

reality, the supreme object of their affections and of their thoughts, the same to whom they have sacrificed all. These two facts suffice to prove that Jesus Christ preached His divine authority, and that the apostles believed in it. If He had declared Himself to be a prophet merely, or even as the greatest of the prophets, as the supreme revealer of the divine will, these two facts would remain inexplicable. Jesus Christ demanded of His disciples an absolute sacrifice, an abandonment, without reserve, to His person. Is not this the language which He should speak who would reveal God to humanity?

Let us suppose the actual existence of a true religion; could we not affirm, beforehand, that it would claim us entirely as a living sacrifice? God may be denied; but if God exists, we ought to exist for Him. If God exists, He is the source from which all proceeds, the centre to which all must return. If He has not created us for His service, there is neither aim nor explanation to our existence; and the law of creation, instead of being harmony in unity, is nothing but confusion in chaos. But if God claims us, He wishes to possess us entirely. I challenge any one to fix a limit to this; to say to God: "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further." So well has the human conscience understood this, that it has always put sacrifice in the centre of all religions. Have you reflected upon this? It is not a thing of the world, for nothing is more repugnant to human nature than sacrifice; and yet nothing is more widespread. Everywhere I find this law written in characters of blood. To obey this law man has recoiled before nothing; he has given everything, even himself, even the life of his own children. He has descended to the refinement of tortures which terrify us. He has made the bloody slaughter of a victim, and often the immolation of his kindred, the primary element of all his worship. We may, indeed, pronounce a summary condemnation upon this universal fact; we may call it folly; and we may believe that we have explained

everything; but I say, in speaking thus, we have failed to understand, we have misapprehended, humanity. As for myself, I recognize in these frightful errors the traces of a true instinct which nothing can ever completely efface. I see in them the spontaneous avowal of the human conscience proclaiming what it owes to God, and that, having offended Him, it owes him, at the same time, a striking reparation. I find in them a legitimate and profound aspiration to which the Gospel has magnificently replied in erecting the cross, by the which it has pleased God to reconcile the world to Himself.

Jesus Christ wishes sacrifice, and not only wishes it, but obtains it. He gains possession of human hearts even across the barriers of time and distance; He overcomes them; He tears them away from all the restraints of earth, in such a manner that the great declaration of Peter, "Lo, we have left all and followed thee," is become the motto of all true Christians.

And notice one thing: in speaking thus, Peter did not attach to these words all the meaning which he put into them later on. To him Jesus was nothing more than the Messiah, the Son of God—in a unique sense, it is true; but Peter had not yet discerned in Him the Lamb of God, of which he speaks later on in terms so touching (1 Pet. i: 18, and 1 Pet. ii: 21-25). If he can say to his Master, "for thee we have forsaken all," what will it be further on, when he will have comprehended His love; when he will have seen this love developing into sacrifice; when, in this sacrifice, he will have seen accomplished the redemption of the world and his own salvation? If, by this sudden intuition and heartfelt logic, which distinguish him among all the apostles, he understood so soon that the Son of God claimed him entirely, how will he feel when this Son of God shall be his Savior, when this Savior shall have bought him with His precious blood, when He shall have become man's ransom, and, according to the language of his epistles, his property, his voluntary slave? Then