

THE PROPHETS AND SACRIFICE

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MODERN OPINIONS

THE attitude of the prophets of the Old Testament towards sacrificial religion has been the subject of much discussion from the days of the Reformation to our own. Leaning largely on the repeated prophetic condemnations of external liturgy, and especially of sacrifice, Protestantism has consistently held that in the perfect religion such cult acts have no place. With the older, as with the present-day orthodox Protestants, the prophetic words were God's revealed will in this matter; with the modern critics, the prophets, as great religious thinkers, point the way to pure religion. In both schools the supposition, generally stated, is that the prophets would have nothing to do with sacrificial worship. It is not out of place, therefore, to examine some of the more recent studies on this matter.

Perhaps the most vigorous recent proponent of the traditional Protestant stand is Paul Volz. In a work¹ that otherwise catches the true spirit of the prophets in a remarkable way, he makes constant sharp attacks on sacrificial religion. Volz holds that all the prophets, including Moses, were bitter adversaries of all external cult, and notably of sacrifice and the priesthood. He asserts that even Moses' religion was without animal sacrifice according to Jer. 7:22 and Amos 5:25.² He tells us that the prophets led the attack on cult religion not for Israel alone but for all mankind, because "something is always intruding itself between God and man; priest, altar, amulet, *Werkerei*."³ The prophetic religion revealed the antigod nature of these *Zwischendinge*. Priest-religion, sacrifice-religion, cult-religion are dead (*starr*); the word is living, active, powerful. From the prophetic religion of the word came the religion of the Word of God.

¹ Paul Volz, *Profetengestalten des Alten Testaments* (Stuttgart: Calwer Vereinsbuchhandlung, 1938).

² See the criticism of this contention of Volz in the review of his book by H. H. Rowley, *The Journal of Theological Studies*, XL (1939), 396-98.

³ Volz, *op. cit.*, pp. 16-19.

Volz has no objection, we may note, to the prophets' themselves being *Zwischendinge*. He praises them as "*Fürsprecher* . . . who placed themselves as mediators between God and people."⁴ So, for Volz, the prophets from Moses on were Protestants.⁵ Moses saw that priest-religion curbed the sovereignty of God, whereas he experienced God only in solitude. That is why Moses insisted only on moral living. To prove his stand Volz gives an excellent picture of the corrupt priest-religions of antiquity.⁶ And Scripture, through the prophets, rightly condemned these. Again, in passing, we may remark that Scripture also condemns pagan "prophetic" practices.⁷ These few remarks are but samples of a thesis that runs through the whole of Volz's book.

Now Volz is a conservative critic, close to traditional orthodox Protestantism. But the common trend even of the more radical critics has been along the same lines. Ernst Sellin, who is a fair representative of this school, fits the development of the sacrificial idea in Israel neatly into the background of the critical reconstruction of Israelite history. Of Moses, Sellin says: "In the solemn hour of the founding of his religion he said not a word about sacrifice or other ritual actions; all emphasis must consequently rest on the ethical, on the relationship between fellow countrymen. This is in actual fact something completely unique in the religious history of the ancient Orient."⁸

Sellin, however, would not go all the way with Volz. Sacrifice had a place, though very secondary, in the religion of Moses.⁹ ". . . sacrifice was tolerated as an ancient festival usage but otherwise it was judged as Samuel judged: 'Obedience is better than sacrifice.'"¹⁰ So, though Moses did away with many cult practices, sacrifice, because it was common to all ancient religions, was allowed to stand with its significance changed.¹¹ Sellin is moved by the description of sacrifice in Exodus 24:5 and 20:24, when he admits that there was sacrifice in the Mosaic religion. But the reason why he concludes that Moses

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 32-33.

⁵ For Moses, cf. *op. cit.*, p. 64.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

⁷ Examples are Deut. 18:10-22, and Is. 8:19-20.

⁸ Ernst Sellin, *Israelitisch-jüdische Religionsgeschichte* (Leipzig: Quelle und Meyer, 1933), p. 22; cf. also p. 24.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

¹⁰ The text here cited is I Sam. 15:22.

¹¹ Sellin, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

was generally adverse to sacrifice is drawn from the prophetic tradition as instanced in the statements found in Amos 5:25 ff.; Jer. 7:22; Os. 6:6; 8:12 f.; Mich. 6:6-8; etc.—texts which either condemn sacrifice or seem to imply that during the Exodus Israel offered no sacrifice.¹²

According to Sellin, the pure Mosaic religion, with its morally holy God, became in time penetrated with Canaanism, and God became a tricky, arbitrary being to be satisfied with ceremonial offerings.¹³ The remembrance of the religion of the wilderness, however, showed itself on occasion; among other places, Sellin instances the song of Deborah (Judg. 5). No wonder, then, that the prophets who witnessed this corruption of Yahweh's religion into the old Baal-cult totally rejected it.¹⁴ Thus, even according to Sellin, it is not merely the idea of sacrifice that is condemned. The religious and social circumstances have much to do with the prophetic attitude.

In the monarchical period, according to Sellin, Samuel and Elias were opposed to sacrificial feasts, and Nathan opposed the building of the Temple.¹⁵ In the religion of this period Sellin sees three tendencies: the older (premonarchic) tendency towards a mixture of Mosaic and Canaanitic practices, the priest-religion, which was Yahwistic but eclectic and cultic, and the prophetic religion, which was pure Mosaic, minimizing cult.

The "Deuteronomic" reform of 621 B.C. was a bridge between cult-religion and law-religion. For before the centralization of cult, every killing of an animal had about it something sacrificial and every feast was a thanksgiving feast. Now only the priest could perform the sacrifice. Against even this purer form of cult the prophets fought until the exile. Out of the exile emerged the highly organized hierarchical cult with its clearly specified and highly detailed feasts and sacrifices. There was emphasis, it is true, on obedience to God; but the means used led to empty practices again. Sellin holds further that the fundamental idea of this whole sacrificial religion is the belief that God cannot forgive sin without compensation (*Entgelt*), or "covering"

¹² The texts in question will be discussed later.

¹³ Sellin, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 55-56.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 56; though Sellin indicates that they were speaking against too much emphasis on external cult, or even too much Canaanitish influence. We must note that Nathan's words about the temple are hardly condemnatory.

(*Deckung*), since such forgiveness would be against His holiness.¹⁶ He accepts a *kippor* (compensation or "covering") in place of punishment.¹⁷

Again Sellin, in this question of sin and atonement, sums up his opinion on the prophetic attitude towards sacrifice:

The prophets were opposed to sacrifices of atonement, and especially bloody sacrifices, as they were against all external penitential ceremonies. God of himself alone forgives sin. This forgiveness is a free gift of God's grace; forgiveness cannot be forced by human action or priestly mediation. According to the priestly law God *is reconciled*; according to the prophets God *reconciles*.¹⁸

And basic for the prophetic teaching is the idea that everything belongs to God; hence He has no need of gifts.¹⁹

Another modern scholar, A. Lods, moves in the general trend of the critical school. Lods holds that the prophets sapped the very foundation of ritual institutions, "the mystical basis of primitive society";²⁰ for "the dominant motive of the real leaders of the prophetic movement, Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, Jeremiah, is much profounder [than condemnation of merely Canaanitish practices]: they challenge the efficacy of the rites, in particular the rite of sacrifice, which all ancient religions held to be infallible."²¹ After asserting that for the prophets the sacrificial rites were "in the sight of God . . . meaningless gestures and exercise no influences on Him," and were useless for men,²² Lods puts down a qualification:²³

This does not necessarily imply that the great prophets demanded the abolition of sacrifices and the creation of a new and purely spiritual worship. They understood quite well—no doubt because they would share it themselves, like any other

¹⁶ In his *Theologie des Alten Testaments* (2d ed.; Leipzig: Quelle und Meyer, 1936), p. 110.

¹⁷ Whether the underlying idea of the Hebrew *kippor* was the taking away, or only the mere covering, of sin, need not detain us here. At least it meant regaining God's favor.

¹⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 111; cf. p. 18.

¹⁹ But note that even in the "priestly code" it was supposed that sacrifice was symbolic of submission to Yahweh.

²⁰ Cf. A. Lods, *The Prophets and the Rise of Judaism*, trans. S. H. Hooke (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1937), pp. 67-69, 84, 89, 94-95, 291, 349-50. Lods, however, admits that the prophets were primarily opposing the "Canaanization" of the early Israelite religion (pp. 66-67).

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 68; Cf. Osee 6:6; Jer. 11:15 (LXX).

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 68-69.

devout-minded man in ancient times—the appalling distress the exiles would feel if these venerated rites were forcibly suspended: ‘What will you do in the day of solemn assembly and the day of the feast of the Lord?’²⁴

But Lods calls Amos the boldest of the prophets, because he did not shrink from the conclusion that perfect religion should have no sacrifice. After quoting Amos 5:21–25, he concludes: “For Amos the demands of Jahweh are of an exclusively moral and spiritual order.”²⁵

Such opinions as the above are widely reflected in the English-speaking world. Thus Oesterley and Robinson, in their book, *Hebrew Religion: Its Origin and Development*, assert that to the God of Israel “sacrifice was always a weariness, and, when substituted for morality, an abomination.”²⁶

Among the more recent statements of this opinion in our country is that of J. P. Hyatt in the *Journal of Bible and Religion*. Hyatt says, “It seems to me beyond doubt that they [the prophets] were absolutely opposed to elaborate ritualism and sacrifice, and their religion excluded the worship of Yahweh in such a manner.”²⁷ He also asserts that the prophetic tradition seemed to be of the belief that in the nomadic period of Israel’s history there was “pure Yahwism” without sacrifice.²⁸

Leroy Waterman makes much of this same idea in his book, *Religion Faces the World Crisis*, where we find such statements as the following: The people of Amos’ day “believed that God was with them and that they had his favor, and that they knew how, through the technique of the sacrificial system, both to win and to keep his goodwill.” Amos opposed this mentality. “When the people claimed the authority of antiquity for their sacrifices, Amos declared that in the period

²⁴ Osee 9:5.

²⁵ Lods, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

²⁶ W. O. E. Oesterley and Theodore H. Robinson, *Hebrew Religion, Its Origin and Development* (London: Society for Promotion of Christian Knowledge, 1930), pp. 21–22, referring to Is. 1:11–15. On pp. 299–300, however, speaking of Amos 5:25–26, they deny that there was any movement for the entire abolition of sacrifice before the exile.

²⁷ “The Ras Shamra Discoveries . . .,” *The Journal of Bible and Religion*, X (1942), 67–75; the part quoted is on p. 71. Cf. also Hyatt’s remarks in his article, “Jeremiah and Deuteronomy,” *The Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, I (1942), 162; and again in his article, “Torah in the Book of Jeremiah,” *The Journal of Biblical Literature*, LX (1941), 382–87.

²⁸ In his article “The Ras Shamra Discoveries,” *cit. supra*, where he relies on Amos 5:25 and Jer. 7:12 f.

of their desert wandering, they were idolaters."²⁹ After asserting that the official religion of Amos' time considered a man excused from ethical obligations, as long as he performed the age-old sacrifices, and that Amos had, perforce, to condemn such a belief because of its baneful social and ethical consequences, Waterman asks whether the prophet wanted sacrifice at all. He answers: "The assumption that Amos had no idea of raising that question belies the natural force of all his words on the subject, as well as the witness of later prophetic writers."³⁰ For Osee, too, "the whole sacrificial system was nothing but a system of moral corruption, surely destroying the nation to its core. Therefore, Hosea is quite as outspoken against the ritualistic religion as was Amos"³¹

These authors are but representative of a widespread school of thought. Still, some recent writers have pointed out that the line of cleavage between the priestly cult (ritualistic and sacrificial religion) and the prophetic ("ethical" religion) is not so complete as such authors would make it. Sellin himself is ready to admit the efficacy of external penitential prayer in the mind of the prophets, provided the heart was converted.³² And as we have seen, Lods, in spite of his strong statements, admits that the prophets were probably not calling for the absolute abolition of sacrifice. E. König, however, seems to represent a method of thinking that is more *nuancé* than that of any of the above writers. He says of the prophets: "Another principal point of their work was that they had to emphasize religiousness (*Religiosität*) and morality, as against the cult, which was becoming formalistic."³³ According to König, the prophets were against the idea of *opus operatum* in the sacrifices of their times. Moreover, Levitical sacrifice, generally speaking, did not gain forgiveness for great sins.³⁴ Death and other severe punishments were laid down for

²⁹ Leroy Waterman, *Religion Faces the World Crisis* (Ann Arbor: George Wahr, 1943), pp. 66-68.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

³² *Theologie d. Alt. Test.*, p. 12; and cf. *supra* Sellin's remarks on the anti-Canaanite nature of the prophets' words.

³³ Eduard König, *Theologie des Alten Testaments* (4th ed; Stuttgart: Chr. Belser Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1923), p. 100. H. H. Rowley, in a discussion of the Eucharist with Fr. C. Lattey entitled "Sacrament or Sacrifice," in *The Hibbert Journal*, XL (1942), 181-85, makes a similar statement on p. 182.

³⁴ König, *op. cit.*, pp. 294 f.

these. Hence the prophetic threats of dire punishments coupled with severe denunciations against those who held a false belief in the exaggerated efficacy of sacrifice. And indeed, König holds that some prophetic statements seem to look to a time when animal sacrifices will have no value at all.³⁵ But König holds that the prophets would retain in their proper place altar, external and public prayer, sacrifice, blessing.³⁶

Muriel Curtis is to a great extent of the same opinion as König. It is her contention that "some students of the Old Testament have overemphasized the differences between the prophets and the priests at the expense of the appreciation of their fundamental agreements. The prophets have blame for only unworthy priests and only for a ceremonial system that has lost its touch with spiritual and ethical realities, not for ritual as such."³⁷

Three recent writers, two non-Catholics and one Catholic, have provided us with very solid discussions which are of great objective value because they get away from the all too common attitude of compiling isolated "proof-texts" against sacrifice. Walther Eichrodt, in his book on the theology of the Old Testament,³⁸ does us a great service by going more deeply into the central ideas of the Old Testament prophets, and proceeding thence to explain their remarks on sacrifice against the background of the times. In his discussion of the prophetic teaching, he insists upon the deep sense of God's reality which possessed the prophets.³⁹ They realized His awe-full majesty, His complete personal distinctness and superiority to all creatures, His all-inclusive greatness. However, Eichrodt points out that this concept of God and His attributes was not entirely new in Israel.⁴⁰

He maintains that it is too narrow a concept of the prophetic ideals that leads writers to make the prophets insist so strongly on "ethical religion" that they place morality and sacrifice in an "either—or"

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 296, n. 1.

³⁶ This is asserted on p. 82, and implied in his remark on the patriarchal religion on p. 85.

³⁷ In an article, "The Relevance of the Old Testament," *The Journal of Bible and Religion*, XI (1943), 81-87. The part quoted is on page 86.

³⁸ *Theologie des Alten Testaments* (Leipzig: Verlag der J. E. Hinrich's Buchhandlung, 1933), Teil I.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 182-209.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 185, n. 2, and p. 191.

relationship.⁴¹ What they were insisting upon was Yahweh's complete mastery over all men, and man's obligation to complete and universal obedience to Yahweh's will. There was a personal relationship of obligation between the individual and Yahweh. Yahweh had made known, and was still making known, His will to men. Man was to carry out that will in his whole life. Hence the prophets were not so anxious to preach explicitly what was good *in se*, nor even the external fulfillment of the law in its particulars; but they were anxious that man should realize that he could never satisfy Yahweh except by complete service in all his relationships whether with God or fellow man. Hence the prophets condemned the attitude that "occupied itself less earnestly with the moral demands of Yahweh, than with his will in other matters. They thought to enjoy his protecting presence, indeed even to be able to intoxicate themselves by communion with him by means of cult, without caring about the fundamental principle of God's domination in practical life."⁴² And again: "When man disregards honor for God in his dealings between man and man, and seeks him only in cult, then he makes god an impersonal, magical source of power . . ."⁴³

That the prophets spoke so strongly against cult was due to the fact that cult-religion had taken the place of the true Yahweh religion—and this not only through the infiltration of Canaanite ideas and practices, but also through a self-centered observance of practices of the Yahwistic religion. The people no longer trembled before Yahweh's majesty, nor did they act with inner submission to His will. They were satisfied with mere formalism in their worship.⁴⁴ Hence the prophets, "in order to close the way to any escape [from their teaching], had to resort to a sharp 'either—or.'" Not, however, in the sense that the prophets were teaching a cultless religion. "Only a complete disregard of the external and internal situation in which they spoke can find anything of this sort." They had no set plans or programs except their actual demand of complete obedience to whatever Yahweh desired.⁴⁵ For them, cult was only useful as a sign of reverence and desire of self-surrender; its acceptance and blessing [sanctification] came not from its own value but from God's gracious con-

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 193.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 194.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 191.

⁴⁵ *Loc. cit.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 193.

descension.⁴⁶ Eichrodt holds, however, that the prophetic attitude could lead to ultimate rejection of animal sacrifices.⁴⁷

Eichrodt finds the explanation of the strong statements of the prophets against sacrifice in the fact that the prophets were trying, by exaggerated antithesis, to present their true and deep concept of Yahweh's relationship to men who looked upon Yahweh as a god easily satisfied with merely external formalities. H. Wheeler Robinson, on the other hand, in an article in *The Journal of Theological Studies*,⁴⁸ shows by a keen study that the prophets could not have intended to condemn external ritual or sacrifice. Wheeler Robinson's basic fact is that the mentality of the Hebrews consistently expressed itself in religion by symbolic actions. This is clearly the case in sacrificial actions. What is frequently overlooked, and what is emphasized in this article, is that we find the prophets unhesitatingly sharing this mentality. Among other instances of this mentality, Wheeler Robinson points to Isaias' walking about Jerusalem half-clad, to indicate coming doom; Jeremias' breaking the earthenware flask, and bearing the yoke to announce the coming of Babylonian domination. A surprisingly long list of such actions could be drawn up. Wheeler Robinson says that these acts were considered efficacious in the sense that the prophetic oracle "Thus saith Yahweh" was considered efficacious. "Word and act find their unity in the purpose of the human agent; their efficacy will depend on their relation to the divine purpose."⁴⁹ These acts were not considered in any way as constraining God: they were performed at His command in order to achieve His own purpose.⁵⁰ He then proceeds to show that there is very little difference in concept between prophetic symbolism and sacrificial symbolism. Both are "sacramental" in a broad sense; both are part of the representative or dramatic realism that ran through all the Hebrew religion. The spoken interpretative word was necessary in both. Both were believed to be performed in keeping with the will of God. And it is significant for Wheeler Robinson that the age of Judaism which treasured, and believed it was obeying, the prophetic religion as well as the Law, was insistent on retaining the sacrificial

⁴⁶ *Loc. cit.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 195.

⁴⁸ H. Wheeler Robinson, "Hebrew Sacrifice and Prophetic Symbolism," *The Journal of Theological Studies*, XLIII (1942), 129-39.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 132-33.

religion. When, therefore, the prophets condemned sacrifice, it was because it was divorced from social righteousness. But Wheeler Robinson explains:

From this standpoint they unhesitatingly condemned the religiosity of their times. But statements made in religious controversy are always likely to be coloured by what they oppose as well as what they uphold and assert. 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. It would be difficult to conceive the maintainance of Israelite worship at all, which the prophets certainly contemplated and desired, without any sort of sacrifice.⁵¹

His conclusion, after quoting Buchanan Gray⁵² in support of his contention that the prophets did not condemn all sacrifice, is that the parallelism between prophetic and sacrificial symbolism “suggests that for the prophets everything depended on the spirit in which the act was performed . . . they condemned the *opus operatum* of sacrifice, as long as it was not lifted up into the spirit of true devotion to Yahweh, and true obedience to His moral requirements” But, if the character of their sacrifice was changed, “it might become as acceptable to God as their own symbolic acts.”⁵³

While Eichrodt brings us to an understanding of the prophetic condemnations of sacrifice through the study of the positive and fundamental doctrine of the prophets in the background of the religious conditions of their times, and Wheeler Robinson throws further light upon the question by a study of the prophetic attitude towards symbolism in religious actions in the background of the ancient Hebrew mentality, Father C. Lattey, S. J., approaches the question from the standpoint of Hebrew idiom. In an article in *The Journal of Theological Studies*,⁵⁴ Father Lattey maintains that “in Holy Scripture the negative is sometimes used in the relative sense,”⁵⁵ especially in the condemnations. After quoting two examples of such relative uses of negatives from the

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

⁵² George Buchanan Gray, *Sacrifice in the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925), p. 89.

⁵³ *Art. cit.*, p. 137.

⁵⁴ “The Prophets and Sacrifice: A Study in Biblical Relativity,” *The Journal of Theological Studies*, XLII (1941), 155–65.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

classical Greek,⁵⁶ the author goes on to discuss examples of such usage in the New Testament. Father Lattey's examples are: John 6:32: "Moses did not give you bread from heaven" (meaning that Moses did not give you *this* bread of which I am speaking); John 6:27: "Work not for the food that perishes" (meaning "Work not so much for the food that perishes . . ."); John 12:25; and Rom. 4:5.

From the Old Testament Father Lattey takes as an example Joel 2:13: "Rend your heart and not your garments," which was surely not interpreted in biblical and rabbinic times as an absolute command. And so of Mal. 1:3: "I have loved Jacob and hated Esau," where the hatred is to be understood only in the relative sense, with Deut. 33:9 and Gen. 45:8. Such negative expressions are to be interpreted in a comparative or preferential sense.

That Father Lattey's thesis is not forced is clear from a brief study by C. J. Cadoux published in the *Expository Times*.⁵⁷ Cadoux opens his discussion with a warning much needed in the study of our particular question: "For the right understanding of the Bible more is necessary than even the most exact rendering of its contents into English. For the Biblical languages, like all languages, have not only their own vocabularies but their peculiar *thought idioms* also."⁵⁸

He adds that certain modes of expression in the biblical languages "were so different from what a Western mind would employ, that a literal rendering of the words would not convey to the modern reader what was meant."⁵⁹ After quoting several examples illustrating his point (among them Mark 9:37: "Whoever receives me *receives not me* but Him who sent me"; John 7:16: "My teaching *is not mine* but belongs to Him who sent me"; Is. 11-3 ff.: [The righteous Davidic ruler] "*will not judge* by that which the eyes see; nor by that which the ears hear . . . but he will judge the needy with the righteous"), Cadoux concludes: "These instances suffice to prove that biblical writers often made negative statements which were not meant to be taken at their face-value, but were simply intended to set in greater relief the accompanying affirmative assertions."⁶⁰

⁵⁶ One from Demosthenes and one from Aristotle.

⁵⁷ "The Use of Hyperbole in Holy Scripture," *The Expository Times*, LII (1941), 378-81.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 378.

⁵⁹ *Loc. cit.*

⁶⁰ *Loc. cit.*

Though this discussion of the articles of Lattey and Cadoux is necessarily brief, I think they prove their point. Father Lattey's article applies the principle he establishes to the prophetic statements on sacrifice, and shows that they are not to be taken as absolute condemnations. We leave the discussion of this point to the following part of this article.

Against those who, like Volz, arrive at extreme conclusions in this matter of the prophetic attitude towards sacrifice as a result of a too literal interpretation and a tendency to manufacture a mosaic of texts isolated from their context, König, Eichrodt, Wheeler Robinson, Lattey, and Cadoux provide us with principles and indicate methods that lead to a more just and objective appraisal of the prophetic statements. Apart from the many condemnations of out-and-out Canaanitish worship which abound in the Old Testament, we find frequent condemnations of ritual directed against two types of mentality common enough in Israel. The first type of mentality was that which, without denying or rejecting Yahweh, accepted Baal and other Canaanite gods side by side with Him.⁶¹ The second type of mentality was that which worshipped Yahweh only, but as Baal was worshipped, thinking to retain Yahweh's favor by mechanical performance of ritual, without any real submission to Yahweh's will, especially in moral matters. That seems to be why the prophets frequently did not content themselves with merely condemning idolatrous worship, but went further and insisted that external cult had value only as an expression of efficacious internal disposition to please Yahweh in every act of life.

THE TEACHING OF AMOS

A full consideration of Amos' prophecy⁶² leads us to conclude, with regard to his condemnations of sacrifice, that they are directed against

⁶¹ And this, if we can believe the Old Testament witness, especially the prophets, was the more common mentality. Elias, in III Kings 18, struck the keynote of the prophetic campaign especially by his challenge in v. 21: "How long are you going to limp between [or upon] two opinions? If Yahweh is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him." For the people were constantly "straddling" between the Yahwistic cult and the Canaanitish. And the prophets had to fight this denial of all that Yahweh stood for. Baal might admit other gods beside him; Yahweh could not.

⁶² I shall confine myself here to the discussion of the pre-exilic prophetic statements. There is no doubt about Ezechiel, Aggeus, Malachy. They clearly accept sacrifice as a part of Yahweh's religion.

the mentalities mentioned above. It is true that Amos uses strong language, when, after describing the injustices and sins of Israel and the punishment to come on "the day of the Lord," he bursts out:

I hate, I reject your pilgrimages;⁶³
 I take no pleasure in your festival assemblies;
 When you offer me your holocausts and your
 grain-offerings,
 I will not accept them;
 Nor will I look with favor upon your peace-
 offerings and fatlings.
 Take away from me the noise of your songs,
 For I will not listen to the noise of your
 harps.
 But let judgment roll down as the waters
 And justice like a perpetual stream.
 Did you offer me sacrifices and oblations
 In the wilderness for forty years,
 O house of Israel?
 But you shall take up Sakkuth, your king,
 And the star of your god, Kaiwan,⁶⁴
 Your images which you have made;
 So I will carry you into exile beyond Damascus,
 Says Yahweh, whose name is the God of Hosts. (5:21-27)

The reference to sacrifices in the desert in v. 25 is a "crux interpretum."⁶⁵ Many hold that here Amos is implying that the Israelites did not offer sacrifice during the Exodus. Some, like Schegg and Knabenbauer, hold that we have here a mere oratorical exaggeration; that sacrifice was offered but not frequently, and this neglect of sacrifice is what Amos is implicitly condemning. This is hardly the case, if we consider the context. For v. 21 seems to imply that Yahweh

⁶³ These "pilgrimages" were the annual journeys to the sanctuaries for the principal festivals.

⁶⁴ We follow Van Hoonacker's translation in *Les douze prophètes* (Paris: Gabalda, 1908), *in h. l.*, and take the reference to idolatry to refer to Amos' day, rather than to the time of Moses. For the point of our discussion either solution would not make much difference, though, if the reference is to the time of Moses, it might refer to a period during the Exodus in which the people were remiss in worshipping and sacrificing to Yahweh, and turned to idols, thus giving a parallel for the state of Israel at the time of Amos; cf. further Van Hoonacker, *op. cit.*, pp. 252-54.

⁶⁵ For a full and careful discussion of this text, cf. Van Hoonacker, *op. cit.*, pp. 250-52.

can save Israel without sacrifice, especially such as they are offering. Others, like Harper, in *Amos and Hosea* (ICC), say that the sacrifices of the desert, as such, did not gain Yahweh's favor. But this is called too subtle by Van Hoonacker. He would take the question as expecting an affirmative answer (as in a similar construction in I Sam. 2:27, and elsewhere), and implying that, just as the sacrifices offered during the Exodus did not save the people from the punishment of the forty years' wandering in the desert, so sacrifices will not now save them from punishment.⁶⁶ This interpretation gives strong point to the passage, and, as such, is very attractive, especially as most admit readily that there was a constant tradition for sacrifice in Israel from the patriarchs on. For the time of the Exodus, this tradition is clear from Ex. 5:1,3; 24:5 ff. and especially from 24:5 and 20:24, as most critics admit. Amos could hardly have ignored the tradition. Yet, relying on this doubtful passage of Amos, some would hold that Amos is here asserting the "true" tradition that in the Exodus there was no sacrifice, though the tradition of the ancient Semites, all of whom had sacrifice, and biblical Tradition in particular, is against them.

In any case, we must note that it is not only sacrifices that are condemned, but also festivals and hymn singing. Moreover, the nature of the actual celebration of these rites is described throughout the prophecy. Thus, in 2:8, we are told:

Upon garments taken in pledge they lay themselves
down by every altar,
And they drink the wine of those they have fined
in the house of their God.

Clearly, here is a condemnation of lascivious practices in religion—even in the very sanctuary! (cf. v. 7)—and of injustice, because, according to Exodus 22:26 ff., garments taken in pledge were to be returned to the poor before nightfall; and further, the wine seems to be the result of a fine which was of the nature of extortion, or, at least, it should have been applied to that for which it was imposed. In any case, there is here a picture of Canaanitish rites and morality hardly in keeping with the Yahwistic religion.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 252.

The actual sins of the Northern Kingdom were the cause of Yahweh's anger against all its religious institutions. Witness 3:14:

. . . on the day when I shall visit (in judgment) the transgressions
of Israel against him,
I will also visit the altars of Bethel;
The horns of the altar shall be cut off, and shall fall to the
ground.

Now Bethel was the principal sanctuary of the Northern Kingdom from the beginning of its schism. The destruction of the horns of the altar is symbolic of the complete end of the power of that sanctuary. Again the sweeping nature of the coming destruction is an indication of how completely corrupt are the institutions of the North and how universally Yahweh rejects them. All that was not in the true service of Yahweh must go. Clearly many things could have stood, if they were symbols of true Yahwistic religion and life.

That the sacrifices of the principal sanctuaries were undesirable because of the sins connected with these places is indicated in 4:4-5, when Amos says:

Come to Bethel and sin.
At Gilgal multiply your sins.
Bring your sacrifices in the morning,
And your tithes every three days

This is, of course, an ironical statement of the complete uselessness of the whole religious organization of the North, as chapter 5 indicates when Yahweh (vv. 4 ff.) tells the Israelites to seek him and not Bethel, Gilgal, or Beersheba. Clearly these places and all connected with them were an abomination to Yahweh, because of the general social and religious mentality that were in possession there. In fact the context immediately preceding the condemnation in 5:21 ff. (5:1-17) shows what was the fundamental remedy for this state of things. If Israel was not seeking Yahweh in her religious practices, how could Yahweh do anything but spurn them? That Israel was in a state of practical apostasy appears from chapter 6 also, especially v. 8. Hence all her festivals and Sabbaths were rejected, not absolutely, but inasmuch as they did not lead to the practice of justice and mercy in the

land.⁶⁷ Surely there is no reason for arguing that such condemnation indicates a desire to do away completely with the whole idea of sanctuary, festival, and Sabbath.

The picture, then, that Amos draws is of a people that has fallen away into Canaanitish religious practices and social sins, and thinks to retain or to regain Yahweh's favor by acting towards Him as if He were a Canaanite deity. Under such circumstances Amos was forced to condemn in sweeping terms. He had to resort to an "either—or" contrast to emphasize the emptiness and even sinfulness of cult actions that were without internal significance. For Yahweh, in His truth, had to reject such ritual.

THE TEACHING OF OSEE

A similar attitude runs through much of the prophecy of Osee. Those who quote Osee:

For I delight in loving piety, and not sacrifice;⁶⁸
And the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings,

and express their conviction that Osee is advocating the abolition of all sacrifice, are arguing without sufficient consideration of Hebrew idiom or mentality, and especially without any consideration of the context or background of the prophecy. Lattey calls attention to an aspect of this text which, being minor, is generally overlooked. It is that the verb 'תִּפְחֵן, which is frequently translated "desire," is better translated "delight in." And if it is a question of Yahweh's good pleasure, there is not necessarily an absolute rejection of sacrifice here. Lattey points out, however, that the LXX translates the word by the more absolute θέλω, and that is the verb found in the two quotations of our text in the New Testament (Matt. 9:13 and 12:7). Because of

⁶⁷ Cf. also 8:4-5, where the rich merchants are rebuked for not observing the festivals and Sabbaths in the right spirit:

"Saying: 'When will the [feast of the] new moon be past,
That we may sell grain;
And the Sabbath, that we may put our wheat on sale?'
Making your measure [*ephah*] small,
And your price [weight for weighing payment] high . . ."

⁶⁸ Os. 6:6. "Loving piety," like any translation of the Hebrew *hesed*, is inadequate. The Latin *pietas*, implying the right moral relationship, whether of justice or of charity, of man with his fellow men and with God, would best express it.

this he explains the text only on the principle of relative negation. But $\theta\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\omega$ itself does have, on occasion, the meaning "delight in," as the new Liddell and Scott records.⁶⁹ And Zorell asserts that, in the New Testament, " $\beta\omicron\upsilon\lambda\omicron\mu\alpha\iota$ indicat determinatum animi concilium vel voluntatis decretum . . ."; while " $\theta\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\omega$ indicat rei desiderium, animi propensionem, vel connotat liberam ex pluribus electionem. . . ."⁷⁰ So he translates the two New Testament quotations of our text: "Delector misericordia plus quam sacrificio." Zorrell would seem to be justified, since on neither occasion did our Lord intend to say that the Law was abolished; but He merely indicated that where rigid observance of the Sabbath law would preclude works of mercy or entail hardship such as hunger, the Sabbath should yield to man's needs. This interpretation is further strengthened if we refer to Hatch and Redpath,⁷¹ and see how commonly the Hebrew verbs of liking (e.g., אָבַח, אָבַח, אָבַח) are translated by $\theta\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\omega$ in the LXX. The stronger $\beta\omicron\upsilon\lambda\omicron\mu\alpha\iota$ (cf. Hatch and Redpath, *s.v.*) is only twice used to render cognates of אָבַח. Briefly, $\theta\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\omega$ in the Biblical texts (especially when used to render אָבַח) indicates good pleasure, not absolute desire; and hence our text of Osee can mean, "Loving piety is pleasing to me and not sacrifice." Such a statement would not be an absolute rejection of sacrifice, but an indication of what best pleases Yahweh. In any case, as Lattey and Cadoux point out in the articles cited above, and as Van Hoonacker reminds us,⁷² the negative is not necessarily to be taken absolutely. In fact the second part of the verse is comparative ("more than" or "rather than"), which is an indication that the first part should also be so understood.

⁶⁹ Liddell and Scott, *A Greek Lexicon: New Edition* by H. S. Jones and R. McKenzie (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940), I, *s.v.* $\theta\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\epsilon\omega$, $\theta\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\epsilon\omega$ in n. 9, p. 479. The references here are to the LXX: III Kings 18:22; Ps. 17 (18):20.

⁷⁰ *Lexicon Graecum Novi Testamenti* (2d ed.; Paris: Lethielleux, 1931), *s.v.* $\theta\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\omega$, cols. 582-83.

⁷¹ *Concordance to the Septuagint* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1897), I, *s.v.* $\theta\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\epsilon\omega$ pp. 628-29.

⁷² *Les douze prophètes*, p. 64. Harper, *Amos and Hosea* (International Critical Commentary; N. Y.: Scribners, 1905), *in h. l.*, p. 287, would argue from the negative $\omega\omicron\iota$ ("and not") in the first phrase to the interpretation of *min* ("from"; here "more than") as being also an absolute negative. Cheyne, on the other hand, in *Hosea* (Cambridge Bible; Cambridge Univ. Press, 1913), p. 79, says that "rather than" is the same in both cases, and adds: "The prophet thinks comparatively little of sacrifices, but does not denounce them as positively displeasing to God."

Furthermore, the context and background favor the comparative sense. The very first chapter of the prophecy reveals to us what Osee was trying to preach to the people of the Northern Kingdom. Whatever be the interpretation of the prophet's dealing with the harlot wife, the symbolism is clear from the second chapter on.⁷³ Israel is playing the harlot towards Yahweh, her lover. And "harlotry" in this connection, as is entirely clear from constant Old Testament usage, is a reference to the turning of the nation to false gods and religions. All commentators on Osee admit a fact which is unescapable, that a state of total religious and moral corruption existed in Israel. The moral corruption (cf. chap. 4 and *passim*) is represented as springing from the spiritual corruption, which is such that Yahweh is forced to abandon His people for a space.⁷⁴ The religious corruption, which is called harlotry, cannot be called merely the worship of Yahweh with images (which would have been subject to condemnation); nor merely the worship of Yahweh with the same rites that were used in the practices of the cult of Baal (which would have been especially abominable to Yahweh); but it consisted mainly in worshipping Yahweh as one of many gods, and in the same spirit as that in which they worshipped the false gods. This was the "adultery," having other lovers besides Yahweh. Israel was turning from Yahweh⁷⁵ and turning to other gods. The other lovers were other gods of whom Israel says:

They give me my bread and my water,
My wool and my flax, my oil, and my drink.⁷⁶

And Baal is called the lover in opposition to and even in preference to Yahweh:

For she did not know that it was I who gave her corn and wine
and oil,
And multiplied the silver and gold,
Which they have used in the service of Baal.⁷⁷

⁷³ For the many interpretations of the harlot wife, cf. W. R. Harper, *Amos and Hosea*, pp. 208-10. The point of the narration for the prophecy is clear whichever interpretation is accepted.

⁷⁴ E.g., 1:9; 3:4; 5:6; 7:14-16.

⁷⁵ Cf. 1:4; 5:4-7; 7:10; 13-16; 8:8-9; etc.; and especially with regard to idolatry: 4:12-17; 8:4-18; 10:5; 11:2; 13:1-2; 14:8; etc.

⁷⁶ 2:5.

⁷⁷ 2:8.

True, Israel is represented as calling Yahweh *ba'ali* (my baal, lord or master). But the fact that Yahweh was only one of many gods in this worship is clear from 4:12-16, where the consultation of stocks and staffs (idols), and the multiplication of sacrifices on hilltops and under trees (which were generally presided over by local deities), and where actual adultery of the women of the community took place (a practice connected with idolatrous Canaanitish cult). Other texts might be brought forward,⁷⁸ but these would seem sufficient to show that the prophet was doing more than condemning only an idolatrous manner of worshipping Yahweh (for some commentators, as Cheyne, seem to imply this). They did offer sacrifice and worship to Yahweh, but, when they did, it was without a real repentance for their terrible sins. Under such circumstances, was not Yahweh right in rejecting their sacrifices, until they learned to practice that *hesed*, or wholehearted loyalty to Yahweh, that is called for in 6:6? If the people remained sunken in their vices, both religious and social, could He accept anything from their hands? Truly, of such useless sacrifices (8:13 says that they profited only as food for those who ate of them) they would be ashamed on the day of their punishment.⁷⁹

That Osee contemplated an acceptable external cult, with sacrifice, is implied when he says:

They shall not remain in the land of Yahweh,
 But Ephraim shall return to Egypt;
 And they shall eat unclean food in Assyria,⁸⁰
 And they will not pour out wine libations to Yahweh;
 Nor shall they prepare their victims for Him . . .⁸¹
 For their bread shall be for themselves [alone]
 And shall not come into the house of Yahweh.
 What will you do on the festival day,
 On the day of the solemnity of Yahweh?
 For, see, they [the people] have gone from the devastated
 country. . . .⁸²

⁷⁸ As in 8:4-11, where the calves of vv. 5-6 are (as also in 10:5) the images that Jeroboam I set up at first as images of Yahweh; cf. also 9:1-10 (the reference to the old sin at Baal-peor, in Deut. 3:29, hints that Israel is still acting that way); 10:1*bc* (altars and "pillars," these latter connected with a feminine deity), etc.

⁷⁹ 4:19.

⁸⁰ Food was made clean by offering of first-fruits or firstlings of the flock.

⁸¹ Following Van Hoonacker (*op. cit.*, in *h. l.*) and others.

⁸² 9:3-6; cf. also 3:4, where the cessation of sacrifice seems to be a temporary punishment.

The prophet here seems to represent the absence of the proper sacrificial system as something sadly undesirable.

Again in chapter 14, where the prophet describes the repentance of the people and their reconciliation with Yahweh, there is, in v. 2., a possible reference to future sacrifice. The sense of v. 2, as it stands in the Hebrew text, is:

Take with you words,
 And return to Yahweh, your God.
 Say to Him: 'Forgive our iniquity completely.
 Accept the good,
 And we will pay the calves of our lips.'

"Calves of our lips" is a strange expression, and hardly makes sense. It might be that the prophet intended to indicate vow-sacrifices. However, all recent exegetes abandon the "calves" of the Hebrew for the reading, "fruit," which is found in the LXX and Syriac, and supposes only a slight emendation in the Hebrew. Those who accept "fruit of our lips," which is still an odd expression, as the proper reading, generally understand the expression to mean words of thanksgiving and praise.⁸³ But despite the frequent practice of interpreters of explaining this text in the light of Ps. 50 (49):14, one is not completely convinced that the text of Ps. 50 solves the question. There seems still to be the possibility that the words of the Psalm, "Sacrifice thanksgiving unto God," and, "make a peace-offering of your vows," could mean real sacrifice in the virtuous spirit described in the context. This is especially true when we realize that the word we translated "sacrifice" means, literally, "slaughter." But if, in Osee's text, we follow Van Hoonacker,⁸⁴ and slightly emend the difficult "our lips" of the Hebrew to "our folds," this changes the awkward "fruit of our lips" to an understandable "fruit of our folds," and leaves us with a verse favoring sacrifice, when it is performed in the sincere spirit of reconciliation.

No proof of Osee's opposition to sacrificial religion can be drawn from his condemnation of the priests.⁸⁵ For he is just as vigorous in his attack on kings and princes⁸⁶—though he does not contemplate the

⁸³ E.g., Harper, Cheyne, and Lippl-Theis (in the Bonn Commentary).

⁸⁴ *Les douze prophètes*, p. 127.

⁸⁵ E.g., in 4:6; 5:1 ff.

⁸⁶ E.g., in 7:2-5.

⁸⁷ Cf. 3:5.

complete abolition of kingship⁸⁷—and on the prophets as a group.⁸⁸ All of these he condemns because they are failing to do the duty of their offices by keeping the nation faithful to Yahweh, but are, on the contrary, leading it astray. The holders of these offices, not the offices are displeasing to Yahweh.

Osee condemned everything that was actually being instrumental in leading the people away from Yahweh, whether cities like Bethel and Gilgal with their idolatrous shrines, or leaders of any class, or practices, whether social, moral, or religious. It is wrong to pick out one class and one practice that he condemned and say that he called in particular for its complete abolition. All things, even “the land of Yahweh” itself, had to be purged to bring about the one central desideratum of true religion, the exclusive and heartfelt service of Yahweh. Cities, offices, and cult practices could stand only if they represented such service and submission; if not, they must undergo condemnation and cleansing punishment. The particular sacrifices described by Osee were idolatrous, placing Yahweh on a par with the immoral, hateful gods of Canaan. Such sacrifices were worse than useless; they were a crowning insult to Yahweh.

The *hesed* that Yahweh demands in 6:6, then, is rightness of life. If Israel thought to substitute for a correction of its deep-seated social or religious sins a sacrifice which was in fact a sort of bribe, the prophet could use no language too violent against such a sacrifice. Even the tender prayer of 6:1 ff., though expressing repentance, is not accepted as not being sincere and solid. But sacrifices that represented true obedience to Yahweh would not be condemned.

THE TEACHING OF ISAIAS

The harsh and seemingly unconditioned words of Isaias⁸⁹ in 1:11–17 are better understood on the application of the principles set forth above. The prophet represents Yahweh as asking:

What care I for the multitude of your sacrifices. . . .
I am sated with holocausts of rams,
And with the fat of fatted beasts;

⁸⁸ Cf. 4:5; 9:7.

⁸⁹ With Isaias and Micheas we shall be brief, for the principles seen with regard to the other prophets apply here.

In the blood of oxen and of lambs
 And of he-goats I delight not.
 When you come to see my face,
 Who has asked this of you:
 That you should trample my courts?
 Bring no more vain oblations;
 The smoke [*or* incense] is abominable to me.
 Your new moon, Sabbath, solemn assembly,
 Fasting and festivals I cannot endure.
 Your new moons and seasonal feasts
 My soul hates;
 They have become to me a burden
 That I am weary of bearing.
 When you stretch out your hands,
 I will hide my eyes from you;
 Yes,—though you multiply your prayer,
 I will not listen.
 Your hands are full of blood—
 Wash yourselves, cleanse yourselves,
 Remove the evil of your deeds
 From before my eyes!
 Cease to do evil! Learn to do good!
 Seek justice, restrain violence,
 Do justice to the orphan,
 Defend the widow's cause!

Now, to quote from such a speech only the words against sacrifice, without regard for the total purpose of the speech and the context, will lead to misunderstanding here also. The people are compared to Sodom and Gomorrah, a nation totally corrupt and displeasing to God.⁹⁰ Yet by multiplying—without true repentance—feasts, sacrifice, prayer, they hope that they may keep the favor of Yahweh. If we take the passage too literally, we shall have to conclude that Isaias is condemning all external religion, and even the Sabbath and prayer. Even though the people multiply their prayers, God rejects the hands extended in supplication, because they still have the blood of sin upon them. “Wash yourselves” seems to indicate that if they come cleansed through repentance, their prayer will be received—and the same is true of the observance of the Sabbath and the offering of sacrifice. Clearly, the prophet is saying that nothing they do can please Yahweh

⁹⁰ Throughout the prophecy, rulers, princes, judges, and people are condemned (see the sharp invective in chap. 1). And in 28:7 priest and prophet are put under the same condemnation.

until they give proof of their conversion from their evil ways, especially from idolatry (1:29; 2:8). Prayer is also strongly rejected in 29:13 ff., when it is not prayer of the heart. And one would hardly argue that Isaias was calling for the abolition of prayer or of days dedicated to God. Surely the solemn vocation-vision of Isaias (chap. 6) with its Temple and altar does not indicate antagonism on his part towards external religion and sacrifice. This is true whether the Temple is the earthly one of Jerusalem, or even with greater force, if the prophet is picturing such things above the earth before the throne of Yahweh. Moreover, in 2:1-4, Isaias describes the day when people will flock to Sion and its Temple, which surely connotes cult and sacrifice; and, in 19:21, Isaias pictures Yahweh as being pleased with the future sacrifices of the converted Egyptians.⁹¹

THE TEACHING OF JEREMIAS

In Jeremias the same difficulties exist to be solved by the same principles. In 7:22, where Yahweh says, with apparent approval, that He did not command sacrifice in the period of the Exodus, we must remember, as S. R. Driver says, that Moses did offer sacrifice in that period.⁹² And many commentators explain the text as meaning that Yahweh's commandments and moral directions were more important than the ritual prescriptions.⁹³ They are what Yahweh wants first and foremost, and, in case of contradiction, exclusively. And in

⁹¹ The passage in Isaias (40:12-31) where the greatness and goodness of Yahweh are described gives a verse which says explicitly what all the prophets imply when talking of cult and sacrifice:

"Even Lebanon is not sufficient for fuel (for sacrifices to Yahweh)
Nor are its cattle enough for a burnt offering." (40:16)

That is, animal sacrifice, of itself (however multiplied), can have no intrinsic value that can move Yahweh. He is too great; He does not need it.

⁹² S. R. Driver, in *The Book of the Prophet Jeremiah* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906), p. 44, refers us to Ex. 23:14-19; cf. also n. 64 *supra*. He also points out that as a matter of fact the promises of his protection (such as those in v. 23 of our text) are in Exodus attached to the general loyalty to Yahweh and His moral prescriptions (cf. Ex. 15:26; 19:5,6; 23:21 f.) and hence incidentally, only, to the offering of sacrifice.

⁹³ So S. R. Driver, *loc. cit.*, and A. Condamin, *Le livre de Jérémie* (Paris: Gabalda, 1920), p. 71, who refers us to Ex. 20:24; 22:29-30; 23:19; and to those places where it is indicated that Jeremias is not against sacrifice as such (Jer. 17:20; 31:14; 33:11, 17-24). G. Ricciotti, *Il Libro di Geremia* (Torino: Fratelli Bocca, 1923), pp. 116-17, agrees with Condamin and Driver. We might add that Is. 43:22-28 is a good example of such exaggerated statements. For here also it is implied that at the date of this pericope Israel has not offered sacrifice, which is certainly not true.

11:15, where sacrifices are said to be of no avail to save the erring nation, the reason is clearly given:

What right has my beloved in my house
Since she has committed such lewdness with many?

Under such circumstances, vows and consecrated flesh cannot save her. Even penitent prayer (when not deeply sincere) is rejected (14:7-10). And again, in 14:12-22, neither the intercession of the prophet nor sacrifice, nor covenant—no, not even Moses and Samuel, both saviors of their nations (just as in 7:3, 4 the Temple is no pledge of safety, unless the people amend their ways), can save the people. And the reason for the rejection of all they might hope in (especially for the rejection of Temple and sacrifice), is given in 7:3-15. They do not practice justice; they oppress the stranger, the orphan, the widow; they shed innocent blood; they worship false gods;⁹⁴ and then they come to the Temple of Yahweh and say, "We are safe!" They make Yahweh's Temple a robber's refuge!⁹⁵ Let them go to Shiloh and see how Yahweh, because of sinfulness, rejected that sanctuary which He himself had set up and approved.⁹⁶ The key to the interpretation of Jeremiah's condemnation of ritual is in this chapter. For all false hopes of safety, and especially the means of external worship, are to be swept away for awhile. But Jeremiah pictures the day when, after their punishment, they may be able to offer sacrifice in the true spirit of hope (2:14; 17:26; 33:18). If Jeremiah condemns the priests, he also condemns the scribes and wisemen and the prophets.⁹⁷ Surely Yahweh does not intend the abolition of prophets and wisemen. Why, then, of the priest and his duty? With Jeremiah, as with Osee, it is not the institution or office which is condemned but the officials who are unfaithful to their duty of keeping the nation firm in Yahweh's religion. Against such a background Jeremiah's condemnation of

⁹⁴ Cf. 7:9, 17-18, 30-31; 8:2. And in 8:5 Yahweh accuses Israel of perpetual apostasy.

⁹⁵ Cf. 7:10-11.

⁹⁶ Cf. 7:12.

⁹⁷ In 2:8 (priests and prophets); 6:13 (priests and prophets); 8:8-10 (scribes, wisemen, priests, and prophets); 18:18 (prophets, priests, and wisemen); 23:11 (prophets and priests); 23:33-34 (prophets, priests, and laymen); often in 23.9-32 the prophets alone are condemned. It seems very significant that Jeremiah so constantly brackets the priest with other offenders (especially the leaders of the nation). All leaders and classes are corrupt, and are condemned for not being true to their office, not because their offices are despised by the prophet. He respects those.

sacrifice must be understood. Institutions are of no avail when their officials and people are unfaithful to Yahweh.

THE TEACHING OF MICHEAS

Micheas' condemnation of sacrifice (6:6-8) is also to be interpreted in its context and background. Micheas indicates that no sacrifice, even the sacrifice of a man's own first-born, can take the place of a godly life. Yahweh demands of man

To do justice, to love kindness,
And to walk humbly with your God.

With or without sacrifice, a man who does not follow such a rule of life cannot please God. Micheas (chap. 1) denounces the general sinfulness of the people, and (chap. 3) of the prophets, priests, and princes. In 5:12-15, he announces God's judgment of complete destruction of the nation which is stubborn in its idolatry. Could Yahweh be pleased with sacrifices of a people who were also worshipping other gods? That Micheas thought that the day would come, however, when agreeable worship would be offered, is clear from the picture (4:1-2) of all peoples coming to the Temple on Sion, for this Temple could not but connote sacrifice. Hence the words of Micheas are to be taken relatively, as Lattey indicates, quoting Professor Powis Smith, in the sense that Yahweh was repudiating the idea that sacrifice to Him was all that was necessary to insure His favor and protection.⁹⁸

The Psalms which condemn sacrifice are to be explained according to these same principles.⁹⁹

SUMMARY OF PROPHETIC TEACHING

What all the authors are insisting upon principally is that God wants obedience, true repentance, a virtuous life above all else. No service or honor which forgets that is pleasing to Him. And this was because sacrifice was but an external symbol of internal recognition of God's goodness, justice, power, etc., just as was public prayer, congregational worship, or even mere private but external profession, by word or act,

⁹⁸ *Art. cit.* (*supra*, n. 54), pp. 160-61.

⁹⁹ Chiefly Psalms 40, 50, 51; cf. Lattey's discussion, *art. cit.*, pp. 161-62.

of belief in Yahweh. It was considered as legitimate and necessary as the spoken word (also an external act). But it was necessary to fight the inevitable tendency of man to substitute form for content, external act for internal devotion. External religious worship of any kind can generate a false *feeling* of holiness, but holiness can exist in reality only if man is disposed in heart and soul to submit completely to God and obey His whole law. When sinful Israel deceived itself into thinking it was buying God's favor and protection by empty forms, the great leaders tried to undeceive her, especially when Yahweh was being degraded to the level of a Canaanite *baal*. The prophets drove their point home fiercely by insisting on the essential worthlessness of a symbol which did not symbolize. Temple, covenant, sacrifice, the giving of gifts, and spoken words were an expression of submission of the nation and its members to God; if that submission did not exist, these things were worthless, because Yahweh neither needed nor wanted them for themselves, though He did want submission and the expression of true submission that could be implied in them.

SACRIFICE FOR SIN

I have not expressly treated of the value of sin-sacrifices in atoning for sin. But a careful study would seem to show that the most grave sins were to be atoned for by death or some other severe punishment; sin-sacrifices were for lesser sins.¹⁰⁰ Hence Israel had fallen into error if it believed that there was an intrinsic value in the offering of an animal which wiped out sin. Such an idea was a perversion of the idea of sacrifice even according to the legal sanction of the Pentateuch. Those writers, then, who say that the prophets excluded any *ex opere operato* effects from Old Testament sacrifice are right.¹⁰¹ Since sacrifice was a symbolic action, it had only the efficacy that the offerer's disposition towards God's will could give it. But we note in passing that the authors referred to above understand the phrase *ex opere operato* in a sense never intended by those Catholic theologians who coined it or by the Council of Trent. Those authors understand by *ex opere operato* an infallible effect that is worked in a person by the

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Eichrodt, *Theol. d. Alt. Test.*, I, 75 and 79, nn. 1 and 4.

¹⁰¹ Wheeler Robinson, *art. cit.* (*supra*, n. 48), pp. 137-38, and König, *Theol. d. Alt. Test.*, p. 100.

mere performance of an external rite, regardless of the subjective disposition of the person in whose favor it is performed. This is a magical concept destroyed by three simple words of Trent: "non ponentibus obicem";¹⁰² for, among the principal obstacles meant by Trent is the lack of proper dispositions. Unretracted, unrepented mortal sin of any kind always precludes the entrance of sanctifying grace into the soul, in the New as well as in the Old Dispensation. No amount of external ritual can work the restoration of the soul to God's friendship, as long as the seriously sinful attachment exists.¹⁰³ In fact, in a certain true sense, *ex opere operato* implies that nothing that man has put into the sacramental or sacrificial act of the New Law makes it efficacious; it is efficacious in virtue of what God, through the merits and will of Jesus Christ, puts into it. It is God who works reconciliation and grace in man, supposing man's disposition to receive. If this is true of the sacraments and sacrifice of the New Law, how much more true is it of similar rites of the Old? Indeed the Epistle to the Hebrews, chapter 11, is as strong against the efficacy of animal sacrifice as any of the prophets.

CONCLUSION

The prophetic condemnations of sacrifice, then, drive home a two-fold concept basic to true religion. One part of that concept is God's essential self-sufficiency. Nothing that man can do or say is needed by God. The second part is man's essential insufficiency, his essential dependence on God. In consequence, God, because of His goodness and truth, wants, and man must give to God, the confession of this dependence in his whole life, interior and exterior. 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

¹⁰² Sess. VII, "De sacramentis in genere," can. 6-8 (DB 849-51).

¹⁰³ Wheeler Robinson (*art. cit.*, pp. 137-38) illustrates this point from Romans 6:3-5, where by baptism man is said to be incorporated into Christ, and to receive sanctification. Unless the adult recipient is "crucified with Christ" (in his intention and dispositions dead to sin and ready to follow Christ's Gospel), the symbolic act cannot produce its effect. Put briefly, unless the soul is in a disposition of repentance for its serious sins, the grace of baptism cannot enter his soul. This point could further be illustrated for other sacraments of the New Law, as well as for the Sacrifice of the New Law. The phrase *ex opere operato* does not prescind from the subjective dispositions of the recipient of the grace of the sacrament. It implies that the subjective dispositions do not cause the grace.

this, it is both hypocrisy, deceiving self, and irreligion, striving to deceive God.

Those who belittle sacrificial religion because of the words of the prophets would, if they were consistent, belittle not only priest and sacrifice, but ruler, wiseman, prophet,¹⁰⁴ temple, covenant, religious assemblies, Sabbath, and even prayer. For these likewise fall under condemnation insofar, and as often as, the spirit and disposition behind them were false. The positive aim of the prophetic preaching taken in the background of their times gives the key to their negative statements. To concentrate one's attention on the negative statements alone is to distort their teaching. Their teaching is so deeply fundamental and so constantly needed that such a distortion does harm to those who would follow these inspired men in their practice of religion.

¹⁰⁴ As we have seen from texts quoted in this article, it is remarkable how constantly the other leaders of the nation (especially prophets) are bracketed with the priests in the condemnatory texts. Perhaps it is more remarkable that those who argue from the condemnations of the priests to the superiority of the "prophetic religion" of the spoken word do not see that the latter religion also can have its abuses and be justly condemned. It is abuse that is condemned, not institution.