THE MEANING OF SACRIFICE IN
THE OLD TESTAMENT

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THE religion of Israel, like many other religions, employed a
ritual of sacrifice, and not a little of the Pentateuch is taken
up with the regulations governing that ritual. To many readers
of the Old Testament this has little meaning to-day, since animal
sacrifice has long ceased for the Jews, while for the Christians
it is superseded. Yet it clearly played an important part in the
life of ancient Israel, and it demands more study from those
who would understand the Old Testament than is commonly
given to it. To examine in detail all the sacrifices of which we
learn is manifestly impossible in a single lecture, and all that I

1 A lecture delivered in the John Rylands Library on the 8th of February,
1950.
2 H. Gressmann (Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart, ed. by F. M.
Schiele and L. Zscharnack, iv, 1913, col. 959) says: 'Das Opfern war mit der
Religion so selbstverständlich verbunden wie das Atmen mit dem Leben und
brauchte daher nicht besonders eingeschränkt zu werden'.
3 Cf., for instance, the scanty space given to the question of sacrifice in M.
Burrows, An Outline of Biblical Theology, 1946, and O. J. Baab, The Theology of
the Old Testament, 1949. Burrows says (p. 5): 'Large areas of Hebrew religion,
such as animal sacrifice or the veneration of sacred places, require relatively
little attention, because they ceased to be important for the religion of the New
Testament'. The importance of Old Testament sacrifice is not negligible for
the understanding of the New Testament, and still less for the understanding
of the Old.
4 The reader is referred for a fuller study to W. Robertson Smith, The
Religion of the Semites: the Fundamental Institutions, 1889, 3rd ed., edited by
S. A. Cook, 1927; G. B. Gray, Sacrifice in the Old Testament: its Theory and
Practice, 1925; A. Wendel, Das Opfer in der israelitischen Religion, 1927; and
W. O. E. Oesterley, Sacrifices in Ancient Israel: their Origin, Purposes and
Development, 1937. Two long articles on the subject, still of value, are those of
W. P. Paterson, in Dictionary of the Bible, ed. by J. Hastings, iv, 1902, pp. 329 ff.,
and of G. F. Moore, in Encyclopaedia Biblica, ed. by T. K. Cheyne and J. S.
Black, iv, 1907, cols. 4183 ff. Cf. also G. Widengren, Religionens värld, 1945,
pp. 204 ff.
can attempt is a rapid survey in the effort to find the function of sacrifice in Israelite thought.

The fact that Israel shared a sacrificial cultus with other ancient religions suggests that it came out of a wider background, and was not something that had its origin within her own tradition. With every side of her religion, indeed, this was so. It has long been impossible to think of her as receiving divine commands for the establishment and organization of her religion at a given point of her history without relation to her own past or to the background of culture and religion in the contemporary world in which she lived. More than ever has this become the case in recent years, in which our knowledge of that background has become rapidly richer and fuller. This does not mean, however—and I wish to make this quite clear at the outset—that the sufficient explanation of the Old Testament is to be found in the study of the thought and culture and practice of the surrounding peoples. Israel took over much, whose origin is therefore to be sought farther back. Its meaning, however, is not necessarily to be sought farther back. Often it was re-adapted and made the vehicle of her own faith and her own thought, and we have no right to assume that it was taken over unaltered in form or meaning. For there was an element in her religion which she did not derive from any other people, but which was mediated to her through her own religious leaders, and especially through Moses, and what she took over was integrated into her own religion and made to serve its ends.

Again, however, I must guard myself against misunderstanding. Many of her people, and often her kings and leaders,
sank to the level of contemporary thought and practice that had no relation to the God of Israel. They stand condemned within the pages of the old Testament. There were practices which could not be integrated into the worship of Yahweh or made to serve its ends. For the religion of Yahwism was not a Nature religion, as the religion of Canaan was. Moreover, even the practices which were taken over could be interpreted in a Canaanite way, and no longer serve the ends of Israel's true religion. We can no longer, therefore, think of Israel's religion and Canaanite religion as set over against one another in sharp and complete antithesis, and engaged in a life and death struggle with one another. There was much that bound the two religions together, and not a little of Canaanite origin has survived in Judaism, so that the struggle was rather between the religion of Israel, that could adapt and reinterpret some elements of Canaanite religion but that had no place for others and that had a distinctive character of its own, and the religion of Canaan that retained those other elements and differently understood them all.

It will be clear from this that I do not propose to speak on the origin of sacrifice among men, or on the first meaning which it may have had. For such a discussion our net would have to be cast much more widely than in the Old Testament. Suffice it to say that those who have conducted such an inquiry are not agreed as to its results. Of the various theories of the primary meaning of sacrifice we may note three: (1) that the sacrifice was a communion offering that sought to bind the worshipper and the god together by their sharing in the body of the sacrificed animal; (2) that the sacrifice was a gift presented to the god.


3 This was the theory of W. Robertson Smith. Cf. op. cit., 3rd ed., p. 245: 'We can affirm that the idea of a sacrificial meal as an act of communion is older than sacrifice in the sense of tribute . . . the object of the sacrifice is to provide
to induce him to act on behalf of the offerer;\(^1\) (3) that the

the material for an act of sacrificial communion with the god'. This view was followed by F. B. Jevons, *An Introduction to the History of Religions*, 9th ed., 1927, pp. 144 ff.; cf. p. 285: 'The sacrificial and sacramental meal, which from the beginning has been the centre of all religion, has from the beginning also always been a moment in which the consciousness has been present to man of communion with the god of his prayers—without that consciousness man had no motive to continue the practice of the rite'; also by C. F. Burney, *Outlines of Old Testament Theology*, 3rd ed., 1930, pp. 55 ff.

\(^1\) This was the theory of E. B. Tylor. Cf. *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art, and Custom*, 5th ed., reprinted 1929, ii, pp. 375 ff., esp. p. 376: 'The gift-theory, as standing on its own independent basis, properly takes the first place. That most childlike kind of offering, the giving of a gift with as yet no definite thought how the receiver can take and use it, may be the most primitive as it is the most rudimentary sacrifice.' Cf. also S. I. Curtiss, *Primitive Semitic Religion Today*, 1902, pp. 218 ff., esp. p. 221: 'Sacrifice may be regarded as a gift on the part of the suppliant, which is designed favourably to dispose the being, who is God to him, in some undertaking on which he is about to enter; or to remove his anger. It may be something like a bribe to blind the eyes of the deity, a keffareh, so that the divine being who is displeased may overlook the offence on account of which he is angry', and p. 222: 'The necessity for shedding blood does not exclude the character of sacrifice as a gift'. So, too, Baumgarten, in *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. by F. M. Schiele and L. Zscharnack, iv, 1913, col. 956: 'Ursprünglich ist das Opfer sogar nichts anderes als ein mit Gaben dargebrachtes Gebet, ein die Bitte nach antikem Urteil notwendigerweise begleitendes Geschenk, dargebracht in der Absicht, die Wirkung jener zu verstärken durch den Tatbeweis dafür, dass man sich den Erwerb des göttlichen Wohlgefallens etwas kosten lasse'. W. Eichrodt favours the view that the sacrifice is given to the deity in order to maintain his strength. Cf. *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, i, 3rd ed., 1948, p. 62: 'Als die wichtigsten Grundgedanken des Opferkults nennt uns die allgemeine Religionsgeschichte die der Speisung, des Geschenks, der sakralen Kommunion und die Versöhnung. Die primitivste Anschauung ist wohl die, dass durch das Opfer der Gottheit Nahrung zur Stärkung ihrer Kraft zugeführt werde.' This was the theory advanced earlier by E. Westermarck, *The Origin and Development of Moral Ideas*, ii, 1908, p. 611: 'The idea that supernatural beings have human appetites and human wants leads to the practice of sacrifice. . . . If such offerings fail them they may even suffer want and become feeble and powerless.' A. B. Davidson (*The Theology of the Old Testament*, 1904, p. 315) regarded the gift idea as the prevailing idea in Old Testament sacrifices, and H. Wheeler Robinson (*Journal of Theological Studies*, xlili, 1942, p. 129) says: 'I should regard the gift theory as giving the widest explanation, and the manipulation of the blood as being one of the chief points of departure.' On this general view of sacrifice, cf. G. van der Leeuw, 'Die do-uit-des-Formel in der Opfertheorie', in *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft*, xx, 1920-1921, pp. 241 ff.
sacrifice released vital power by the death of the animal.\(^1\) It is probable that no simple theory can express even the first meaning of sacrifice,\(^2\) and that it was already of complex significance so far back as it goes. Within the thought of the Old Testament, no one of these views can give us the clue to the interpretation of all sacrifice.\(^3\) Some sacrifices were clearly propitiatory; yet

\(^1\) So E. O. James, *op. cit.*, p. 256: ‘The fundamental principle throughout is the same; the giving of life to promote or preserve life, death being merely a means of liberating vitality’. Cf. also R. Dussaud, who, in speaking of Israelite sacrifice, says (Les Origines cananéennes du sacrifice israélite, 1921, p. 27): ‘Le sacrifice met en mouvement des énergies plus puissantes, surtout le sacrifice par excellence, c'est-à-dire le sacrifice sanglant: avec sang, l'immolation met en liberté l'âme de la victime que le rite de la *semikha*, ou imposition de la main, a préalablement identifiée au sacrifiant’; also A. Bertholet (*Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 2nd ed., edited by H. Gunkel and L. Zscharnack, iv, 1930, col. 704) who, while regarding sacrifice as also communion and gift, says: ‘im Opfer ruht eine Kraft, und durch das Opfer wird eine Kraftwirkung ausgelöst’. Of the importance of this element in Old Testament sacrifices there can be little doubt. G. F. Moore (*Encyclopaedia Biblica*, iv, col. 4217) says: ‘From first to last the utmost importance attaches to the disposition of the victim’s blood.’ H. H. Gowen (*A History of Religion*, 1934, p. 64) defines sacrifice as ‘man’s effort to sustain the course of Nature by providing the requisite replenishment of power. It has therefore affinity with Imitative Magic.’ It will be seen below that while I would agree that sacrifice has its roots in magical practice, I do not think the Old Testament presents a magical view of sacrifice.


\(^3\) Cf. Gray, *op. cit.*, p. 3. Gray stresses the gift element as against Robertson Smith’s stress on the communion element, but expressly guards himself against being supposed to see only this element. J. Pedersen (*Israel III-IV*, pp. 299 ff.) also well emphasizes the variety of purposes sacrifice was designed to serve and the impossibility of interpreting Israelite sacrifice in terms of one idea. Cf., too, F. F. Hvidberg, *Den israelitiske Religions Historie*, 1943, pp. 91 f. O. Eissfeldt (*Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 2nd ed., iv, 1930, col. 712) observes that after the entry into Canaan the conception of sacrifice as communion tended to give place to the conception of it as gift. For a study of the variety of motives that lay behind Israelite sacrifice, c.f. A. Wendel, *Das Opfer in der israelitischen Religion*, 1927, pp. 32 ff.
equally clearly all were not. The thankoffering, for instance, was clearly not propitiatory. Some sacrifices were thought of as having an effect upon the offerer and not merely on his behalf, or even upon others for whom the offerer made them. Job's sacrifice at the end of the round of his sons' banquets was partly to avert the anger of God at any thoughtless word or act on the part of his sons, and partly to cleanse his sons.¹ In a particular sacrifice one element might be to the fore, but it is probable that other elements were also often present.

I have already indicated that Israel's sacrifices had a large element in common with the pre-Israelite sacrifices of Canaan. The view has been propounded, indeed, that Israel's sacrificial ritual was essentially of Canaanite origin.² This would well accord with the common view of the meaning of Amos v, 25 and Jer. vii, 22. In the former passage Amos asks: 'Did ye bring unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel?'; while in the latter Jeremiah says: 'For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices'. It is hard to subscribe to this common, literalistic view of these passages, however.³ For in

¹ Job i, 5.
² Cf. Dussaud, op. cit., 1921, and 2nd ed., 1941, with an appendix in which additional support for his view is drawn from the Ras Shamra texts, which were undiscovered when the first edition was issued. Cf. also Pedersen, Israel III-IV, p. 317: 'Our knowledge of the Phoenician-Canaanite cult is now quite sufficient to warrant the conclusion that the greater part of the Israelish sacrificial practices had been learnt from the Canaanites'. Similarly, J. P. Hyatt, Prophetic Religion, 1947, p. 128: 'Modern discoveries and research have confirmed the belief that the Hebrew sacrificial system was largely of Canaanite origin. This has long been suspected on the basis of fragmentary evidence, and has been further proved by the discovery of cuneiform texts... at modern Ras Shamra.'
³ I have discussed these and related texts in Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, xxix, 1946, pp. 340 ff. My argument was criticized by C. J. Cadoux, in Expository Times, lviii, 1946-1947, pp. 43 ff., to which I replied, ibid., pp. 69 ff. Cf. also N. H. Snaith, ibid., pp. 152 f., and my reply, ibid., pp. 305 ff. So far as Amos v, 25 is concerned, D. B. Macdonald noted the significance of the unusual order of the Hebrew words, and the unusual word used for bring, more than half a century ago, and rendered: 'Was it only flesh-sacrifices and meal-offerings that ye brought me in the wilderness?' where the expected answer is 'We brought more than this; we brought true worship of heart and righteousness.'
passages which stand in documents almost certainly older than the time of Amos, there are references to sacrifice in the Mosaic period and the sacrifice of the Passover is integral to the story of the Exodus, which lay at the heart of the national consciousness. It is hard to believe that Amos or Jeremiah denied that this sacrifice was offered, or ordained by God. The prophetic attitude to sacrifice cannot be determined by taking odd texts out of their context in this way and interpreting them in a rigid and literalistic way. They must be studied in relation to their context and in relation to the totality of each prophet’s teaching. It is also important to ask how their contemporaries understood them. Here we must remember that almost all modern scholarship is agreed that the book of Deuteronomy

Cf. Journal of Biblical Literature, xviii, 1899, pp. 214 f. E. Würthwein (Theologische Literaturzeitung, lxxii, 1947, col. 150) with less probability suggests that ‘the offerings which ye brought to me in the wilderness’ was a gloss. So far as Jer. vii, 22 is concerned, I find the passage to indicate the relative importance of sacrifice and obedience, in accordance with the well-known Biblical idiom, whereby ‘not this but that’ means ‘that is more important than this’. See Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, loc. cit., p. 340, where several illustrations are given. Moreover, in Jer. vi, 19 f. Jeremiah again condemns sacrifices, but couples with his condemnation a complaint that the people had not hearkened unto the voice of God. If he really meant that the condemnation would have stood unchanged even if they had hearkened to the voice of God, he might have been expected to avoid mentioning irrelevances. Further, though in Jer. vii, 1-15 he announces the coming destruction of the Temple, he makes it quite clear that if the people would amend their ways this might be averted. Clearly, therefore, he does not regard the Temple ritual as something that is unacceptable to God in itself, but only as something that is unacceptable when it is observed by people whose spirit is an offence to Him.

1 The oldest sources of the Pentateuch, that were almost certainly in existence in Jeremiah’s time, ascribe sacrifice to Moses and say that he ordained it. Similarly traditions which must antedate the time of Jeremiah say that Samuel sacrificed. There is no evidence that Jeremiah denied the accuracy of these traditions, but there is evidence that he held Moses and Samuel in high esteem. Cf. Jer. xv, 1. Similarly the sacrifice of the Passover is inextricably woven into the tradition of the Exodus, which Jeremiah regarded as achieved by the power of God. There is no evidence that he denied that the Passover was sacrificed at that time, or denied that this was done in accordance with the divine will, and it is hard to see how Jer. vii, 22 can be understood as a challenge to all the traditions of the past, when it can be understood less drastically, and when there is independent evidence that Jeremiah valued other elements of the traditions that are inseparable from the ones he is supposed to be challenging.
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is the deposit of the teaching of the eighth century prophets; yet it found nothing fundamentally repugnant to true religion in sacrifice in itself. I am therefore unwilling to set the religion of Israel, as represented by Moses and the prophets, over against sacrificial religion, and to suppose that sacrifice was wholly a Canaanite borrowing into her practice after the Settlement in the land.

It is, nevertheless, probable that not a little in Israel’s ritual was of Canaanite origin. This has been more generally recognized since the Ras Shamra texts became available for study, though it was already recognized before their discovery that Canaanite religion had exercised a powerful influence on Israel’s religion. It is sometimes pointed out that technical names for

1 While there are some who dispute this, they cannot be identified with those who regard the eighth century prophets as inflexibly opposed to all sacrifices. Indeed the latter theory developed amongst scholars who regarded the teaching of those prophets as the background of Deuteronomy.

2 A. Lods says: ‘The Israelite system of sacrifice, in its essentials, does not seem to have been either a Jahwistic innovation... nor a borrowing from the Canaanites, as Dussaud has recently maintained, nor a creation of the Jewish priests at the time of the exile. In the main it comes from the old pre-Mosaic Semitic stock of religious practices’. See Israel from its Beginnings to the Middle of the Eighth Century, E. Tr. by S. H. Hooke, 1932, p. 281 (original French edition, Israël des Origines au milieu du viii siècle, 1930, p. 324; cf. also Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie religieuses, viii, 1928, p. 410). I am inclined to go farther than Lods, though not so far as Dussaud, and to hold that while Israelite sacrifice came from a background of ancient Semitic sacrifice, the institution would naturally be differently developed in different branches of the Semitic peoples, and that while Israel doubtless brought some sacrificial ritual with her when she entered Canaan, she borrowed much from the Canaanites for its development in the post-Settlement period. Cf. J. Pedersen, Israel III-IV, p. 317: ‘It is difficult to draw the line between what is Canaanite and what is strictly Israeliite. The Israelites did not adopt the Canaanite custom as a dead system.’ H. Wheeler Robinson (Redemption and Revelation in the Actuality of History, 1942, p. 249) conjectures that the peace-offering is older in Israel than the Settlement in Canaan, while the burnt-offering was derived from the Canaanites. A. Lods (Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie religieuses, loc. cit., pp. 405 ff.) thinks that all the three main types of sacrifice, communion offering, whole offering and piacular offering rest on older pre-Settlement forms of sacrifice.

sacrifices that stand in the Old Testament are found in the Ras Shamra texts,¹ and the antiquity of these sacrifices can no longer be questioned.² This does not carry with it, of course, as is sometimes concluded, the antiquity of the Biblical sources that refer to them. On the other hand it does carry with it—though this is less often noted—the evidence that these forms of sacrifice did not originate in a divine revelation to Moses on the mount. Their antiquity goes back behind Moses.

On the other hand, it is impossible that all of Israel's ritual was derived from Canaanite sources.³ In particular, it is unlikely that the Passover, which was offered before the entry into Canaan, was derived from Canaanite sources.⁴ The origin of this rite is highly obscure, though it is probable that it long


² It should not be forgotten that the antiquity of much of the usage that is codified in the Priestly Code has long been recognized. Cf. A. Lods, loc. cit., p. 401 : ' les représentants les plus autorisés de l'école de Graf-Wellhausen, à commencer par Wellhausen lui-même, ont souligné expressément que ces institutions sont, pour une large part, très anciennes '; also H. Schulz, American Journal of Theology, iv, 1900, p. 282 : ' The sacrificial laws in the priestly Torah undoubtedly contain very early material. The sacrificial regulations for the priests of the old Jerusalem may lie at the bottom everywhere. Without the assumption of such a given basis the presence of the conception of guilt-offering (אשָׁם) alongside of that of sin-offering (חַטַּאת) . . . is wholly inexplicable.'

³ Cf. R. de Langhe, op. cit., p. 42, and also above, p. 81, n. 2.

⁴ Cf. J. Pedersen, Israel III-IV, p. 317 : ' The paschal sacrifice is probably pre-Canaanite '; p. 382 : ' It is clear that the Passover was such a popular festival before the immigration '; pp. 400 f. : ' The events of the spring festival warrant the presumption that it is a combination of two originally independent festivals, a pre-Canaanite pastoral feast which sanctified the firstborn, and a Canaanite peasant feast which sanctified the barley crops. The originally separate character of these two feasts has, of course, long been recognized. Cf. E. Dhorme, L'Évolution religieuse d'Israël : i. La religion des Hébreux nomades, 1937, p. 210. It may be noted that Dussaud agrees with this view. He says : ' On admet généralement que la pâque est constituée par la combinaison de deux fêtes, primitivement distinctes : l'Offrande des premiers-nés des troupeaux, pratiquée jadis par les Israelites nomades, et la fête des pains azymes, fête agricole cananéenne ouvrant la période de la moisson que clôturait la pentecôte.' For a study of this spring festival and its ritual, cf. G. B. Gray, ' Passover and Unleavened Bread : the Laws of J, E, and D ', in Journal of Theological Studies, xxxvii, 1936, pp. 241 ff. See also N. H. Snaith, The Jewish New Year Festival : its Origins and Development. 1947, pp. 13 ff.
antedated the time of Moses.¹ What is more important than its origin is the meaning Israel attached to it, and from the time of the Exodus she seems to have made it the vehicle of her remembrance of that deliverance, so that whatever significance it may have had before is no longer relevant for her. Here is a notable example of the process to which I have referred, whereby practices that were once of a different significance were integrated into Israel’s religion and made the vehicle of Yahwism. It is the significance attached to all the sacrificial and other rites that is more deeply important than antiquarian research into their origin. All the light that can be shed on their origin is to be welcomed, provided we do not delude ourselves into thinking that when we have found the origin we have explained and understood all.

Whatever the source of Israel’s sacrificial ritual, whether she derived it from her own distant past or from Canaanite or other sources, or whether it came into being in the course of her own history, no simple idea will suffice to explain the meaning of it all. Some sacrifices were thought of as gifts; others as means of effecting communion with God; others as having propitiatory significance. Some were wholly consumed on the altar; some were partly consumed on the altar and partly given to the priests; in some the worshipper himself had a share.

Not all sacrifices were animal sacrifices. There were the firstfruits,² which were held to be sacred to God and His by right. These were not thought of as man’s gift to God, but as His own property, so that it would be an act of sacrilege for a man to use them for himself.³ God was recognized to be the source of all fruitfulness, and therefore entitled to a share of what his bounty provided. The same was true of the firstborn of animals. These too, belonged to God,⁴ and their purpose was not primarily to propitiate God, to effect communion with Him, or to bring him a gift. They were the recognition of what was His own.

³ Cf. J. Pedersen, *Israel III-IV*, p. 304: ‘He acquires the full right to use the crops when he has given Yahweh his share’.
⁴ Cf. Ex. xiii, 2.
Of non-animal sacrifices in addition to firstfruits\(^1\) we may recall the meal offerings and the freewill offerings of substance. It will be remembered that in the time of Joash there was a dispute between the king and Jehoiada the High Priest as to the source of the funds for the repair of the Temple, and the dispute was finally settled by devoting to this purpose freewill offerings of substance which might be placed by the people in a chest in the Temple, which could only be opened jointly by the priest and the king's officers.\(^2\) At the time of Josiah this arrangement was still in force, and it was after the opening of the chest that Hilkiah announced the finding of the book of the Law.\(^3\) Probably the *minḥāh* was a gift,\(^4\) though what it signified is less clear. It seems clear that originally it denoted an animal sacrifice, since the term is used of Abel's sacrifice,\(^5\) but it became in later times a meal offering. Whether it was a gift expressing devotion to God, or seeking to induce Him to grant a boon, is hard to determine.\(^6\)

There were thankofferings, which were also gifts, though with a more defined purpose. These were not seeking boons, but the recognition that boons had been received and that God was their author. Similarly with vows,\(^7\) though these might have been contracted as a means of securing blessing. Once contracted, the vow imposed its obligation on a man, so that its purely voluntary undertaking had become a moral obligation which it was sinful to repudiate.\(^8\)

Other sacrifices included the peace offerings, and sacrifices which were connected more definitely with sin. The peace-

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\(^1\) The tithes belong to the same category as the firstfruits, though they are, of course, distinct, and more defined in amount. Cf. Pedersen, *op. cit.*, pp. 307 ff.; also Eissfeldt, *op. cit.* On incense and the place it acquired in the ritual, cf. M. Lohr, *Das Räucherofer im Alten Testament : eine archäologische Untersuchung*, 1927.

\(^2\) 2 Kings xii, 4 ff.

\(^3\) *Ibid.*, xxii, 3 ff.


\(^5\) Gen. iv, 4.

\(^6\) For a study of the ritual associated with the *ōlah*, or burnt offering, and the *zebah*, with which the peace offering is equated, c.f. W. B. Stevenson, 'Hebrew 'Olah and Zebach Sacrifices', in *Festschrift für Alfred Bertholet*, 1950, pp. 488 ff.

\(^7\) Cf. J. Pedersen, *op. cit.*, pp. 324 ff.

offerings may have been designed for the maintenance or restoration of proper relations with God. The offerer shared part of them in the sacred feast, in pre-exilic times, while in the post-exilic times the name peace offering was made to include the thank offerings, the vows and the free-will offerings. Of the sacrifices more closely connected with sin there were the sin offering and the guilt offering in post-exilic times, though these do not figure in the pre-exilic sources of the Old Testament that have come down to us. This does not mean that they were post-exilic inventions, however, and the fact that in Lev. v, 1-9 they appear to be identified, and that they cannot now be distinguished with precision, is against such a supposition.

For it is probable that they were once distinct. Both appear to have been offered for more specific offences than the peace offering—if the peace offerings involved any idea of offence.

In addition to these individual sacrifices there were the daily

1 Cf. Pedersen, ibid., p. 335, where they are called 'covenant offerings'. Their name, šhālōm, is connected with the word shālōm = peace, but their precise purpose is difficult to define. Cf. L. Koehler, Theologie des Alten Testaments, 1936, p. 177: 'Was דָּשִׁית bedeutet, wissen wir nicht'. A Haldar (Associations of Cult Prophets among the Ancient Semites, 1945, p. 122) thinks they were divinatory.

2 W. P. Paterson (in Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible, iv, 1902, p. 338b) says that the sacrificer of the peace offering 'always stood upon the ground of salvation', in contrast to the offerer of the sin offering, who had fallen from a state of grace. But while this appears to be true of the post-exilic period, it is less certain for the earlier period.

3 C. F. Burney (Outlines of Old Testament Theology, 3rd ed., 1930, p. 62) says: 'It is not unreasonable to regard the sin- and guilt-offerings as later specialized forms of the older burnt-offering'. Cf. H. Wheeler Robinson, Inspiration and Revelation in the Old Testament, 1946, p. 226: 'The well-known pre-exilic sacrifices of the so-called 'peace-offering' . . . and of the whole burnt-offering . . . were extended in the post-exilic period by the development of the sin-offering and the guilt-offering which marked a deepened sense of alienation or remoteness from God'.

4 The word 'āšām, which is the technical term for a guilt offering, is found in pre-exilic writings, but never with this meaning. In 1 Sam. vi, 3, 4, 8, 17 it stands for the golden symbols which the Philistines returned with the Ark, and in 2 Kings xii, 17 for money given to the priests. In Gen. xxvi, 10, which is commonly assigned to J, it means guiltiness, and so in Jer. li, 5, and in Ps. lxviii, 21 (Heb. 22), which may be pre-exilic.

offerings of the community for the maintenance of right relations between the community and God;¹ and there was the solemn offering of the Day of Atonement,² when sacrifice was made for the sin of the community, and the scapegoat that bore the sin of the community was not sacrificed on the altar, but driven into the wilderness.³ There can be no doubt that the roots of this ritual lay far back in the past, and primitive practices have doubtless survived in it.

Our information about these sacrifices is not all of the same age, and it is certain that there was development of usage in connexion with some part of them during the period covered by the Old Testament. We must beware of supposing, however, that a sacrifice which is only attested in a late document first came into existence at the time of that document's composition. To trace the history of these sacrifices lies outside my purpose, and even to trace the history of their significance is not my intention. I have little doubt that sacrifice did not mean the same to the patriarchs, to priests or people during the monarchy, to prophets, and to the founders of Judaism. Yet there were some elements of its significance which were constant within the stream of the true tradition of Israel. That there were many in all ages who were spiritually insensitive is freely declared in the Old Testament, and I am not concerned with them. So far as the Pentateuch is concerned, I recognize that there are various strata within it; yet all were gathered by the final redactors within its compass, to be understood in terms of that dynamic element which reached its full development in the Judaism which made the Pentateuch the expression of its spirit. My concern is primarily with the conception of sacrifice cherished by the final framers of the Law, and to a lesser extent with the compilers of the older documents which are embedded in the Law, and with the great prophetic figures of the pre-exilic period.

¹ On the history of these cf. Pedersen, ibid., pp. 349 ff. G. F. Moore, in Encyclopaedia Biblica, iv, col. 4209, surmises that the custom of offering a daily burnt offering and oblation probably originated in the royal temples of Judah and Israel.

² Cf. Lev. xvi.

It is important to recognize that not all sacrifice was related to the expiation of sin. Moreover, no sacrifice is represented as achieving anything by the mere act of offering it. In popular thought, so often challenged by the prophets, sacrifices were believed to have automatic power, as they were widely thought to have amongst non-Israelite people. But that is not the real teaching of the Old Testament, where it is clearly taught that sacrifices must be the organ of the spirit of the offerer, if they were to be effective. Where the sacrifice was offered for sin, the Law no less than the prophets asked for something more than the outward act. The Law required the confession of sin and humble penitence of spirit, without which the sacrifice could achieve nothing. It also required restitution, where the sin was against another and where restitution could be made. It is in Leviticus that we read: 1 'It shall be, when he shall be guilty in one of these things, that he shall confess that wherein he hath sinned; and he shall bring his forfeit unto the Lord for his sin which he hath sinned... and the priest shall make atonement for him as concerning his sin.' It is in Numbers that we read 2: 'When a man or woman shall commit any sin that men commit... then shall they confess their sin which they have done; and he shall make restitution for his guilt in full, and add unto it the fifth part thereof, and give it unto him in respect of whom he hath been guilty'. Moreover, there is a passage at which we shall look later, which makes it clear that it is the intention, rather than the act, which validates sacrifice, since there are cases where no sacrifice can avail since the spirit is wrong.

With all this it must be remembered that sacrifice was thought of as potent. 3 It was not merely an expression of the spirit of the offerer, and certainly not an empty form that neither added nor subtracted anything. It required the spirit to validate it, but once validated it was thought to be charged with power. It was

1 Lev. v, 5 f.
2 Num. v, 6 f.
3 Cf. H. Wheeler Robinson (Journal of Theological Studies, xliii, 1942, p. 131): 'That the personal act of sacrifice was generally regarded as doing something, i.e. as efficacious, hardly needs demonstration. This is implied, on the one hand, in the detailed attention given to sacrifice in the Old Testament. This would be meaningless unless sacrifice were meaningful, to a degree far beyond a figurative and merely declaratory symbolism.'
never merely a plea, whether for aid or for forgiveness or for communion. It was potent to effect something, either within or on behalf of the offerer or of another. The sacrificed animal was not merely a substitute for the offerer. He laid his hands upon it, and was conceived of as in some way identified with it, so that in its death he was conceived of as dying—not physically, but spiritually. The death of the victim symbolized his death to his sin, or to whatever stood between him and God, or his surrender of himself to God in thankfulness and humility. And then it was thought of as the medium of his cleansing, or his fellowship with God, or as the assurance of blessing. Hence sacrifice both expressed the spirit of the worshipper and did something for him. Sometimes, as in the thankoffering, the first of these was to the fore and the second was little in evidence. But wherever the second was thought to be present, it could not operate without the first.

It is important to remember this in connexion with the common view that the pre-exilic canonical prophets were against the institution of sacrifice as such, and that they declared it was wholly unacceptable to God. It is improbable that their words should be so interpreted, and far more probable that they opposed the sacrifices of their day because they were hollow and unrelated to the spirit of the offerer. To discuss this question here would

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1 Lev. i, 4; iii, 2, 8, 13, etc.
2 Cf. the remark above quoted (p. 78, n. 1) from Dussaud: 'que le rite de la semikha, ou imposition de la main, a préalablement identifié au sacrifiant'. Also H. Wheeler Robinson (Journal of Theological Studies, xliii, 1942, p. 130): 'The natural meaning of the laying of hands on the sacrifice is the closer identification of the offerer with his offering.'
3 Cf. Pedersen, Israel III-IV, p. 300: 'In every offering there is something of all the effects produced by the offering; but one or other element may become more or less prominent.'
4 Cf. H. Wheeler Robinson, Redemption and Revelation, p. 250: 'The prophets' criticism of contemporary sacrifices was not necessarily intended to do away with them altogether, but was more probably intended to check the abuse of them, by which they became the substitutes, instead of the accompaniments, expressions and encouragements, of true piety and right conduct'; Inspiration and Revelation in the Old Testament, 1946, p. 226: 'It is difficult to conceive how these prophets would have devised a worship wholly without sacrifices. They were attacking a false and non-moral reliance upon them, rather than the expression of true worship through a eucharistic gift.'
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involve too long a digression, and is the less necessary since I
essayed this a few years ago in a lecture in the same series as the
present one.¹ The over-sharpening of antitheses, that was in
vogue some years ago,² is less common to-day, and there is a
greater readiness to recognize an affinity between priest and
prophet,³ or between the Law and the Prophets, without ignoring
the differences of emphasis and function that marked their
work or their message.⁴ This means that the creators of the

¹ 'The Unity of the Old Testament', in Bulletin of the John Rylands

² For survivals of the older view, cf. T. H. Robinson (in Oesterley and
1937, p. 232): 'The God of Israel, alone among the deities worshipped by men,
made no ritual demands; to Him sacrifice was always a weariness, and, when
substituted for morality, an abomination'; P. Volz (Prophetengestalten des
Alten Testaments, 1938, p. 19): 'Die alttestamentliche Religion, die Propheten-
Religion, ist Wort-Religion, und dadurch steht die alttestamentliche Propheten-
Religion im schärfsten Gegensatz zur Priester-Religion, zur Kult-Religion.
Priester-Religion ist Opfer-Religion... Propheten-Religion ist Wort-
of the prophets to the whole sacrificial and ritualistic system and practices of
their day seems to have been absolute, and they thought it should be abolished
as an offence against the God of Israel.' Cf. L. Koehler, Theologie des Alten
Testaments, pp. 170 ff.

³ Cf. N. W. Porteous, Interpretation, iii, 1949, p. 414: 'We must not allow
the denunciation of Israel's prophets, justifiable as they undoubtedly were, to
blind us to the service which Israel's cult must have rendered in maintaining
through the centuries the faith and obedience of many a pious Israelite'.

⁴ Cf. W. O. E. Oesterley, Sacrifices in Ancient Israel, p. 208: 'Their —
i.e. the prophets' — purpose was to purify, not to abolish, the offering of sacri-
fices'; p. 213: 'If the prophets thought the ideas of sacrifice were wrong,
they would assuredly have given some indications of this. But there is no hint
to this effect; a fact which supports the contention that it was not sacrificial
worship in itself that they condemned, but only its misuse in wrong directions';
J. M. Powis Smith, The Prophets and their Times, 2nd ed., revised by W. A. Irwin,
1941, p. 62: 'It may hardly be supposed that Amos would have done away with
sacrifice and ritual entirely if he could. . . . It was not ritual as such to which
he objected, but rather the practice of ritual by people who believed that thereby
they set in motion magical forces and insured for themselves well-being and
happiness' (cf. 1st ed., 1925, p. 50); H. Wheeler Robinson, Journal of Theological
Studies, xliii, 1942, p. 137: 'The prophets were virtually compelled to over-
emphasize, or to emphasize too exclusively, one side of the ritual-righteousness
antithesis, in order to make their meaning clear—to say, in effect, righteousness
only, in order to say, not ritual only': J. E. Coleran, Theological Studies, v, 1944,
pp. 437 f.: 'The prophetic condemnations of sacrifice, then, drive home a
? *
Law and the great prophets were emphasizing opposite sides of the same teaching. On the one side we have the detailed requirements of the ritual, with the recognition that the spirit must be brought to their observance. On the other, we have the insistence on the spirit, without which the offerings are meaningless. On both sides it is perceived that the sacrifice must be in a genuine way the expression of the spirit of the offerer.

two-fold concept basic to true religion. . . . If men will confess their dependence by external cult-acts, these acts must express their sincere disposition of soul. If the external cult does not express this, it is both hypocrisy, deceiving self, and irreligion, striving to deceive God'; P. S. Minear, *Eyes of Faith*, 1946, p. 22: 'The prophets often protest against the emphasis on animal sacrifices and ceremonial ablutions, but rarely is such protest directed against all sacrifice as such. . . . The prophets are fighting against a false separation of sacred from secular'; J. Paterson, *The Goodly Fellowship of the Prophets*, 1948, p. 27: 'Many scholars assume that these prophets are advocating a system of religion without ritual or sacrifice. This seems quite impossible. The great prophets are united in their denial of the efficacy of mere ritual and in their demand for moral and spiritual relations between the people and God. . . . But neither Amos nor Isaiah nor Jeremiah would deny a place to sacrifice'; W. Eichrodt, *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, i, 3rd ed., 1948, p. 182: 'Denn auch die Stellung zum Kultus ist nicht aus dem einfachen aut-aut von Moral oder Opfer zu begreifen, das die Propheten als Vertreter der "sittlichen Religion" charakterisieren soll. Damit spannt man diese Männer wieder in zu engen Rahmen ein und übertreibt die Wichtigkeit des Kultus in ihren Reden. Die zugespitzte Gegenüberstellung von kultischem Betrieb und Rechthandeln an den bekannten Stellen gibt noch kein Recht, eine kultusfrei moralische Religion als prophetisches Ideal zu konstruieren'; P. van Imschoot, in *Bijbelsch Woordenboek*, 1941, col. 1148: 'De leer der profeten wordt door vele niet-kath. critici uitgelegd alsof de profeten alle o.s en allen uiterlijken cultus hadden veroordeeld als Jahweh onwaardig, den zedelijken en transcendenten God, die neits anders van zijn vereerders eischte dan de volledige onderwerping aan zijn wil en het onderhouden van zijn zedelijke geboden. . . . Deze interpretatie houdt niet voldoende rekening met den werkelijken toestand van den cultus, noch met de mentaliteit der tijdgenooten van de profeten, noch met den aard van hun taal, die het ideaal scherp tegenover de misbruiken van den cultus van hun tijd stelde en de schaakeringen verwaarloosde.'

1 Cf. what I have written elsewhere (apud H. Wheeler Robinson, *Journal of Theological Studies*, xliii., 1942, p. 136): 'The final form of the sacrificial law of the Old Testament comes to us from men who valued the prophetic teaching, and the age of Judaism treasured alike the Law and the Prophets. It sought by the Law to guard the prophetic principles, and it conceived of the ritual as the organ of obedience, not the substitute for it. But it is clear that it conceived of the ritual as potent, and not alone as acceptable, and the power with which it was charged was divine power.'
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if it was to be effective.¹ No plea for forgiveness could be sincere, if there was no renunciation of the sin in the heart; no cry for cleansing could have any meaning, if there was still the purpose to renew the act that brought the stain; no prayer for communion could be genuinely expressed by a sacrifice, if there was no desire to walk in harmony with God’s will. The offerings must bear the spirit of the worshipper to God, before they could mediate to him forgiveness, cleansing, and communion. In Proverbs we read: ‘The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord’.² It can bring him no blessing, but only increase his alienation from God. This is essentially the message of Amos and of other prophets. ‘I hate, I despise your feasts, and I will take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Yea, though ye offer me your burnt offerings, and meal offerings I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fed beasts . . . But let judgement roll down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.’³ It is for lack of the qualities of the spirit that the sacrifices stand condemned, and not because they are wrong in themselves, even though the spirit should be right. The great eighth century prophets looked out on a society in which they saw the will of God being flouted on every side, and the fundamental qualities of God’s character were conspicuously lacking in the people who brought him their splendid sacrifices. None had the slightest desire to change his way, or to approach God in genuine confession of sin and humble desire to be cleansed and renewed in spirit. They came in the hard and proud and impenitent spirit which the Law declared to invalidate sacrifice. But this

¹ In Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, xxix, 1945-1946, pp. 351 ff., I noted the evidence of the Psalter for the understanding of the Law. N. W. Porteous (Interpretation, iii, 1949, pp. 404 f.) draws attention to the same thing. He says: ‘It must never be forgotten that the clue to the meaning of what Israel did in her religious practice is to be found reflected in the Psalter. It is quite unlikely that these ancient Hebrew hymns which have inspired so much that is best in Christian worship should have originally, many of them, been composed to accompany a ritual which did not represent a genuine synthesis of the religious and the ethical. To suppose anything else is to suppose that the Psalms were fundamentally irrelevant in the ritual setting to which they originally belonged. In other words, the evidence of the Psalter must be allowed to qualify the evidence of the prophets.’

² Prov. xxi. 27; xv, 8.

³ Amos v. 21-24.
cannot imply that had the prophets seen men coming to the altar with the genuine desire to submit themselves in spirit to God, they would have loosed against them the same denunciation.¹ The gravamen of their charge was not that men sacrificed, but that they offended God by lives that knew none of His spirit, and that they were inflexibly determined to continue in their way.² Such stand under the condemnation of the Law, as well


'Our parallelism suggests that for the prophets everything depended on the spirit in which an act was performed. Their own symbolic acts were, genetically, the continuance in form of widespread symbolic magic which they themselves certainly condemned. Yet the psychology of symbolic magic was taken up into their faith in Yahweh and sublimated by the performance of similar acts, not to constrain Him, but as constrained by Him. Similarly, we may say that they condemned the opus operatum of sacrifice, so long as it was not lifted up into the spirit of true devotion to Yahweh, and true obedience to His moral requirements. Then the character of sacrifice would be changed, and it might become as acceptable to God as were their own symbolic acts.'

² E. C. B. Maclaurin has recently published a very superficial study on The Origin of the Hebrew Sacrificial System, 1948, designed to prove that sacrifice was not original to Israelite sacrifice and that it was totally rejected by the pre-exilic prophets. The whole is marked by astonishing special pleading that savours of propaganda rather than scholarship. The author frequently refers to passages useful for his purpose. Others are sometimes ignored, and sometimes explained away. Samuel and Elijah do not figure among the pre-exilic prophets because they would not be convenient for his purpose, but quite the reverse. He notes that there is no law of the priesthood in E, and asks 'Could a cult exist in which blood-sacrifice was part of a definite ritual and which nevertheless did not possess any form of priesthood? It seems highly unlikely that this would be so' (p. 11). Clearly the compilers of the J and E documents saw no difficulty here, since they treated the patriarchs as their own priests. Similarly Micah appointed his own son to be his priest (Jg. xvii, 5) until a wandering Levite was made his professional priest (Jg. xvii, 12). There is no suggestion that Elijah was a professional priest. Yet he could rebuild an altar and offer sacrifice (1 Kings xviii 32 f.). Maclaurin asserts that the Passover sacrifice was originally a substitution for a human being, and then finds significance in the fact that E does not record the Passover sacrifice, while J does, and concludes that this proves the secondary character of the blood sacrifice (p. 28). It is hard to follow the reasoning here, and it would be interesting to know (a) whether the sacrifice of human beings is held to have begun after the establishment of the priesthood, or to have been possible without professional priests, and (b) whether Maclaurin supposes that there was a hiatus between the human sacrifice and the sacrifice of Passover lambs, during which only the feast of Unleavened Bread was observed. He allows that at the Exodus the Passover was instituted, but blandly suggests that it is unlikely that it was a blood-sacrifice (pp. 7 f.), disregarding the earlier source J, and drawing cheerful conclusions from silence in E. The inconvenient
as of the prophets. But where the sacrifice was the organ of the spirit, it was believed to be potent to mediate blessing and renewal to men.

So, too, where the sacrifices made on behalf of the community

passage in Isai. i. 11 ff. is treated most unnaturally. Here every form of religious observance, including prayer, is condemned, since men's hands were full of blood. To suppose that the prophet imagined that prayer was in itself and of necessity an offence to God is out of the question for any who treat the prophets as the exponents of spiritual religion. But instead of accepting the plain meaning of the passage that it was because the life was evil in God's eyes that every form of religious observance was meaningless—a meaning which is obvious from the demand of vv. 16 ff.—Mclaurin resorts to the forced exegesis that identifies the blood which was an offence to God and which invalidated prayer with the blood of the sacrificed animals (p. 13). Surely Isaiah had graver evils to protest against than the slaughter of animals; and if his meaning was that the fact that men did not seek judgement and relieve the oppressed, or judge the fatherless and plead for the widow, had nothing to do with the invalidating of their prayers, which was solely due to their animal sacrifices, it remains to be shown why he was so crass as to introduce an extraneous and irrelevant matter at so vital a point. For if Mclaurin's thesis means anything, it means that the Israelite who was full of good works and devotion to the will of God would be hounded from his Maker's presence, in Isaiah's view, if he dared to offer any sacrifice and thus fill his hands with blood. The virtue or vice of his life was quite immaterial to a God whose only vital interest was to protect animals from slaughter. In the interests of this theory Mclaurin renders Hos. vi, 6b ' and the knowledge of God without burnt-offerings ' (p. 29), and then denies to his opponents the right to render the preposition as a comparative. That the preposition in itself, could have either meaning is the fact, and that the comparative rendering is not only possible but more natural is evidenced by the fact that it is not theorists with an axe to grind who have so rendered it, but translators generally, both ancient and modern, whereas Mclaurin's rendering is one that would only occur to a writer with an axe to grind, whose theory was embarrassed by the verse. Similarly any text that stands in his way has to be mauled about by unnatural exegesis. In order to maintain the view that ' the religious aspect of sacrifice had been forgotten by those whom it is convenient, anachronistically, to call Bne Abraham '—presumably for Bne Abraham—' before they crossed the threshold of history ', he argues that the altar does not necessarily imply sacrifice, and so concludes from silence that no animal sacrifices were offered on altars except where they are specified, and suggests that Gen. xv, 9 f. means that the Baal of Canaan—here called Yahweh—was instructing Abraham in a sacrificial rite with which he was quite unacquainted, and which was really Canaanite, and that the Canaanite Baal was here adopting the newcomers because he was dissatisfied with his old worshippers (pp. 3 f.). All of this will convince whom it may. But since this is acknowledged to have been a sacrifice, we might have been informed whether it is recognized to have been possible without a professional priest, or have been offered some evidence that Abraham employed such a priest.
were the organ of the common desire for harmony with God's will, they were believed to be potent. Yet there was nowhere any suggestion that such sacrifices were potent independently of the spirit of the community. In Ex. xix. 5, which is assigned by some scholars to the earliest document of the Pentateuch, an essential element in the ritual was the priestly confession of the sin of the community. That confession was made by the priest as the representative of the community, and in so far as it did not represent the spirit of the community it was meaningless. To treat this element of the ritual as a hollow formality, in which the sincerity of the priest, or the genuineness of its expression of the attitude of the community towards itself  


2 Lev. xvi, 21.
and towards God, is of no moment, is to do less than justice to the Law. Whether in individual sacrifice or in public sacrifice it was the attitude of heart of those for whom the offering was made that alone could validate the ritual. Yet where it was thus validated, it was in either case believed to be charged with power.

It is important here to realize that while sacrifice was thought to have potency, it was potent only when accompanied by genuine penitence and submission. On the other hand, penitence and submission alone were not sufficient for the cases where sacrifice was prescribed. They were primary as the condition of blessing, and it was always recognized in the true stream of Israel’s religion that obedience was better than sacrifice;¹ but it was not supposed that man could save himself from his sin either by his penitence or by his sacrifice. It was divine power that reached down to save him in the moment when he offered himself with his sacrifice. The animal of itself could do nothing for him. But when its sacrifice was the organ of his approach in humble surrender and obedience to God, it became the organ of God’s approach in power to bless him.

Wheeler Robinson has linked this fruitfully with the practice of prophetic symbolism.² Often the prophets performed symbolic acts, such as Jeremiah’s wearing of a wooden yoke,³ or Isaiah’s appearance in Jerusalem unclothed.⁴ These were not mere dramatizations of the word of the prophets, but were acted prophecies, as potent to release power for their own fulfilment as the spoken word of the prophets.⁵ Yet they are to be differentiated from magic, in that they did not represent the desire of the prophet to control events by the exercise of a technique. Often the prophet hated the message with which

¹ 1 Sam. xv, 21. Cf. Eccl. v, 1: ‘Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God; for to draw nigh to hear is better than to give the sacrifice of fools’.
³ Jer. xxvii f.
⁴ Isa. xx.
he was charged. Yet he profoundly felt that he was under the divine control, and his word and act alike expressed God’s will and not his own, so that the power with which they were charged was not human power to control God, but divine power released to fulfill the purpose of God. In the same way, Wheeler Robinson suggests, the sacrifices were symbolic acts, ‘actualized approaches to God’, not mere opera operata in the realm of magic, but expressions of the spirit of the offerer, which initiated a new relation to God. It cannot be denied that many in Israel had a merely magical view of sacrifice, as many of other nations have had, and thought that the correct performance of the ritual was all that mattered. But if they were ‘actualized approaches to God’, they were meaningless without the approach in spirit which they were designed to actualize.

Much is said in the Law of unwitting sins in connexion with the sin offering and the guilt offering, and it would seem that only unwitting sins were capable of being cleansed by sacrifice. Alongside unwitting sins we find mention of sins committed with a high hand, as though these were the only two classes of sins. It is as improbable that unwitting sins means sins committed in ignorance in every case as it is that sins committed with a high hand means sins knowingly committed. For the sin offering and the guilt offering were not valid for sins committed with a high hand. Yet they were valid for false dealing with a neighbour in the matter of a deposit, or of robbery or oppression, or of the wrongful retention of something that was lost. In none of these cases does it seem likely that the sinner would be ignorant of his sin at the time of his committing it. On the other hand, unwitting sin in many cases quite clearly means sins that were accidentally committed, violating some ritual taboo, of which the sinner became conscious only after his act. In this connexion it is of interest to note that the leper who became cleansed of his leprosy had to offer a sin offering and a burnt offering. Here

1 Cf. Inspiration and Revelation in the Old Testament, p. 227: ‘Genetically, they spring from the widespread practice of symbolic magic, but the prophets have transformed them into religion by assimilating them to the will of God’; Journal of Theological Studies, loc. cit., p. 132: ‘Magic constrains the unseen; religion means surrender to it’.

2 Lev. xiv. 1-19.
either his leprosy was itself regarded as a ritual 'sin', or it was believed to be the punishment for some undisclosed sin. It is more probable that the former was the case, and that it was regarded as an unwitting sin because it came upon a man independently of his own volition.

Clearly, however, the distinction between unwitting sins and high-handed sins is something different from sins committed in ignorance and sins knowingly committed, and if conscious sins could ever be atoned for by a sacrifice, then high-handed sins must be defined in some other way. It is probable that by these is meant deliberate sins, perpetrated of set purpose, rather than sins into which a man 'fell' through human weakness, or involuntarily. Paul says: 'For that which I do I know not: for not what I would, that do I practise; but what I hate, that I do . . . For the good that I would I do not: but the evil that I would not, that I practise'. It is probable that this passage gives the clue to the Old Testament distinction, and that it is a distinction between sins which a man commits through ignorance or through weakness, or willy-nilly, and those which he commits because they are the expression of his real nature, arising out of the essential purpose of his heart. For these no sacrifice could atone. Moreover, there are whole classes of sins for which no ritual is provided. These are heinous sins, of too great a magnitude to be dealt with by ritual acts. For murder and adultery the Law provided no means of atonement, and only demanded the execution of the murderer or adulterer. Yet

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1 The sin for which leprosy could be regarded as a punishment would be some very heinous sin, for which no sacrifice could atone. The cure of the leper would be evidence that the sin was forgiven, and therefore not needing to be atoned for by his sacrifice. It is more likely that the sacrifice was for the ritual cleansing of the leper so that he could again take his place in society.

2 It is to be noted that after childbirth a woman was required to offer a sin offering (Lev. xii). There could be nothing unwitting about the bearing of a child, and since the Hebrews valued the fruit of the womb as God's blessing to man, and even believed that God's first command to man was to be fruitful and multiply (Gen. i, 28), it would not have been regarded as a sin in any moral sense. Hence, here again the purpose seems to have been to fit the woman ritually to take her place in society once more. (Cf. preceding note.)

3 Rom. vii, 17, 19.

sometimes we find that there is cleansing even for sins of this
magnitude and it is clear that in the thought of the Old Testament
sacrifice is not the only organ of atonement. To remember this
is of the first importance in any study of sacrifice, or of the treat­
ment of sin, in the Old Testament.

One of the passages frequently associated with the prophetic
passages in which sacrifices are denounced, and held to reveal an
attitude of hostility to sacrifice under any circumstances,¹ is

¹ So C. J. Cadoux, *Expository Times*, lviii, 1946-1947, p. 45. Like many
others Cadoux rejects the last two verses of the Psalm as a patent addition,
because they will not square with his interpretation of these two earlier verses.
Some modern editors have defended their originality, however. So e.g. C. A.
Briggs, *The Book of Psalms*, in the International Critical Commentary, ii, 1909,
p. 10, where they are said to be ‘essential to the completeness of the Strophe’.
G. Widengren (*The Accadian and Hebrew Psalms of Lamentation as Religious
Documents*, 1937, pp. 31 f.) also holds to the unity of the psalm, and maintains
that the reason no sacrifices were desired by God was simply that Jerusalem lay
in ruins. If these last two verses are original, the Psalm could hardly have been
written before the exile. Without them, we have no means of determining its
age. I am inclined to agree with Cadoux that they are an addition, though not
on the ground of disagreement with the earlier verses on the question of sacrifice,
but because they have no relation to the individual penitence which marks the
rest of the psalm. It is usually supposed that they were added to counteract
the previous verses which rejected sacrifices. I think C. Ryder Smith (*The
Bible Doctrine of Salvation*, 1941, p. 85) is more penetrating here. He says:
‘Why did some one, after having read the Psalm, add them, and why did others
accept the addition? Not, surely, just because he and they wanted to push ritual
in somehow, but because they felt that, when the experience so poignantly de­
dcribed in the psalm was theirs, they could go on to use the sacrifices of the Temple
sacramentally. There were men who, having cried out for “a clean heart”
and “a right spirit”, knew that the right use of ritual would help them to find
it.’ S. Daiches claimed that in the Psalms ‘sacrifices’ frequently does not mean
animal sacrifices (cf. ‘The Meaning of “Sacrifices” in the Psalms’, in *Essays
Presented to J. H. Hertz*, 1944, pp. 97 ff.), and maintained that the last two verses
of Psa. li had no reference to animal sacrifices, burnt offerings, whole offerings
and bullocks being merely figures of speech for ‘sacrifices of righteousness’,
which he understood to mean sacrifices which consist in righteous living. This
is forced and unnatural. Moreover, it is commonly recognized to-day that many
of the Psalms accompanied ritual acts. This view of the Psalter is particularly
associated with the name of S. Mowinckel, whose *Psalmenstudien*, 1921-1924,
will remain as one of the most creative of studies on the Psalms, however much
particular views may be criticized. This view of the Psalms is older than the
work of Mowinckel, however. In 1919 A. J. Wensinck wrote: ‘My thesis
is that, for the greater part, the Psalms are spoken rhythmic illustrations of the
acts of worship; just as the musical part of the Catholic Mass is an illustration
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Psa. li, 16 f. (Heb. 18 f.) : ‘For thou delightest not in sacrifice; else would I give it: Thou hast no pleasure in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.’ These verses are taken right out of their context, as the prophetic passages are, and held to prove that the Psalmist believed that sacrifices were futile under all circumstances. It would seem wiser to examine it in relation to its context before such sweeping conclusions are drawn. By its heading this Psalm is associated with David’s adultery with Bathsheba and the scandalous removal of Uriah that amounted to murder. The sins of adultery and murder were on David’s head at that time, therefore. Most modern scholars ascribe the Psalm to a later date. But whatever its date, it can scarcely be denied that it would be appropriate to such a situation, and the psalmist may have composed it with David in mind, to be used by others who were conscious of heinous sins. Certainly it represents the cry of one who was profoundly conscious of some very great sin. In such a situation as David’s there would be nothing whatever inconsistent with the Law in this

and a rhythmization of the ritual acts. In this connexion the description of the service 2 Chron. 29, 27-30 is of importance: ‘And Hezekiah commanded to offer the burnt offering upon the altar. And when the burnt offering began, the song of the Lord began also with the trumpets and with the instrument ordained by David king of Israel. And all the congregation worshipped, and the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded: and all this continued until the burnt offering was finished’ (reprinted in Semietische Studiën uit de nalatenschap van A. J. Wensinck, 1941, p. 57). If such a view is correct, it is improbable that such passages in the Psalms as Psa. li, 16 f. (Heb. 18 f.) are rightly to be understood as the condemnation of all sacrifice. Indeed, I have elsewhere suggested that nothing could be more appropriate than this Psalm to make the offerer of a sin offering realize that the spirit in which he came to the altar was of more importance than his offering, or to call forth from him the spirit of penitence which would make the offering the genuine organ of his approach to God (Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, xxix, 1945-1946, pp. 352 f.). Originally written to express the feelings of a penitent who had sinned more deeply than the ritual law provided for, it could call forth from other sinners who used its ritual a profound sense of need and penitence in the presence of God.

1 Other passages in the Psalms similarly held to be opposed to sacrifice under all circumstances are dealt with by C. Lattey, Journal of Theological Studies, xlii, 1941, pp. 161 f.

2 B. D. Eerdmans (The Hebrew Book of Psalms (Oudtestamentische Studiën, iv), 1947, pp. 274 ff.) defends the ascription of the Psalm to David.
cry. No sacrifice was provided by the Law for murder and adultery, and it is therefore strictly in accordance with the Law to say that in such case sacrifice and offering are not desired by God.\textsuperscript{1} It is gratuitous to assume that the psalmist meant to imply that sacrifice was equally useless under quite other circumstances where the Law did prescribe it. Whether David or another, the psalmist would seem to be one who had committed a sin that stood outside the categories dealt with in the ritual, but who was deeply penitent for his sin, or who wrote in the character of such a sinner.

That there could be pardon for such sins in the thought of the Old Testament is clear from the sequel to Nathan's rebuke of David. The conscience of the king was touched, and in genuine penitence he cried: 'I have sinned against the Lord'.\textsuperscript{2} And Nathan said: 'The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die'.\textsuperscript{3} Here, let it be observed, the cleansing was the response to penitence, and not achieved by the penitence. It was the act of God, as it must ever be, whether associated with sacrifice or not. Moreover, the divine forgiveness did not dispense with the punishment. It is true that here the punishment took the form of the death of the child, but it was regarded as the punishment of David. Similarly, when Ahab humbled himself before the Lord following the rebuke of Elijah after the affair of Naboth, his repentance was accepted by God, though the penalty for his sin had still to be reaped. Here it was deferred to his son's days; but it was not to be avoided.\textsuperscript{4} With our more individualistic outlook we find injustice here, though it would not occur to men of that time, with their stronger sense of the solidarity of the family and the race. Nor is it contrary to experience

\textsuperscript{1} M. Burrows (An Outline of Biblical Theology, 1946, p. 244) says: 'The fact that the Psalms were used in the temple makes it all the more remarkable that in them forgiveness and divine favour are often represented as dependent, not on sacrifice, but on confession and prayer'. It is less remarkable if we remember the Law's insistence on confession, and the areas of sin for which no sacrifice was prescribed. H. Herkenne (Das Buch der Psalmen, in Feldmann and Herkenne's Die Heilige Schrift des Alten Testamentes, 1936, p. 191) noted that the sins of David, with which the heading associates this Psalm, lay beyond the field of prescribed sacrifices.

\textsuperscript{2} 2 Sam. xii, 13.  
\textsuperscript{3} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{4} 1 Kings xxi, 29.
that children often pay the price of their father's sins, and that the effects of such a crime as that of Ahab and Jezebel against Naboth often take time to develop. Here, however, where the thought of the Old Testament is what concerns us, it is important to note two things. The first is the recognition that even the divine forgiveness does not cancel all the effects of sin. While this is elementary, it is often forgotten. A man who has ruined his health by sinful excesses does not find himself restored to health by repentance. Moreover, others whom he has influenced may continue their excesses to his lasting reproach. David sinned and repented. But his son Amnon followed in the way of his father's lust,¹ and Absalom in that of his father's bloodguiltiness,² without repenting. The Bible does not conceal facts in the interest of an unreal theory, and Biblical theology is grounded in experience. The second thing to note is that in the thought of the Old Testament the cleansing of the sin was of more importance than the escaping of its consequences.³ The only penitence it valued was a genuine horror of the sin, and not a selfish desire to avoid the punishment.

While, therefore, we cannot think of salvation from sin in the thought of the Old Testament without thinking of sacrifice, we seriously err if we think only of sacrifice. There are many passages which tell of men's response in submission to the chastening discipline of God, or to His message of rebuke, where there is reference to restored relations with God without any mention of sacrifice. Penitence and submission on man's part are the invariable conditions of his salvation; but the organ of salvation, whether sacrifice is offered or not, is conceived to be the power of God.

Nevertheless, it must be recognised that there was peril in the Law's emphasis on unwitting sin and provision of sacrifices for its cleansing, since it is undeniable that unwitting sin could mean, and often did mean, sins committed in ignorance or

¹ 2 Sam. xiii, 11 ff. ² Ibid., 26 ff. ³ I am not able, therefore, to agree with N. H. Snaith, when he renders Isa. liii, 11b: 'For it was their iniquities (i.e. punishments) he was bearing' (The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament, 1944, p. 92). It seems unnecessary to force the thought of this chapter below so much else in the Old Testament by imposing upon it the equation of punishment and iniquity.
involuntarily, and especially ritual rather than moral offences. The purpose of those who framed the Law was to stress the exceeding sinfulness of sin, but manifestly there could not be the same quality in the repentance when one was unconscious of the sin at the time it was committed, or not responsible for it, and such sacrifices tended to be regarded as mediating automatic cleansing. Hence the evils against which the prophets had protested were not wholly guarded against, and while at its best Judaism was spiritually sensitive, at its worst it became a mere externalism. But just as the prophets had declared to those of their contemporaries who supposed that the potency of the sacrifice lay in the due performance of the external ritual alone, and who knew no compunction for sins which exceeded any that sacrifice was prescribed for, that they were offering vain and meaningless sacrifices, which were an offence to God, and which but added to their sin, so there were voices in Judaism which renewed the same message and rebuked those who supposed that a formal act unrelated to the spirit could suffice to win God's favour. In the second century B.C. Ben Sira wrote: 'The sacrifice of an unrighteous man is a mockery,' and the oblations of the wicked are not acceptable.' The Most High hath no pleasure in the offerings of the godless; nor is pacified for sins by the multitude of sacrifices.' In the Mishnah we read: 'If a man say, I will sin and repent, I will sin again and repent, he will be given no chance to repent. If he say, I will sin and the Day of Atonement will clear me, the Day of Atonement will effect no

1 This rendering is preferable to that of R.V.: 'He that sacrificeth of a thing wrongfully gotten, his offering is made in mockery'. G. H. Box and W. O. E. Oesterley, in Charles's Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament, i, 1913, p. 435, render: 'The sacrifice of the unrighteous man is a mocking offering'. This is in part supported by the Syriac, which has 'The sacrifices of the unrighteous are unrighteous'. It agrees closely with the rendering of V. Ryssel (in Kautzsch's Die Apokryphen und Pseudepigraphen des Alten Testaments, i, 1900, reprinted 1921, p. 403): 'Das Opfer des Ungerechten ist eine Gabe, die (Gottes) spottet'.

2 This rendering follows the Syriac. Box and Oesterley have: 'And unacceptable are the oblations of the godless'. Cf. Ryssel's 'wie denn auch die Spottereien der Gottlosen ihm nicht zum Wohlgemessen gereichen'. R.V. following the Greek, has: 'And the mockeries of wicked men are not well-pleasing'.

3 Ecclus, xxxiv. 18 f. (xxxvi. 21-23).
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atonement.' The writer of those words interpreted high-handed sin as has been done above. In the Tosephta we find: 'Sin offering and guilt offering and death and the Day of Atonement all put together do not effect atonement without repentance'. Yet later, in the Talmud we read: 'Be not like fools who sin and bring an offering without repenting'.

These sayings were written by men who studied the Law and loved it, and who believed they were true to its spirit and principles in what they wrote; yet they were equally true to the principles of the great prophets. For there was no difference between them in these fundamental questions. Where sacrifice was prescribed and was offered, it must be the organ of the spirit of the offerer before it could be the organ of the power of God unto him or on his behalf. Where sacrifice was not prescribed because the sin was so much more heinous, then penitence and humble submission were even more called for ere the divine power could operate in the heart of the sinner.

Before we leave the subject of sacrifice in the Old Testament, however, we must turn to the figure of the Suffering Servant in Deutero-Isaiah. It is well known that there are four passages here which are commonly linked together, Isa. xlii, 1-4, xlix, 1-6, l, 4-9, and lii, 13-liii, 12. If we bring together the thought of these four passages we see that it was the mission of the Servant to set justice in the earth, and to give his law to men. He is thus thought of as instrumental in bringing about the state of universal worship of the God of Israel and obedience to His will. Hence his work is connected with the bringing in of the Golden Age that was elsewhere associated with the Davidic Messiah. There is no evidence that the Suffering Servant was equated with the Messiah in pre-Christian days, and definite evidence

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2 Tosephta Yoma v. 9 (ed. Zuckermandel, 1937, p. 190, line 23).
3 T. B. Berachoth 23a. Cf. L. Goldschmidt, Der babylonische Talmud mit Einschluss der vollständigen Mishnah, i, 1892, p. 82.
4 Some recent writers contest this statement. Cf. J. Jeremias, in Deutsche Theologie, ii, 1929, pp. 106 ff.; N. Johansson, Parakletoi, 1940, pp. 113 ff.; W. D. Davies, Paul and Rabbinic Judaism, 1948, pp. 274 ff.; J. Jocz, The Jewish People and Jesus Christ, 1949, p. 162. No solid evidence coming from a pre-Christian date can be produced in support of their position, and the evidence of
in the New Testament that the two figures were not equated, since the disciples were always bewildered when Jesus spoke in terms of suffering. Nevertheless, they are both related to the Golden Age of universal obedience to God's will, and have their roots in common ideas, even though they are different conceptions as to how their hopes should be realized. The second song shows that the Servant has a mission to Israel as well as to the nations, while the third recognizes that his mission will involve him in grievous suffering, and the fourth declares that his suffering will be the organ of his mission, and not merely incidental to it. Men will say: 'He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed'.

There is therefore potency in his sufferings, potency to effect something in, or on behalf of, others, and not himself. He himself is declared to be without sin, indeed: 'although he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth'. His death was not the consequence of his own sin; it was potent on behalf of others. He is likened to a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and it is clear that his death is thought of in terms of sacrifice. Just as the sacrificed animal dies not for its own sins, but to be the bearer of man's spirit to God and of God's blessing and cleansing to man, so the Servant is conceived. Moreover, the term 'āšām, which is the technical name for a guilt offering, is used of him. The Servant is therefore said to be a sacrifice the New Testament is firmly against it. For the Gospels show that whenever our Lord spoke of His mission in terms of suffering, the disciples were completely bewildered and failed to understand what He meant. Hence most scholars support the view which I have expressed in the text above. So Strack-Billerbeck, Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch, ii, 1924, p. 274; G. F. Moore, Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era, i, 1927, p. 551; M. J. Lagrange, Le Judaïsme avant Jésus-Christ, 1931, p. 385; P. Volz, Eschatologie der jüdischen Gemeinde im neutestamentlichen Zeitalter, 1934, p. 228; J. Héring, Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie religieuses, xviii, 1938, pp. 419 ff.; J. J. Brière-Narbonne, Le Messie souffrant dans la littérature rabbinique, 1940, p. 133; H. Wheeler Robinson, Redemption and Revelation, 1942, pp. 199, 251 f.; M. Burrows, An Outline of Biblical Theology, 1946, p. 86.

1 Isa. liii, 5. 2 Ibid., 9.

3 Ibid., 10. The text of this verse is almost certainly corrupt. R.V. has: 'When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days'. All editors find difficulties here, and many suggested
that is effective for those whose hearts are so moved by his sufferings that they humbly confess their own sin, and recognize that his death may be at once the organ of their approach in humble submission to God and of God's approach in cleansing power unto them. They therefore bring to the offering the spirit which we have seen to be essential to the validation of sacrifice, and acknowledge that the death he died should rightly have been theirs, ere they find through his death their redemption from sin. 'Surely he has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows.'

They then become aware that he has borne their iniquities and that through him they are justified. The term to justify is commonly a forensic term, meaning to declare in the right. Here, however, it cannot have that meaning. For it could not be supposed that in virtue of the death of the Servant, God would give a verdict in favour of others, though He knew full well that they were not in the right. This would be to declare God an Unjust Judge, in contradiction to the uniform teaching of the Bible, and it is improbable that that was the thought of the writer. God's judgements are invariably declared to be in accord with strict justice, and no gift can corrupt Him to depart from righteousness. If men who are conscious of their sin are declared righteous, it is because they have become righteous. They have become separated from their sins and have been cleansed in their inner nature. When Isaiah received his call he was conscious of his sin until the live coal from the altar touched his lips, when the voice said: 'Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged'.

Changes have been put forward. One of the simplest is that of R. Levy, who differently divides the first two words (reading "meth sûm for 'im tāsim") and secures the sense: 'Truly he gave himself an offering for sin; He shall see his offspring, he shall prolong his days'. Cf. Deutero-Isaiah, 1925, pp. 266 f.

1 Isa. liii, 5. 2 Ibid., 11.

3 N. H. Snaith (The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament, 1944, p. 92) proposes to translate Isa. liii, 11: 'The righteous one, my servant, will make many prosperous'. This is highly improbable, and if, as is frequently supposed, Dan. xii. 2 is a reference to this verse, it could not have been understood by the writer of that passage as Snaith understands it. Moreover, this rendering takes too little account of the context in Isa. liii, where the Servant is referred to as a guilt offering.

4 Isa. vi, 7.
became a new creature. So here, in relation to the Servant, when men are declared righteous, it is because through the sin offering of his death they become righteous. There is potency in the sacrifice to cleanse them, when they bring to the sacrifice the spirit that validates it for them by making it the organ of their approach to God.

Here, then, is something of outstanding importance in the Old Testament teaching on sacrifice. It is the idea of a sacrifice that transcends animal sacrifice, in which instead of an animal without physical blemish, one who is without moral blemish is put to death. Moreover the victim, while he is cruelly maltreated and slain by others, yields himself willingly unto them. 'I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting.' Further, this sacrifice is conceived of as of far wider effectiveness than any of the sacrifices of the ritual. The ordinary sin offering or guilt offering could be effective for the individual offerer, and the sacrifice of the Day of Atonement for the whole Jewish community, when individual or people turned to God in the right spirit. But if the earlier Servant Songs declare that the Servant has a mission to all the world and that its execution will involve suffering, the fourth song both makes it clear that the suffering is the organ of the mission, and not merely incidental to it, and also shows that it is the organ of service to the Gentiles.

It has been observed already that though the concept of the Davidic Messiah and the Suffering Servant might have common roots, they were different conceptions; also that they are related in that both have reference to the Golden Age. Both bring world-wide and beneficent consequences to men, and lead to the universal worship of God. In the pictures of the Davidic Messiah we see a state of society that far transcended the contemporary society known to the prophets, and here we see a sacrifice that far transcends in quality and power any of the sacrifices of the Temple.

1 This is constantly insisted on in the Law as a necessity in sacrificial victims.
2 Isa. 1, 6.
3 Cf. Isa. ii, 3 f.; Mic. iv, 2-4; Isa. ix, 6 f. (Heb. 5 f.), xi, 4-9, and other similar passages.
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It lies beyond my immediate purpose to identify the figure of the Servant in the prophet's thought, since my concern is with the meaning of sacrifice, rather than with the definition of the victim. Nevertheless, it is necessary to say something on this point, and not to leave this profoundest of Old Testament words on sacrifice in the air. Jewish scholars have commonly held the Servant to be Israel, and in modern times that was the view of many nineteenth century scholars, and of not a few in the twentieth century. ¹ Others, especially during the last half century, have claimed that the reference is to some unknown individual, either contemporary with the prophet or belonging to an earlier generation, ² and several have proposed to identify the Servant with the prophet himself. ³ There is much to suggest a connexion


of the Servant with Israel, though no simple identification will do here. There is also much to suggest an individual, though again all the names suggested seem inadequate. It is hard to see how any writer in the exilic period could suppose that Moses, or Jeremiah, or Jehoiachin, or the prophet himself, could satisfy the conditions of this conception and serve as a sacrificial victim of such universal potency. Hence some have continued to advocate the traditional messianic interpretation. Yet this is not without difficulties, and most of those who hold this view find themselves forced to delete the word Israel in Isa. xlix. 3, on very inadequate grounds. It seems wiser, therefore, to adopt no simple individual or collective view. It is probable that the Servant is in part the personification of the mission of kirchliche Zeitschrift, xli, 1930, pp. 73 ff., 145 ff., and Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, N.F. xiv, 1937, pp. 177 ff.; P. Volz, Jesaja II, in Sellin's Kommentar zum Alten Testament, 1932, pp. 149 ff., and Prophetengestalten des Alten Testamentes, 1938, pp. 316 ff.; K. Elliger, Deuterojesaja in seinem Verhältnis zu Trito-jesaja, 1933, pp. 75 ff., 267 ff. For Mowinckel's modifications of his own view, cf. Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, N.F. viii, 1931, pp. 245 ff., and De seren profeter, in Michelet-Mowinckel-Messel, Det Gamle Testamente, iii, 1944, pp. 192 ff.


3 A single unimportant MS omits the word. For a study of the value of the MS. cf. J. A. Bewer, in Studies in Memory of George A. Kohut, 1935, pp. 86 ff. It is sometimes said that metrical reasons demand the excision, but actually the verse is metrically more regular with it than without it. Cf. F. Pràtorius, Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, xxxvi, 1916, pp. 9 f.
Israel, and in part the delineation of one who should embody its mission in himself, and fulfil the mission with peculiar fullness, so that he should play a notable part in the achievement of the Golden Age.\(^1\) Something of the fluidity of what has become known as 'corporate personality' is found here,\(^2\) so that the Servant is both the community and an individual who represents it. While the mission will be peculiarly fulfilled in one, it is nevertheless the mission to which all are called, and all should enter in some measure into it. In either case, it seems to me certain that the prophet was looking into the future for the Servant. The Israel of his day did not fulfil his vision, and certainly no individual of that or an earlier day did. He could therefore only think of a future Israel that should fulfil this mission to the world through suffering, and of a future individual Israelite who should in himself and in his own sufferings carry that mission to a unique, and uniquely effective, point.\(^3\)

Here, then, we must end our brief examination of the meaning of sacrifice in the thought of the Old Testament. We have not been able to study all the forms of sacrifice, or all the details of its varied ritual. Nor has our primary study been of such things as the originally apotropaic meaning of the Passover sacrifice, or of the terms of the message which later sacrifices were thought to present to God—a message of thankfulness, of plea, or of propitiation. Rather have we gone below that to the underlying thought of all sacrifice as the organ of the offerer's presentation of himself to God, the bearer of his spirit to the exalted Being he

\(^{1}\) This is substantially the view of C. R. North, *The Suffering Servant in Deutero-Isaiah*, 1948, though with particular emphasis on the individual messianic element. His book provides an unrivalled review of the history of interpretation of the Servant.


approached, and therefore meaningless unless he brought with it the appropriate spirit. It is not as an external act that it had meaning, but as an external act charged with his spirit. Yet neither can sacrifice be understood merely as man's approach to God. It is also God's approach to him, charged with power. It thus carries a two-way traffic, and God's readiness to release power for the blessing of man through this avenue only waited for the opening of the two-way traffic by man's approach to Him in humility and submission. Yet all the animal sacrifices failed to meet man's need, since the sins that most needed cleansing were beyond the range of their power. A sacrifice greater than any the Law provided, and more far-ranging in its power, was therefore envisaged in the Old Testament, and its deepest word on sacrifice speaks of one never offered on the altar of the Temple or provided in the ritual of the Pentateuch, but one to which it looked forward beyond the Old Testament itself.