

the ancient Canaanites the cry of burning children was lost to hearing in the savage din of drums and trumpets. In such sacrifices we see the most awful and revolting perversion of the religious sentiment which the history of man affords. An abuse so shocking and unnatural could exist only among people where right ideas of God had faded away, and the prevailing deity had become the reflected image of some of the worst human passions. It must have come from the feeling of alienation. They felt that their God stood wrathfully apart from them, and such heinous sacrifices were designed to propitiate him. This feeling of alienation is natural to man. His conscience tells him how far he falls short of—how much he sins against—his ideal excellence. His own moral nature is offended, and surely so likewise must his God be offended. No victim short of the most precious, or that which will fully represent what is most precious, is adequate to express his regret for the separation, and the most precious is offered. The child is given by the parent, in some cases the monarch is taken from the throne, for the sacrifice. The captive taken in war is brought to the altar, and through the sacrifice of that human life, as representing that which is most precious upon earth, the worshipper seeks to placate his God. The sacrifices are offered—will the God accept them, and be appeased and conciliated? In some such way do I satisfy myself concerning the origin of such fearful abuse of sacrifice.

The abuse here, following the general law in such things, came from the use. Nothing is clearer in human experience than the sense of sin. And this sense of sin brings with it the sense of separation from God. The soul awakened to a consciousness of this separation seeks