

Expiation, then communion

or, Eating as sacrament: every meal has a host, a cost

You cannot partake of the table of the Lord
and the table of demons. – 1 CORINTHIANS 10:21

Analysis

A. (2:1-16, compare 1:13; 6:13-23) **The grain or cereal offering, unlike the whole burnt offering, is not sacrificial, nor is it completely consumed**

The meat-offering was generally, or rather always, presented along with some animal sacrifice, in order to show the connection between pardon of sin and devotion to the Lord. The moment we are pardoned, all we are, and all we have, becomes the property of Christ. "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price." (1 Cor. 6:19.) Our Redeemer and Kinsman buys first Ruth, the Moabitess, herself, and next, He claims also the field and inheritance. Joseph who saves our life, buys up our bodies and our substance. [Bonar 33]

As the burnt-offering represented the consecration of the life, the person, to God, so the meal-offering represented the consecration of the fruit of his labours. [Kellogg 65]

It made no atonement since it cost no life (cf. Heb. 9:22); but it was to accompany the blood-shedding sacrifices, as Num. 15:1-10 indicates. God was presented again with His own gifts, yet not in their natural state (there was a place for this: cf. v.12; 23:10, etc.) but in the forms given them in human use: fine flour, not grain; oil, not olives; and so on. [Kidner 109]

The Burnt-offering symbolized the life devoted to God, and the Meal-offering the fruits of labor consecrated to Him ... the full surrender and dedication of our work to God. [Thomas 112]

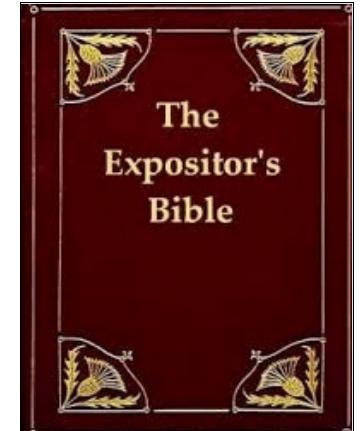
Significance for Israel:

If it be asked, why it was that when man's labours are so manifold, and their results so diverse, the product of the cultivation of the soil should be alone selected for this purpose, for this, several reasons may be given. In the first place, of all the occupations of man, the cultivation of the soil is that of by far the greatest number, and so, in the nature of the case, must continue to be; for the sustenance of man, so far as he is at all above the savage condition, comes, in the last analysis, from the soil. Then, in particular, the Israelites of those days of Moses were about to become an agricultural nation. Most natural and suitable, then, it was that the fruit of the activities of such a people should be symbolised by the product of their fields. And since even those who gained their living in other ways than by the cultivation of the ground, must needs purchase with their earnings grain and oil, the meal-offering would, no less for them than for others, represent the consecration to God of the fruit of their labour. [Kellogg 64]

Significance for Christians:

The meal-offering is no longer an ordinance of worship, but the duty which it signified remains in full obligation still. Not only, in general, are we to surrender our persons without reserve to the Lord, as in the burnt-offering, but unto Him must also be consecrated all our works. This is true, first of all, regarding our religious service. Each of us is sent into the world to do a certain spiritual work among our fellow-men. This work and all the result of it is to be offered as a holy meal-offering to the Lord. A German writer has beautifully set forth this significance of the meal-offering as regards Israel. "Israel's bodily calling was the cultivation of the ground in the land given him by Jehovah. The fruit of his calling, under the Divine blessing, was corn and wine, his bodily food, which nourished and sustained his bodily life. Israel's spiritual calling was to work in the field of the kingdom of God, in the vineyard of his Lord; this work was Israel's covenant obligation. Of this, the fruit was the spiritual bread, the spiritual nourishment, which should sustain and develop his spiritual life." [Kellogg 65-66]

There are many who consecrate, or think they consecrate, their religious activities; but seem never to have understood that the consecration of the true Israelite must cover the secular life as well, the labour of the hand in the field, in the shop, the transactions of the office or on 'Change, and all their results, as also the recreations which we are able to command, the very food and drink which we use – in a word, all the results and products of our labours, even in secular things. And to bring this idea vividly before Israel, it was ordered that the meal-offering should consist of food, as the most common and universal visible expression of the fruit of man's secular activities. The New Testament has the same thought (1 Cor. x. 31): "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." [Kellogg 68]



Every Christian teacher should own the *Expositor's Bible*, if only to have Kellogg on Leviticus and Maclaren on Psalms and Colossians

Significance of salt:

[2:13] Kidner [109] points to the significance of the salt: "In this way every sacrifice was to contain an allusion to this host-and-guest relationship". See Num. 18:19 and 2 Chron 13:5, 'a covenant of salt'.

Most probably *the salt of your God's covenant* (v. 13) gives the clue to the symbolism. It suggests that the salt symbolized the covenant. Greeks and Arabs are known to have eaten salt together when they concluded covenants. In the OT salt is connected with covenants on two occasions, and in both a covenant of salt means an eternal covenant (Num. 18:19; 2 Chr. 13:5). Salt was something that could not be destroyed by fire or time or any other means in antiquity. To add salt to the offering was a reminder that the worshipper was in an eternal covenant relationship with his God. This meant that God would never forsake him, and also that the worshipper had a perpetual duty to uphold and keep the covenant law. [Wenham 71]

Lesson of first 2 offerings: Consecrate your best

For wheat, in Israel, as still in most lands, was the best and most valued of the grains. Israel must not only offer unto God of the fruit of their labour, but the best result of their labours. Not only so, but when the offering was in the form of meal, cooked or uncooked, the best and finest must be presented. That, in other words, must be offered which represented the most of care and labour in its preparation, or the equivalent of this in purchase price. Which emphasises, in a slightly different form, the same lesson as the foregoing. Out of the fruit of our several labours and occupations we are to set apart especially for God, not only that which is best in itself, the finest of the wheat, but that which has cost us the most labour. David finely represented this thought of the meal-offering when he said, concerning the cattle for his burnt-offerings, which Araunah the Jebusite would have him accept without price: "I will not offer unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing." [Kellogg 69-70]

The remaining part of the ritual was, as we have pointed out, peculiar to the burnt offering. In it alone the whole of the sacrifice was consumed on the altar, with the exceptions of the skin, which was given to the priest, and of the contents of the intestines. Hence it was sometimes called a 'whole burnt offering.' The meaning of this provision may be apprehended if we note that the word rendered 'burn,' in verse 9, is not that which simply implies destruction by fire, but is a peculiar word, reserved for sacrificial burnings, and meaning 'to cause to ascend in smoke or vapour.' The gross flesh was, as it were, refined into vapour and odour, and went up to God as a sweet savour. It expressed, therefore, the transformation of the sinful human nature of the worshipper, by the refining power of the fire of God, into something more ethereal and kindred with the heaven to which it rose. Or, to put the thought in plainer words, on the basis of expiation, the glad surrender of the whole being is possible and will ensue; and when a man yields himself in joyful self-surrender to the God who has forgiven his sins, then the fire of the divine Spirit is shed abroad in his heart, and kindles a flame which lays hold on all the gross, earthly elements of his being, and changes them into fire, kindred with itself, which aspires, in ruddy tongues of upward-leaping light, to the God to whom the heart has been surrendered, and to whom the whole being tends.

This is the purpose of expiation; this is the summit of all religion. One man has realised to the full, in his life, what the burnt offering taught as the goal for all worshippers. Jesus has lived in the constant exercise of perfect self-surrender, and in the constant unmeasured possession of 'the Spirit of burning,' with which He has come to baptize us all. If we look to Him as our expiation, we should also find in Him the power to yield ourselves living sacrifices, and draw from Him the sacred and refining fire, which shall transform our grossness into His likeness, and make even us acceptable to God, through Jesus. [Alexander Maclaren, Expositions 239-40]



MARTIN LUTHER KING
Lewis Baldwin's *Never to Leave Us Alone* is the first study of King's way of prayer and communion

B. (3:1-17; 7:11-34) Peace offering universally observed – but who is host, who is guest?

Indeed, scarcely any religious custom has from the most remote antiquity been more universally observed than this of a sacrifice essentially connected with a sacrificial meal. An instance of the heathen form of this sacrifice is even given in the Pentateuch, where we are told (Exod. 32:6) how the people, having made the golden calf, worshipped it with peace-offerings, and sat down to eat and to drink at the sacrificial meal which was inseparable from the peace-offering; while in 1 Cor. 10 Paul refers to like sacrificial feasts as common among the idolaters of Corinth. [Kellogg 83]

The Meal-offering signified the presentation of powers and products to God in homage and service. But this offering with its feast symbolized reconciliation, as shown in the fellowship of eating. ... The Peace-offering was one of those which existed before the time of Moses (Gen. 31:54; Ex 32:6), but was given a fresh sanctification by God in communion with Israel. [Thomas 113]

By giving the fat the worshipper was giving the best of the animal; and insofar as the animal was thought to represent the man, the worshipper showed he was giving God the best part of his life. [Wenham 80]

Now, observe that all these portions of the animal are the richest; and also deeply seated, near the heart. In an offering of thanks and fellowship, nothing was more appropriate than to enjoin that the pieces presented should be those seated deep within. [Bonar 55]

Profoundly suggestive and instructive is this contrast between the heathen custom in this offering, and the Levitical ordinance. For do we not strike here one of the deepest points of contrast between all of man's religion, and the Gospel of God? Man's idea always is, until taught better by God, "I will be religious and make God my friend, by doing something, giving something for God." God, on the contrary, teaches us in this symbolism, as in all Scripture, the exact reverse; that we become truly religious by taking, first of all, with thankfulness and joy, what He has provided for us. A breach of friendship between man and God is often implied in the heathen rituals, as in the ritual of Leviticus; as also, in both, a desire for its removal, and renewed fellowship with God. But in the former, man ever seeks to attain to this intercommunion of friendship by something that he himself will do for God. He will feast God, and thus God shall be well pleased. But God's way is the opposite! The sacrificial feast at which man shall have fellowship with God is provided not by man for God, but by God for man, and is to be eaten, not in our house, but spiritually partaken in the presence of the invisible God. [Kellogg 92]

God invites the truly consecrated to His feast

Nothing in this chapter gives any hint of what would have loomed largest in a human account: that this offering was festive, a meal as well as a sacrifice. This aspect will emerge in 7:11-36 ... [Kidner 110]

The enduring presence of God is one of the theological presuppositions running through the whole book. ... God is present not only in worship, but at all times, even in the mundane duties of life. ... The whole of man's life must be lived out in the presence of God. The recurring refrain in the later chapters, 'I am the Lord your God' (e.g. 18:2ff.; 19:3-4, 10; 20:7), reminds the people of Israel that every aspect of their life – religion (chs. 21-24), sex (chs. 18-20), relations with neighbors (chs. 19, 25) – is of concern to their covenant redeemer. The behavior of each member of the

covenant people must mirror that of God himself (20:7). The fear of God should prompt men to undertake good deeds they might otherwise neglect, such as help for the blind, the deaf, the elderly, and the poor. Though such people may have no redress against unfair treatment, God is aware of their plight and cares what his people do to them (19:14, 32; 25:17,36,43). [Wenham 17]

[3:16,17] But by marking out (for a while – cf. Col. 2:16f) certain areas of life as God's preserves and not man's, the levitical laws gave a continual reminder of both sovereignty and grace. Sovereignty, in that it is for God to choose what He will give or withhold; grace, in that what He withholds He turns to our benefit. The blood (17) was 'given' back for better use than nourishment (17:11). The fat, 'as food offered by fire to the Lord' (11), was made the symbol of the fact that we do not feast alone, but play host to God Himself, by His gracious command. He dines with us, as well as we with Him. [Kidner 110]

Perhaps we are entitled to consider the Psalmist as referring to this offering in Psa. 63:5, "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness". Here is the reference to the pieces presented – q.d., My soul shall be satisfied, as if I had received all that is intimated by the rich pieces of the peace-offering. And so, also, when Isaiah says (55:2), "Eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness," – q.d., Come to the great peace-offering, and take the richest portions, even those selected for God! Enjoy the very love wherewith the Father loveth the Son! [Bonar 58]

But will we partake of all portions at God's feast?

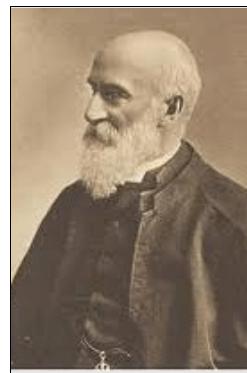
A man may be born of God, and as such, having the life of Christ, be an heir of heaven, sure of all that the love of God has laid up in store for the redeemed family in glory; and yet, like a child, know nothing of his inheritance, nothing of his Father's will, be a stranger to service and warfare, and ready to be deceived by any. This is, I fear, the case with many believers now. The low standard of truth in the Church, making the possession of eternal life the end instead of the beginning of the Christian's course, had led many to think that if they have, or can at last obtain this life, it is enough. But these are not God's thoughts. Birth, spiritual birth, is birth of God for ever – a life once given never to be destroyed. Schooling, training, adorning, clothing, follow the possession of life, and the knowledge of it. I own, indeed, that while the Christian is a babe, he needs milk, and ought never to be pressed to service; at such a time he does not need the deeper truths of Scripture; strong meat may choke the babe as much as poison. But milk, the simpler doctrines of the Word, will not support the man in active service. The man of God needs deeper truth: and it is, I believe, the lack of this deeper truth in the Church which so effectually leaves us without power or service, and brings it to pass that much of what is done is performed in the energy of the flesh rather than in the power of the Spirit. [Jukes 8-9]

Few ordinances were more blessed than these Peace-offerings. Yet, like the Lord's Supper with us, often were they turned to sin. The lascivious woman in Prov. 7:14, comes forth saying, "I have peace-offerings with me; this day have I paid my vows."

She had actually gone up among the devoutest class of worshippers to present a thank-offering, and had stood at the altar as one at peace with God. Having now received from the priest those pieces of the sacrifice that were to be feasted upon, lo! she hurries to her dwelling and prepares a banquet of lewdness. She quiets her conscience by constraining herself to spend some of her time and some of her substance in His sanctuary. She deceives her fellow-creatures, too, and maintains a character for religion; and then she rushes back to sin without remorse. Is there nothing of this in our land? What means Christmas-mirth, after pretended observance of Christ's being born? What means the sudden worldliness of so many on the day following their approach to the Lord's Table? What means the worldly talk and levity of a Sabbath afternoon, or evening, after worship is done? [Bonar 62]

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Andrew Jukes



ANDREW JUKES
(1815-1901)

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