

so. Our Lord said that Abraham rejoiced to see His day, and "saw it, and was glad," and many other righteous and inspired men may have done so. But, in all probability, although all God's people believed in the coming of Messiah, yet few understood what His work was to be, or the exact reason why they were directed to slay innocent animals as an act of worship.

There must have been a feeling amongst the reasonable that it was "not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins." In the 50th Psalm God asks, "Will I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats?" And in the 51st Psalm the writer says, "For Thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: Thou delightest not in burnt offering." But did this imply that in the writer's opinion the Temple sacrifices were useless and to be safely dispensed with? By no means; for those who wrote these words were the foremost in carrying out the law as to sacrificial worship, and at even so late a period as the time of Malachi, the nation was reprov'd not for offering animal sacrifices, but for offering diseased and worthless animals instead of valuable ones. How can we reconcile, then, the words quoted above, and the acts of those who studied to be religious? In this way;

These sacrifices, although they were felt to be incapable in themselves of blotting out sin and pleasing God, were yet commanded by God; and therefore he who neglected them was directly disobedient to God. And moreover, the eye of faith saw that there must be in them deep meanings, or else God would never have ordered them. That they could not be the source of full forgiveness all knew, for there were many sins (such as adultery) for which the law provided no sacrifice, nor gave pardon. Yet that they were not worthless or valueless the righteous felt; for by obeying God the faithful soul was sure of God's blessing; and God could use these insignificant means as the channel through which He might pour His spiritual gifts.

Hence the offering of sacrifices tested the faith and the obedience of those of the Old Dispensation; and also demanded of them some self-sacrifice and self-denial. For it was no insignificant gift that they were required to offer, but animals useful for food, and possessing a market value.

But when they obeyed God and worshipped Him in the way He (not they) had appointed, they did more than they knew (which is ever the case with those who obey God when His commands are hard to understand). For what did they do? Nothing less than plead continually, over and over again, in the highest and strongest way (because the way of

God's own appointing) the *sacrifice of Jesus Christ*, not yet accomplished, but in God's eyes as if it were accomplished; the blessings from which were (as I have just said) for them as well as for us; and which alone was the source to them as well as to us of pardon, grace, and peace.

It was mostly hidden from their eyes. The dying animals; the red blood streaming forth; the consuming flesh; the rising smoke, may have at times suggested what was some day going to take place; but in ignorance for the most part they offered, or in dimly shining light. Yet when they offered in faith, believing that the offering was pleasing to God (which it was inasmuch as it prefigured and pleaded the acceptable death of the Son), and when they studied to be righteous and true in their daily lives, the blessings (or some of them) which flowed from the Cross became theirs, and their worship ascended to Heaven permeated and made sweet with the incense of Christ's merits.

Is it not all now plain to us? Can we not see why God commanded sacrificial worship from the first and why this was more pleasing to Him than simple offerings of the lips? Can we not understand why God blessed Abel and Abraham and Noah and Job and David and Solomon, and others too numerous to mention, when they offered their sacrifices to Him? These holy men of old were all accepted through Christ Jesus, just as we can be; and benefited from His offering just as we can do.

One more thought before we conclude this paper. We call these animal offerings "*sacrifices*." We at the same time call the offering of Jesus a "*sacrifice*." Did these animal sacrifices then possess *some* virtue in themselves so that although the sacrifice of Jesus was the greatest sacrifice yet these can be called lesser sacrifices? No; the sacrifice of Jesus was not only the greatest sacrifice, but as well the *only* sacrifice that has ever been offered up and received by God. There is no other sacrifice; there has been no other; there can be no other than that "one sacrifice" offered once for all by our Lord, never to be repeated, never requiring to be repeated. Hence the offerings of the Old Dispensation can only be called sacrifices because of their connection with Christ's sacrifice. They are not sacrifices in themselves, but are called sacrifices because they plead and show forth and grasp and convey the merits of the Infinite Sacrifice offered by the Son of God.

In our next paper we shall dwell more particularly on the worship of the Jewish Church, and consider what some of the principal rites and ceremonies were intended to prefigure.