

In this volume the distinguished authority on folk-lore subjects the complex ritual and belief comprehended in the term *Sacrifice* to a detailed critical analysis in accordance with modern anthropological methods with a view to the determination of (a) the origins and fundamental character of the institution, and the principles underlying the ritual as a whole; (b) the primary and secondary elements in the cult complex; (c) the main lines of development and the effects of the new movement in thought in the first millennium B.C. on the ancient law of sacrifice. While many attempts have been made, often with conspicuous success, to investigate and evaluate various aspects of the rite from the theological, historical and psychological standpoints, and in particular regions, this is the first time that the institution as a whole, in its cultural setting, has been brought under review in a separate volume. In addition to the complicated question of origins, the higher manifestations of sacrifice in Judaism, Christianity and the oriental religions are described, together with the factors in the transformation of the ancient rites and myths into the symbols of an order of reality transcending the order of nature.

ORIGINS OF SACRIFICE.

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ORIGINS OF SACRIFICE

A Study in Comparative Religion

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PREFACE

NOTWITHSTANDING the unique position occupied by the ritual of sacrifice in the history of religion, no volume exists, I think, which deals exclusively with the institution from the standpoint of anthropological research. Innumerable works, of course, treat adequately the various historical, philosophical, doctrinal and devotional questions involved in the evaluation of sacrificial worship in terms of validity and ultimate reality, of which mention may be made of Dr. Hicks's recent investigation of the part played by the concept in the formative period of the Christian religion, and the gradual departure therefrom, as he believes, with disastrous results. Again, from an entirely different angle, an interesting attempt has been made by Dr. Money-Kyrle to explain the meaning of certain varieties of sacrifice, and the unconscious impulses invoked by them, by the aid of the methods of psycho-analysis. Anthropologists, too, have not been slow to produce theories to account for the original conscious motives which called the ritual into being, and to put on record countless instances of the rite from all parts of the world and in all states of culture. But, so far as I am aware, no one has yet undertaken a systematic scientific investigation of the material as a whole.

Of modern regional studies perhaps the most notable is the admirable course of lectures on *Sacrifice in*,

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the Old Testament delivered before the University of Oxford by my learned friend the late George Buchanan Gray, in the capacity of Speaker-Lecturer. We can never be too thankful that this manuscript was discovered by Dr. D. C. Simpson in Gray's study after his sudden death in 1922, and that this invaluable piece of research has been made accessible to scholars through the labours of Dr. T. H. Robinson and his collaborators in the work of preparing the volume for the Press. It is to be hoped that its publication will stimulate others with a similar intimate knowledge of particular cultures to produce detailed investigations of the institution in their own regions.

In the meantime I have ventured to step into the breach with a wider survey of the numerous rites comprehended under the name of Sacrifice, or belonging to the complex of ideas out of which, as it seems to me, the institution arose. In the anthropological treatment of a ritual of this character which has persisted throughout the ages, and undergone a complete metamorphosis in the long course of its complex history, there is a danger of interpreting the final products in terms of crude beginnings by the simple method of overleaping the intervening series of changes in thought and expression. As Professor Percy Gardner has pointed out, it is all too easy to assume, for example, that the notion of a ceremonial eating of a divine victim persisted from savage orgiastic rites not only into the more civilized pagan mysteries, but even into early Christianity. A certain school of anthropologists, he says, "take ancient religion at its lowest, not at its highest levels," regardless of the fact

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that "while magic and materialism no doubt persisted, all the noble spirits warred against them."¹

To counteract this source of error, I have carried the investigation through its successive stages to the higher ethical manifestations of the ritual in the hope of discovering the fundamental principles inherent in the institution as a whole, and of determining the chief phases of its expression. In so doing, however, I am very conscious of the pitfalls awaiting those who stray outside their own domain. In these days of specialization it is only possible normally for one man to speak with anything approaching a voice of authority on one subject, and unfortunately the rite of sacrifice as a universal phenomenon belongs to many departments of research, in most of which I can lay no sort of claim to first-hand knowledge. For instance, I am neither an Egyptologist nor an Assyriologist, and if I move rather more freely in Biblical studies, there are many technical critical questions here about which I should be very loath to pass an opinion, since any conclusions I might reach would be based on insufficient knowledge. Clearly, then, a work of this character demands some co-operation with specialists in their several departments.

In securing this all-important assistance I have been singularly fortunate. The advantages of living in Oxford are manifold, and not least among them are the unique opportunities afforded for consultation with experts in almost any subject. Furthermore, our scholars are quite the most generous people in the world, who unstintingly give of their time and know-

¹ *E.R.E.*, ix, p. 82.

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ledge to any serious student, even on matters which must sometimes appear somewhat trivial; a quality which incidentally is not confined to this University, as I have good reason to know. Thus, if I am more indebted than I can say to my friend Dr. A. M. Blackman for the amazing amount of trouble he has taken in discussing with me the Egyptian sections of the book, it was Mr. Herbert Loewe, until recently University Lecturer in Rabbinic Hebrew at Oxford, and now Reader in Rabbinics in the University of Cambridge (his Alma Mater), who, at the end of a very busy term, and while within the throes of a removal, ungrudgingly devoted several mornings to a discussion of the later Jewish material. Dr. G. H. Box, Professor Emeritus of Rabbinical Hebrew, King's College, London, also made several valuable suggestions in this connexion. Professor Percy Gardner willingly bestowed upon me his unrivalled knowledge of the Greek mystery cults, and I have also consulted Dr. J. G. Milne, of the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, concerning this aspect of the subject. In the discussion of Babylonian conceptions of sin and atonement, Professor Langdon's advice and help have been invaluable, and he most kindly allowed me to see the proofs of his volume on Semitic Mythology which was then in the Press. Dr. T. H. Robinson, Professor of Semitic Languages, University College, Cardiff, who happened to be lecturing in Germany when I consulted him on certain questions arising out of the Old Testament evidence, did not hesitate to place his immense learning at my disposal on his return to England, despite many pressing claims

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on his time and attention. On the Christian aspect of the problem, the Oriol Professor of the Philosophy of the Christian Religion, Dr. L. W. Grensted, has supplied references and given me additional information with regard to the doctrine of the Atonement; the Rev. J. S. Bezzant, Fellow of Exeter College, made several valuable suggestions concerning New Testament interpretation, and Dr. Darwell Stone gave me his help and advice in Patristic matters. For the main thesis, however, and any errors which may appear in it, I am alone responsible.

• Finally, it should be pointed out that this volume could never have been written if that splendid army of field-workers had not recorded faithfully the actual state of things as they have found it in operation to-day, or revealed by the spade or the text the hidden secrets of the past. To trace origins and determine fundamental principles are generally better reserved for subsequent and separate treatment in the study, but those who engage in these tasks should not be unmindful of their obligations to the producers of the raw material. In the arduous task of proof-reading, once again, I have to thank my friend the Rev. A. Mallinson, and my ever-devoted wife.

The dedication is the expression of a debt that a pupil owes to a master capable of kindling within him an ever-increasing enthusiasm for his own department of research which has endured from youth to middle age.

E. O. JAMES.

OXFORD, 1932.

ABBREVIATIONS

- A.A.* . American Anthropologist.
E.R.E. . Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics (Hastings).
G.B. . The Golden Bough (Frazer).
J.H.S. . Journal of Hellenic Studies.
J.R.A.I. . Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute.
J.T.S. . Journal of Theological Studies.
E.B.A.E. . Reports of the Bureau of American Ethnology
(Washington).

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