Levi, Ben Gerſon, and Abarbanel. The greater part of theſe writers maintain, that ſacrifices were at firſt a human inſtitution; and that God, in order to prevent their being offered to idols, introduced them into his ſervice, though he did not approve of them as good in themſelves, or as proper rites of worſhip. That the in­finitely wise and good God ſhould introduce into his ſervice improper rites of worſhip, appears to us ſo ex­tremely improbable, that we cannot but wonder how ſuch an opinion ſhould ever have found its way into the minds of ſuch men as thoſe who held it. Warburton’s theory of ſacriſice is much more plauſible, and being more lately publiſhed, is worthy of particular examina­tion.

According to this ingenious prelate, ſacriſices had their origin in the ſentiments of the human heart, and in the ancient mode of converſmg by action in aid of words. Gratitude to God for benefits received is na­tural to the mind of man, as well as his bounden duty. “This duty (ſays the biſhop @@\*) was in the moſt early times diſcharged in expreſſive actions, the leaſt equivocal of which was the offerer’s bringing the firſt fruits of paſturage or agriculture to that ſequeſtered place where the Deity uſed to be more ſolemnly invoked, at the ſtated times of public worſhip; and there preſenting them in homage, with a demand which ſpoke to this purpoſe. — ‘I do hereby acknowledge thee, O my God! to be the author and giver of all good: and do now, with humble gratitude, return my warmeſt thanks for theſe thy bleſſings particularly beſtowed upon me. ”—Things thus devoted became thenceforth ſacred: and to prevent their *deſecration,* the readieſt way was to send them to the table of the prieſt, or to conſume them in the fire of the altar. Such, in the opinion of our author, was the origin of euchariſtical ſacriſices. *Impetratory* or *precative* ſacriſices had, he thinks, the fame origin, and were contrived to expreſs by action an invocation for the continuance of God’s favour. “Expiatory ſacrifices (ſays the learned prelate) were in their own na­ture as intelligible, and in practice as rational, as either of the other two. Here, inſtead of preſenting the firſt fruits of agriculture and paſturage, in corn, wine, oil, and wool, as in the euchariſtical, or a portion of what was to be ſown or otherwiſe propagated, as in the *impetratory;* ſome choſen animal precious to the repenting criminal, who deprecates or ſuppoſed to be obnoxious to the Deity who is to be appealed, was offered up and ſlain at the altar, in an action which, in all languages, when tranſlated into words, ſpeaks to this purpoſe: — ‘I con­feſs my tranſgreſſions at thy footſtool, O my God! and with the deepeſt contrition implore thy pardon; confessing that I deſerve death for thoſe my offences. ’— The latter part of the confeſſion was more forcibly ex- preſſed by the *actiοn* of ſtriking the devoted animal, and depriving it of life; which, when put into words, con­cluded in this manner, —‘ And I own that I myſelf de­ferve the death which I now inflict on this animal. ’

This ſyſtem of ſacriſice, which his lordſhip thinks ſo well ſupported by the moſt early movements of ſimple nature, we admit to be ingenious, but by no means ſatisfactory. That mankind in the earlier ages of the world were accuſtomed to ſupply the deficiencies of their language by expreſſive geſticulations we are not inclined to controvert: the cuſtom prevails among ſavage na­tions, or nations half civilized, at the preſent day. His

lordſhip, however, is of opinion, and we heartily agree with him, that our firſt parents were inſtructed by God to make articulate sounds ſignificant of ideas, notions, and things (ſee Language, no 6. ), and not left to fabricate a language for themſelves. That this heaven- taught language could be at firſt copious, no man will ſuppoſe who thinks of the paucity of ideas which thoſe who ſpoke it had to expreſs; but when we confider its origin, we cannot entertain a doubt but that it was preciſe and perſpicuous, and admirably adapted to all the real purpoſes of life. Among theſe purpoſes muſt ſurely be included the worſhip of God as the moſt important of all. Every ſentiment therefore which enters in­to worſhip, gratitude, invocation, confeſſion, and depre­cation, the progenitors of mankind were undoubtedly taught to clothe in words the moſt ſignificant and une­quivocal; but we know from Moſes, whole divine lega­tion the hilltop ſurely admitted, that Lain and Abel, the eldeſt children of our firſt parents, worſhipped God by the rites of ſacrifice: and can we ſuppoſe that this practice occurred to *them* from their having ſo far for­gotten the language taught them by their father, as to be under the neceſſity of denoting by action what they could not expreſs by words? If this ſupposition be ad­mitted, it will force another upon us ſtill more extrava­gant. Even Adam himſelf muſt, in that cafe, have be­come dumb in conſequence of his fall; for it is not con­ceivable, that as long as he was able to utter articulate sounds, and affix a meaning to them, he would ceaſe, in the preſence of his family, to confeſs his sins, implore forgiveneſs, and expreſs his gratitude to God for all his mercies.

The right reverend writer, as if aware of ſome ſuch objection as this to his theory, contends, that if ſacrifices had ariſen from any other ſource than the light of reason, the Scripture would not have been silent concerning that source; “eſpecially ſince we find Mo­ſes carefully recording what *God* immediately, and not *nature,* taught to Adam and his family. Had the ori­ginal of ſacrifice, ſays he, been preſcribed, and directly commanded by the Deity, the ſacred hiſtorian could never have omitted the expreſs mention of that circumſtance. The two capital obſervances in the Jewiſh ri­tual were the Sabbath and Sacrifices. To impreſs the higheſt reverence and veneration on the *Sabbath,* he is careful to record its divine original: and can we ſup­poſe that, had ſacriſices had the fame original, he would have neglected to eſtabliſh this truth at the time that he recorded the other, ſince it is of equal uſe and of equal importance? I ſhould have ſaid, indeed, of much greater; for the multifarious *ſacrifices* of the law had not only a reference to the *forfeiture* of Adam, but likewiſe prefigured our redemption by Jeſus Chriſt. ”

But all this reaſoning was foreſeen, and completely anſwered before his lordſhip gave it to the public. It is probable, that though the diſtinction of weeks was well known over all the eaſtern world, the Hebrews, during their reſidence in Egypt, were very negligent in their obſervance of the Sabbath. To enforce a reli­gious obſervance of that ſacred day, it became neceſſary to inform them of the time and occaſion of its firſt in­ſtitution, that they might keep it holy in memory of the creation; but, in a country like Egypt, the people were in danger of holding ſacrifices rather in too high than too low veneration, ſo that there was not the ſame ne-

\* Divine Leg. b. ix. c. 2.