the slau*g*hter of an animal (which gave the meal a more luxurious and festal character, animal food being not in daily use with the mass of the agricultural populations of the Mediterranean lauds) seems to have been always sacrificial in early Greece, and even in later times St Paul assumes that the flesh sold in the shambles would often consist of *ϵίδωλόθυτα*. Among the Semites sacrifice and slaughter for food are still more clearly identified; the Hebrews use the same word for both, and the Arabian invocation of the name of Allah over every beast killed for food is but the relic of a sacrificial formula. The part of the gods in such sacrificial meals was often very small, the blood alone (Arabia), or the fat and the thighs (*Il*., i. 460), or small parts of each joint (Od., xiv. 427), or the blood, the fat, and the kidneys (Lev. iii.). When the sacrifice was offered by a priest, he also naturally received a portion, which, properly speaking, belonged to the deity and was surrendered by him to his minister, as is brought out in the Hebrew ritual by the ceremonial act of waving it towards the altar (Lev. vii. 29 *sq.).* The thigh, which in Homeric sacrifice is burned on the altar, belongs in the Levitical ritual to the priest, who was naturally the first to profit by the growth of a conviction that the deity himself did not require to be fed by man’s food.

The conception of the sacrifice as a banquet in which gods and men share together may be traced also in the accessories of sacred ritual. Music, song, garlands, the sweet odour of incense, accompany sacrifice because they are suitable to an occasion of mirth and luxurious enjoy­ment. Wine, too, “ which cheereth gods and men ” (Judges ix. 13), was seldom lacking in the vine-growing countries ; but the most notable case where the sacrificial feast has the use of an intoxicant (or narcotic) as its chief feature is the ancient *soma* sacrifice of the old Aryans, where the gods are honoured by bowls of the precious draught which heals the sick, inspires the poet, and makes the poor believe that he is rich.

The sacrificial meal, with the general features that have been described, may be regarded as common to all the so- called nature-religions of the civilized races of antiquity, —religions which had a predominantly joyous character, and in which the relations of man to the gods were not troubled by any habitual and oppressive sense of human guilt, because the divine standard of man’s duty corre­sponded broadly with the accepted standard of civil con­duct, and therefore, though the god might be angry with his people for a time, or even irreconcilably wroth with individuals, the idea was hardly conceivable that he could be permanently alienated from the whole circle of his worshippers,—that is, from all who participated in a certain local (tribal or national) cult. But when this type of religion began to break down the sacrificial ritual under­went corresponding modifications. Thus we find a decline of faith in the old gods accompanied, not only by a grow­ing neglect of the temples and their service, but also by a disposition to attenuate the gifts that were still offered, or to take every opportunity to cheat the gods out of part of their due,—a disposition of which Arabia before Mohammed affords a classical example. But, again, the decline of faith itself was not a mere product of indiffer­ence, but was partly due to a feeling that the traditional ritual involved too material a conception of the gods, and this cause, too, tended to produce modifications in sacri­ficial service. The Persians, for example (Herod., i. 132 ; Strabo, xv. p. 732), consecrated their sacrifices with liturgical prayers, but gave no part of the victim to the deity, who “ desired nothing but the life (or soul) of the victim.” This, indeed, is the Roman formula of piacular as distinct from honorific offerings (Macrob., iii. 5, 1),

and might be taken as implying that the Persians had ceased to look on sacrifices as gifts of homage; but such an explanation can hardly be extended to the parallel case of the Arab sacrifices, in which the share of the deity was the blood of the victim, which according to antique belief contained the life. For among the Arabs blood was a recognized article of food, and the polemic of Ps. 1. 13 is expressly directed against the idea that the deity “ drinks the blood of goats.” And the details given in Strabo make it tolerably clear that Persian sacrifice is simply an example of the way in which the material gift offered to the deity is first attenuated and then allegorized away as the conception of the godhead becomes less crassly mate­rial. But on the other hand it is undoubtedly true that under certain conditions the notion of piacular sacrifice shows much greater vitality than that of sacrificial gifts of homage. When a national religion is not left to slow decay, but shares the catastrophe of the nation itself, as was the case with the religions of the small western Asiatic states in the period of Assyrian conquest, the old joyous confidence in the gods gives way to a sombre sense of divine wrath, and the acts by which this wrath can be conjured become much more important than the ordinary traditional gifts of homage. To this point we must return by and by.

It appears, then, that in the old national nature-religions the ordinary exercises of worship take the form of meals offered to the gods, and usually of banquets at which gods and worshippers sit down together, so that the natural bond of unity between the deity and his subjects or children is cemented by the bond of “ bread and salt ”— salt is a standing feature in the sacrifices of many races (comp. Lev. ii. 13)—to which ancient and unsophisticated peoples attach so much importance. That the god is habitually willing to partake of the banquet offered to him is taken for granted ; but, if anything has occurred to alienate his favour, he will show it by his conduct at the feast, by certain signs known to experts, that indicate his refusal of the offered gift. Hence the custom of inspect­ing the *exta* of the victim, watching the behaviour of the sacrificial flame, or otherwise seeking an omen which proves that the sacrifice is accepted, and so that the deity may be expected to favour the requests with which the gift is associated. @@1

In the religions which we have been characterizing all the ordinary functions of worship are summed up in these sacrificial meals ; the stated and normal intercourse between gods and men has no other form. God and worshippers make up together a society of *commensals,* and every other point in their reciprocal relations is included in what this involves. Now, with this we must take the no less certain fact that throughout the sphere of the purely sacrificial religions the circle of common worship is also the circle of social duty and reciprocal moral obligations. And thus the origin of sacrificial worship must be sought in a stage of society when the circle of commensals and the circle of persons united to each other by sacred social bonds were identical. But all social bonds are certainly de­veloped out of the bond of kindred, and it will be generally admitted that all national religions are develop­ments or combinations of the worship of particular kins. It would seem, therefore, that the world-wide prevalence of sacrificial worship points to a time when the kindred group and the group of commensals were identical, and when, conversely, people of different kins did not eat and drink together.

At first sight it might appear that this amounts to the

@@@1 Hence in Roman ritual there is no inspection of the *exta* where the sacrifice is piacular, and so does not involve a meal offered to the deity.