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THE O.T. Short Title

O.T. SACRIFICES: MEANING AND PURPOSE

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Exegetical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Sacred Theology

by

James Lowell Bishop

June 1957

approved by:

Alexander R. Bruce
Professor

Wm. A. Thumlich
Professor

51810

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Approved by: Reginald von Rohr Jauer
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Later, the writer began to realize that his youthful ideas were far from accurate, but he still had an interest in studying the Old Testament sacrifices.

In an Old Testament Introduction course at Concordia

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

When the present writer was still a child, he somewhere picked up the idea that sacrifice in the Old Testament was related to work-righteousness. He thought that by piling up a sufficient number of sacrifices in obedience to the law, the Old Testament saints could somehow earn their own salvation. That this was actually the belief of many of the people, at least at times, is evident from the complaints of the prophets.¹ But these same prophetic complaints indicate that such a concept was not to be understood as the true, God-intended concept of sacrifice.

Somewhere this writer also picked up the idea that the Old Testament sacrificial system was intended to point God's people directly to the suffering and death of the coming Savior. Since Christ has come and we now have a much fuller revelation of him, this writer believed that the Old Testament sacrificial system had become outmoded, and that there was no longer any value in studying it.

Later, the writer began to realize that his youthful ideas were far from accurate. But he still had no interest in studying the Old Testament sacrifices.

In an Old Testament Introduction course at Concordia

¹Cf. Micah 6:6-8; Amos 4:4-5; 5:21-24; Jer. 7:1-26.

Seminary, the members of the class were required to read rapidly many of the books of the Old Testament in the Revised Standard Version. As the present writer hastily read through the Mosaic legislation on sacrifice, he became impressed with a thought that had not occurred to him before. It no longer seemed to him that the sacrificial system was a matter of salvation through the piling up of human works. Instead, he found in the system a concrete expression of God's grace. The whole idea of sacrifice seemed to be bound up with the covenant which had been established by God in grace. The whole validity of the sacrifices seemed to be derived not from the human acts in themselves, but from the promises of God. The writer began to view the presentation of the sacrifice as a very concrete expression of the worshiper's confession of sin, and the consumption of the sacrifice by fire as a visual assurance of God's forgiveness.

Since in liturgical language the parts of a worship service in which the congregation speaks or offers something to God are called sacrificial, and the parts in which God speaks or offers something to the worshipers are called sacramental, this writer began to toy with the idea that perhaps the sacrifices of the Old Testament should be called sacraments, in order to emphasize the facts (if, under investigation, these would prove to be facts) that: (1) God instituted the sacrificial system; (2) sacrifices were brought on the basis of God's command and promise, not on man's initiative

as an attempt to persuade God to do man's bidding; (3) the validity of the sacrifices was derived from God's institution and promises, not from the acts themselves; (4) the chief purpose of sacrifices was to offer visual assurance of forgiveness of sins to the worshipers, who brought their sacrifices as the visual counterpart of their confession of sin.

According to this theory, there were both sacrificial and sacramental elements in the sacrificial system. But since the sacrificial elements have usually been stressed to the point that people seldom consider the sacramental elements, this writer began to think that it might be worthwhile to shift the emphasis to the other side by speaking of the Old Testament sacrifices as sacraments.

When this writer learned that Dr. Sauer was interested in having a student study the whole area of Old Testament worship with a view to finding material that could some day be incorporated into a new course at the Seminary, he decided to apply for the fellowship that was being offered in this area. He looked upon this as an opportunity to dig into this subject and find out whether his latest theory on sacrifice would hold up against a careful study of the Biblical passages involved and the writings of scholars in the field.

Once this writer began his study, it wasn't long before he found that the subject was much more complicated than he had imagined. He soon discovered also that there are more theories or modifications of theories on the origin, meaning,

and purpose of sacrifice than there are writers on the subject. And the number of writers is very large.

Although the Old Testament gives some very minute details regarding the proper performance of sacrifices, many scholars feel that there are only hints at the meaning and purpose of sacrifice to be found in the Old Testament. Therefore, some writers have allowed their imaginations to run away with them in determining the meaning and purpose of Israel's sacrifices. Other men have very carefully studied pagan worship rites as they have been revealed by recent studies,² and have sought to find the origin as well as the original meaning and purpose of Israel's sacrificial system in these pagan rites.

To exhaust in half a year all the material that bears upon the subject of this investigation is impossible, especially for a student who is carrying a full load of graduate studies. A person could spend many years studying the material, and still not be sure that all his conclusions were correct.³ One way to get around this difficulty would be to

²During the last seventy-five years, much information about pagan worship rites contemporary with the history of Israel has been uncovered by archaeologists. Numerous scientific investigations of uncultured peoples of today have also been carried on by anthropologists. As a sample of the number of books that have been written and the type of work that has been done, cf. the footnotes in W. O. E. Oesterley, Sacrifices in Ancient Israel: Their Origin, Purposes and Development (New York: Macmillan, [1937], pp. 11-74.

³Norman H. Snaith, The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, c.1946), pp. 20-2, has clearly demonstrated that even James G. Frazer has drawn unwarranted conclusions from the vast amount of material that he has studied and presented in his voluminous work, The Golden Bough.

narrow the scope of this investigation considerably. But that would defeat the original purpose of the study. The writer is not at this time interested in exhaustively studying some small detail of the sacrificial system. He is interested in looking at the concept of sacrifice in general and trying to find the original meaning and purpose of the institution.

Therefore, the writer has tried to stand with both feet solidly grounded in the Scriptures and with his eyes surveying the parade of countless theories, trying to select the best from these theories and to give an explanation of those theories which contradict the Scriptural concept of sacrifice.⁴

We do not propose to add another theory to the already long list. Instead, we want to present an overview of the chief theories that have been set forth--an overview that may serve as a brief introduction to the subject for any student

⁴This presupposes that Scripture is a valid place to stand in surveying and judging theories on sacrifice. This writer assumes that the Bible is a reliable source of information on all matters concerning which it speaks. He holds that the Pentateuch presents an accurate, though incomplete, historical account of the period of which it speaks. Therefore, since the Bible speaks at great length concerning sacrifice, this writer considers it a primary source of information on the subject, a criterion according to which other theories may validly be judged. Because the Bible does not tell us everything we would like to know, it is certainly valid to go outside Scripture for information. But where the Bible does speak clearly, its statements are not to be either ignored or denied. Where the Bible speaks, but not clearly, or where its statements are subject to various interpretations, outside sources can often throw light upon the interpretation of such passages. But no statement of Scripture is ever to be interpreted in such a way that it conflicts with other clear statements of Scripture.

who is interested in such a survey. We also want to show that the many theories that have been presented do not succeed in overthrowing the Biblical concept of sacrifice. Finally, we want to show what this writer believes to be the direction that Lutheran scholarship should take in using the vast amount of material available for further study.

We have chosen as our title: "The Original (God-Intended) Meaning and Purpose of the Old Testament Sacrifices." This means that this thesis is intended to answer two basic questions: (1) What was God's purpose in instituting sacrifices?; (2) What meaning did God intend sacrifices to have for man?

This presupposes that God did institute sacrifices, and that the origin of sacrifice is with God. But since so many writers on the subject reject God's institution of sacrifice and view it simply as a human development, it seems necessary to at least consider whether it is possible in the light of recent discoveries to hold that God did institute sacrifice. The second chapter takes up this question and seeks to show that God did institute sacrifice.

The third chapter takes up another question that is really not a part of this study. Yet, because so many writers hold that Israel's worship rites were totally or almost totally based on pagan religious rites, it seems necessary to say a few words about the relationship of Israel's sacrifice to pagan sacrifice.

Chapter four presents and evaluates a number of theories

that have been set forth with regard to the meaning and purpose of sacrifice.

With chapter five begins the presentation of the answers to our basic questions. We begin with the meaning and purpose of sacrifice before the Levitical legislation. Chapter six takes up the chief animal sacrifices of Leviticus: the "burnt-offering," the "peace-offering," the "sin-offering," and the "guilt-offering."

Chapter seven is a summary and conclusion, and it includes suggestions for further study.

A correct understanding of the Old Testament sacrifices is important because the New Testament uses the sacrificial system to explain the suffering and death of Jesus to Jews.⁵ And the continued study of the sacrificial system is important also because man is ever in need of learning and relearning the ancient lessons that the sacrificial system taught.

⁵Particularly the Epistle to the Hebrews.



CHAPTER II

THE DIVINE INSTITUTION OF SACRIFICE

The question of whether or not God instituted sacrifice is not a part of the intended scope of this thesis. This writer would like to assume that God did institute sacrifice, and go on immediately to discuss the purpose of that institution and the meaning that it was intended to have for man. But most recent writers on the subject of sacrifice do not accept this assumption. Almost all of them either explicitly state or very clearly imply that God did not institute sacrifice, that sacrifice is a purely human development, and that if God had anything to do with it at all, his function was not that of instituting but that of adapting and purifying.¹

It is immediately obvious that unless we can establish that God did institute sacrifice, there is no point in trying to discuss the God-intended meaning and purpose of sacrifice. Therefore, it is the purpose of this chapter to show briefly how far recent writers have gone in rejecting the divine institution of sacrifice, to show that this rejection is based on theory, not on fact, and to reaffirm the Biblical assertion that sacrifice had its origin with God.

There is a great deal of disagreement among scholars

¹This theory that God adapted and purified pagan sacrifice is discussed further in the next chapter.

regarding the origin and original meaning of sacrifice among men.² After a thorough study of the material available, some have come to the conclusion that the origin of sacrifice simply is not known and cannot be known on the basis of the present evidence.³

In recent years anthropologists have studied the worship practices of many primitive peoples and have tried to discover the meaning that these rites had or have to these primitive men. These scholars have largely disregarded the Bible, because they consider it irrelevant to a study of pagan worship rites.⁴ On the basis of anthropological studies, writers have come to the conclusion that the practice of sacrifice

²Harold H. Rowley, The Meaning of Sacrifice in the Old Testament (Manchester: University Press, 1950), p. 76, writes: "I do not propose to speak on the origin of sacrifice among men, or on the first meaning which it may have had. . . . Suffice it to say that those who have conducted such an inquiry are not agreed as to its results." Some of the disagreement is shown in this present thesis.

³This is suggested by Rowley's reluctance to speak on the subject (loc. cit.). Royden Keith Yerkes, Sacrifice in Greek and Roman Religions and Early Judaism (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952), p. 87, says that the origin of many religious rites and ceremonies will never be known.

⁴At first glance it seems to be a valid statement that the Bible is irrelevant to a study of pagan worship rites. But as one studies the theories that have been proposed concerning pagan sacrifice, one soon realizes that these theories not only ignore, but also contradict express biblical statements. Therefore, for the person who holds, as this writer holds, that the first five books of the Bible present a historical account that is accurate, though not by any means complete, it is impossible to study even pagan sacrifice without taking into consideration as a reliable authority, as far as it goes, the biblical information on the subject.

antedates the concept of a personal deity.⁵ Some have even said that ancient man once offered sacrifices without any concrete idea of why he was doing it, and certainly without any thought that his sacrifices had something to do with the relationship between him and the gods.⁶

According to some theories, man gradually became aware of the gods.⁷ And as he began to recognize the higher powers in nature as gods, and began to look upon them as personal deities, he also began to consider the gods as having human appetites and wants. When primitive theology had advanced to this point, man began to look upon his sacrifices as means of

⁵Yerkes, op. cit., p. ix, writes: "Sir James G. Frazer, in his exhaustive studies in The Golden Bough, left no doubt that sacrificial rites can be traced to a period long antedating any concept of deity. He concluded that these rites arose from purely magical practices. . . . [Morris] Jastrow himself leaned to the opinion that all sacrifices were developed from divination rites, especially hepatoscopy [the perception of omens of the future by means of study of the entrails of animals] as practised in Babylonia. Burning the corpse of the animal used in the rites seemed the most fitting disposition of what had been used for a quasi-supernatural purpose." On p. 86, he says that the Passover feast probably antedated any concept of personal deity.

⁶Yerkes, op. cit., p. 103, speaking of early Greek thusias, writes: "One method of showing great honour to prominent men and benefactors and to slain warriors was to offer thusias for them. They had not developed their thinking so far as to reason or argue upon just what was accomplished by such offerings. They were happy and thankful; a thusia expressed that attitude."

⁷Yerkes, op. cit., p. 94, suggests this development in the thinking of man.

feeding and thereby strengthening the gods.⁸

Now if the gods had human appetites and wants, and if man was the chief or only supplier of these wants, then the gods were dependent upon man, to some extent at least, for continued life and health.⁹ It is at this point that magic comes into the picture.¹⁰ Magic is the means by which man manipulates the gods and the forces of nature according to a strict ritual pattern to make them serve his own ends. The acts of magic which man performs determine the course of historical events and the destinies of many individual men or groups of men (such as armies or nations).

It seems that man later realized the fact that the forces of nature and history were not completely within his own power. With this concept of gods who were above the control of man went fear of offending the gods by failing to offer the service that they demanded or by committing acts that displeased them. Sacrifice now became a means by which man might

⁸Rowley, op. cit., p. 77, quotes Edward Westermarck, The Origin and Development of Moral Ideas (1908), II, 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."

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Rowley, op. cit., p. 78, quotes H. H. Gowen, A History of Religion (1934), p. 64, as defining sacrifice thus: "man's effort to sustain the course of Nature by providing the requisite replenishment of power. It has therefore affinity with Imitative Magic." Rowley agrees that sacrifice had its roots in magical practice, but he does not think that the Old Testament presents a magical view of sacrifice.

approach the gods to appease their anger and to avert whatever misfortune they had in store for him. It also became a means of requesting or even bribing the gods to do the will of man.¹¹

As we have said before, scholars disagree widely with regard to the origin of sacrifice. But most of them agree in making of sacrifice an organ of man's approach to God. The writer who speaks of sacrifice as God's gift or God's approach to man is a rare one indeed.¹²

¹¹Rowley, *op. cit.*, p. 77, quotes Samuel Ives Curtiss, Primitive Semitic Religion Today (1902), 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, . . . so that the divine being who is displeased may overlook the offence on account of which he is angry." Yerkes, *op. cit.*, p. 95, speaking of pre-Homeric Greek thusias in connection with the slaying of animals for eating purposes, writes: "Men were convinced that to kill and eat without due recognition of the gods would be to stir their anger and bring misfortune. Present although unseen, they would not tolerate rudeness."

¹²One of the few is F. D. Kidner, Sacrifice in the Old Testament (London: Tyndale Press, 1952), pp. 23-4: "The initiative of God in making the covenant was extended also to the appointing of the offerings. . . . The very means of making atonement was His gift to man: 'the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls.' The theology of this is essentially that of grace: its crowning statement is that 'God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.'" Rowley, *op. cit.*, pp. 95 and 110, states that sacrifice can not be understood merely as man's approach to God. He speaks of a two-way traffic between man and God, with God reaching down in power to save man at the moment when he offered his sacrifice. But Rowley always makes man the initiator, the one who opens the two-way traffic by his approach to God. William Moenkemoeller, The Festivals and Sacrifices of Israel (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1932), p. 29, emphasizes that the blood was God's gift to man as a symbol of man's atonement with God. The offering, then, of the flesh of the animal to God was a gift of the offerer to the merciful God in gratitude for his blessings.

The conclusions that have been drawn on the basis of archaeological and anthropological studies have led men to force the same conclusions on the Old Testament. For example, in almost complete disregard of the Old Testament statements to the contrary, some writers have speculated that the origin of the Passover among the Israelites goes back way beyond Moses and the beginning of the Exodus.¹³ They say that the Passover story is something that was added after the Exodus to a much older rite as an explanation of its origin.¹⁴

Furthermore, it was not long ago that the theory was popular which said that the prophets categorically opposed all sacrifice. This was hailed as clear evidence that sacrifice did not originate with God, and that God neither demanded nor approved of sacrifice, but that he only tolerated it so long as it did not interfere with the true worship that he demanded.¹⁵

¹³So Yerkes, op. cit., pp. 86-7; Rowley, op. cit., p. 83.

¹⁴So Yerkes, op. cit., pp. 86-7; on p. 86 he says, "The feast itself, like other feasts of its kind, probably antedated any concept of personal deity. Its continuation, long after the invisible Power had been thought of as an intelligent, volitional Being, necessitated definite reference to the Being when the feast was kept." On p. 138, he applies the same principle to the perpetual fire on the altar, saying that what was once simply a necessity was later explained symbolically.

¹⁵W. O. E. Oesterley and Theodore H. Robinson, Hebrew Religion: Its Origin and Development (second, revised and enlarged, edition; New York: The Macmillan Co., 1937), p. 232, write: "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." (Continued on p. 14.)

Now the facts that are being uncovered by archaeological and anthropological studies can be of great value to students of the Bible as well as to students of history. But it is always necessary for us to keep in mind the difference between facts and interpretations. Facts are completely objective. But interpretations of facts and conclusions based on them are often very subjective, especially in historical studies where not all the facts are known and where certain very important facts are often missing. Because of the lack of complete information, every writer who wants to come to definite, or even tentative, conclusions has to begin with certain a priori assumptions and has to engage in a certain amount of speculation. If the theories that are developed by this method are able to survive all tests and criticisms, they can usually be considered true. But if they are contrary to the revealed word of God, they can not stand, because they are unable to account for all the available facts.

Some of the a priori assumptions with which men who write on sacrifice often begin are contrary to our Christian

Paul Volz, Prophetengestalten des Alten Testaments (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1938), p. 19, says, "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 is Opfer-Religion. . . . Propheten-Religion ist Wort-Religion." J. Philip Hyatt, Prophetic Religion (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, c.1947), p. 127, states: "The opposition 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 offense against the God of Israel."

faith. Men who begin with such assumptions are bound to reach conclusions that are also contrary to our faith, even though they may have operated with a large amount of purely objective material. When we read their writings, it is often easy to follow them and agree with their reasoning. But suddenly we find that we are being led to conclusions which do not agree with our faith. When we check back to find out how we were led astray, we usually find that the a priori assumptions with which the writer began (which are usually just taken for granted without being stated) are assumptions that we can not accept. And it is at this point and very often only at this point that we can challenge these writers.

Everyone who writes or thinks about sacrifice has to operate with some presuppositions. These assumptions usually can not be proved, although they can sometimes be established by the conclusions that are derived from them, if the conclusions hold up under critical examination. This writer operates with the presupposition that the Pentateuch presents an accurate, although very incomplete, picture of the historical situation of which it speaks. He also operates with the assumption that the Pentateuch was composed at an early date and that the words that are attributed to Moses were actually spoken by him. This writer further holds that this Moses lived and acted at the time of the Exodus, which was also a historical event. Therefore, this writer considers the Pentateuch a valuable source of information on the origin, develop-

ment, and practice of sacrifice. When it speaks on the subject, what it says can not be ignored or denied.

This writer believes that his assumptions have not been disproved, and that they can still be used as a basis of operation. However, most recent writers on the subject of sacrifice deny these assumptions and propose a set of their own, including the following: (1) Most of the material on sacrifice contained in the Pentateuch is of late origin. Much of it is post-exilic; (2) The words and acts attributed to Moses were largely or entirely not spoken or performed by a historical person named Moses who lived at the time of the Exodus; (3) The Pentateuch, especially the book of Genesis, presents neither an accurate nor a historical account of the early days of man; (4) Therefore, the Pentateuch is not a reliable source of information on the subject of sacrifice in ancient days, and it can be used only to corroborate information gathered from other sources. These are assumptions that have not been proved, and which this writer does not accept.

A common method of studying primitive sacrifice is to find an uncultured tribe of natives who still practice sacrifice and ask them what their sacrifices mean to them. This is supposed to throw light on ancient sacrifice.¹⁶ But this

¹⁶W. O. E. Oesterley, Sacrifices in Ancient Israel (New York: Macmillan, [1937]), p. 16, says that Robertson Smith's communion theory involved the contention that sacrifice was originally connected with totemism. Totemism is a term that belongs originally to some of the North American Indian tribes. (Continued on p. 17.)

method operates on the assumption that the thinking of modern savages is equivalent to that of ancient man. Now it seems to this writer that, although there may be some validity to this method, modern savages are not as valid a source of information on ancient sacrifice (particularly the sacrifice of God's people) as is the Bible, which is itself a very ancient source.

Therefore, where the Bible speaks clearly, this writer considers it a primary source. All secondary sources must be considered, but they must remain secondary.

On the basis of clear Biblical statements we can give the following answers to the theories that have been summarized earlier in this chapter. God instituted sacrifices among men. God himself explicitly states that the sacrifices

On p. 18, Oesterley speaks of Durkheim's studies of the Intichiuma rites of the Arunta tribe of Central Australia, which Durkheim believed to be an indication of a very primitive, perhaps the earliest, concept of sacrifice. The first of the rites which Durkheim considered significant "is an act of oblation undertaken to increase the totem species; in this Durkheim discerns the idea of sacrifice: 'The purpose of the ceremony at the present day, so say the natives, is, by means of pouring out the blood of kangaroo men upon the rock, to drive out in all directions the spirits of the kangaroo animals, and so to increase the number of the animals.'" On p. 22, Oesterley speaks of Loisy examining the rites of the aborigines of Australia (whom he places in the lowest scale of civilization known), finding no sacrifice among them, and concluding that these rites must have been in existence before the idea of sacrifices arose. These are only a few examples of this method.

of Israel were his gift to his people.¹⁷ The author of the book of Leviticus informs us that the laws regarding Israelite sacrifices were given to Moses by God on Mount Sinai.¹⁸ But the book of Genesis clearly tells us that

¹⁷Lev. 17:11. Kidner, op. cit., pp. 23-4, maintains that the sacrifices of Israel were a gift on God's own initiative, and that "the giving was first of all on God's side." On p. 5, he says that the existence of heathen sacrificial rites "no more weakens the Israelite claim to a divine sanction, than the ability of the Nazarenes to name the brothers and sisters of Jesus disproved the incarnation." Rowley, op. cit., p. 110, is willing to say that sacrifice is God's approach to man, charged with power. But he makes this only the response to man's initial approach to God. Moenkemoeller, op. cit., p. 3, writes: "when God organized His chosen people in that momentous year of their stay at Mount Sinai, He gave them a constitution at once complete and all-embracing, which was to govern them throughout the entire duration of their national existence." It is true that in 1 Sam. 26:19, David says, "If it is the Lord who has stirred you up against me, may be accept an offering." This seems to indicate that David looked upon sacrifice as a means of appeasing God's wrath. But the word that he used for "offering" is the same as that which generally refers to the cereal offering. It seems strange that he would propose using the cereal offering rather than the burnt offering as a means of appeasement. Perhaps David had something other than appeasement in mind. On the other hand, this same word seems to have been used as a general word for sacrifice before the Levitical legislation (cf. Gen. 4:3-5), and it is possible that this general usage continued even after the sacrificial laws had been given. If this is true, and if David was speaking of appeasement, it is worthy of note that in the opinion of many scholars the context of this statement indicates that at the time David had a very low concept of God. He looked upon God as a national God, whose influence did not extend beyond the borders of Israel (1 Sam. 26:19-20). Therefore, this statement must be taken as an indication of the extent to which he had been influenced by pagan concepts, and not as a criterion for judging the true and original concept of God and of sacrifice.

¹⁸Lev. 7:38. Kidner, op. cit., p. 5, writes, "the existence of other cults invites comparisons which soon compel the question whether their cruelties, their licentiousness and their ideas of bribery and magic, which persistently fascinated the Israelites themselves, were excluded from the Old Testament code by any influence less powerful than the authority of God." Moenkemoeller, op. cit., p. 3.

sacrifice went back far beyond the giving of the law on Sinai,¹⁹ probably to the origin of the human race. We find Noah, the second father of the human race, offering sacrifice immediately after the flood. And his sacrifice is offered to the true God.²⁰ Beyond this it is worthy of note that the earliest sacrifices recorded anywhere were sacrifices offered to the true God by Cain and Abel.²¹

Therefore, it is contrary to Scripture to say that the origin of sacrifice among men is unknown. There is clear evidence that sacrifice was practiced by Cain and Abel,²² and there is every reason to believe that they learned the practice

¹⁹For a fuller discussion of this subject, see chapter five of this thesis. Rowley, *op. cit.*, p. 82, states: "the antiquity of these sacrifices can no longer be questioned." And he says that this carries with it "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 [*italics added*]."

²⁰Gen. 8:20. The historicity of Noah and the Flood is attested beyond doubt by 1 Pet. 3:18-20: "For Christ also died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit; in which he went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water." Christ could not have gone to preach to the spirits of people who existed only in the imagination of the author of the book of Genesis. The historicity of Noah and the Flood is further attested by Heb. 11:7.

²¹Gen. 4:3-4. The historicity of Cain and Abel is attested by Heb. 11:4. It is interesting to note that even some writers who reject the historicity of Cain and Abel speak of them as actual, historical persons when this suits their purposes and helps to further their theories.

²²Ibid.

from their parents, Adam and Eve, who in turn must have learned it from God himself.²³

It is contrary to Scripture to say that sacrifice antedates the concept of a personal God,²⁴ because the first sacrifices that were offered were offered to the true God, who was already then recognized as a personal being.²⁵

In view of these things, for one who accepts the first five books of the Bible as true and as giving a correct, though often sketchy, historical picture, it is impossible to say that God opposed sacrifice as sacrifice. The author of the book of Leviticus states that God commanded the people of

²³The story of the sacrifices of Cain and Abel is told in Gen. 4:3-5 as though this was something that they were accustomed to doing. There is no evidence that the author of Genesis intended with this story to account for the origin of sacrifice. That is not the purpose of the story. The following translation would probably best convey the emphasis intended by the author of Genesis, and it is a translation that is allowed by the waw consecutives that are used: "And it happened in the course of time, when Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground, and Abel brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions, that the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering he had no regard." Most likely, sacrifice was practiced from the time that Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden. Perhaps non-bloody sacrifices were offered even before that, although this writer is inclined to doubt this.

²⁴It is interesting to note that at least one writer has maintained that sacrifices do not belong to the earliest ideas about religion at all. Oesterley, op. cit., p. 22, calls this "a notable contribution to the whole subject" of sacrifice by Loisy.

²⁵God is represented as carrying on a conversation with Cain in Gen. 4:6-7, 9-15.

Israel to bring their sacrifices to him.²⁶ Furthermore, the once popular view that the prophets opposed all sacrifice has been almost completely abandoned today in favor of the true Biblical view that the prophets opposed corrupt cultic practices that hindered true worship, but did not oppose the correct use of sacrifice.²⁷

One source of error for many writers is the theory that the concept of God has been developed through an ever-advancing evolution. This theory leads writers to classify worship rites according to their distance from the concept of God that

²⁶Lev. 7:38.

²⁷With regard to Amos 5:25, Rowley, op. cit., p. 79, writes: "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.'" With regard to Jer. 7:22, Rowley, op. cit., p. 80, writes: "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.'" H. Wheeler Robinson, Redemption and Revelation: In the Actuality of History (New York: Harper and Brothers, c.1942), p. 250, states: "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." In Inspiration and Revelation in the Old Testament (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1946), p. 226, he further states: "The attitude of the classical prophets to the sacrifices of their times does not deny any legitimate place to an offering accompanied by the right moral and spiritual attitude. 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."

is held by modern western civilization. Those rites that are farthest from the current view are considered earlier than rites that are not so far removed. By this method it is possible to develop a table of the progress in religious thinking from primitive times to the present.

But we have already seen that it is contrary to Scripture to trace the origins of sacrifice back to a time when man did not yet recognize the existence of a personal God. Furthermore, this classifying of religious rites leaves completely out of the picture the well-known fact that man's piety and theological insight does not develop according to a progressive pattern of evolution. Periods of intense piety and periods of indifference often follow one another with amazing rapidity. In addition to this well-known fact, we have clear Biblical evidence that man's spiritual and theological development has often involved retrogression rather than progression.²⁸

Therefore, when we find primitive peoples practicing religious rites that involve a low concept of God or that

²⁸Evidence of this abounds in the Old Testament. A few examples are the Fall of Adam and Eve and the retrogression that followed, leading up to the Flood; the retrogression after the Flood from the piety of Noah to the pagan concepts involved in the construction of the Tower of Babel; the retrogression from the Davidic kingdom to the later state of affairs in both kingdoms; the retrogression from the zeal with which the exiles returned to Judea to the apathy against which the post-exilic prophets had to speak. In the New Testament, as but one example, we have the Disciples, whose faith and understanding fluctuated considerably.

leave God completely or almost completely out of the picture, we must recognize this as what it really is: evidence of sinful man's retrogression from the high concept of God and worship that the earliest of men had. And we must look upon religious magic as one of man's longest steps on the road that leads away from man's original knowledge of the true God and from the true concept of sacrifice.²⁹

This discussion is carried farther in the next chapter, where some of the basic principles just mentioned are applied to the question of the relationship of Israel's sacrifice to pagan sacrifice.

²⁹Rowley has ruled out the magical view of sacrifice from the Old Testament concept. In op. cit., p. 78, he states that he does not think the Old Testament presents a magical view of sacrifice. On p. 96, he says, "In the same way, H. 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"; he quotes an interesting statement from Robinson, "Hebrew Sacrifice and Prophetic Symbolism," Journal of Theological Studies, XLIII (1942), 132: "Magic constrains the unseen; religion means surrender to it." This is a very good distinction between magic and religion, showing that the two are not at all compatible with one another. Applying this to the prophets, Rowley says, "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 fulfil the purpose of God."

CHAPTER III

THE RELATIONSHIP OF ISRAEL'S SACRIFICE TO PAGAN SACRIFICE

This discussion, as the discussion of the Divine institution of sacrifice, is not really a part of the intended scope of this thesis. But archaeology has uncovered many similarities between the worship rites of Israel and the worship rites of the Canaanites, and anthropology has discerned many primitive practices among other pagans that seem to be related to the worship of the Israelites. Therefore, many writers look to pagan sacrifices, especially the sacrifices of the Canaanites, in their search for the meaning and purpose of Israel's sacrifices. For this reason, it seems necessary to say a few words about the relationship of Israel's sacrifice to pagan sacrifice.

It is not the purpose of this chapter to discuss at length the actual similarities that have been claimed or proved. This chapter is intended only to summarize the chief conclusions that have been drawn from these similarities, to show where error is involved in these conclusions, and to set forth a theory that this writer considers harmonious with Scripture and adequate as an explanation of the similarities.

Many writers have concluded that a large part of the sacrificial system of Israel was taken over directly from pagans. They attribute the origins of various Israelite sacrifices to such peoples as the Canaanites, the Phoenicians, and the

Babylonians.¹ Although most recent writers agree that at least some of Israel's sacrificial system was adopted from the pagans, they disagree widely among themselves with regard to just which sacrifices were thus adopted and to how great an extent these sacrifices were altered in the process

¹Johs. Pedersen, Israel: Its Life and Culture, III-IV (London: Oxford University Press, 1940), p. 317, says, "Our knowledge of the Phoenician-Canaanite cult is now quite sufficient to warrant the conclusion that the greater part of the Israelitish sacrificial practices had been learnt from the Canaanites. . . . it is indeed difficult to draw the line between what is Canaanite and what is strictly Israelite." H. Wheeler Robinson, Redemption and Revelation, in The Library of Constructive Theology, edited by W. R. Matthews and H. Wheeler Robinson (New York: Harper and Brothers, c.1942), p. 249, writes: "It was probably within Canaan, and from their Canaanite kinsfolk, that the Hebrews derived the 'burnt-offering.'" J. Philip Hyatt, Prophetic Religion (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, c.1947), pp. 128-9, says, "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 in a near-Hebrew language at modern Ras Shamra in Syria, the site of ancient Ugarit. These tablets contain ancient Canaanite religious literature of about the fourteenth century B.C., and reveal quite clearly that at that time Canaanite religion included many sacrifices and rites which were later incorporated into Hebrew religion. In some instances the names of the Ugaritic sacrifices are the same as those in Hebrew." Harold H. Rowley, The Meaning of Sacrifice in the Old Testament (Manchester: University Press, 1950), p. 81, says that Israel "borrowed much from the Canaanites for its development in the post-Settlement period." Royden Keith Yerkes, Sacrifice in Greek and Roman Religions and Early Judaism (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952), p. 124, writes: "The well-substantiated tradition that much of Hebrew culture came from Phoenicia makes it quite possible that the Phoenicians furnished not only the temple for Solomon, but also much of the pattern of the rites connected with that temple and its successors." On p. 123, he gives names and descriptions of nine North Semitic rites that have been found in inscriptions, and points to parallels to Hebrew rites.

of adoption.²

Among writers who agree that pagan sacrifices were not adopted by Israel without modification, there is a difference of opinion with regard to the factor that influenced the modifications. Some attribute the purification of pagan sacrifice to the great national religious genius of Israel.³ Others

²Pedersen, op. cit., p. 317, says that "the Israelites did not adopt the Canaanite custom as a dead system. The sacrifices, also, entered as a natural element into the organism of Israelite culture, not as a thing merely acquired in an outward sense." Rowley, op. cit., p. 76, has an interesting statement on Israel's adaptation of Canaanite 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." On the same page, he points out that "the religion of Yahwism was not a Nature religion, as the religion of Canaan was."

With regard to which rites were borrowed and which were not, Robinson, op. cit., p. 249, says that the "peace-offering" was a development from ancient nomadic sacrifices, while the "burnt-offering" was probably learned in Canaan and from the Canaanites. However, it is interesting that in Yerkes's list of nine North Semitic rites, op. cit., p. 123, the word that seems to be parallel to the Hebrew "burnt-offering" is used only once, in a neo-Punic inscription of the second century B.C., and is accompanied by no description. On the other hand, the word for "peace-offering" is common among the Canaanites. Rowley, op. cit., p. 83, thinks that the Passover was not derived from Canaanite sources.

³Pedersen, op. cit., p. 317, says, "The Israelites did not adopt the Canaanite custom as a dead system. . . . Behind the sacrificial practices adopted by Israel there lay deeply rooted elemental ideas, which lived in the Israelite people." Rowley, op. cit., p. 76, also seems to suggest this.

give Moses credit for the accomplishment of the great task of surveying the host of pagan worship rites and selecting and adapting them to his own concept of God and worship. In some instances, Moses's concept of God and worship is equated with the true concept, taught to him by God.⁴

A few writers attribute the purification of pagan sacrifice to God himself.⁵ These same writers are usually not willing to attribute to God the origin of sacrifice. But they are willing to say that God took the forms of contemporary pagan worship rites, cleansed them of objectionable features, and added his own special meaning to them.

Some writers go so far as to say that Israel's adapted sacrifice had a distinctive character of its own, and that it contained new forms and new viewpoints that had not been found in pagan sacrifice.⁶

Aware that not all of Israel's sacrifices can be considered

⁴It is interesting to note that most of the writers consulted seldom spoke of Moses except in a negative way.

⁵F. D. Kidner, Sacrifice in the Old Testament (London: Tyndale Press, 1952), p. 5, writes: "Indeed the existence of other cults invites comparisons which soon compel the question whether their cruelties, their licentiousness and their ideas of bribery and of magic . . . were excluded from the Old Testament by any influence less powerful than the authority of God."

⁶Pedersen, op. cit., p. 299, says that to a certain extent Israelite sacrifice, though not much different from Canaanite sacrifice, "has acquired a special Israelitish character." On p. 317, he says of the Israelites: "they could independently appropriate the entire sacrificial cult, but also create new forms and new viewpoints from it."

copies of Canaanite worship rites, some recent writers have tried to trace certain Israelite sacrifices back beyond the settlement in Canaan. They have not been very successful in tracing the exact development of these sacrifices. But they have conjectured that these sacrifices originated sometime before Moses and the establishment of Israel as a nation.⁷ Some have conjectured that the origin is to be found in certain primitive pagan rites.⁸ Others have placed the origin somewhere in Israel's own early history, prior to her establishment as a nation.⁹ Perhaps most widely accepted is the view that Israel's worship must be considered in relation to both her own past and the background of culture and religion in the contemporary world in which she lived.¹⁰

This brings us to the point that this writer wants to make. As we have already seen, the Bible traces the origin of sacrifice back to the beginning of the human race. It tells us of sacrifices brought to the true God by Cain and Abel and by Noah.¹¹

The true tradition of sacrifice must have been carried

⁷So Rowley, op. cit., pp. 82-3. In one sentence in which he speaks particularly of the Passover, he says that "the origin of this rite is highly obscure, though it is probable that it long antedated the time of Moses."

⁸So Yerkes, op. cit., p. 168.

⁹So Rowley, op. cit., pp. 75, 82.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 75.

¹¹Gen. 4:3-6; 8:20-21.

on among the faithful, since we later find Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob building altars and offering sacrifices to the true God.¹² Jacob was specifically commanded by God to build an altar at Bethel.¹³

When Moses gave the people of Israel the laws of God regarding sacrifice, he was not introducing something new to the minds of the people. At Sinai a band of God's elect, organized only according to a loose tribal system, was welded into a nation. The laws that God gave to his people at Sinai were not entirely new concepts. They were, rather, a restoration and codification of things that God's people had learned before from their fathers. The elements that were new were those that applied to Israel as a nation.

It seems particularly true that the laws of sacrifice were a continuation, nationalization, and formalization of worship that had existed since the beginning of the human race. As Israel became a nation, it was necessary that it have a focal point for worship, a sanctuary, and that it have a priesthood to carry on the ritual of worship in a decent and orderly manner. The laws regarding sacrifice are not concerned with explaining sacrifice as if it were something new.¹⁴

¹²Gen. 12:7,8; 13:18; 22:13-14; 26:25; 31:53-54; 35:6-7; 46:1.

¹³Gen. 35:1.

¹⁴Lev. 1-7 speaks of sacrifice as a known thing. It does not explain why sacrifices are to be brought; it does not explain the meaning and purpose in any detail. It assumes that the people know these things. What it is concerned with are the details of priestly function and other patterns that need to be established for sacrificial worship on a national level.

They are primarily concerned with giving specifications for the sanctuary and instructions to the priesthood for carrying on worship on a national level.¹⁵

Evidently, the Israelites were not permitted to carry on sacrifice during the Egyptian bondage.¹⁶ Therefore, the Mosaic legislation served the further purpose of restoring a defunct practice and refreshing the people's memory of how worship was to be carried on. But although God's people probably did not sacrifice in Egypt, it seems that they knew something about the sacrifices of their fathers from oral tradition and possibly even written records.¹⁷

Now, if Israel's sacrifices as prescribed by Moses were a continuation on a national level of the true sacrifices that had existed on an informal and individual or small-group level from the beginning of the human race, then how do we account for the similarities that existed between Israelite sacrifices

¹⁵Kidner, *op. cit.*, pp. 8-9, writes: "It should be remembered at the outset that the codifying of the sacrificial system is not represented as a break with the past so much as a reorganizing of what already existed in an elementary form. The basic sacrifices, the burnt-offering and the peace-offering, were still basic, and kept the general character which they had had before. What was new was the priesthood, the sanctuary and the law. Where these were in full operation, the full range of sacrifices and the full details of their ritual could be expected; when they were defectively administered, a return to informality would be unavoidable."

¹⁶Israelite sacrifice would have been an abomination to the Egyptians (Ex. 8:26).

¹⁷When Aaron told the people of God's plans for them to go into the wilderness to offer sacrifices, everyone seemed to understand (Ex. 4:29-31).

and pagan sacrifices? The answer that appeals to this writer is very simple. But in spite of its simplicity, it is not the answer that is given by most modern writers. However, its very simplicity commends it as the answer that is likely to be correct.

Saint Paul tells us that the heathen have a natural knowledge of God,¹⁸ and that the content of the law has been written on their hearts and into their consciences.¹⁹ He tells us that the heathen once knew God, and that it was through their own sin that they fell away from the true God and turned to the worship of idols.²⁰ This is exactly the picture that the Old Testament gives us, although it does not express it in such exact words.

Gain and Abel stood at the head of the human race, the first-born in the second world, the world outside the Garden of Eden. And they offered sacrifices to the true God.²¹ Noah

¹⁸Rom. 1:18-20.

¹⁹Rom. 2:14-16.

²⁰Rom. 1:21-2:1: "although they knew God they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man or birds or animals or reptiles. Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity . . . because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator. . . . They did not see fit to acknowledge God. . . . Though they know God's decree that those who do such things deserve to die, they not only do them but approve those who practice them. Therefore you are without excuse, O man, whoever you are. . . ."

²¹Gen. 4:3-6.

also stood at the head of the human race, the first to enter the third world, borne into this post-deluvial world by the ark. He, too, offered sacrifice to the true God.²²

But in both the second and the third world, it was not long before men began to wander away from the true God. A small segment of the human race remained faithful, and this small segment carried forward an unbroken tradition of knowledge of the true God and of true worship. But the vast majority of men fell away from the true God and turned to the worship of idols.²³

Now if the heathen, who do not know the law, do by nature some of the things that the law requires; if their consciences, which are not acquainted with the written law, bear witness to a knowledge of the requirements of the law;²⁴ and if these same heathen, even though they no longer know the true God, still have a natural knowledge of the Divine which drives them to seek God in the form of man-made images;²⁵ then it is also reasonable to assume that their worship practices, no matter how corrupt they may have become, still bear traces of the

²²Gen. 8:20-21.

²³At the time of the Flood, there were only eight faithful persons; all of the rest of the population of the world had turned away from the true God. After the Flood, it was not long before most of the population of the earth had turned away from the true concept of God and went about building the Tower of Babel.

²⁴Rom. 2:14-15.

²⁵Rom. 1:19-23.

original concept of worship that they have inherited from their fathers.

This is not to say that pagan worship practices are in any way natural outgrowths from true worship practices. It is only to say that the need for worship, the desire to worship, and worship itself are found among the pagans as a result of their descent from the founders of the human race, who were God-fearing men.

And no matter how corrupt the worship practices of the heathen may at any time become, it is always possible for some vestiges of the original, true worship to show up here and there.

It should be stated at this point that this writer has no personal or theological objections to the theory that Israel's sacrificial system was taken over by God from the pagans and reworked into a system that expressed the ideals of worship that God had for his people. It is not prejudice but evidence that has led this writer to conclude that Israel's sacrifice was not taken from pagan sacrifice.

The theory presented by this writer is in harmony with the Biblical evidence and offers an adequate explanation of the archaeological and anthropological evidence. The theory that Israel's sacrifice was borrowed may explain the non-Biblical evidence, but it can not account for the Biblical evidence except by discounting it as poor or invalid evidence.

If Israel borrowed from the Canaanites, then Israel's

sacrificial system could not have been established at the time of the Exodus, neither the sacrificial system nor the authorship of the Pentateuch can be attributed to Moses, and the Pentateuch must be dated considerably later than the time of the Exodus.

Moses was brought up as an Egyptian. And if he established the sacrificial system of Israel, it is difficult to explain why he chose the Canaanite type of sacrifice,²⁶ and how he had become familiar enough with that type of sacrifice to be able to adopt it and adapt it to the needs of his people.²⁷

One could argue that God's people acquired Canaanite practices in the days of the Patriarchs. But this is the exact opposite of the picture that is presented in Genesis. There the patriarchs are presented as religious separatists. In fact, their faith is presented as the chief cause of their separation and distinction from their unbelieving neighbors.²⁸

The account of the establishment of the sacrificial system in Leviticus is presented as a direct revelation from God.

²⁶This could possibly be explained as a reaction to Egyptian worship rites, which the people of Israel must have hated.

²⁷This could possibly be explained on the basis of Moses's forty-year stay with Jethro, who was a priest of Midian. But the Midianites were not Canaanites.

²⁸Abraham even had to leave his family and his friends in an act of faith (Gen. 12:1-5; cf. Heb. 11:8-10).

It is true that God ordinarily works through nature, history, and people. But he does at times perform miracles and speak directly to persons. At Sinai, God spoke to establish his Old Testament people as a nation. He had laid the foundation for this much earlier; this was not a new idea.²⁹ But at Sinai he acted decisively to create a nation.

God later entered history decisively in the person of his Son to re-establish his kingdom. This act, too, had been prepared for by the prophets. But when the time came, God acted apart from natural laws.

A few years later, God spoke to Paul in order to establish Gentile missions. The Old Testament and Jesus had spoken about Gentile missions, and other Apostles also engaged in the work. But to Paul God spoke in a decisive act in order to get his Gentile mission program moving on a large scale.

The first seven chapters of Leviticus speak of sacrifice as a known practice. This can be explained in either of two ways: (1) the laws of Leviticus were given at the time of the Exodus, and the practices incorporated into those laws had already been in existence for a long time; (2) the laws of Leviticus were given a long time after the people of Israel had settled in Palestine, in which case the practices incorporated into those laws could have come into common use through borrowing from the Canaanites.

²⁹E.g., Gen. 12:1-3; 17:1-8; 26:1-5.

This writer holds that the laws of the first seven chapters of Leviticus were given by God through Moses at Mount Sinai. The theory that we have presented gives an adequate account of the similarities that have been revealed between Israel's sacrifice and pagan sacrifice. The theory that we have presented fits the words of St. Paul to the Romans much better than the theories that involve borrowing. Therefore, we maintain that Israel did not derive its sacrifices from the Canaanites or any other pagan nation.

It is true that in actual practice the people of Israel often mixed pagan worship with worship of the true God,³⁰ and sometimes even substituted pagan worship for true worship.³¹ But this was always done by a degenerate Israel, and was always evidence that Israel had fallen away from God.³² And we must not allow the false worship practices of God's people to cloud our vision as we consider sacrifice as God intended it.

On the other hand, it is entirely possible that the Canaanites borrowed some things from the Israelites.³³ And it will probably never be known how much influence men like

³⁰This was especially true under King Ahaz in the kingdom of Judah.

³¹As, e.g., the worship of the Tyrian Baal which was introduced into the kingdom of Israel by Jezebel.

³²Cf. the complaint of Elijah in 1 Kgs. 19:10.

³³The Canaanites, with their many gods, would have less difficulty borrowing Israelite worship practices or ideas than the monotheistic Israelites would have borrowing pagan customs.

Abraham and others had on the worship practices of the land of Canaan.³⁴

It seems possible to say that some of the terminology used in connection with sacrifice may have been borrowed from the pagans. But this in no way means that the rites themselves or the meaning and purpose of the rites were taken over from them.

The similarities that exist, then, between the sacrifices of Israel and the sacrifices of the pagans are to be explained and understood on the basis of the common origin of all men. True worship and false worship both came from one source, and no matter how far the pagans may have fallen away from the true worship, certain original patterns persisted or recurred, causing at least surface similarities to appear at times between true worship and false worship. The common culture which God's people shared with the pagans offered ample opportunity for the heathen to borrow or adapt certain worship practices from the Old Testament saints.

Therefore, when we study pagan worship rites and note their similarities in many respects to true worship, we can use our knowledge of these pagan rites for several good purposes: (1) to show us what great temptations presented themselves to God's people; (2) to help us to understand the sins

³⁴Gen. 21:28-32 seems to present Abimelech as learning a religious or, at least, semi-religious custom from Abraham. Some evidence of Isaac's witness is seen in Gen. 26:26-29. These are only two random examples.

of idolatry or of mixed worship (Jahweh under the form of man-made images) that God's people fell into; (3) to a very limited extent to help us to find the original meaning and purpose of sacrifice, since amid all sorts of corruptions some remnants of the original truth are usually to be found. This last use must be made with extreme caution.

CHAPTER IV

VARIOUS THEORIES OF THE PURPOSE OF SACRIFICE

The purpose of this chapter is to set forth in summary form the major theories that have been advanced with regard to the meaning and purpose of sacrifice. In addition to these major theories, a few minor ones that seem worthy of mention are also included. In this chapter, meaning and purpose are not distinguished as clearly as they are in the next two chapters. Most of the theories discussed in this chapter do not consider God's purpose in instituting sacrifice, since the advocates of these theories do not, as a rule, look upon God as the author of sacrifice. These theories look upon sacrifice from man's viewpoint, and the only distinction between meaning and purpose is this: meaning applies to what man thinks he is doing when he sacrifices; purpose applies to what man hopes to achieve by sacrificing. Since both of these thoughts are anthropocentric, it is not always necessary for us to speak separately of meaning and purpose.

It is not the purpose of this chapter to trace the full development of the various theories that are mentioned. Nor is it our purpose to discuss all the arguments that are given to support the various theories. Our one purpose is to set forth the major and a few important minor theories, and to indicate briefly where there are weaknesses in these theories, so that the reader may have a general overview of the work

that has been done in this field, of the complications that are involved in the solutions that have been offered, and of where the basic weaknesses lie in some of these theories.

There are three major theories of the purpose of sacrifice that are widely favored today. These three theories can be conveniently labeled: (1) the gift theory; (2) the communion theory; (3) the liberation of life theory.¹ This sounds simple enough. But actually, it is more complicated than it seems on the surface. There is disagreement as to which of these theories represents man's earliest view of sacrifice. There is some disagreement as to which of these theories represents man's view of which sacrifices. Does each individual sacrifice have a single meaning and purpose? or does more than one element play a part in a single sacrifice?² And within each of the three theories mentioned, there is disagreement as

¹Cf. W. O. E. Oesterley, Sacrifices in Ancient Israel (New York: Macmillan, [1937]), pp. 7, 11, 23; Harold H. Rowley, The Meaning of Sacrifice in the Old Testament (Manchester: University Press, 1950), pp. 76-8.

²Oesterley, op. cit., p. 13, says, "Roughly speaking, two stages are to be discerned in the history of the study of our subject: the earlier was that during which it was held that all sacrifices had in origin a single purpose; the second was, and is, that wherein it is realised that the origin and purposes of sacrifices cannot be explained on the theory of any one single underlying principle. According to almost all later theories, there was more than one object in offering sacrifices." Rowley, op. cit., p. 78, writes: "It is probable that no simple theory can express even the first meaning of sacrifice, and that it was already of complex significance so far back as it goes." On p. 79, he says, "In a particular sacrifice one element might be to the fore, but it is probable that other elements were also often present."

to the exact purpose of giving, holding communion, or liberating life. Furthermore, there is a certain amount of confusion of the three theories. One author may speak of the gift in the same terms that another author speaks of liberation of life or communion.

The gift theory was the first to be advanced on the basis of a really scientific study.³ Some writers consider this the basic idea behind sacrifice and the earliest of man's concepts on the subject.⁴ Particularly with regard to the sacrifices of the Old Testament it has been said that the gift idea is

³Cf. Oesterley, op. cit., p. 13, where he calls E. B. Tylor the first to enter upon the subject in a really scientific manner. According to Royden Keith Yerkes, Sacrifices in Greek and Roman Religions and Early Judaism (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952), p. ix, the gift theory was proposed by Tylor in 1874, in his book entitled Primitive Culture, II, 375.

⁴Oesterley, op. cit., p. 13, says, "[E. B. Tylor] maintained that sacrifice was in its origin a gift offered to supernatural beings." Rowley, op. cit., p. 77, quotes Tylor, Primitive Culture (5th edition; reprinted 1929), II, 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." George Buchanan Gray, Sacrifice in the Old Testament (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925), pp. 1-3, thinks that although it may be true that the communion idea represents man's earliest thoughts about sacrifice, the gift idea probably played a greater role in man's thoughts about sacrifice during historic times. Rowley, op. cit., p. 77, quotes Samuel Ives Curtiss, Primitive Semitic Religion Today (1902), p. 221: "Sacrifice may be regarded as a gift on the part of the suppliant. . . . It may be something like a bribe to blind the eyes of the deity." He also quotes from p. 222 of Curtiss: "The necessity for shedding blood does not exclude the character of sacrifice as a gift."

the prevailing one.⁵

But why did man bring gifts to his gods? It has been suggested that the purpose was either to secure the favor of the gods or to avert their wrath.⁶ Or, the gift may have been brought to induce the god to act on behalf of the offerer.⁷ Another thought is this, that the gift was brought in order to secure the blessing of the god on some undertaking that the offerer proposed to begin.⁸ It has been suggested that the gift was intended to serve as something like a bribe, to blind the eyes of the deity, so that he might overlook the offence that had made him angry.⁹ The motive behind the gift, then, may have been gratitude, desire for reward, fear, or penitence.¹⁰ Another suggestion is this, that the gift was brought for the purpose of giving nourishment to the gods.¹¹

⁵A. B. Davidson, The Theology of the Old Testament, in The International Theological Library, edited by Charles A. Briggs and Stewart D. F. Salmond (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1904), p. 315.

⁶According to Oesterley, op. cit., p. 13, this was Tylor's theory. Cf. also Curtiss, Primitive Semitic Religion Today (1902), p. 221, as quoted by Rowley, op. cit., p. 77.

⁷Rowley, op. cit., pp. 76-7.

⁸So Curtiss, Primitive Semitic Religion Today (1902), p. 221, as quoted by Rowley, op. cit., p. 77.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰S. C. Gayford, Sacrifice and Priesthood: Jewish and Christian (London: Methuen, 1924), p. 12.

¹¹So Michrodt, Theologie des Alten Testaments (1933), I, 65, as quoted by Oesterley, op. cit., p. 15. (Continued on p. 43.)

This idea comes close to being a part of the liberation of life theory.

The suggestion has been made that the concept of sacrifice as a gift originated in the practice of leaving gifts of food and drink at the tombs of the dead.¹²

Another theory holds that originally sacrifice was prayer accompanied by the necessary gifts.¹³ This would be in line with the ancient custom of accompanying with a multitude

On pp. 11-2, Oesterley writes: "The original institution of sacrifice was based upon the conception that the supernatural and powerful beings, upon whom men were dependent, were in their nature similar to human beings, and therefore had the same needs. Like men, too, they were of variable temperament, angry and vindictive if annoyed, but kindly disposed if approached in the right spirit, and treated as superior beings should be by their inferiors." On p. 19, Oesterley says, "Westermarck believes that . . . 'supernatural beings have human appetites and human wants,' but if these wants are not supplied by their worshippers all kinds of evil may befall them; so that 'in early religion the most common motive [of sacrifice] is undoubtedly a desire to avert evils.'"

¹²See Herbert Spencer, The Principles of Sociology (3rd edition; New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1885), pp. 261-84.

¹³Rowley, op. cit., p. 77, quotes Baumgarten, in Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart, edited by F. M. Schiele und L. Zscharnack (1913), IV, col. 956: "Urspruenglich 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 verstaerken durch den Tatbeweis dafuer, dasz man sich den Erwerb des goettlichen Wohlgefallens etwas kosten lasse." Yerkes, op. cit., pp. 180-1, points to the Septuagint and Latin translators of the Old Testament as evidence that the word kipper was at that time understood to mean "pray" or "pray out." He connects this idea of prayer to that of purification and says, "This idea was admirably expressed by exlaskethai which makes plain that, when men performed these rites, they were praying God to purify themselves and his sanctuary in order that they might render him the worship which alone insured and mediated his protection."

of presents any request directed to a king or any other person in a position of authority.

Perhaps the gift idea did play some part in Israel's sacrifices, particularly in the so-called burnt-offering. But insofar as this theory leaves out of the picture God's institution of sacrifice and God's own statement that sacrifice is his gift to man, just so far is it impossible to apply this theory to the sacrifices of the Old Testament. The idea that man can in any way enrich or feed God is entirely foreign to the Old Testament.¹⁴ And, as we shall see when we later discuss the various sacrifices of the Old Testament, some of the crass motives involved in the gift theory can not be called a part of sacrifice as God intended it.¹⁵

The communion theory was developed later than the gift theory.¹⁶ It shares some ideas with the gift theory and not a few with the liberation of life theory. According to this theory, the chief purpose of sacrifice was to provide the

¹⁴F. D. Kidner, Sacrifice in the Old Testament (London: Tyndale Press, 1952), p. 23, says, "Whatever ideas may have been held by the heathen or by the ignorant in Israel, the notion that man could feed or enrich his Creator had no basis in the Law, and was held up to scorn by the Prophets and Psalmists."

¹⁵Gayford, op. cit., p. 105, writes: "There is nothing in the regulations of the Sacrifices which gives any support to the idea of propitiating an angry God."

¹⁶The communion theory was introduced by W. Robertson Smith, The Religion of the Semites. According to Oesterley, op. cit., p. 16, the first edition of this work was published in 1889. This was only two years before the third edition of Tylor's work appeared.

necessary material for an act of communion with the gods.¹⁷ Some writers have claimed that this view of sacrifice is a more ancient one than the concept of the gift.¹⁸ Whether sacrifice as communion implies an awareness of the need for renewal of fellowship with the gods, or whether such sacrifice can be performed only by one who is already in fellowship with the gods is a debated point.

Advocates of the communion theory generally say that the communion between men and the gods was brought about by the consumption of the offering partly by the worshiper and partly by the god through the medium of fire or through the appointed medium of the priesthood.¹⁹ But some writers have traced the communion idea back to concepts that are involved in totem

¹⁷So Smith, The Religion of the Semites (3rd edition; 1927), p. 245, as quoted by Oesterley, op. cit., p. 16, and Rowley, op. cit., p. 76.

¹⁸Rowley, op. cit., p. 76, quotes Smith, The Religion of the Semites (3rd edition; 1927), 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." Oesterley, op. cit., p. 17, quotes F. B. Jevons, An Introduction to the History of Religion (1904), 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." Gray, op. cit., p. 2, is willing to admit the complete priority of the idea of communion.

¹⁹Yerkes, op. cit., p. 113, speaks of the gods and men sharing common food. Although he wrote before the communion theory as it is known today was introduced, Andrew Jukes, The Law of the Offerings in Leviticus I-VII (London: James Nisbet, 1847), p. 99, expressed a similar idea: "The second point in which the Peace-offering differed from others was, that in it the offerer, the priest, and God, all fed together. . . . They held communion in feeding on the same offering."

worship. In totemism, the animal was often identified with the god. Then, the eating of the animal by the worshiper was more than communion with the god; it was union with him. By eating the god, the worshiper received divine life and strength into himself.²⁰

When the communion theory is extended to the idea of eating the god, it comes very close to being the same as the liberation of life theory in practice. At least two men have combined the elements of these two theories into one theory.²¹

One purpose of communion with the gods that is the same as one of the purposes of giving gifts to the gods is that of seeking to receive supernatural protection against the supernatural dangers that surrounded primitive man.²²

It seems that communion is definitely a major factor in the so-called peace-offering of the Old Testament. But there is no evidence at all in the Old Testament that the idea of eating God was ever a part of true worship.²³ And once again

²⁰So Smith, The Religion of the Semites (3rd edition; 1927), pp. 245-6, as quoted by Oesterley, op. cit., p. 16.

²¹Oesterley, op. cit., p. 18, writes: "Next we may mention the view of Hubert and Mauss; . . . By the act of the consecration of the victim the divine principle is infused into it; the victim then being slain, this divine principle is released; but in consuming part of the victim the offerer receives within himself something of the divine, whereby he is made a different man."

²²So Jevons, An Introduction to the History of Religion (1904), p. 285, as quoted by Oesterley, op. cit., p. 17.

²³Gayford, op. cit., p. 14, says, "every trace of the prehistoric 'eating the god' has disappeared from the Old Testament."

it seems appropriate to mention the fact that the communion theory, as it is usually advocated, leaves God's institution of sacrifice completely out of the picture. It claims that in sacrifice man was seeking to establish fellowship with the gods, not that this was an institution of God through which he sought fellowship with his people.

The liberation of life theory shares some elements with each of the two previous theories. The theory maintains that in sacrifice the death of the animal was simply a means of liberating the life principle, the life itself, or at least the vitality from within the animal. There are varying reasons for which life was liberated. One purpose was to increase the power of the god in order to make him able to perform his beneficent functions on earth.²⁴ This purpose is so similar to one of the purposes involved in the gift theory, that it is often difficult to discern whether a writer is speaking of the gift theory or the liberation of life theory when he talks about sacrifice for the purpose of offering the god nourishment. Was the animal itself food for the god? or was the life of the animal the real nourishment for the god? There is some question whether the life that was liberated and given to the god was necessary to maintain his life, or whether it was offered to give the god additional strength

²⁴E. O. James, Origins of Sacrifice (1933), pp. 256f., as quoted in Oesterley, op. cit., p. 20.

for a special task that the worshiper wanted performed.²⁵

Another purpose of liberating life in sacrifice was to meet the forces of death and destruction with a fresh outpouring of vital potency. This would strengthen the worshiper against evil influences.²⁶

It has also been suggested that the liberated life served the purpose of covering or wiping out the transgressions of the worshiper.²⁷

This theory has been combined with the communion theory to produce the theory that when the animal was killed, its life was liberated to strengthen both the god and the worshiper as they together consumed the animal.²⁸

Before the introduction of modern medicine, people

²⁵The idea that the god needed the strength which the sacrifice afforded is suggested by Oesterley, op. cit., pp. 11-2; Westermarck, Origin and Development of the Moral Ideas (1908), II, 611ff., as quoted by Oesterley, op. cit., p. 19; Walther Eichrodt, Theologie des Alten Testaments (3rd edition; 1949), I, 62, as cited by Rowley, op. cit., p. 77 (Eichrodt's edition of 1933, II, 65, is quoted by Oesterley, op. cit., p. 15). The idea that the sacrifice supplied additional strength for a special task is suggested by E. O. James, Origins of Sacrifice (1933), pp. 256f., as quoted in Oesterley, op. cit., p. 20.

²⁶E. O. James, Origins of Sacrifice (1933), pp. 256f., as quoted in Oesterley, op. cit., p. 20.

²⁷Ibid. This is also the view of Dussaud, Les Origines canaanéennes du sacrifice israelite (1921), p. 27, as expressed in English by Oesterley, op. cit., p. 20.

²⁸Oesterley, op. cit., p. 18, attributes this theory to Hubert and Mauss, "Essai sur la nature et la fonction du sacrifice," L'Année sociologique, II (1899), 133.

commonly believed that life resided in the blood.²⁹ As a result, some primitive people not only ate the flesh of sacrificial animals, but also drank their blood.³⁰ Sometimes the flesh was even eaten raw, while it was literally still quivering with life.³¹

A further development of the liberation of life theory is the theory that the shed blood, which contained the life of the animal, was life that had passed through death; it was resurrected life.³² This theory is then tied to the death and resurrection of Christ, who passed through death but emerged alive.

But one writer has presented a very convincing argument against the view that the blood of sacrifices signified liberated life, and in favor of the view that the blood signified

²⁹Gayford, op. cit., p. 68, writes: "The blood is the seed of life; more than this, to the Semite it was the actual life itself. Not only does the 'life [soul] of the flesh' reside 'in the blood' (Lev. 17:11) as a spiritual principle embodied in a material, the blood and the life (soul) are one and the same thing: 'The blood is the life' (Deut. 12:23; Gen. 9:4). It is not too much to say that the Hebrews regarded the life-blood almost as a living thing inside the body which it quickened; and not only was it the vitalizing life while it pulsated within the body, but it had an independent life of its own, even when taken from the body [brackets in the original]."

³⁰Yerkes, op. cit., p. 82; cf. p. 43.

³¹Ibid., pp. 71-4, 79, 82.

³²This is the theory of Gayford, op. cit., specifically discussed on pp. 1, 2, 68-9.

the violent death, or execution of the victim.³³

The Old Testament legislation forbade the drinking of blood³⁴ and required that all meat eaten in a sacrificial act be roasted.

Somewhat closely related to the idea that in sacrifice a powerful force was released is the idea that sacrifice arose from certain primitive magical practices.³⁵ One writer

³³Kidner, *op. cit.*, pp. 24-5, writes: "Against this theory three points may be made. (I) The criminal law dealing with blood that was shed by violence, while it may support at first sight the view that the shed blood was still active, prescribes a penalty that is inconsistent with it. It would seem a curious remedy for the defilement of the land by blood, 'regarded,' according to Westcott, 'as still living,' to add to it the blood of the murderer, which would itself be as active as the victim's; whereas it is a simple conception to make the murderer's life forfeit, as the full price of his crime. The accusation, 'the voice of thy brother's blood crieth,' is vivid enough without being taken literally; and nobody supposes 'the hire of the labourers' in St. James's Epistle to be alive because it also 'crieth.' (II) The prohibition of the use of blood for food is consistent with the idea of its preciousness, but hardly with that of its potency. Indeed, on the theory that the function of the blood in sacrifice was to be a source of energy, it would have been appropriate to have at least one offering in which 'eating with the blood' was prescribed. But such a procedure was unthinkable. (III) Atonement has reference to an existing breach of relations, brought about by sin already committed. The Guilt-Of-fering, in which there was not only repayment required, but even a valuation of the sacrificial victim, shows that the Old Testament did not regard the reformation of the offender as closing the incident alone. To offer blood as a symbol of paying the extreme penalty is an intelligible act of atonement; but to offer it as representing energy for future service is to leave the past to bury itself as best it may. This is not atonement even in its loosest sense. . . . The blood, then, . . . signified not life but the violent death, or execution, of the victim."

³⁴Lev. 17:10-14.

³⁵Yerkes, *op. cit.*, p. ix, calls this James G. Frazer's conclusion in his exhaustive studies in The Golden Bough.

connects sacrifice with divination rites, especially hepatoscopy as it was practiced in Babylon. After certain parts of the animal had been used for such purposes, it seemed that the most fitting disposal of the corpse was burning.³⁶

Another writer connects sacrifice closely to the practice of imitative magic.³⁷ Still another makes of sacrifice a magical act by which it was possible to compel the gods to grant the things desired.³⁸

The old theory that sacrifices were offered to bring about reconciliation with God has not been completely lost by all modern writers, although few of them consider this an early or primary purpose of sacrifice.³⁹ Those writers who

³⁶Yerkes, op. cit., p. ix, says that Morris Jastrow leaned to this opinion.

³⁷So H. H. Gowen, A History of Religion (1934), p. 64, as quoted by Rowley, op. cit., p. 78. Rowley himself agrees that sacrifice has its roots in magical practice. But he does not think the Old Testament presents a magical view of sacrifice.

³⁸So Wundt, Voelkerpsychologie (1915), VI, 463ff., as cited by Oesterley, op. cit., p. 21.

³⁹Oesterley, op. cit., p. 13, begins his discussion of theories of sacrifice with a reference to Lasaulx's theory that sacrifices were originally all offered with the one purpose of effecting a reconciliation with the god. On p. 15, Oesterley speaks of the view of Eichrodt, "who holds that the most important of the fundamental objects of sacrifice were: the gift for the purpose of giving nourishment to the supernatural powers, and sacramental communion; to these, however, he adds the idea of reconciliation." Rowley, op. cit., p. 77, quotes Walther Eichrodt, Theologie des Alten Testaments (3rd edition; 1948), I, 62: "Als die wichtigsten Grundgedanken des Opferkults nennt uns die allgemeine Religionsgeschichte die der Speisung, des Geschenks, der sakralen Kommunion und die Versoehnung." (Continued on p. 52.)

speak of it at all usually make of reconciliation a late development in man's thinking on the subject of sacrifice, or else they make of it one among many of the purposes for which man offered sacrifices. One writer goes so far as to claim that the idea of reconciliation was not connected with sacrifice until the sixteenth Christian century, when the English word atonement was coined.⁴⁰

The New Testament makes use of the Old Testament sacrificial system to illustrate or elucidate the suffering and

On p. 83, Rowley writes: "Some sacrifices were thought of as gifts; others as means of effecting communion with God; others as having propitiatory significance." Gayford, op. cit., p. 33, says, "Now, there is one spiritual fact which is common to all the Sacrifices: they all express the human desire for fellowship with God. We may perhaps go a step further and say that all of them, even the most confident and joyful, imply some sort of consciousness that the fellowship with God is not a continual unbroken union, but needs to be renewed. To this renewal of fellowship we English have given the very expressive name of 'at-one-ment.'"

⁴⁰Yerkes, op. cit., pp. 178-81. On p. 178, he writes: "The substantive atonement was introduced into the English language about 1513 by compounding a preposition, a cardinal number and a participial suffix, at-one-ment. It therefore describes a union of two separate beings. Within a dozen years it was adopted by William Tyndale for his translation of the Bible. The verb atone seems to be an instance of back formation and was coined about 1555. First used as a transitive verb, by 1617 it had gathered up the idea of appeasement. By 1662 it described placation in the modern sense of that term. Its whole use is post-reformational." On p. 179, speaking of the Septuagint translation of the O.T., he says, "Thus the idea of reconciliation is excluded from explanation of kipper by men who spoke both Hebrew and Greek. Sixteen centuries later, reconciliation had become the principal explanation of the word with which it had never been equated." On p. 181, after speaking of the Latin translation of the O.T., he says, "Neither Greek nor Latin translators seem aware of the idea of reconciliation."

death of Jesus. As a result of this, many writers of the past concluded that the people of the Old Testament must have recognized in their sacrifices something that pointed forward to Christ. Some very sensible thinking can be and has been done in the area of showing how sacrifices prepared for and to some extent, at least, pointed forward to Christ. But many writers of the past taxed their imaginations to the limit to come up with a picture of Christ in the Old Testament sacrificial system that was clearer than that which is given in the New Testament.⁴¹ Such elaborate and imaginative reading of the New Testament into the Old Testament has been almost completely removed from the scene of modern thinking on the subject of sacrifice.⁴²

When asked by a class of Lutheran Seminarians whether,

⁴¹As an example of how far this can be carried, cf. Jukes, op. cit., passim, especially pp. 10, 11, 33, 35, 42, 43.

⁴²John Leighton, The Jewish Altar (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1886), passim, has given a good refutation to the "common interpretation" which "makes it the special office of those sacrifices to 'point the minds of the worshippers to Christ'" (p. 17). On p. 10, he says that the ritual of the Altar, "in looking forward to the Redeemer, is not understood to be occupied in speaking directly of His sacrifice, but rather in making the greatly needed preparation for His coming and His work." On p. 14, he writes: "we should be very far from making those sacrifices emblematic. An emblem is 'an allusive picture suggesting some other object, quality, or the like' (Webster). But the Altar service was a different thing. It was, we insist, a sober reality in and of itself. It is to be classed with such an act as bowing in deference to a superior; or that of kneeling, as expressive of veneration; or that of signing and sealing a covenant; or that of the ceremonial of marriage. All these are obvious expressions of present realities, and they have an inherent force of their own."

if the opportunity should ever present itself, the Jews would rebuild the temple in Jerusalem and reinstate the sacrificial system, a Jewish rabbi once said that the only reason why God instituted animal sacrifice in the Old Testament was to keep his people away from the human sacrifice which their pagan neighbors practiced. Therefore, in this enlightened age, when human sacrifice has disappeared from civilization, there is no need for animal sacrifice.

Although human sacrifice could never have had a part in the revealed religion of the Old Testament,⁴³ there are passages that clearly reveal that God could have claimed the life of at least the first-born, if he had wanted to. But he accepted animal sacrifice as a substitute. Some writers have said that all life is God's and that he demands the total devotion or commitment of the lives of his people. But since human sacrifice carried to this extreme would eliminate life among God's people, animal sacrifice became a sign of man's total devotion of himself to God.⁴⁴

⁴³Gayford, op. cit., p. 17.

⁴⁴Jukes, op. cit., p. 54, says, "Life was that part in creation which from the beginning God claimed as His. As such,--as being His claim on His creatures,--it stands as an emblem for what we owe Him. What we owe to God is our duty to Him. . . . Thus the life yielded is man's duty to God, and man here [in the burnt-offering] is seen perfectly giving it." Kidner, op. cit., p. 13, writes: "The ritual prescribed in the first chapter of Leviticus dramatizes implications which discerning eyes had no doubt seen in this offering from the days of the patriarchs. In the first place, it was an offering of the best that one could bring. While in any sacrifice the victim must be without blemish, in this [the burnt-offering] it must also be a male, the more costly animal. [Continued on p. 55.]

Closely related to this theory is the theory that the offering of the firstfruits of vegetable life did not signify man's recognition of God as Lord and giver of all things, but signified that God was really the owner of all things and that man was permitted to make use of God's property only after he had paid God his specified due, as a tenant pays rent as the specified condition of his use of the landlord's property.⁴⁵

The importance and significance of fire before the invention of matches is something that the modern mind has difficulty comprehending. Some writers have attached a great deal of significance to this subject, and perhaps rightly so.

And not far from the worshipper's thoughts there might well be the knowledge that if Jehovah had been as the gods of the heathen, the victim might have been a firstborn child. The story of the virtual offering of Isaac, while it ruled out the idea, remained the heart-searching pattern of the devotion the burnt-offering was meant to express: a Godward devotion to the uttermost." Gayford, *op. cit.*, p. 18, says, "all Sacrifice, so far as it is worth anything in the sight of God, is self-sacrifice." On p. 17, he writes: "the greatest of all Sacrifice is a self-sacrifice. And though the allusions to human Sacrifice in the Old Testament show that it could never have a place in the revealed religion of Israel, the Israelites were reminded that their nearest and dearest belonged of right to God if He chose to claim His due (Ex. 22:29). The first-born son has to be 'redeemed' in acknowledgment that he is owed to the Lord and that the claim of God, though waived, is not surrendered (Num. 18:15,17)."

⁴⁵Johs. Pedersen, Israel: Its Life and Culture, III-IV (London: Oxford University Press, 1940), pp. 304-5, says, "At each stage man must sanctify the crops to be able to appropriate them," and, "he acquires the full right to use the crops when he has given Yahweh his share." Rowley, *op. cit.*, p. 83, writes: "Not all sacrifices were animal sacrifices. There were the firstfruits, 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."

A common source of fire was lightning, which came down from heaven to consume certain things on earth. As primitive man beheld this phenomenon, it is easy to understand how he began to associate fire with the gods, and it was only natural that fire should be made at least the sign, if not the reality, of God's eating or acceptance of an offering.⁴⁶ In the days when fire was not easily kindled, and when live coals were usually carried from place to place for starting new fires, the maintenance of a perpetual fire in an altar that was to be frequently used was almost a necessity. It certainly was the most practical solution to the problem.⁴⁷

Another fact that escapes the thinking of modern man is this, that in primitive times there were a lot of problems connected with eating meat. Without refrigeration or other ways of preserving meat, it was impossible to eat a few cuts of meat at a time, saving the rest for later meals. One could not store a quarter of beef in one's deep freeze. And there were no meat markets where one could buy a few choice cuts. When an animal was killed, the whole animal had to be eaten in a short period of time, or else much of it would have to be thrown away. Small game animals and fowl could be eaten without difficulty in one meal by a small number of people. But larger animals would require a larger guest-list.

⁴⁶Yerkes, op. cit., p. 94.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 138.

It is very possible that at one time, at least among certain classes of people, many meatless meals were eaten.

It has been suggested that the rarity of meat-meals led to the idea that such festive occasions had to include due recognition of the gods, which was taken care of by offering a part of the animal to the gods in sacrifice.⁴⁸

Particularly with regard to nomads, who ordinarily eat the fruit of wild plants, since they do not stay in one place long enough to grow gardens, it is possible to suggest that for them there was some sacred significance involved not only in killing animals, but also in killing plants. When one eats the fruit of a plant (forgetting the modern, unclear distinction between fruit and vegetable), this does not harm the plant; it continues to live and to produce fruit. But when one eats the plant itself or its roots, this destroys the plant. It seems possible to suggest, at least, that some primitive men may have attached special significance to the destruction of both plant and animal life and may have considered occasions of such destruction times when sacrifice was necessary to the gods who had provided life.

Then there is the question whether the sacrifice itself or the use of the blood of the sacrificial animal was the chief thing in the sacrifice.⁴⁹ At least one writer makes

⁴⁸Cf. Yerkes, *op. cit.*, pp. 95, 147.

⁴⁹The importance of the blood is mentioned by G. F. Moore, "Sacrifice," *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, edited by T. K. Cheyne and J. S. Black (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1903), IV, col. 4217: "From first to last the utmost importance attaches to the disposition of the victim's blood. [Continued on p. 58.]

of the sacrifice itself an act of worship which could not be carried on unless it was preceded by a blood rite. The sacrifice itself could be offered only by one who was in a harmonious relationship with the god. And this harmonious relationship was established by the blood rite.⁵⁰

Some writers have gone so far as to say that the pouring out of blood for religious purposes is a much older form of worship than the offering of sacrifices.⁵¹

Since the blood of the Old Testament sacrifices was used for special ceremonies in connection with the sacrifices, this seems to be the best place to mention the discussion on the question whether sin defiled the sanctuary or the people. According to the one theory the blood rites in connection with the items within the sanctuary were made necessary by the fact that the altar and other utensils of worship had somehow incurred taboo which had to be removed before acceptable sacrifice could be offered on or in connection with them.⁵² This

Indeed, it may be said this is the one universal and indispensable constituent of sacrifice."

⁵⁰Yerkes, op. cit., makes a big point of this. Cf. especially pp. 39, 50, 52, 168, 182, 195-6.

⁵¹So Durkheim, The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life, English translation by J. W. Swain (n.d.), pp. 327-31, as cited and quoted in part by Oesterley, op. cit., p. 18. So also Loisy, Essai historique sur le sacrifice (1920), pp. 11ff., as cited by Oesterley, op. cit., p. 22.

⁵²Gayford, op. cit., p. 94, says, "The sanctuary has been defiled by the uncleanness of the people and therefore needs cleansing; but also--and here the inanimate altar is almost personified as if it were a responsible being whose guilt incurs Divine disfavour--atonement must be made for it, to restore it to Divine favour. [Continued on p. 59.]

theory was advanced in opposition to the more traditional view that the items in the sanctuary were considered holy and that sin made it impossible for man to approach holy things or to use them for worship. The unapproachableness, then, of these items was eliminated by the blood rites, which removed the sins of the people.⁵³ The New Testament draws a parallel between the Old Testament blood rites and the work of Christ which can make sense only if the defilement is considered as belonging to the people, not the sanctuary.⁵⁴

The blood of the Sin Offering effects a change not only in the altar itself (from uncleanness to 'holiness') but in the attitude of God towards it (from disfavour to favour). The former is called to cleanse, purge, purify, or hallow; the latter is called making atonement for it."

⁵³Yerkes, who makes a big issue of the blood rites in connection with sacrifice, looks upon them as "concerned with removal of disqualifications for worship"; therefore, they were "indispensable as preparation for worship" (op. cit., p. 168).

⁵⁴Kidner, op. cit., pp. 19-20, writes: "It will be as well to pause at this point to examine the view sometimes put forward, that sin had produced not so much the banishment of the sinner as the defilement of the sanctuary. This is at first sight the implication of the Day of Atonement, for it was appointed to provide 'atonement for the holy place, because of the uncleannesses of the children of Israel,' and likewise 'for the tent of meeting, that dwelleth with them in the midst of their uncleannesses' (Lev. 16:16). But the New Testament interprets this by taking it a stage further, saying 'It was necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be cleansed with these [sacrifices], but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ entered not into a holy place made with hands . . . ; but into heaven itself, now to appear before the face of God for us' (Heb. 9:23-24). Now if the defilement were regarded as infecting the holy things, causing them to lose holiness, the parallel with the heavenlies (which culminates with God himself) would break down. Therefore the atonement or cleansing of the holy things must mean the removal of uncleanness, not as infectious to them but as an affront. The pollution is taken away, not from them as though they shared it, but from their presence [the parenthetic Biblical references are from footnotes]."

One final theory is mentioned here only to show what it is possible for man's imagination to produce. It has been proposed that the burnt-offering constituted or at least represented the perfect fulfilment of the first table of the law and the cereal-offering represented the fulfilment of the second table.⁵⁵

We have not spent much time here analyzing, carrying to their conclusions, or critically evaluating most of the minor theories presented. Our purpose has been to present a general overview of some of the suggestions that have been made. The best features of these many theories are made use of in the following two chapters. Some of the worse features are also discussed and rejected in those chapters. This has been simply an overview of theories on sacrifice in general. The rest of this thesis is devoted to the meaning and purpose of true sacrificial worship in the Old Testament.

⁵⁵So Jukes, op. cit., p. 70.

CHAPTER V

PRE-LEVITICAL SACRIFICE AMONG GOD'S PEOPLE

Operating with the assumption that Genesis and Exodus present an accurate historical account of the situation of which they speak, we find that sacrifice was known and practiced among God's people of the Old Testament long before the sacrificial legislation of the book of Leviticus was given. And although the people of Israel could not offer sacrifices during the time of their bondage in Egypt,¹ they still remembered the sacrifices of their fathers to the extent that they knew what sacrifice was about and how it was to be performed.

The book of Genesis specifically mentions sacrifices offered by Cain and Abel, Noah, Abraham, and Jacob.² In addition, without specifically mentioning sacrifice, it speaks of the erecting of altars by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.³ Most likely, these altars were used for offering sacrifices, unless their primary purpose was to serve as monuments.⁴ Jacob set

¹Israelite sacrifice would have been an abomination to the Egyptians (Ex. 8:26).

²Gen. 4:3-5; 8:20-22; 22:13; 31:54; 46:1.

³Gen. 12:7,8; 13:18; 26:25; 35:7.

⁴In Gen. 12:7 and 26:25, Abraham and Isaac, respectively, built an altar in response to an appearance and promise of God. This is similar to the contexts in which Jacob set up pillars. Perhaps in these two places, both ideas, sacrifice and monument, were involved (cf. Gen. 22:13-14).

up pillars of stone and anointed them. These were monuments erected at the places where God appeared to him.⁵ God later sent Jacob back to Bethel, where he had set up the first stone, to build an altar.⁶

The book of Genesis twice speaks of Abraham worshiping without any mention of how he carried on that worship.⁷ But one of the places where he worshiped was a place where he had earlier built an altar.⁸ Evidently he worshiped by offering sacrifices.

The book of Exodus speaks of sacrifice as a known thing. Moses was directed by God to tell Pharaoh to let the people of Israel go into the wilderness to offer sacrifices to God.⁹ When Aaron explained all of this to the people of Israel, there is no evidence that the people failed to understand what this was all about.¹⁰ And when Pharaoh once agreed to let all the people go if they would leave their flocks behind, Moses explained that it was necessary to take the flocks along for purposes of sacrifice. Moses and the people did not know what type of offerings God would require or how large the offerings

⁵Gen. 28:18; 35:14.

⁶Gen. 35:1-3; cf. 28:18-22.

⁷Gen. 13:4; 21:33.

⁸Gen. 13:2-4; cf. 12:8.

⁹Ex. 3:18; cf. 7:16; 8:1,20; 9:1,13.

¹⁰Ex. 4:30; cf. 5:15-18.

would have to be. But they anticipated that animal sacrifice would be involved.¹¹

Furthermore, Moses knew enough about the kind of sacrifice that would be required to be able to tell Pharaoh that the sacrifices of the people of Israel would be an abomination to the Egyptians.¹²

After Israel had left Egypt, and before the Levitical legislation had been given, it is recorded that Moses erected an altar.¹³ It is possible that this altar was to serve primarily as a monument. But, on the other hand, it is also possible that the altar that was built and the sacrifices that may have been offered on it constituted the sealing of a covenant or promise that God had made to the people.¹⁴

Later, Jethro brought a sacrifice, and the elders of Israel joined him in his worship.¹⁵ Possibly the common meal that was involved also sealed a covenant of mutual friendship

¹¹Ex. 10:24-26.

¹²Ex. 8:25-27.

¹³Ex. 17:15.

¹⁴The context seems to indicate the sealing of a promise of God: "And the Lord said to Moses, 'Write this as a memorial in a book and recite it in the ears of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven.' And Moses built an altar and called the name of it, The Lord is my banner, saying, 'A hand upon the banner of the Lord! The Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation'" (Ex. 17:14-16). Probably both ideas, sacrifice and monument, were involved (cf. Gen. 22:13-14).

¹⁵Ex. 18:12.

and respect for one another's property.

At the foot of Mount Sinai, before the giving of the Levitical law concerning sacrifice, Moses built an altar and set up twelve pillars for the twelve tribes of Israel. Then he sent young men to offer sacrifices on this altar.¹⁶

Before we move on to the relationship of sacrifice to the establishment of covenants, we should mention that worship did not always involve sacrifice. In the book of Exodus it is recorded that the people bowed their heads and worshiped God.¹⁷ And this took place in Egypt at a time when it was impossible for the people to offer sacrifices.

Long before the Levitical legislation, the common meal or food offered by one person to another or some use of animals was often involved in the establishment or sealing of a covenant or promise.¹⁸ Melchizedek blessed Abraham over a light lunch of bread and wine.¹⁹ God made a far-reaching promise to Abraham and sealed it by sending a smoking fire-pot and a flaming torch to pass between two rows of raw meat that

¹⁶Ex. 24:4,5.

¹⁷Ex. 4:31; 12:27.

¹⁸S. C. Gayford, Sacrifice and Priesthood: Jewish and Christian (London: Methuen, 1924), p. 25, says that "a covenant between men was cemented by a common meal," and he cites Gen. 31:44-46 as an example. He further states that "the use of salt in this meal symbolized the inviolable nature of the covenant entered into."

¹⁹Gen. 14:18-20.

Abraham had prepared according to God's specifications.²⁰

Abraham gave animals to Abimelech to seal a covenant with him and to swear in Abimelech as a witness to the fact that the well at Beersheba had been dug by Abraham and belonged to him.²¹ Jacob and Laban set up a monument on the border between their territories as a lasting sign of their agreement, and they sealed the covenant by sharing in a sacrificial meal.²²

The offering that Jacob sent to Esau when Jacob was on his way back from the land of Haran²³ is usually considered an appeasement-offering. But it may have been much more than that. If our thesis which we are gradually trying to develop in this chapter is correct, the acceptance of the gift by Esau may have been a concrete and irrevocable pledge that he would not harm Jacob. Only if he had rejected the gift could he have harmed Jacob.

Similarly, in the story of the visit of the three men to Abraham on their way to Sodom and Gomorrah,²⁴ there may have been more involved in Abraham's persistent pleadings than appears on the surface. Abraham had prepared a meal for his

²⁰Gen. 15:7-21.

²¹Gen. 21:25-32.

²²Gen. 31:43-54.

²³Gen. 32:13-21.

²⁴Gen. 18.

guests from the best that he had. He himself had stood by while they had eaten the meal.²⁵ Then the Lord had blessed Abraham and Sarah, promising to give them a son.²⁶ That he would keep his promise was assured by the fact that he had accepted and eaten Abraham's meal. When Abraham later kept pressing the Lord to spare the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah,²⁷ there may possibly have been involved the thought that Abraham had the right to make this request in view of the meal he had provided, although Abraham was at all times very humble in making his requests. But whether this was involved or not, it is very possible that Abraham was sure that whatever promise he could get the Lord to make would certainly be kept, because the meal was the seal to any agreements that might be reached. When the Lord finally left, Abraham had not only the verbal assurance of the Lord that he would spare the cities for the sake of ten righteous people, but also the concrete, visual assurance that the Lord would keep his word which was provided by the fact that the Lord had accepted and eaten Abraham's meal.

At the foot of Mount Sinai, where Moses had erected an altar and twelve pillars, he used the blood of the sacrifices

²⁵Gen. 18:6-8.

²⁶Gen. 18:10-14.

²⁷Gen. 18:23-32.

to seal the covenant between God and the people.²⁸

Fire has been associated with God from very early times.²⁹ God sealed a covenant with Abraham by sending fire between two rows of meat.³⁰ He appeared to Moses for the first time in the burning bush.³¹ He led the people of Israel out of Egypt with a pillar of fire by night and a pillar of cloud by day.³² On Mount Sinai God's presence was visualized as fire on top of the mountain.³³ Later, the pillar of cloud and of fire hovered over Moses's tent of meeting³⁴ and over the sanctuary of the tabernacle.³⁵

The fire mentioned above was not just fire that was sent from heaven by God, but it was fire that contained and radiated forth the glory of God's presence; God was in the fire, and he sometimes spoke from within the fire.

When Elijah called down fire from heaven upon his public sacrifice,³⁶ the fire that God sent was a vivid demonstration

²⁸Ex. 24:6-8.

²⁹Cf. Royden Keith Yerkes, Sacrifice in Greek and Roman Religions and Early Judaism (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952), p. 94.

³⁰Gen. 15:17.

³¹Ex. 3:2-6.

³²Ex. 13:21,22; 14:19,20,24; cf. 16:10.

³³Ex. 19:18; 24:17.

³⁴Ex. 33:7-10.

³⁵Ex. 40:34-38.

³⁶1 Kgs. 18:36-39.

that Jahweh, not Baal, was the Lord. But in this sacrifice we see another view of fire that seems to be as old as the human race. The fire that God sent from heaven was more than a demonstration of his existence and power; it was also a visual sign of his acceptance of the sacrifice and an endorsement of Elijah as his prophet. Probably from earliest times fire was an anthropomorphic symbol of God's acceptance and consumption of the sacrifice. In the fire God was eating the sacrifice.³⁷

This is not in any way to identify Jahweh with fire as the pagans often so identified some of their gods. God is far greater and far bigger than any local fire. The local fire is not God, but it is the manifestation of that part of God's glory which man can be permitted to see without being consumed. When God himself appears in the form of fire, his presence is so brilliant that man can hardly stand to behold it.³⁸ And he who stands in God's presence for any length of time returns with a glowing face.³⁹

But the fire connected with sacrifice need not be thought of as the manifestation of God's presence. It is simply a symbol, yet a very realistic symbol. As the smoke from the

³⁷Cf. Yerkes, *op. cit.*, p. 94. This subject is discussed further under the gift theory of sacrifice in chapter four.

³⁸Moses hid his face because he was afraid to look at God (Ex. 3:6); the people of Israel feared God's presence on Sinai (Ex. 19:16; 20:18,19,21).

³⁹Cf. Ex. 34:29-35.

fire ascends toward heaven, and as the sacrifice gradually disintegrates and seems to evaporate into the air by way of the flames that leap heavenward, this symbolizes God's acceptance and eating of the sacrifice.

With regard to the sacrifices of Cain and Abel,⁴⁰ there has been a great deal of speculation about the way in which God demonstrated that he was pleased with Abel's sacrifice but displeased with Cain's. A very old interpretation says that God showed his approval and acceptance of Abel's sacrifice by sending fire from heaven to consume it.⁴¹ The picture that is usually presented in Sunday school material is that of the smoke from Abel's sacrifice ascending toward heaven and the smoke from Cain's sacrifice descending toward the ground.⁴² The latter theory is very unlikely, because it would be contrary to the fact that under similar atmospheric conditions the smoke from both sacrifices would normally go in the same direction. And God ordinarily operates through the forces of nature. The former theory is not impossible. Fire could have descended from heaven in the form of lightning

⁴⁰Gen. 4:3-5.

⁴¹Theodotion, the Greek translator of the second century, rendered the Hebrew word that speaks of God's looking upon Abel's sacrifice *ἐνεπύρωσεν*, he kindled, or set on fire.

⁴²This theory is referred to by John Skinner, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis, in The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, edited by Samuel R. Driver, et al. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910), p. 105.

to strike Abel's sacrifice.⁴³ But this has been discredited on the basis of the statement that God's look of favor was directed toward both Abel and his sacrifice.⁴⁴

Those who dislike the two theories just mentioned usually prefer to assume that God's favor and disfavor was made known in the subsequent blessings that came upon Abel in contrast to the lack of blessing that fell upon Cain.⁴⁵ But as the story is presented in Genesis, and especially as it is discussed in Heb. 11:4, it seems that God's attitude toward the sacrifices was immediately made known.

⁴³Skinner, op. cit., pp. 104-5, calls this the common opinion. Franz Delitzsch, A New Commentary on Genesis, translated into English from the German by Sophia Taylor, vol. XXXVI in the New Series of Clark's Foreign Theological Library (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1899), I, 180-1, says, "As it is not said that Abel himself kindled his offering, it appears that the visible sign of look of favour . . . consisted in the kindling by miraculous fire of Abel's offering." Some of the O.T. passages that are sometimes cited in support of this theory are Lev. 9:24; 1 Kgs. 18:38; 1 Chron. 21:26; 2 Chron. 7:1.

But John Calvin, Commentaries on the First Book of Moses, called Genesis, translated from the Latin by John King (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1948), I, 196-7, says about this theory, "The Hebrews, according to their manner, resort to divination, and imagine that the sacrifice of Abel was consumed by celestial fire; but, since we ought not to allow ourselves so great a license as to invent miracles, for which we have no testimony of Scripture, let Jewish fables be dismissed."

⁴⁴C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, The Pentateuch, in Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament, translated into English from the German by James Martin, vol. II in the 4th Series of Clark's Foreign Theological Library (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, n.d.), I, 110, remind us of the dual direction of the look of Jehovah.

⁴⁵So Calvin, op. cit., I, 197.

Perhaps we may offer the proposal that the fire with which Abel ignited his offering spread and increased until it had consumed the whole sacrifice, while the fire which Cain started in his offering smoldered a while and then went out.

At any rate, we are in good company if we hold that already at the time of Cain and Abel the burning of the sacrifice signified the acceptance of that sacrifice by God.

This brings us to an Old Testament story that is ordinarily not associated with the subject of sacrifice, but which this writer considers very instructive on the subject. It is the story of Jacob's deceit by which he received the blessing that Isaac intended for Esau.⁴⁶ Briefly, the story goes like this: Isaac sent Esau out to hunt game and to bring in a meal for Isaac to eat, that he might bless Esau.⁴⁷ While Esau was gone, Jacob came in with his imitation wild-game-meal, and, posing as Esau, told his father to sit up and eat, that he might bless him.⁴⁸ After a discussion, Isaac told his son to bring the food to him, that he might eat of his son's game and bless him. This Jacob did. And Isaac ate the meat and drank some wine which Jacob also brought.⁴⁹ Then Isaac blessed Jacob. Later, Esau appeared with his platter of meat and

⁴⁶Gen. 27:1-40.

⁴⁷Gen. 27:3,4.

⁴⁸Gen. 27:18,19.

⁴⁹Gen. 27:25.

invited his father to eat and bless him.⁵⁰ When Isaac realized that he had been deceived, he said, "Who was it then that hunted game and brought it to me, and I ate it all before you came, and I have blessed him?--yes, and he shall be blessed."⁵¹ When Esau pleaded with his father to give him some blessing, Isaac had none to give.⁵²

Throughout the story there is a close connection between the eating and the blessing.⁵³ Some have speculated that in connection with the blessing there was some sacrificial meal.⁵⁴ But this has been objected to on the basis of the later laws which required that only domesticated animals be used for sacrifice.⁵⁵

With regard to Isaac's statement that Jacob would be

⁵⁰Gen. 27:30,31.

⁵¹Gen. 27:33--the RSV conjectures that the text should read all instead of the Hebrew from all.

⁵²Gen. 27:34-40.

⁵³Skinner, op. cit., p. 369, where he says that he believes that this close connection rests on some religious notion which we can no longer recover.

⁵⁴H. C. Leupold, Exposition of Genesis (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, c.1942), II, 738, attributes this to Luther and others, but he himself disagrees. Herman Gunkel, Genesis Uebersetzt und Erklaert, I Band in I Abteilung im Goettingen Handkommentar zum Alten Testament, herausgegeben von W. Nowack, et al. (5te unveraenderte Auflage; Goettingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1922), p. 309, says, "Hier scheint es sich urspruenglich um ein Opfermahl gehandelt zu haben, bei dem die Gottheit zitiert wird."

⁵⁵Leupold, op. cit., II, 738, thinks that the patriarchs were aware at this early date of the principle involved in the later Mosaic Law.

blessed, some have said that this was an expression of Isaac's sudden awareness of the fact that he had been trying to go against God's will, an expression of repentance for his obstinacy, and an expression of resignation to the divine will.⁵⁶ In connection with this theory it is said that Isaac could have withdrawn his blessing if he had wanted to, but that he refused to do so when he realized that it was God's will to bless Jacob.⁵⁷

Others have said that there was something in the very nature of the blessing that made it irrevocable,⁵⁸ as was the case with the laws of the Medes and the Persians.

But it seems to this writer that all this talk about a sacrificial meal establishing communion with God and about the intrinsic revocability or irrevocability of the blessing misses the real point of the story. It seems that the reason given by Isaac himself for his inability to revoke the blessing was the fact that he had eaten all or at least selections from every part of the supposed wild animal.⁵⁹ The eating

⁵⁶This idea is suggested by Leupold, op. cit., II, 753, when he calls it Isaac's recognition that God's providence had "checked him in his unwise and wicked enterprise." Cf. Calvin, op. cit., II, 93-4.

⁵⁷This is suggested by Calvin, op. cit., II, 94.

⁵⁸Skinner, op. cit., p. 372.

⁵⁹If we read all with the RSV, it means that Isaac ate either the whole animal or the whole meal. If we read from all with the Hebrew text, it means that Isaac ate selections from the meat that had been prepared, perhaps choice pieces of the animal that were customarily eaten in connection with the giving of a blessing of this nature.

was what established the blessing as an irrevocable thing.

In a sense, then, this story depicts sacrifice to a man. This is not to be connected with ancestor-worship or with any thought that Isaac was a god. But in this scene, in many respects, we see exactly the same thing happening that we later see in the laws of sacrifice given by God.

Isaac had a blessing to give, and he wanted his son to have not only his word but also the customarily accepted visual assurance of the blessing. Therefore, he sent his son out to hunt game and to bring in the meal, specifying the purpose of the meal: that he might bless him. By accepting and eating the meal, Isaac bound himself to the blessing with the standard method of binding oneself to a covenant. Such a blessing or covenant once established by eating all of the offering or at least selected portions from every important part of the animal could not under any circumstances be broken. This must have been a law (written or unwritten) according to which men lived. Whether there was a penalty involved for breaking such an agreement, or not, once a man had broken such an agreement his integrity was forever ruined and his bargaining ability lost.

The author of the first two books of the Bible was not concerned with giving a complete history of the religion of Israel, and he was particularly not concerned with giving a complete picture of the development of sacrifice or of its meaning and purpose. He has given us only glimpses into the

worship-life of the patriarchs. Much more information about sacrifice is available to us in the book of Leviticus and later books.

But on the basis of the glimpses that we have into early life and early sacrifice, it seems that we can at least tentatively draw a few basic conclusions regarding the original meaning and purpose of sacrifice. God instituted sacrifice as a concrete, visual assurance to his people of his grace and faithfulness. From God's viewpoint, the purpose was to give his people this additional assurance. From man's viewpoint, sacrifice meant that God accepted him and his offering.

Sometimes God's blessing was sought by man.⁶⁰ At other times it was offered, unrequested, by God.⁶¹ Sometimes the sacrifice sealed a covenant between God and man.⁶² At other times it seems that the sacrifice was brought in gratitude for blessings already received.⁶³

When that part of the sacrifice which was offered to God was consumed, this constituted a solemn and irrevocable pledge of God's acceptance of man, of the fact that God would fulfill his promises, and of the fact that God would bless the offerer.

⁶⁰This seems to have been the case with Noah (Gen. 8:20-22). So also with Jacob in Gen. 46:1-4.

⁶¹As in Gen. 12:7 and 26:24-25.

⁶²As in Gen. 8:20-22 and Ex. 24:4-8.

⁶³This was perhaps the original thought of Noah (Gen. 8:20-22).

In response to this, one is likely to say that when a fire is made of proper fuel, is properly kindled, and has sufficient draft, it is bound to burn and to consume the sacrifice; therefore it can not be understood as a sign of anything, since the chances of its going out are very small. But this is exactly the point, it seems. God wanted his people to be sure of his grace and faithfulness. Therefore, he gave them a sure sign. Just as sure as it is that the sacrifice will be consumed by fire, just so sure is it that God is gracious, blessing those who deserve no blessing but cast themselves upon him for grace; that God is faithful, keeping his covenant and fulfilling his promises; and that God accepts those who come to him in the proper spirit.

This sure sign to the true worshiper could easily be corrupted and misused by the untrue worshiper, whose worship was all external.⁶⁴ And it was abused by many. But for the faithful it remained a comforting and blessed assurance.

⁶⁴The same is true of the N.T. means of grace: they are a sure sign and a great comfort to true believers, but they can also be abused by the insincere, resulting in overconfidence and indifference.

CHAPTER VI

THE MEANING AND PURPOSE OF THE CHIEF ANIMAL SACRIFICES OF LEVITICUS

This chapter discusses the meaning and purpose of the four chief animal sacrifices of Leviticus: (1) the burnt offering; (2) the peace offering; (3) the sin offering; (4) the guilt offering. It does not discuss such rites as the cereal offering, the firstfruits, incense offerings, libations, the showbread, or the passover. Since the passover celebration involved the killing and eating of an animal, one may wonder why this feast is not included in this discussion. The reason is simply this, that the passover was not a sacrifice in the usual sense of the word; no part of it was burned as an offering to God. What could not be eaten was burned; but this burning was a matter of disposal, not of offering to God.¹

Such ritual acts as redemption of the first-born and purification procedures after infliction with leprosy, after contact with blood or a dead body, after childbirth, and after the incurring of uncleanness in various other ways, are discussed only as they pertain to one of the four chief animal sacrifices.

Many writers hold that, while the burnt offering and the

¹Ex. 12:2-10; cf. Royden Keith Yerkes, Sacrifice in Greek and Roman Religions and Early Judaism (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952), pp. 82-7, 125.

peace offering are very ancient sacrifices, the sin offering and the guilt offering were not introduced until the time of the exile.² The fact that all four of them are discussed together in the first seven chapters of Leviticus is generally attributed to the work of a late priestly redactor. But as one reads the book of Leviticus carefully and thoughtfully and at the same time rapidly enough to view the entire book as a whole, one gets the impression that there is a very close unity to the whole book which is more than the work of a redactor. As one sees how the sin offering and the burnt offering, and the guilt offering and the burnt offering, are repeatedly tied together, particularly in the restoration of one who has in one way or another become unclean, one wonders how any sacrificial system involving the burnt offering and the peace offering as they are described and limited in the book of Leviticus could have been in force before the

²H. Wheeler Robinson, Redemption and Revelation, in The Library of Constructive Theology, edited by W. R. Matthews and H. Wheeler Robinson (New York: Harper and Brothers, c.1942), p. 249, traces the peace offering back to nomadic times before the settlement in Palestine. He believes that the burnt offering was derived from the Canaanites prior to the exile. Harold H. Rowley, The Meaning of Sacrifice in the Old Testament (Manchester: University Press, 1950), p. 85, says that the word for guilt offering is never used in this technical sense in pre-exilic writings. S. C. Gayford, Sacrifice and Priesthood: Jewish and Christian (London: Methuen, 1924), p. 32, says, "The Trespass Offering and the Sin Offering are hardly earlier than the Exile." On p. 47, he says that it is not until Ezekiel that the word for sin offering is used of a sacrifice. All of these writers hold the Pentateuch as we have it to be a very late document.

introduction of the sin offering and the guilt offering.³

This is not to say that there could have been no burnt offerings or peace offerings before the introduction of the sin and guilt offerings. Indeed, it is evident that the burnt offering and the peace offering on the individual or small-group level go back to the origin of the human race,⁴ while the sin and guilt offerings were possibly introduced at the time of the Levitical legislation. But the use of the burnt offering as a national institution and especially as an individual offering that was to be brought under certain specified conditions could hardly have been exercised as described in Leviticus before the existence of the sin and guilt offerings.⁵ And a peace offering that involved the

³The sin offering and the burnt offering were connected at the ordination of Aaron and his sons (Lev. 8:14-21). The initial sacrifice of Aaron included sin offerings, burnt offerings, and peace offerings (Lev. 9:1-22). Purification of a woman after childbirth involved a sin offering and a burnt offering (Lev. 12:6-8). After being cleansed of leprosy, a person was required to offer a guilt offering, a sin offering, and a burnt offering (Lev. 14:10-32). A sin offering and a burnt offering were required after cleansing from uncleanness due to a discharge from the body (Lev. 15:13-15, 29-30). The ceremony of the Day of Atonement involved sin offerings and burnt offerings (Lev. 16:1-28).

⁴Cf. supra, pp. 18-20, 61-5.

⁵The chief occasion of a burnt offering by an individual in Leviticus is after cleansing from some sort of uncleanness. In every such case, this burnt offering is always preceded by a sin offering, and sometimes also by a guilt offering. Evidently, a person was not permitted to offer a burnt offering after he had incurred uncleanness until he had first offered a sin offering. Furthermore, at the ordination of priests and on the Day of Atonement, the sin offering always preceded the burnt offering. (Continued on p. 80.)

limitations that are given in Leviticus could not have been offered unless the sin and guilt offerings were also in existence.⁶

Reasons for assuming that the sin and guilt offerings originated with the Levitical legislation are these. They are not mentioned in Genesis. Only the sin offering is mentioned in Exodus, and that is in connection with instructions for the ordination of the priests,⁷ which were not carried out until after the general laws of the sin and guilt offerings had been given in Leviticus four to seven.⁸ The sins for which they were to be offered and for which they would be

Daily morning burnt offerings for the nation, burnt offerings that were a part of festival celebrations, and burnt offerings that were brought voluntarily by individuals were acceptable without being preceded by sin offerings. But this seems to presuppose that the person offering such sacrifices was not at the time tainted with any uncleanness. The individual burnt offerings that were required were always preceded by sin offerings.

⁶ Lev. 7:19-21 specifies that only those who are clean may eat the peace offering. All who are unclean are forbidden to eat of it under penalty of being cut off from their people. It seems that uncleanness could be removed only by the sin offering. Therefore, if there had been no sin offering, it would have been impossible for people to participate in a peace offering that included this specification of cleanness. The removal of uncleanness by the sin offering is discussed at greater length later in this chapter.

⁷ The sin offering is mentioned in Ex. 29:14, twice in Ex. 29:36 (here it refers to the ordination of the priests and the dedication of the altar of burnt offering), and in Ex. 20:10 (here it refers to the annual atonement for the incense altar which is to be made by Aaron after he has been ordained).

⁸ The ordination of the priests is carried out in Lev. 8:1-36.

accepted were not regarded as sins before the giving of the law at Sinai.⁹ Both of these offerings provided food for the priests, and there was no need for this before the institution of the priesthood.¹⁰ It is true that in the peace offering the priests also shared; a special portion was reserved for them. But the peace offering was shared in by laymen as well as priests, and this offering and common meal could easily have been carried on by laymen without any priests before the establishment of the priesthood. The setting aside of a special portion of the peace offering for the priests must have originated with the Levitical law.

At first glance, it may seem that the laws of sacrifice recorded in Leviticus were compiled from a number of sources, each giving information about the sacrifices that differed from the information given by the others. The burnt offering,

⁹Cf. Andrew Jukes, The Law of the Offerings in Leviticus I-VII (London: James Nisbet, 1847), pp. 142-3. He says, in part, "It was the law which convicted man of sin, and made it necessary that he should have a Sin-offering." This fact that the sins covered by the sin and guilt offerings were not known before the giving of the law and, therefore, required no sacrifices may be what Paul had in mind when he wrote, for example: "where there is no law there is no transgression" (Rom. 4:15); "through the law comes knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3:20); "sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law" (Rom. 5:13); "Law came in to increase the trespass" (Rom. 5:20). And perhaps Paul was thinking of the sin and guilt offerings when he said, "but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more" (Rom. 5:20).

¹⁰If the sin and guilt offerings were for a priest or the nation, no part was eaten. But when they were offered for someone other than a priest or the entire nation, almost all of the edible parts of the animal were eaten by the priests (Lev. 6:24-7:10).

the cereal offering, the peace offering, the sin offering, and the guilt offering are discussed twice in the first seven chapters of Leviticus, and in two different orders. Much additional information about the use of the sin and guilt offerings is given later in the book. But this is not evidence for compilation of the book from various sources. It is not at all necessary to assume that, if the sacrificial laws of Leviticus had been recorded together originally, they would have given all the information about each sacrifice in one place. In fact, the arrangement of the discussion that is followed by Leviticus is exactly the sequence one would expect to find in a book of this nature. Except for the historical facts, which are themselves an integral part of the book and also serve the chief purpose of the book, the book of Leviticus is a book of liturgical rubrics. And the outline which the discussion follows is appropriate to the purpose of the book.

The first discussion of the sacrifices is concerned with the occasion of an offering, the materials of an offering, and the proper offering of that part which is consigned to God by fire.¹¹ The second discussion is primarily concerned with the disposal of that part of the sacrifice which is to be eaten by man, qualifications for participation in a

¹¹Lev. 1:1-6:7.

sacrifice, and the respect that man is to have for the offering.¹² This is followed by a historical, and at the same time instructive, discussion of the ordination of the priests, the offering of the first sacrifices in the newly-constructed tabernacle, and some violations of the regulations regarding sacrifice.¹³ This is followed by a discussion of what is clean and what is unclean, what makes a person unclean, and what is to be done about persons and things that incur uncleanness.¹⁴ Next comes a discussion of a specific festival, the Day of Atonement.¹⁵ This is followed by warnings against breaking the covenant and against misuse of the sacrificial system.¹⁶ The rest of the book is devoted to a discussion

¹²Lev. 6:8-7:36. In this second discussion, the peace offering is placed last (it was third in the first discussion). A reasonable explanation of this is the fact that it involved eating by the largest number of people. In the other offerings, only the priests were allowed to eat. The burnt offering, which no one ate, is mentioned first, then the offerings from which only the priests are permitted to eat, then the peace offering, in which both priests and laymen participate in the eating.

¹³Lev. 7:37-10:20.

¹⁴Lev. 11:1-15:33. In this discussion, the sin offering, the guilt offering, and the burnt offering are mentioned as they are required after cleansing from uncleanness. This section is actually, from a liturgical viewpoint, a statement of the circumstances under which an individual is required to offer sin, guilt, and burnt offerings.

¹⁵Lev. 16:1-34.

¹⁶Lev. 17:1-22:33. This section includes: a warning against offering sacrifices to anyone but God; specification of the guilt offering for a certain sin (Lev. 19:20-22); regulations of purity for the priests, sanctity of the holy things, and purity of animals acceptable for sacrifice.

of various festivals and periodic celebrations, coupled with regulations that fit this discussion, and closing with regulations for vows and tithes (personal offerings that have no direct connection with sin).¹⁷

In general, this is the sequence followed by the book of Leviticus.¹⁸ This may not be the order in which we would consider these matters if we were writing the book today. But as one reads the book, one gets the impression that the order that was followed by the author was followed intentionally and with a definite purpose in mind. And one also gets the impression that this is the order in which the material contained in the book was originally written.

Therefore, this writer holds that the entire sacrificial law recorded in the book of Leviticus was given by God through

¹⁷Lev. 23:1-27:34.

¹⁸This is not intended to be an exhaustive outline of the book. For more detailed outlines see, e.g., Alfred Bertholet, Leviticus: Erklärt, Abteilung III in Kurzer Hand-Commentar zum Alten Testament, herausgegeben von Karl Marti (Tuebingen und Leipzig: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1901), pp. v-viii; S. R. Driver, An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament, in The International Theological Library, edited by Stewart D. F. Salmond and Charles A. Briggs (4th edition; Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1892), pp. 39-43; Herman L. Strack, Die Buecher Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus und Numeri, erste Abteilung im ersten Teil in Kurzgefaszter Kommentar zu den heiligen Schriften Alten und Neuen Testaments sowie zu den Apokryphen, herausgegeben von Hermann Strack und Otto Zockler (Muenchen: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1894), pp. ix-x; Edward J. Young, An Introduction to the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., c.1949), pp. 79-85.

Moses at Mount Sinai.¹⁹

As we studied sacrifice among God's people before the Levitical legislation, we found no explicit explanation of the meaning and purpose of sacrifice.²⁰ As we look to the laws of Leviticus, we find even there no explicit reference to the meaning and purpose of the sacrifices involved. The reason for this may well be that sacrifice had been known and practiced among God's people long before the Levitical laws were given.²¹ Presumably, everyone understood the meaning and purpose of sacrifice. Therefore, the writer of Leviticus concerned himself primarily with those details of the sacrificial system that were new. These were: the organization of a sacrificial system on a national level; the establishment of a permanent sanctuary and priesthood; the

¹⁹This view is shared by Carl Friedrich Keil, Leviticus, Numeri und Deuteronomium, zweiter Band in erster Teil in Biblischer Commentar ueber das Alte Testament, herausgegeben von Carl Friedrich Keil und Franz Delitzsch (Leipzig: Doerffling und Franke, 1862), p. 5. Cf. C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, The Pentateuch, vol. II in Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament, translated from the German by James Martin, vol. II in the 4th Series of Clark's Foreign Theological Library (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1891), p. 264.

This view is not shared by Bruno Baentsch, Exodus-Leviticus-Numeri: Uebersetzt und Erklaert, 2 Band in I Abteilung in Handkommentar zum Alten Testament, herausgegeben von W. Nowack (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1903), pp. v-xlv; Bertholet, op. cit., pp. ix-xiv; Driver, op. cit., pp. 39-55; W. O. E. Oesterley and Theodore H. Robinson, An Introduction to the Books of the Old Testament (New York: Macmillan, 1934), pp. 22-67; Strack, op. cit., pp. xiii-xvii.

²⁰Cf. supra, pp. 74-5.

²¹Cf. supra, pp. 18-9, 61-5.

formulation of an exact sacrificial ritual; the specification of priestly functions.²²

Since there is actually very little information about the meaning and purpose of sacrifice given anywhere in either the Old or the New Testament, we are constrained to rely almost completely on secondary materials for information on the subject. As we view the suggestions that have been offered by secondary sources, largely on the basis of studies of pagan worship rites, we can use the information that we find there to draw tentative conclusions about the meaning and purpose of Israel's sacrifices so long as these tentative conclusions seem to be in harmony with the information that is given in the Bible, seem to explain some of the unclear Biblical information, and do not contradict any clear Biblical teachings.

Factors Involved in All Four of the Sacrifices

All four of the sacrifices under discussion were God's gift to his people, channels of grace through which he approached his people in a redemptive way.²³ Like the New

²²F. D. Kidner, Sacrifice in the Old Testament (London: Tyndale Press, 1952), pp. 8-9, writes: "It should be remembered . . . that the codifying of the sacrificial system is not represented as a break with the past so much as a reorganizing of what already existed in an elementary form. The basic sacrifices, the burnt-offering and the peace-offering, were still basic, and kept the general character which they had had before. What was new was the priesthood, the sanctuary and the law."

²³cf. supra, pp. 12, 17-8, 75-6.

Testament means of grace, these sacrifices were valid and powerful only because of God's institution and his decision to operate through them.²⁴ Also like the New Testament means of grace, although God's redemptive power was always available in sacrifice, it was not forced upon man; it was necessary for man to take the initiative in making use of the means of grace that God had provided by bringing his sacrifices to the sanctuary.²⁵

Israel's sacrifices distinguished her from her pagan neighbors. Exodus and Leviticus both contain very severe warnings against participation in the sins and sacrifices of the Canaanites and the idolatry of the Egyptians and the Canaanites.²⁶ Leviticus clearly states that it was because of the sins of the Canaanites that God was driving them from the land.²⁷ And it also states very clearly that if the Israelites practiced the abominations of the Canaanites, they too would be driven out of the land.²⁸ These statements are basic to an understanding of the words of the prophets who

²⁴Cf. Rowley, *op. cit.*, pp. 95, 101, 110.

²⁵*Ibid.* This is not to suggest synergism in conversion. The Old Testament saint who brought an offering was already a child of God by virtue of the covenant made with his fathers and extended to him in circumcision.

²⁶Ex. 20:4-5, 23; 22:20; 23:23-33; 34:11-17; Lev. 11:44-45; 18:3, 21; 20:2-5; 26:1.

²⁷Lev. 18:24-28; 20:23.

²⁸Lev. 18:28; 20:22, 24-26; 26:14-39.

predicted the destruction of the land of Israel and the exile of God's people.

In the sacrificial act there were usually three major stages that need to be discussed. These were the killing of the animal, the use of the blood, and the actual offering of some part of the animal on the altar. One writer has made a big issue of the distinction between these three stages.²⁹ He has said that the offering on the altar constituted an act of worship. This act of worship could not be engaged in by anyone who had incurred any sort of ritual taboo.³⁰ The blood rite that preceded the offering on the altar was not a part of worship, but a necessary preliminary for the purpose of removing any taboo which might disqualify one for worship.³¹ He has further pointed out that the animal was ordinarily killed by the offerer, not the priest. And from this he draws the conclusion that the death of the animal was not an essential part of sacrifice. It was only a necessary preliminary, the last stage of the preparation for sacrifice.³² The death of the animal had no significance, it was simply the means of providing the necessary blood for the blood rite

²⁹This is Yerkes, op. cit., passim.

³⁰Ibid., p. 50.

³¹Ibid., pp. 50, 168, 195-6.

³²Ibid., p. 135. This view is shared by Gayford, op. cit., pp. 106-7.

and the necessary meat for the offering on the altar.³³

In connection with this theory, the same writer holds that atonement was little more than prayer.³⁴ He has found evidence that some primitive people always performed some external act as a prayer. In fact, the action was the real essence of prayer. Any words that may have accompanied the action were of only secondary importance.³⁵ Claiming that

³³Yerkes, *op. cit.*, pp. 4-5, says, "The death of the animal, while a necessary fact preliminary to the sacrifice as it is necessary to the preparation of a roast of meat for dinner, was not a factor of the sacrifice any more than it is a factor of the dinner. The animal had to be killed for the purpose, as any animal has to be killed before it can be eaten. Slaying for sacrifice was naturally performed with solemnity proper for the occasion, but no significance was ever attached to the fact that the animal had died."

³⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 178-82. He calls upon the Septuagint and Latin translations of the word for atonement as evidence that before the introduction of the word atonement into the English language, this idea had never been understood as the meaning of the word. Basically, the word meant to pray or to pray out. The prayer that was involved was intended to effect a cleansing or purification. For this reason, to cleanse or to purify is often a good translation of the word. The idea of reconciliation was not connected with the word by either the Greek or the Latin translators.

³⁵*Ibid.*, p. 100, where he writes: "Ceremonial manipulation of grains of barley is likewise familiar as a prelude to a thusia [a Greek sacrifice similar to the peace offering] or to prayer when unaccompanied by a thusia. The grains might be placed in a basket near the devotee or they might be scattered or cast about. Oak leaves might be substituted if barley grains were unobtainable. The origin of the rite is obscure; its continuance is due to religious conservatism, strengthened by the idea that 'doing something with something' is a necessary accompaniment of prayer. In fact, the spoken words are the accompaniment; the scattering of barley grains constitutes the act of prayer. The deeply sacred character of this idea is not always realized by many modern people whose concept of prayer is limited to speaking words."

atonement is tied to the blood rites, he affirms that the use of the blood of a sacrifice constituted an act of prayer.³⁶

It is true that the use of the blood of a sacrifice was a very important part of the ritual.³⁷ And it is possible that prayer was at least one of the primary meanings involved in the word that is usually translated "make atonement." It certainly seems likely that somewhere in the sacrificial ritual, prayer would be included.³⁸ It is also true that the

³⁶Ibid., p. 50; cf. pp. 178-82. Atonement, whatever the word is taken to mean, is frequently connected with the use of the blood; cf. Jukes, op. cit., pp. 154-5.

³⁷In every animal sacrifice, something was specified to be done with the blood. G. F. Moore, "Sacrifice," Encyclopaedia Biblica, edited by T. K. Cheyne and J. S. Black (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1903), IV, col. 4217, says, "From first to last the utmost importance attaches to the disposition of the victim's blood. Indeed, it may be said that this is the one universal and indispensable constituent of sacrifice." Gayford, op. cit., pp. 106-7, writes: "Later Jewish thought also recognized the truth that 'the sprinkling of the blood is the main point in sacrifice.'"

³⁸Yerkes, op. cit., p. 102, writes: "An interesting phrase is found in two old inscriptions describing men as thuontes kai euchomenoi--thuing and praying. The two words belonged together; prayer was the preparation for a thusia; a thusia was the most desirable form of prayer." Rowley, op. cit., p. 77, quotes Baumgarten, in Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart, edited by F. M. Schiele and L. Zscharnack (1913), IV, col. 956, as saying that sacrifice was originally nothing else than prayer accompanied by gifts: "Urspruenglich 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 verstaerken durch den Tatbeweis dafuer, dasz man sich den Erwerb des goettlichen Wohlgefollens etwas kosten lasse." It is difficult to imagine how the entire sacrificial ritual could have been carried on without prayer.

animal was usually, if not always, killed by the offerer.³⁹ But the fact that the killing was not done by the priest as an essential part of the sacrifice does not prove that the death of the animal was insignificant. Another writer has clearly shown that the blood that was used as a part of the sacrificial ritual signified the violent death of the animal.⁴⁰ Furthermore, the book of Leviticus does not clearly attach the making of atonement to the blood rites.⁴¹ In fact, it often appears that the actual offering of the part of the animal that was burned constituted the making of atonement.⁴² Perhaps both the blood rite and the offering on the altar combined to make an act of atonement. It seems that the most logical time at which to offer prayer for the offerer would

³⁹Cf. Lev. 1:5,11; 3:2,8,13; 4:4,24,29,33.

⁴⁰Kidner, op. cit., pp. 24-5, quoted supra, p. 50.

⁴¹It is true that Lev. 17:10-16 emphasizes the blood as the thing that accomplishes atonement (here the meaning seems to be purification or cleansing). But in every instance in the book of Leviticus where the making of atonement is mentioned in connection with a sacrifice, it is always mentioned after the actual offering on the altar. Furthermore, although there was a blood rite also in connection with the peace offering, to the knowledge of this writer the making of atonement is never mentioned in the book of Leviticus in direct connection with the peace offering. Perhaps it was the blood that effected purification, while the fire and smoke that ascended as a pleasing odor from the burnt offering gave evidence that the purification had been accomplished and that God accepted the sacrifice. Thus, it is the blood that makes atonement, but it is the whole process of blood rite and offering on the altar that gives the offerer assurance of the atonement.

⁴²Cf. for example, Lev. 4:20,26,31,35; 5:10; 12:7.

be the time at which the smoke and fire of the offering was ascending heavenward from the altar.⁴³

There are basically three views of the significance of the laying of the hand of the offerer on the head of the animal before the sacrifice. The first is that it represented transference of the offerer's sins to the animal.⁴⁴ This was the significance of the laying of hands on the head of the scapegoat on the Day of Atonement.⁴⁵ But whether this was the significance of the laying of the hand on the other sacrifices is not indicated by the book of Leviticus.

A second view is that the laying on of hands meant that the offerer was offering his own sacrifice by proxy. Before the establishment of the priesthood, each person had offered his own sacrifice. But with the introduction of the priesthood, this task became assigned to the priests. When the worshiper brought his animal to the door of the sanctuary and laid his hand on its head, he was saying in effect, This is my sacrifice; I am offering it, even though the priest is

⁴³This would be especially true in the case of a pleasing-odor offering, such as the burnt offering. It seems to be generally believed that the burning of incense on the incense altar was symbolically connected with prayer.

⁴⁴This seems to be the traditional view. But none of the recent writers on the subject hold this view.

⁴⁵Lev. 16:21-22. Yerkes, *op. cit.*, p. 134, says of this passage, "This is the only instance of explanation of meaning of the act and is not in connection with a sacrifice, but refers to an animal which is not to be sacrificed."

doing it for me.⁴⁶

A third view is that the laying on of hands expressed identification of the offerer with his offering.⁴⁷ One branch of this idea is that in offering a sacrifice the worshiper was symbolically offering himself.⁴⁸ Another branch of this view is that the animal bore the offender's judgment for him.⁴⁹ As we discuss the individual sacrifices, we shall see that all of these ideas seem to play some part in the various sacrifices.⁵⁰

The Burnt Offering

The burnt offering was the only sacrifice in which the

⁴⁶Cf. Yerkes, op. cit., p. 134.

⁴⁷So Jukes, op. cit., p. 38; Kidner, op. cit., p. 25; Rowley, op. cit., p. 88; Dussaud, Les Origines cananéennes du sacrifice israelite (1921), p. 27, as cited by W. O. E. Oesterley, Sacrifices in Ancient Israel (New York: Macmillan, [1937]), p. 19.

⁴⁸So Rowley, op. cit., p. 88. Yerkes, op. cit., p. 159, also adopts this view.

⁴⁹So Kidner, op. cit., p. 25. Jukes, op. cit., pp. 38, 135, also presents this theory. But he ties it to the casting out into an unclean place of the remains of the sin and guilt offerings: "the offerer in his offering surrendered himself as a sinner to God's judgment, and was cast out as accursed into the wilderness." This is possible, but it seems unlikely in view of the fact that in the sin and guilt offerings, the atonement was accomplished and finished before the disposal of the remains. Besides, only the remains of a few sin and guilt offerings were disposed of in this way. Ordinarily, the priests ate the flesh of the sin and guilt offerings.

⁵⁰Most writers make use of more than one of these views in their discussion of sacrifice.

whole animal was burned. It has been called the chief cultic act of Israel's sacrificial system.⁵¹ It formed the chief part of the daily morning and evening sacrifice.⁵² As the Israelite went about his daily work, no matter where he was, he knew that in the tabernacle, or, later, in the temple, the daily burnt offerings were being sacrificed for him as a member of God's people.⁵³

The burnt offering was offered for individuals or for the nation. When the individual laid his hand on his offering, it is very likely that one thing that this symbolized was the fact that this was his offering, being offered for him by the priest. In every burnt offering, whether individual or for the nation, it seems that the laying on of hands also symbolized identification with the offering.⁵⁴ The consignment of the entire offering to God through fire symbolized man's giving of himself entirely to God. This was an act of total devotion to God, a complete dedication of self or nation to the God of the covenant.⁵⁵

The fire which consumed the burnt offering symbolized

⁵¹So Yerkes, op. cit., p. 140.

⁵²Ex. 29:38-46; William Moenkemoeller, The Festivals and Sacrifices of Israel (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1932), p. 6.

⁵³Moenkemoeller, op. cit., p. 7.

⁵⁴Yerkes, op. cit., pp. 159, 201.

⁵⁵Gayford, op. cit., p. 43; Kidner, op. cit., pp. 13, 15; Yerkes, op. cit., pp. 145-6, 158-9, 201.

God's acceptance of the offerer.⁵⁶ The first sacrifices that were offered by Aaron in the tabernacle were kindled by fire that came forth from God.⁵⁷ The dedication sacrifices that were offered by Solomon in the temple were also kindled by fire from heaven.⁵⁸ In this way God demonstrated his willingness to abide in his house, his approval of sacrificial worship in his house, and his acceptance of both the offerings and the offerers. The fire that was thus begun by God in the altar was kept going day and night; it was never allowed to go out.⁵⁹

Since the burnt offering symbolized man's total devotion of himself to God and God's acceptance of his people and his willingness to abide with them, the burnt offering was a true and expressive symbol of the covenant relationship that existed between God and his people. God had chosen to dwell with his people and to rule over them and bless them. This was his side of the covenant. On man's side, the covenant required complete devotion of himself to his God.

The burnt offering presupposed the existence of the

⁵⁶cf. Gayford, op. cit., p. 80; supra, 55-6, 67-71, 75-6. These references are to fire as a symbol of acceptance of the offering. Since the offering represented the offerer, the acceptance of the offering constituted the acceptance of the offerer.

⁵⁷Lev. 9:24; cf. Gayford, op. cit., p. 80.

⁵⁸2 Chron. 7:1-3.

⁵⁹Lev. 6:12-13; cf. Gayford, op. cit., p. 80.

covenant relationship between God and his people. It did not establish or re-establish that covenant. The fact that burnt offerings were brought daily did not symbolize the repeated re-establishment of the covenant. It rather symbolized the fact that the covenant relationship was a continuing thing. Apart from the covenant relationship no burnt offering could be offered; it would not be accepted.⁶⁰ The fact that the burnt offering could be offered and was accepted by the perpetual fire which had been begun by God expressed the fact that the covenant was in existence and continued to be in force.

Since the whole of the burnt offering was offered to God by fire, this looks very much like a gift on man's part. One writer has even suggested that the burnt offering was an expression of man's willingness to deprive himself of the common meal by handing over the entire animal to God.⁶¹ This idea of self-denial and abstinence is supposed to have become associated with ideas of propitiation and appeasement. If the offerer thought that God was for some reason angry, he would give him the entire animal as a gift rather than assume the relationship of fellowship which the common meal of the

⁶⁰W. P. Paterson, "Sacrifice," A Dictionary of the Bible, edited by James Hastings, et al. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1902), IV, 338, says, "it was only on the assumption that he was still 'in a state of grace' that he was allowed to sacrifice at all: for the sins which led God to cast men off no sacrifice was accepted."

⁶¹Gayford, op. cit., p. 41.

peace offering implied.⁶² It is very likely that man's thinking often followed this direction. But the Levitical regulations concerning sacrifice do not give any support to the idea of propitiating an angry God.⁶³

God did not need burnt offerings for nourishment or strength. In fact, they were of no value to him for these purposes.⁶⁴ It is really impossible for man to give anything to the Lord of the universe. Therefore, it seems that the offering of an animal in the burnt offering really did not constitute a gift. The gift that was involved, if we may call it a gift, was the gift that was symbolically offered, that is, the person of the offerer. The burnt offering symbolized his giving of himself to God.

The burnt offering was sometimes offered without a sin offering.⁶⁵ As such, it was a vivid reminder of the constancy and perpetuity of the covenant and of the demands which the covenant made upon man. To the knowledge of this writer,

⁶²Ibid., pp. 41-2.

⁶³Ibid., p. 105.

⁶⁴Kidner, op. cit., p. 23, says, "the notion that man could feed or enrich his Creator had no basis in the Law, and was held up to scorn by the Prophets and Psalmists." Cf. Jer. 7:22, where God says that he did not speak about burnt offerings to the Israelite fathers as though he were hungry and needed them for food.

⁶⁵As, e.g., in the daily morning and evening sacrifices (Ex. 29:38-41), in connection with the offering of firstfruits (Lev. 23:9-14), in payment of a vow or as a freewill offering (Lev. 22:18-20).

the concept of making atonement and the concept of forgiveness are never connected in Exodus or Leviticus with a burnt offering that is not preceded by a sin offering.⁶⁶ However, it seems that the offering of the burnt offering without a sin offering could only be done by one who had not incurred uncleanness, which required a sin offering. Whenever a burnt offering is offered by one who has incurred uncleanness, it is always preceded by a sin offering.⁶⁷ And in connection with this offering of a sin offering followed by a burnt offering, the concepts of making atonement and of forgiveness come into the picture.⁶⁸

This seems to suggest a special use of the burnt offering in connection with the sin offering. Ordinarily, the

⁶⁶The only exception of which this writer is aware is Lev. 1:4. The burnt offering that is subsequently described is not called an offering for atonement. But in the specification of what kind of animal is acceptable, it is stated that the kind of animal described is acceptable for atonement purposes. Therefore, this passage does not invalidate the statement made in the text, since it is simply giving information about the acceptability of an offering. Some burnt offerings were connected with sin offerings, and then the idea of atonement was definitely attached to them. And since this is true, it is appropriate that in a general discussion of the burnt offering, the type of animal acceptable for atonement purposes should be mentioned.

⁶⁷E.g., Lev. 5:7-10; 8:14-21; 9:8-14,15-17; 14:19-20, 30-31; 16:3,5,6-25. In Lev. 12:6-8, the burnt offering and the sin offering are mentioned together, with the burnt offering mentioned first. But the offering of the sacrifices is not individually mentioned; only the fact that the two are to be offered is mentioned. Wherever the offering of each of the two sacrifices is mentioned separately, the sin offering always comes first.

⁶⁸E.g., Lev. 5:10; 12:7,8; 14:20,31; 16:6-25.

burnt offering symbolized the perpetuity of the covenant. And from God's side, it was perpetual; he would never break it. But from man's viewpoint, the covenant was not so enduring. He was repeatedly breaking it by failing to keep himself clean and by falling into sin. And sin cut him off from fellowship with God and from worship,⁶⁹ and it required the bringing of a sin offering. When man brought his sin offering, he also brought a burnt offering as a sign of his readiness to reassume his responsibilities under the covenant. In his burnt offering, he rededicated himself to God. And as the perpetual fire on the altar consumed his burnt offering, he was vividly shown that God was constantly ready to accept the repentant sinner back, and that God was accepting him.

When the sin offering and the burnt offering are mentioned together, the making of atonement and the forgiveness are always attached to the entire ceremony of the dual offering.⁷⁰ The entire act supplied assurance of forgiveness to the offerer. His sin offering was accepted and atonement was made. As assurance that he was now clean and that he had been accepted back into fellowship with God in the covenant, the burnt offering was consumed by God's own fire.

The Peace Offering

The peace offering was the only one of the four major

⁶⁹Cf. Yerkes, *op. cit.*, pp. 50, 195.

⁷⁰Lev. 5:10; 12:7,8; 14:18-20,30-31; 16:24-25.

animal sacrifices of Leviticus in which the offerer participated in the eating. In this sacrifice, God, the priests, the offerer, and his friends all participated in the eating.⁷¹ In the sin and guilt offerings, only the priest who offered the sacrifice received a portion to eat.⁷² But in the peace offering, the wave breast went to the priests in general, and the right thigh went to the officiating priest.⁷³ The rest of the edible parts of the animal belonged to the offerer. A time limit was set on the eating of the offerer's portion.⁷⁴ As a result, the offerer was compelled to share his offering with his family and friends, in order that it might not be wasted.

Peace offerings of thanksgiving had to be eaten on the same day that they were brought.⁷⁵ Peace offerings that were votive offerings or freewill offerings had to be eaten by the end of the following day.⁷⁶ One writer has offered an excellent explanation of this requirement:

the reason, surely, is one which we should have discovered soon enough in putting the regulations into practice. We should have found ourselves physically unable to offer our thanks before God in the prescribed time without

⁷¹Lev. 7:11-18, 28-36; cf. Jukes, op. cit., p. 99.

⁷²Lev. 6:26; 7:7.

⁷³Lev. 7:28-36.

⁷⁴Lev. 7:15-18.

⁷⁵Lev. 7:15; cf. Yerkes, op. cit., p. 151.

⁷⁶Lev. 7:16-18.

inviting a considerable number of friends to help us-- which is as it should be. Our vows or our devotion, on the other hand, could have been shared, if we wished, with a smaller circle. What certainly was excluded altogether was the notion of a peace-offering, of any kind, in which nobody but the offerer had a share. It was to express peace, not in its minimum sense but in its maximum: fellowship with God, fellowship in His service, and fellowship with one another.⁷⁷

The peace offering, then, was an act of communion, expressing, as did every common meal in ancient days, fellowship and friendship among the participants. A peace offering was always an occasion of great joy.

The prevailing opinion of writers on sacrifice is that in the peace offering man sought to establish communion with God.⁷⁸ But we hold that God instituted the peace offering, and that it was his gift to his people. Naturally, man's initiative was involved in the bringing of each individual offering. But the establishment of the sacrifice and the offer to share in such a sacrifice was God's gracious act.⁷⁹ The peace offering was a demonstration of God's willingness to share with his people the intimate relationship of the common meal. It was perhaps the most vivid demonstration possible of God's grace within the covenant. It showed that God was truly dwelling among his people, that he was on friendly terms with them and need not be feared, and that

⁷⁷Kidner, op. cit., pp. 18-9.

⁷⁸cf. supra, pp. 12, 46-7.

⁷⁹Supra, pp. 17-8, 86-7.

he had graciously counted his people worthy to join him in a holy meal.

In this offering, with which sin is never connected, the laying of the offerer's hand on the head of the animal must have signified nothing more than the fact that this was his own sacrifice, even though the priest was offering it for him.

The peace offering is not the sacrifice for making peace with an offended God. If it were, it would be above all other sacrifices the atoning sacrifice.⁸⁰ But, as a matter of fact, the idea of atonement or of forgiveness is never connected with the peace offering. The peace to which the peace offering refers is a peace that already exists between God and his people.⁸¹ The peaceful relations presupposed by this sacrifice are the relations of the covenant which was made with Abraham, enacted at Mount Sinai, and repeatedly reaffirmed in the burnt offering.

The peace offering is very similar to the common meals of Genesis and Exodus that were shared as the seal of a covenant.⁸² Just as those common meals did not make or establish covenants, but ratified and sealed covenants that had already been made, so the peace offering did not establish or re-establish the covenant between God and his people,

⁸⁰Gayford, op. cit., p. 35.

⁸¹Ibid., pp. 35-6; Yerkes, op. cit., p. 150.

⁸²cf. supra, pp. 63-6, 71-4.

but it acted as a seal and a demonstration that the covenant was in effect. The common meal symbolized the mutual trust and confidence that the participants had in one another.⁸³

The question of the exact meaning of the heave thigh and the wave breast is a difficult one, and it is probable that no one is sure of the exact meaning even today. One writer, however, has offered a suggested solution which seems worthy of mention here:

The Priest's portion was the heave thigh and the wave breast (Lev. 7:30,32,34). The waving was a ceremonial act expressive of the Priest's offering this portion to God and receiving it back from Him. The expression "Wave Offering" is used of a thing offered to God and returned by Him (e.g. the Levites offered to the Lord and returned by Him "as a gift to Aaron and his sons" to assist them in the Tabernacle ministry, Num. 8:11-22). The word "heave" seems to be used of taking a part from a larger whole, e.g. the first-fruits from the whole crop; so here the right thigh from the whole carcass. There would seem to be this distinction, that the breast was offered to God in acknowledgment that it was His due, and given back by Him to His Priest, while the thigh was simply taken from the offerer's portion. Thus the position of the Priest as mediator and bridge between God and man was indicated: his portion was derived partly from "the portion of the Lord" and partly from the layman's share.⁸⁴

⁸³Yerkes, op. cit., p. 150, writes: "The exchange of the shalom, as of chaire among Greeks or ave among Latins, was plainly equivalent to 'You can trust me; I shall not harm you.' It was an easy step to conventionalization of these phrases into standard friendly greetings. The very pronouncement of the phrase indicated that the persons were friendly. It is not surprising, therefore, that one of the normal acts of Canaanite worship was called a shelem or a shelem kalil. The primary supposition of such an act was that the worshiper was on friendly terms with the deity. The shelem did not create the terms; it assumed them as already existent."

⁸⁴Gayford, op. cit., pp. 37-8.

It is very interesting to note, and also very important to the full understanding of the sin offering, that no one who was technically unclean could share in the common meal of the peace offering.⁸⁵ This was true of priests as well as laymen.⁸⁶ Perhaps one of the reasons for this regulation was common decency and sanitation. At any common meal, since food and drink were shared and passed from person to person, it would not be desirable for one who had a communicable disease or who was not clean to participate. Perhaps this is the principle that underlies this regulation concerning the peace offering.

The Sin Offering and the Guilt Offering

As far as the priests were concerned, the law of the sin offering and the law of the guilt offering were the same. In both of these offerings, those parts of the animal which were not to be eaten were burned on the altar. The rest of the animal was eaten by the priest,⁸⁷ unless the offering was brought for a priest or for the nation, in which case the carcass was burned outside the camp in a clean place, where the ashes were dumped.⁸⁸

⁸⁵Lev. 7:19-21.

⁸⁶Lev. 22:3-7.

⁸⁷Lev. 4:8-10; 6:26; 7:3-7.

⁸⁸Lev. 4:11-12, 21.

The actual distinction between the sin offering and the guilt offering is difficult to determine. Many solutions have been offered,⁸⁹ but in the opinion of this writer, none of the solutions adequately accounts for all the available evidence. It seems that the guilt for which a guilt offering was required involved a greater degree of responsibility for the wrong that had been done than was involved in the sin which demanded a sin offering.⁹⁰ But this distinction does not always seem to hold true.⁹¹ It seems that the guilt offering involved restoration of damages done, plus a fine of one-fifth the value of the damage.⁹² But even this does not seem to have been true in every case.⁹³ Sometimes

⁸⁹Since the solutions that have been suggested are many and varied, and since none of them seems to present a final solution, we do not discuss the various views at length here. For examples of solutions that have been presented, see Jukes, op. cit., pp. 133ff., 164ff.; Gayford, op. cit., pp. 44ff.; Yerkes, op. cit., pp. 168ff. Rowley, op. cit., p. 85, says that the two sacrifices cannot be distinguished with precision as they are presented to us in the Bible. George Buchanan Gray, Sacrifice in the Old Testament (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925), p. 57, says, "The precise distinction between the sin-offering and the guilt- or trespass-offering is not altogether clear, and has been much discussed, but that need not detain us here." Oesterley, op. cit., pp. 75ff., 80f., has a discussion of the words involved and their history.

⁹⁰Cf. Yerkes, op. cit., p. 171.

⁹¹It is often difficult to see how some of the things listed as ways of becoming guilty involve a greater degree of responsibility than the things listed as sin.

⁹²Lev. 5:15; 6:2-6; Yerkes, op. cit., pp. 185-6; Gayford, op. cit., pp. 45-6.

⁹³Cf. Lev. 5:5-6, 7-10; 19:20-22, where no mention of restitution or a fine is made in connection with the guilt offering.

guilt is spoken of and the offering of a guilt offering is required; then, after the sacrifice has been offered, it is referred to as a sin offering.⁹⁴ After recovery from leprosy, both a guilt offering and a sin offering are required to precede the burnt offering. And in this particular case, the blood of the guilt offering is used for a complicated ritual of cleansing the patient.⁹⁵

In the sin offering and the guilt offering, the use of the blood is much more complicated than it is in the burnt offering and the peace offering.⁹⁶ In fact, the use of the blood seems to be the most important part of these two sacrifices.⁹⁷ It is not our purpose to discuss all the various uses of the blood here. Suffice it to say that in everything that is here said about these two sacrifices, it is the blood rite that is the important thing, not the burning or the eating.

⁹⁴Lev. 5:1-6,7-10.

⁹⁵Lev. 14:10-20.

⁹⁶Cf. the contrast between the use of the blood in the burnt and peace offerings and the use of the blood in the sin and guilt offerings as they are discussed in Lev. 1-7 and 16. Yerkes, *op. cit.*, p. 168, calls the blood rites in connection with these sacrifices "the most complicated rites in the Old Testament." Cf. Kidner, *op. cit.*, p. 19, for a convenient summary of the blood rites of the sin offering and a good explanation of the reason for the variations that were dependent on the person for whom the sacrifice was made.

⁹⁷The blood was put to a complicated use. On the other hand, very little of the animal was actually offered to God on the altar. Yerkes, *op. cit.*, p. 177, calls the blood rite "the chief feature" of the sin offering.

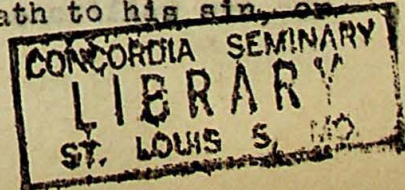
In these offerings, the laying on of hands may have symbolized a number of things. Perhaps the transference of sin was involved. In this case, the animal was punished for the sins which it bore. But there is good reason to doubt whether the transference of sins was at all involved in the laying of hands on an animal that was to be killed and used as a sacrifice.⁹⁸ Probably the idea that the sacrifice was being offered by the offender, even though the priest was doing it for him, was involved. But the chief meaning seems to have been identification of the offerer with the victim. This is hardly to be understood in this way, that as the remains of the animal were cast out into the ash pile, this symbolized the casting away of the sinner.⁹⁹ It seems much more likely that the death of the animal symbolized the punishment by death of the offender.¹⁰⁰

There is some debate as to whether the sin offering and

⁹⁸ Cf. Yerkes, op. cit., p. 134.

⁹⁹ This is the view of Jukes, op. cit., pp. 38, 135. This seems an unlikely explanation because the atonement was already accomplished before the remains of the animal were carried out (Lev. 4:20-21; 16:1-28). There would no longer be any point in symbolically punishing the offender.

¹⁰⁰ Kidner, op. cit., p. 25, says, "The blood . . . signified not life but the violent death, or execution, of the victim. . . . the victim bore the judgment of God on the offerer's sin. It was his substitute." Rowley, op. cit., p. 88, writes: "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."



the guilt offering implied that fellowship with God had been broken and needed to be restored.¹⁰¹ It seems to this writer that the best solution to the problem is to answer both affirmatively and negatively. From God's viewpoint, the covenant remained in effect. It was only because the covenant remained that man was able to offer a sin or guilt offering that would be accepted. But from man's viewpoint, he had broken the fellowship with God and disqualified himself for the worship of the burnt offering or the communion of the peace offering. This breach of relations was repaired by the sin and guilt offerings, which restored the sinner to his place in the community of God's people and enabled him

¹⁰¹Gayford, *op. cit.*, p. 33, says, "We may perhaps . . . say that all of them [the sacrifices], even the most confident and joyful, imply some sort of consciousness that the fellowship with God is not a continual unbroken union, but needs to be renewed." Yerkes, *op. cit.*, pp. 195-6, writes: "The lesson of all these purifications is simple. Approach to the presence of God is a group act in which each individual participates by reason of his constituent membership of the group. Faults on the part of the group or its constituent members automatically invalidate the approach. If the faults are deliberate, or responsibly committed, any consequence must be rectified before the approach can be made. If the faults are unconsciously committed any untoward consequences must be rectified and they who committed the faults must at least direct their minds to the seriousness of their acts."

On the other hand, Paterson, *op. cit.*, p. 338, says, "The use of the Sin-offering in the matter of the consecration of temple buildings and furniture does not suggest the rupture of covenant relations, nor does it appear that the sacrificer of a Guilt-offering had fallen from a state of grace more surely than any ordinary member of the community. . . . Moreover, it was only on the assumption that he was still 'in a state of grace' that he was allowed to sacrifice at all; for the sins which led God to cast men off no sacrifice was accepted."

once again to offer burnt offerings and to participate in peace offerings with impunity.¹⁰²

The sin and guilt offerings were to be accompanied by sincere penitence and confession of sin or guilt. Actually, the very bringing of the offering constituted an act of confession.¹⁰³ Then the priest took the animal and offered the sacrifice, thus making atonement for the sinner and securing forgiveness for him.¹⁰⁴ The ritual of the sin and guilt offerings provided a very effective means of grace. A concrete and visual confession of sin was required, an assuring visual sign of forgiveness was given, and additional assurance that the sinner had been accepted back into fellowship with God was provided by the acceptance of the burnt offering that followed. In this burnt offering, the sinner expressed his desire to live up to his responsibility under

¹⁰²Cf. *supra*, pp. 98-9, 104. Speaking of the sin offering for the recovered leper, Rowley, *op. cit.*, p. 97, says, "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." On the same page, he says that the sin offering of a woman after childbirth served the same purpose.

¹⁰³Lev. 5:15. Rowley, *op. cit.*, p. 87, says, "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." On p. 95, he writes: "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." Cf. also p. 100. John Leighton, *The Jewish Altar* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1886), p. 85, says, "Indeed, the whole rite was a confession acted out by the worshipper."

¹⁰⁴Lev. 5:10,13,16,18; 6:7.

the covenant, and God expressed his ever-willingness to accept the sinner back into his family.¹⁰⁵

But interesting and important as many of these things may be, there is one very serious problem involved in the sin and guilt offerings. And it is this problem that we want to discuss at greater length.

As one studies the sins for which the sin and guilt offerings were required, one becomes immediately aware of the fact that these offenses were almost all of a very minor nature.¹⁰⁶ Many of them were matters of uncleanness that the New Testament Christian finds difficult to consider sins. In some cases it seems that the word sin was applied to things that even the writer of Leviticus did not consider sins in any moral sense.¹⁰⁷ It was forbidden for anyone who was unclean to participate in a peace offering.¹⁰⁸ And as one

¹⁰⁵ Cf. supra, p. 99.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Kidner, op. cit., p. 25; Leighton, op. cit., p. 70.

¹⁰⁷ Gayford, op. cit., p. 48, says, "when we remember 'it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins,' it becomes of deep significance that the highest atoning Sacrifice of the Old Covenant should have been appointed for sins which were not sins." Rowley, op. cit., p. 97, writes: "It is to be noted that after childbirth a woman was required to offer a sin offering (Lev. 12). 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. 1:28), it would not have been regarded as a sin in any moral sense."

¹⁰⁸ Lev. 7:19-21.

views the many things that are called sin, one is led to believe that some of these were merely matters of actual uncleanness that disqualified the person for such participation.¹⁰⁹ It seems that in some cases the sin offering signified that the period of uncleanness had passed and that the person was once again qualified to join the community in its peace offerings.

Nowhere is any sacrifice specified for major crimes. When David cried out, "Thou hast no delight in sacrifice; were I to give a burnt offering, thou wouldst not be pleased," he was not in any way questioning the validity of the sacrificial system. He was simply stating the fact that for his sin no sacrifice was provided.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹Sin offerings were required after childbirth, after recovery from leprosy, after a discharge from the body, after a menstrual period, and evidently also after an emission of semen or intercourse with a woman during her menstrual period (Lev. 12:3-15:32).

¹¹⁰Ps. 51:16. Rowley, *op. cit.*, pp. 99-100, says, "In such a situation as David's there would be nothing whatever inconsistent with the Law in this 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." Cf. Kidner, *op. cit.*, p. 26. Leighton, *op. cit.*, p. 70, writes: "when we turn to the record we find no provision whatever made for murder, wilful theft, idolatry, witchcraft, rebellion, or indeed any of the graver offences against the decalogue. 'If a man come presumptuously on his neighbor and slay him with guile, thou shalt take him away from My Altar that he may die.' There was no offering provided to meet his case, however penitent he might be." Some people believe that the Day of Atonement provided forgiveness for major sins. But Gayford, *op. cit.*, p. 85, says, "It is repeated again and again that all the sins of the nation are included under the atonement made on this Day. . . . [Continued on p. 112.]

The Jewish rabbis recognized the fact that no sacrifices were specified for major sins, and they tried to find some solution to the problem. They were certain that there was some way of gaining forgiveness for major sins. Therefore, they looked for solutions outside the regular sacrificial system.¹¹¹

The sentence that was commonly pronounced by Leviticus on persons who committed major crimes was either that they

It has been thought that this repeated 'all' would include the greater moral sins which we saw were not covered by the ordinary Sin Offerings. . . . But this is doubtful in itself, since it would be a reversal of the general principle of atonement by Sacrifice; and the offences are described in Heb. 9:7 as *ἁγνοήματα* ('errors,' i.e. 'sins of ignorance'), which makes it clear that, as generally understood by the Jews, there was no difference in principle between the Sacrifices on the Day of Atonement and other Sin Offerings. The fact remains, however, that these Sacrifices summed up and included all the atonement for sin that could be made by means of Sacrifice under the Old Covenant."

¹¹¹Norman H. Snaith, The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, c.1946), p. 85, writes: "The earliest reference of which we are aware, wherein Leviticus 16:30 is taken to include deliberate sin, is in the classification of Rabbi Ishmael at the beginning of the second century A.D. He says that there are four ways of atonement. Firstly, if a man transgresses a commandment by not fulfilling it (i.e., omits it by error), and immediately repents, then God forgives, and the Scriptural reference is Jeremiah 3:22. Secondly, if he deliberately breaks it and repents at once, then God suspends punishment, and the Day of Atonement atones, and the Scriptural reference is Leviticus 16:30. Thirdly, if he deliberately breaks a commandment where the penalty is death or excommunication, and then repents, then repentance and the Day of Atonement suspend punishment, and visitations cleanse the sin away. Fourthly, if he profane the Name, then there is no power in repentance to suspend the punishment, nor in the Day of Atonement to atone, nor in visitations to cleanse away, but all three together suspend punishment, and death cleanses, Isaiah 22:14 [sic]."

should die or that they should be cut off from their people.¹¹² Being cut off from one's people may refer to excommunication, or it may be the same as the death sentence. Regardless of what it means, the penalty for major sins was severe. Yet, the sentence was not always carried out. David is a good example of a person who found forgiveness for his sin apart from the sacrificial system. And it was not just the fact that he was king that permitted him to escape the death sentence. The prophet Nathan told him that God had forgiven his sin.¹¹³

Therefore, it is evident that there was some way in which the Old Testament saints could receive forgiveness for major sins.¹¹⁴ The sentence pronounced by the law on major sins was probably the same as the sentence which the law always pronounces on the sinner, a sentence that holds true

¹¹²E.g., Lev. 7:21,27; 17:4,9,10,14; 18:29; 19:8; 20:2, 4-5,6,10,11,12,13,14,15,16.

¹¹³2 Sam. 12:13.

¹¹⁴Rowley, *op. cit.*, p. 98, says, "it is clear that in the thought of the Old Testament sacrifice is not the only organ of atonement." Forgiveness of sin occurs frequently in the book of Exodus. Pharaoh several times asked Moses to forgive him his sin against the Lord. In Ex. 32:30-34:28, Moses repeatedly pleaded with God to forgive the sin of the people and to come with them to the promised land. God finally did forgive his people and grant Moses's request. These are only a few examples. Exodus clearly shows that there was forgiveness apart from the sacrificial system. But it never gives any instructions concerning how one is to go about gaining that forgiveness. All the examples that are given seem to indicate that the means of gaining forgiveness was penitence, confession, and the casting of oneself upon the mercy of God.

only so long as the sinner refuses to repent and turn to God for forgiveness. When the sinner repents and in faith casts himself upon God's mercy, God forgives, and the sentence is revoked.

The fact that no solution to the problem of major sins is offered by the Levitical law is probably due to the fact that the Levitical law is primarily concerned with liturgical legislation. The removal of minor offenses is discussed by Leviticus because this removal involved little more than a sin or guilt offering.¹¹⁵ The removal of those sins which required something other than mere sacrifice is not treated, simply because this lies outside the intended scope of the book of Leviticus.

Just because the Pentateuch does not emphasize the means of forgiveness of major sins, this does not mean that God's people were not already then aware of the medium of forgiveness of which the prophets later spoke. The fact that Deuteronomy 18:15-22 is the only place in the Pentateuch where the functions of a prophet are discussed, leads this writer to conclude that the Pentateuch is not concerned with prophetic activities, but primarily with liturgical and priestly functions. This certainly does not mean that prophetic functions in the broader sense were not carried on at this

¹¹⁵In the case of the guilt offering, it usually, at least, required also restitution and a fine of one-fifth the value of the damage done.

time. Among God's people there were always religious leaders who were not members of the priesthood. Abraham was called a prophet. Moses himself was the chief religious leader of Israel in his time, and he was not a priest.

In the Pentateuch, Moses lays down rules that are to govern the activities of the priests. But his own functions as prophetic leader of the people are nowhere specified in the Levitical law.

For this reason, the absence of forgiveness of major sins from the book of Leviticus is not to be understood as an indication that there was no such forgiveness. The prophetic leaders of God's people must always have instructed and reminded the people of God's grace and forgiveness which was available to them through repentance and trust in God.

The Psalter is a book that may hold the key to the final solution of this problem. It finds forgiveness available in repentance and trust in God. And this very Psalter was used in the religious services of the temple, the place of sacrifice. In the Psalter, the Levitical concept of forgiveness through sacrifice and the prophetic concept of forgiveness apart from sacrifice are fused without conflict or contradiction.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ Millar Burrows, An Outline of Biblical Theology (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, c.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 favor are often represented as dependent, not on sacrifice, but on confession and prayer." Rowley, op. cit., p. 100, replies, "It is less remarkable if we remember the Law's insistence on confession, and the areas of sin for which no sacrifice was prescribed."

Therefore, it seems justifiable to conclude that both concepts were known to the people all along; the prophetic concept simply is not mentioned in the Levitical law because the law is concerned almost exclusively with sacrificial ritual.

Sacrifice as Preparation for Christ

The Old Testament sacrifices that we have discussed are not to be viewed as nothing more than pictures of Christ. Nor is it to be said that in their sacrifices God's people of the Old Testament perceived all the details of the plan of salvation that have been revealed in the New Testament.

The Old Testament sacrifices were a reality in and of themselves, and they were valid for the purposes for which they were instituted.¹¹⁷ The fact that God has enabled his people of the New Testament to see in Christ the perfect sacrifice, offered once for all sins and as the perfect fulfillment of the Old Testament sacrificial system--this does not mean that at the time when the sacrificial system was

¹¹⁷Leighton, *op. cit.*, p. 14, says, "the Altar service was . . . a sober reality in and of itself. It is to be classed with such an act as bowing in deference to a superior; or that of kneeling, as expressive of veneration; or that of signing and sealing a covenant; or that of the ceremonial of marriage. All these are obvious expressions of present realities, and they have an inherent force of their own." On p. 102, he writes: "While the Altar ritual was doing its appropriate work for the heart of the individual worshipper and for the nation in its generations, those sacrifices did, at the same time, actually atone for certain large classes of offences."

instituted it was in any way recognized as prophetic of the person or work of Christ.¹¹⁸

The true worshipers of the Old Testament never considered their sacrifices as having automatic or magical power, although these ideas often prevailed in popular thinking on the subject.¹¹⁹ There was redemptive power in sacrifice. But that power was operative for the individual only when he approached the altar of God in true penitence and in a spirit of devotion to God.¹²⁰ And when man did approach the altar in the proper spirit, it was the power of God that reached down to save him. The animal itself could do nothing for him. But it became the organ of God's approach in power to bless him.¹²¹

The fact that sacrifice was required for many minor things which man does not ordinarily consider sin, taught some very important lessons to God's people of the Old Testament. It emphasized the great gulf between God's holiness

¹¹⁸Gayford, op. cit., p. 3, says, "No doubt in part the symbolism was perceived by the choicer spirits among the Jews; so much we can gather from the glimpses they give us now and then, e.g. in Pss. 40, 50, and 51. But we can see in the Sacrifices more than was ever dreamt of by the wisest among them; and that without any fanciful or arbitrary allegorizing, but simply by the light of a higher revelation. The Sacrifices were pregnant with deeper truth than anyone realized before a new light was thrown on them by the Death and Resurrection and Ascension of our Lord."

¹¹⁹Rowley, op. cit., pp. 87, 96.

¹²⁰Ibid., pp. 87, 95, 100.

¹²¹Ibid., pp. 95, 101, 110.

and man's sinfulness.¹²² It stressed the fact that the holy God demands of his people an absolute and perfect holiness and cleanness.¹²³ It pointed out to the believer that even minor defilements, which were sometimes a necessary part of his daily life, rendered him unfit for fellowship with God.¹²⁴ It taught a strong sense of responsibility for one's thoughts, words, and actions.¹²⁵ It showed man that even when he was not engaged in deliberate sin, it was possible for him to be guilty of something which, unknown to him, separated him from God.¹²⁶ And it constantly kept before the minds of the faithful the question, If such sacrifices are required for minor offenses, how much more must be required for the forgiveness of my major sins?¹²⁷

¹²²Leighton, op. cit., p. 91.

¹²³Kidner, op. cit., p. 26. Since man could never achieve God's standard of perfection, the sacrificial system, like the rest of the law became a "ministration of condemnation" (2 Cor. 3:7,9)--this statement is paraphrased from Leighton, op. cit., p. 87.

¹²⁴Leighton, op. cit., p. 87; Yerkes, op. cit., p. 184.

¹²⁵Yerkes, op. cit., p. 184, says, "We of the present day are apt to reason that, if an act is accidental and not intentional, it may be an unfortunate mistake but no one can be blamed for it. We have a colloquial phrase, 'It was just one of those things.' The ancient Jew realized that he had nevertheless committed an act which should not have been committed and for which he had consequent regrets. Although he was morally inculpable, he was 'inadvertently' responsible for the consequences of his act. He might be more careful in the future. In the meantime he must be cleansed from whatever fault he had committed."

¹²⁶Kidner, op. cit., pp. 25-6.

¹²⁷Cf. Leighton, op. cit., p. 86.

The fact that there was no sacrifice prescribed for major offenses cast the sinner completely on God's grace and mercy.¹²⁸ Perhaps one purpose of this insufficiency of the sacrificial system was to guard against the complacency that could have resulted from a sacrificial system which specified sacrifices to cover every possible kind of sin.¹²⁹ The fact that sacrifice was not sufficient to cover man's greater sins pointed to the fact that something much greater than this was required.¹³⁰ That greater something was the fullness of God's grace, which was known to the Old Testament saints and which was expressed in its most vivid form on Calvary.¹³¹

¹²⁸Kidner, op. cit., p. 26; Leighton, op. cit., pp. 73, 91.

¹²⁹Kidner, op. cit., p. 25, writes: "Now the more clear-cut the provision and assurance of atonement, the more is the danger that its very completeness will defeat its object. We have only to read the prophets to sense the complacency of the crowds in the temple courts in the days when sacrifices were most in favour. It was to guard against this that the elaborate sacrificial system of the tabernacle led up to the anticlimax of a sin-offering which was virtually not available for sins--that is, for the sins which seem to cry out most for atonement--but only for the offences which could be reasonably called excusable."

¹³⁰Leighton, op. cit., pp. 89, 91; Kidner, op. cit., pp. 26-7.

¹³¹Leighton, op. cit., p. 65, says, "it remained for the New Testament revelation of the 'great mystery of godliness' to make known to the pious that the price of their redemption was no other and no less than the blood of God's own Son, shed strictly as an atonement for sin." On p. 86, he writes: "[The Israelite's sacrifices] told him he not only deserved to die, but of right must die, or have satisfaction made to justice by means of a substitute; and this he left to the grace of God to arrange as He saw fit." Gayford, op. cit., p. 3, says, "The Sacrifices were pregnant with deeper truth than anyone realized before a new light was thrown on them by the Death and Resurrection and Ascension of our Lord."
(Continued on p. 120.)

In this way, the Old Testament sacrificial system did prepare the way for, and in a certain sense point to, Christ and his redemptive work.¹³²

Kidner, op. cit., pp. 26-7, writes: "So, because the Law pointed beyond itself, the prophets and psalmists searched the horizon until it yielded the dim shape of a country not yet explored, where was a new covenant, and a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness; above all, a Figure which they could not identify, though they had always known Him, and had seen Him in a thousand offerings 'brought as a lamb to the slaughter.' There, if they had known it, their search was over. Had they been able to catch the sound, they might have heard the voice of every generation joining theirs in the same possessive: 'Surely, He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: . . . and with His stripes we are healed.'"

¹³²Cr. Leighton, op. cit., p. 10. In connection with the pointing of the sacrificial system to Christ, it is very interesting to note that even on the Day of Atonement, when sacrifice was brought for all the sins of the people for an entire year, only one animal was killed (cf. Gayford, op. cit., p. 99).

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

The subject of sacrifice in the Old Testament is a vast subject. It is a subject which is generally admitted to be complex and difficult. And, therefore, it is a common failing of Christians to ignore it or pass over it in a very superficial way. But it plays such a major role in the life of God's Old Testament people, and it is so significant for a full understanding of the redemptive work of Christ, that it can not be ignored or superficially treated without great loss of understanding and insight.

The research that this writer has carried out to date has been sufficient to make him very much aware of the importance of the subject and of its complexity and difficulty. It has enabled him to come with great hesitancy to some tentative conclusions. However, this writer does not feel at all qualified to speak as an authority on the subject, and he hesitates even to operate on the basis of his very tentative conclusions.

Very much more work needs to be done in this area by Lutheran scholars. In the course of this study, this writer has become convinced that the works of recent writers on the subject of sacrifice can be used to great advantage in the study of Israel's sacrificial system. This does not mean that everything they have said must be accepted as truth.

Many of their conclusions, no matter how definitely they may be expressed, are actually very tentative. Although this writer has not operated with very much actual archaeological or anthropological material, he has done enough reading to get the general impression that archaeologists and anthropologists are usually very careful in stating that their conclusions are tentative. Sometimes they even point out weaknesses in their own conclusions, usually weaknesses that are caused by the lack of complete information. But men who write on sacrifice in general often take the tentative conclusions of archaeologists and anthropologists as established facts and proceed to build theoretical structures upon them.

The factual material that is available does not seem to contradict Scripture. Very often, if both the facts and the meaning of Scripture are properly understood, one finds that the facts support Scripture, at the same time adding additional information that is not given in Scripture. It is only human theories that sometimes run counter to God's revelation. For this reason, Lutheran scholars need not hesitate to study the subject of sacrifice. In fact, what is really needed by our Church is a concentrated study by Lutheran scholars of all the factual material that is available, in order to arrive at conclusions that are based on all the evidence, both Biblical and non-Biblical. Anyone who attempts to undertake this task needs a genuine interest in the subject and both the time and the willingness to spend many hours, even years,

on the project.

Such a study is seriously needed by the Lutheran Church because there is within that Church so much ignorance and misunderstanding of the Old Testament sacrificial system.

The bibliography of this thesis is not even a good indication of the vast amount of material that is available, material that needs to be studied before any final conclusions can be drawn. If one is interested in getting a general idea of the material available, this writer suggests that he consult all the books in this bibliography, all of which are available at the present time in the library of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and look at the footnotes in them. Particularly recommended for this purpose are Oesterley and Rowley.

In the pursuit of his study, this writer has been primarily interested in looking for the answers to two questions: (1) what was God's purpose in instituting sacrifices?; (2) what meaning did God intend sacrifices to have for man? On the basis of this very limited study, this writer has come to the following tentative conclusions.

God instituted sacrifices as a means of grace for the purpose of giving his people a visible and sure sign of the fact that he had chosen them to be his people, that he had chosen to dwell among them, and that he was always ready to accept them if they approached him in the proper spirit of humility, penitence, and prayer. God intended sacrifice to

be a constant reminder to his people of the covenant and of his people's responsibilities under that covenant. He intended it to remind his people of the absolute perfection that he required of them. At the same time, he intended sacrifice to show his people that if they repented of their sins and returned to him, casting themselves upon his mercy, he was always ready to forgive their sins and accept them back. Throughout the sacrificial system, the emphasis is on the grace of God. And in God's own redemptive plan, he was by means of the sacrificial system preparing the way for that really significant act of redemption which he accomplished through his Son.

The meaning that God intended sacrifice to have for his people is simply the obverse side of his own purpose. Man was to recognize and use the sacrificial system as the divinely appointed means of grace. The sacrificial system was to offer him assurance without misleading him into complacency or indifference. Some great lessons were taught to God's Old Testament saints by their sacrificial system: the requirement of total dedication of self to God; the blessed privilege of communion with God, which is the privilege of every one of God's people; personal responsibility not only for one's intentional misdeeds, but also for every failure to meet God's standard of thorough perfection and cleanliness; the necessity of making restoration for damage done; the need for casting oneself completely on God's mercy for forgiveness.

These great lessons are lessons that need to be learned and relearned also by God's New Testament people.

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