

WORSHIP AND FEASTING ON SACRIFICE

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What is worship? Many in our day would define it as a lifting up of our hearts in praise to God through our Lord Jesus Christ and ascribing worth to His name. Certainly this is true and biblical, but is this all? If so, we must confess that worship seems to be a moment of emotional connection with God expressed verbally, something that may or may not happen in the context of the Church. Granted, it helps to be around others of like mind, and corporate music also serves to warm the heart towards God, but worship in this sense is essentially a subjective experience. We do not really know what is going on in the hearts of others, and at times we are not quite sure what is going on in our own. In fact, we may even leave church with a certain unease of soul, wondering if anything at all substantial had happened.

It is the intention of this essay to reexamine the whole idea of worship in light of Scriptures. We will discover that worship is a very concrete experience, an act of sacrifice, and an act consummated by eating. Worship happens in the material and earthy matrix of grain and animal in the Old Testament and in the matrix of the bread and wine, which become the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus, in the New. Without sacrifice there is no complete worship, and without eating, the sacrifice cannot be completed. It is a ritual that can happen only in the Church, the body of Christ. Therefore, worship is necessarily a costly, corporate and objective act as well as a subjective experience.

SACRIFICE AS A UNIVERSAL AND HUMAN INSTINCT A RITUAL OF EATING

“When gods and mortal men parted,” mused Hesiod, the ancient Greek historian, “sacrifice was created.”¹ Few things are more ancient and universal in mankind than his pristine instinct to approach deity, and this drive is necessarily associated with sacrifice. One cannot read the *Iliad*, for instance, without being impressed with the number and size of the “hecatombs” (offerings of a hundred oxen) to the gods. The greater the boon desired from the gods, the more precious the sacrifice, and hence the inevitable necessity of human sacrifice, the ultimate oblation, in special situations.

Seen merely from the practical perspective, that of moving the gods to do something, we clearly perceive that this ritual behavior of sacrifice is nothing more than magic. Magic is what humans most instinctively resort to when there is no love relationship with deity.² Magic is the manipulation to get one’s way, and it takes on many forms, ranging from occult ritual to religious performance of any kind, whether done consciously or unconsciously. We must not, however, be so hasty to dismiss the whole idea of sacrifice as mere magic, for ritual is also a kind of human language.³ Sacrifice is a cultic event that bonds a community together on a horizontal level, but which also bonds the community with deity on the vertical level. Viewed from this angle, we see that ritual and sacrifice is a very human instinct, that it is an act of worship, and that it involves eating.

Bulls, along with sheep and goats, were the natural animals of choice for sacrifice in pastoral cultures.⁴ The altar was considered to be the hearth of the gods.⁵ No doubt some thought that the gods were literally hungry and needed to be fed. We find this in that famous passage in the *Gilgamesh Epic* in which the famished gods swarmed over Utnapishtem’s sacrifice like flies, for they had not eaten for a week since the flood had wiped out their providers.⁶ Such an idea must have been silly and even obscene to most people, no matter how primitive; no doubt the question of what good this burning animal carcass could possibly be to a god lingered in the minds of many. In ancient Greece, anyway, the “fulsome banquet of the gods” turned out to be more of a banquet for the celebrants, for the mortals got the best parts of the beast while the gods got the bones and the gall.⁷

SACRIFICE AS PRESCRIBED BY OLD TESTAMENT LAW: SACRIFICE NECESSITATES EATING

When we come to ancient Israel, however, we see that sacrifice is tightly prescribed by the Law. The first seven chapters of *Leviticus* present us with the five great offerings: the burnt offering, cereal offering, peace offering, purification offering, and reparation offering.⁸

For the burnt offering, cattle, sheep or goats, or birds were offered according to the wealth of the one

who sacrificed. The sacrificer pressed his hand on the animal as a form of prayer; thereby the animal is condemned to die in his stead for sins committed (Lev. 1:4). A distinguishing characteristic of this sacrifice is that it was a holocaust (Heb. עֹלָה, ‘*olâ*) and, as such, was completely burned. The whole sacrifice went up in smoke, “a soothing aroma for the LORD” (Lev. 1:9).

The cereal offering (Heb. מִנְחָה, *minhâ*) was a gift of the firstfruits to the Lord. A portion was burnt on the altar, and a portion was given to the priests (Lev. 2). Behind this sacrifice was the acknowledgment that YHWH owned the whole of the land, and the offerer was to pay a tribute of the first and the best to his “divine landlord.” The peace offering (Heb. שְׁלָמִים, *š’lāmîm*) involved cattle, sheep, and goats, and was a festive meal eaten at the sanctuary (Lev. 3). The ritual followed that of the burnt sacrifice, except that the kidneys, the fat covering the intestines, and the long lobe of the liver (if a sheep was offered, the fat of the tail) were given over to the Lord (3:9f.). This was to be a “food offering to YHWH” (3:11), burnt as “a soothing aroma for the Lord” (3:16). These parts of the beast, explains Wenham, symbolized the emotions for the ancient Israelite in the same way that “heart” is used in English, and possibly symbolized “the dedication of the worshipper’s best and deepest emotions to God.”⁹ The priests were assigned certain parts and the worshipper ate the rest. Hence, God and man, at peace with one another, sat down to feast together.

Whereas the burnt offering was offered for sins in general, the purification offering (Heb. חַטָּאת, *ḥattā’ t*) was made for specific sins, whether they were inadvertent sins or sins of omission (Lev. 4). Since such sins made the land unclean, they had to be purged for YHWH, who is holy, to dwell with man. There was a unique blood ritual, after which the fat portions were burnt on the altar “as a soothing aroma for YHWH” (4:31). If a priest (4:3-12) or the congregation (4:13-21) sinned, all the rest of the beast was taken outside the camp and burned on an ash heap. It is not clear if the priests ate the meat of the ruler’s offering (4:22-26) or that of the commoners (4:27-35). The reparation offering (Heb. אֲשָׁם, *’āšām*), often referred to as a “guilt offering,” made restitution to God for sins committed against sacred property (5:1-13). The animal required was a ram; the two kidneys with their fat, entrails, the fat of the tail, and the fatty lobe of the liver were burned on the altar, and the meat was reserved for the priests (7:1-7).

As we ponder these sacrifices, we can clearly conclude that sacrifice necessarily involves the devouring of the sacrificial victim. First and foremost YHWH Himself partook; His eating was done by sacred flame, and His acceptance was symbolized by smoke ascending as “a soothing aroma.” The priests who managed the ritual also were allowed to partake, and finally, the worshipper. It is difficult to know exactly how the ancient Hebrews understood this connection between eating, sacrifice, and worship, but one thing is certain: these ideas were inextricably bound together in such a way that they could not be understood apart from each other. Moreover, it is fair to take this a step further by acknowledging that union with God was achieved at this sacrificial meal, not through the actual ingestion of the animal in some magical way, but by the fact that God and man shared together a common covenantal meal.¹⁰

THE VALUE OF THE SACRIFICE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT: WORSHIP HAPPENS IN THE MATRIX OF DIVINE GIVING AND HUMAN GIVING

It might very well be of more than passing interest that one of the first times the Hebrew word for worship appears is in the context of sacrifice, specifically Abraham’s (Heb. root וָחַח, [*ḥwh*] Gen. 22:5). YHWH requests that Abraham offer up his son as a burnt offering (Gen. 22:2, עֹלָה, ‘*olâ*). Abraham could not have understood this in any other way but that YHWH wanted to devour his son completely through sacred fire. It is critical here to see that Abraham also understood this as an act of worship. All things belong to YHWH, and He demands the first and the best. To give the best is nothing other than worship; to hold back the best is something less than worship.¹¹

We see this idea carried on in the Mosaic Law of the Firstborn. It is first introduced at the climax of the parental battle over firstborns—YHWH and Pharaoh fighting for the lives of their own respective firstborns, Israel and Pharaoh’s heir to the throne. One firstborn must die; the parent of the survivor will prove to be the true divine parent. It is in this context that we read in Exodus 13:1-2:

Sanctify to me every firstborn, that which opens every womb among the children of Israel, both of man and beast—it is Mine.

The emphatic “it is Mine” was considered to be a very concrete thing. It means that every firstborn, like the firstfruits of the cereal offering, was the very best men had to offer God, and the primal way to offer the firstborn was through the sacred fire of sacrifice. However, it was specifically forbidden for the children of Israel to offer human sacrifice, and therefore every firstborn had to be “redeemed” with five shekels (Num. 18:15-16). Moreover, YHWH specifically chose the tribe of Levi to stand in the place of all Israelite firstborns by consecrating this tribe for complete and absolute service at the Tabernacle (Num. 8:15-19).

From all this it is clear that what Israel brought to her altar was the very best of man and beast. Although human sacrifice was forbidden, in principle the concept itself was never deemed inappropriate by virtue of the divine command to Abraham¹² and the solemn reminder in the Law that the firstborn belongs to YHWH, and it is only because the firstborn has been redeemed that he is not offered to God through sacred fire. Such flaming desire on YHWH’s part for the best of the worshipper must not be discounted! It means that earthly things are of intense value to YHWH. They are real, and in spite of YHWH’s utter transcendence beyond all material things, He shows keen interest in His earthly offerings. YHWH Himself, who owns all things and freely gives of Himself and His creation to His people, expects His people to respond in kind: freely, joyfully, and without holding back.

In fact, we may say that worship happens in the matrix of divine giving and human giving. Within the matrix is the thing sacrificed, and the more costly the sacrifice to the worshipper, the more intense the worship experience and the bond between God and the offerer, be it an Isaac or a widow’s mite. Moreover, with regard to the sacrificial system in Israel, giving is received by eating. Man eats what he has graciously received from God, and God eats what He has received from man. Within the matrix is real food, stuff of the earth, such as meats, grains, and oils. The union in this matrix is both physical and spiritual, body and soul, a wedding of heaven and earth.

One might object to such a radical conclusion by citing the prophets’ criticism of Temple worship that had degenerated in their day.¹³ It is clear that YHWH hated the sacrifices offered by those who went to great effort to bring before YHWH their sacrifices yet at the same time behaved wickedly towards their neighbors or were not sincere in their hearts. No doubt the sacrificial system was abused by those who had no relationship with God at all but offered sacrifices with a magical intent so as to maneuver their way “around the gods” to get what they wanted. This is truly a human impulse and is a charge that can be leveled not only at ancient man, whether pagan or Israelite, but at contemporary man as well, whether the Protestant with his check in the offering, or the Catholic with his ritual. It is clear that the prophets did not condemn the Mosaic system itself with its graces and provisions. There is no evidence whatsoever that they advocated a purely “spiritualized” or “moral” worship to counter the abuses. Their understanding of heaven meeting earth at the altar did not change. We can only conclude that their worldview remained intact; worship was inconceivable without sacrifice, and sacrifice was inconceivable without eating.

WORSHIP AND THE EATING OF SACRIFICE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT: THEREFORE, LET US KEEP THE FEAST!

Many of the old ways of the Kingdom had passed by the time of Christ. Centuries before, Israel had broken covenant with her God, and although God had reestablished covenant with her and her sacrificial system,¹⁴ she was a country in exile in her own land and was torn apart by sectarian infighting. The legitimacy of the High Priest in Jesus’ time was doubted by many because it was not of the Zadokite line¹⁵ but of the Hasmonean line, descendants of the Macabbeans.¹⁶ The Essenes, though they believed in sacrifice, rejected what went on in the Temple and established a desert community that awaited a messiah to purify the land and the Temple.

In spite of the confusion of the times, it is clear that Jesus and His disciples could not conceive of worship without sacrifice.¹⁷ Jesus certainly criticized the corruption of the religious establishment and boldly drove out the money changers from the Temple but never attacked the legitimacy of the sacrificial system. He assumed that His disciples would, in fact, bring their “gift before the altar” (Matt. 5:23f.). When Jesus said this in His Sermon on the Mount, His disciples most certainly interpreted

this to mean the altar of the Temple. The first readers of Matthew's Gospel, living in the aftermath of the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 69, would most naturally interpret this for themselves as the Eucharistic altar in their churches. Before they brought their gifts to the Eucharist, they had better be at peace with their brothers. In the minds of the Apostles, what once went on in the Temple was transferred into the churches.¹⁸

No one can reasonably doubt that the Apostles considered Jesus to be God's one supreme sacrifice that fulfilled the whole of the sacrificial system. The burnt offering, purification offering, and reparation offering, all being sacrificial remedies for sin, would have a natural association with the crucifixion and death of our Lord. Likewise, the peace offering, which was a common meal together with God, would certainly be applied to the Lord's Supper¹⁹ together with the cereal offering, grain being the core ingredient for bread. In saying this, however, it would be misleading to narrowly limit the Eucharist to the peace offering and the cereal offering, for the Eucharist most assuredly presented to the worshipper the whole spectrum of Christ's salvific work, both historical and eschatological.²⁰

It is a fact that the early Church considered the Eucharist to be a sacrifice.²¹ This perception naturally rose out of the action and language of the Eucharist as presented in Scripture. It is the action and language of sacrifice. The worshippers would come together, bringing the totality of themselves along with their tithes to the altar of God. At the center of this presentation were the common loaf and the wine, symbolizing their life and labor, as a sacrifice to God. In the ritual, the words of Christ pronounced over these elements "this is My Body, which is broken for you" and "this is My Blood, which is shed for you" transformed the sacrifice of the worshippers into the sacrifice of God.²² Again, just as worship happened in the matrix of material sacrifice in the Old Testament, so worship now happens in the matrix of the bread and wine in the New Testament.²³ Worship is a very concrete, objective action. It involves the giving of one's best to God, coming together in unity, eating and drinking.

Here we must acknowledge, however, three shocking differences between the New Testament and the Old Testament sacrifice. First, we are confronted with the very uncomfortable reality of human sacrifice. This suggests to us that the pagan impulse of human sacrifice is, in fact, fundamentally sound. As we have seen above, this necessity lies latent in the Old Testament with Abraham and with the law of the firstborn. The key, however, is that it is not man who offers the human sacrifice to appease the gods but God who offers His own Son in behalf of humanity. Second, YHWH never proclaimed that the Old Testament sacrificial animals were ever "His Body." The sacrificial animal was accepted by God as a "soothing aroma," but was never associated with God Himself. Finally, although blood was used in the ritual in sprinkling and smearing, it was poured out and never imbibed or burned. In fact, the Israelites were expressly forbidden to drink blood. No doubt this was because blood was considered to be magical in pagan ritual.²⁴ Worship happened in the matrix of material sacrifice in the Old Testament, but there was no indication in the ritual that the material was transformed into something else, and there was no drinking of blood.

Such shocking departure from Old Testament ritual begs explanation! Certainly we must begin with the fact that the Old Testament sacrifice, as well as the totality of the primal human urge to sacrifice, were considered to be a type of the one, pure, true, and acceptable sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Although the sacrifice of animals prefigured Christ, it is categorically different. A pronouncement of "this is My Body" over an animal carcass would be the height of sacrilege. A pronouncement of "this is My Son" over the Incarnate God at His baptism, as fantastic and as scandalous as it might seem to many, is not blasphemy to a believer. Likewise, the equally shocking pronouncements of the Incarnate Son over the elements of "this is My Body . . . this is My Blood" might be scandalous but are of the same order, both being solemn, liturgical proclamations.²⁵ When the Old Testament worshipper ate of the sacrifice, he was eating mere flesh. When the New Testament worshipper eats of the Eucharist, he is taking into his physical and spiritual being God's Incarnate Sacrifice. We become what we eat. The Incarnate Lord has ascended to the Father, but before His Ascension, He perpetuated the incarnational principle by multiplying Himself in His Church.

Such a metamorphosis of sacrificial rite is radical indeed. St. John, writing his Gospel approximately forty years after St. Paul wrote I Cor. 11 and twenty to thirty years after the Synoptics, was addressing second to third generation Christians. These Christians were just beginning to face protognostic preachers and writers who denied that matter was good, and by extension, denied that matter could be

sanctified in worship. They denied the Incarnation of Christ, spiritualizing the language of tradition and Scripture to adapt it to their cosmology. Hence, St. John writes his Gospel, the most mystical of all four, reinforcing the truth of the Incarnation by using language that cannot be misconstrued without doing great violence to the text.

Parallel to St. John's doctrine of the Incarnation is his doctrine of the Eucharist. It is well-known that he did not write a narrative version of the institution of the Last Supper along the lines of the Synoptics.²⁶ Rather, he artfully located it as the fourth and middle of the seven signs of the book,²⁷ the sign of the feeding of the five thousand. This opens up Jesus' discourse on the bread from heaven. Although the manna of the desert serves as the springboard for the discourse (6:31f.), it is clear that Jesus is speaking of His Body and Blood in relation to His sacrifice. The Jews are confused over how they could eat this Man's flesh (6:52). True, people tended to show their ignorance in this Gospel by taking spiritual things literally, as Nicodemus (John 3) and the woman at the well (John 4) had done, and this certainly is the case with the Jews in that they were thinking in terms of a crude, savage cannibalism. Jesus, however, pushed the idea beyond the breaking point in vv. 51ff. For St. John's hearers, to understand this eating and drinking merely as a spiritual feeding by faith would not even approach the radical implications the discourse demands.²⁸ They would most naturally understand this as a radical affirmation of the bread and wine of the Eucharist as the Body and Blood of Christ, thus countering the proto-gnostic denial of the material being the matrix in which heaven and earth are united.

What is particularly offensive to Jewish sensibilities in this context is the drinking of blood. Blood is the magical drink *par excellence*, and its consumption can have no other association than that of pagan ritual. Both the Law and paganism connect the blood with life but depart radically in the implications they draw from this fact. The Israelites were not to drink the blood, especially when it was flowing from a beast as it was dying, out of respect for the life of the beast and because the proper use of the blood was to make atonement on the altar; therefore, it was not to be consumed.²⁹ Pagans drank blood because of its inherent powers that are associated with sympathetic magic, transferring the life energies of the sacrifice to the one ingesting it. Jesus here appears to be binding the atonement principle with the pagan magic principle. He, the willing sacrifice, invites those who would be His disciples to drink His Blood. Those who drink His Blood receive life eternal and achieve union with Him (6:53-59). We know, however, that Jesus is not speaking of magic, because magic is at its core a manipulation of matter for one's own purposes and is therefore not relational. The drinking of Jesus' Blood is by definition covenantal and relational. Those who would dare to partake of the cup in an unworthy, magical manner, as St. Paul taught the first generation Church, take in Christ at the risk of sickness and death (I Cor. 11).

CONCLUSION

Those in our present culture who cannot accept the Eucharist as Christ's sacrifice in Body and Blood refuse to do so not so much on an exegetical basis as on a cosmological basis. They have embraced a rationalism birthed by the nominalism of the Middle Ages that maintains that transcendence must be radically separated from immanence. They feel the particulars of our creation, specifically the material, have no true correlation to transcendence. Therefore, one will embrace transcendence as real and consider immanence to be an illusion, or embrace immanence and believe transcendence to be an illusion.³⁰ To ascribe reality and integrity to matter, especially in the context of ecclesial ritual, must therefore necessarily be denigrated as magic. The practical outcome of this, however, is the implicit denial of the Incarnation and the wedding of transcendence and immanence. This has direct bearing on the very worship of God, the most important thing we Christians do. Worship is reduced to a subjective experience of transcendence through faith. If the feelings are there, then there is success. If not, then there is no real worship. The strange irony is that such worship sets out to worship God in His utter transcendence but ends up being all about the worshipper and his subjective experience.

Such a fixation on the individual and his interior experience comes not from Scripture but from Western philosophy birthed out of the nominalism described above, and it has gone to seed in modern existentialism and our contemporary postmodern "me" culture. We must regain a sense of biblical worship that is centered on true sacrifice. Of course, God desires the "sacrifice of praise," but He is after more. He desires to meet us at the altar where we, along with the congregation, come together in

unity, offering the very best of our wealth, and what is more, our very lives, to Him. Moreover, there can be no true sacrifice without eating; sacrifice must be consummated at a meal. It is the material elements that represent our common sacrifice to God and which, upon their consecration, become God's divine sacrifice of His Son Jesus Christ. There at the bread and wine, now the Body and the Blood of Christ, in the very matrix of heaven and earth, we as a congregation become one with Christ. Worship is and has always been a very concrete act.

¹ Hesiod, *Theog.* 535, as quoted by Walter Burkert in *Greek Religion*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1985), p. 57.

² As Sir James Frazer eloquently stated many years ago, beneath the very thin veneer of our civilized cultures, "this universal faith, this truly Catholic creed, is a belief in the efficacy of magic." *The Golden Bough*. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1922), p. 56.

³ Burkert, p. 55.

⁴ "In general the Canaanites sacrificed the same general range of animals as Israel." Gordon Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company), pp. 167, 172. This is also true of the Greeks, except they allowed the sacrifice of pigs. See Burkert, p. 55.

⁵ Burkert, p. 61. So also Roland de Vaux when discussing Mesopotamian sacrifice in *Ancient Israel*, vol. 1, Religious Institutions. (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1965), p. 433.

⁶ Tablet XI, 154-161. See Alexander Heidel's *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1946), p. 87.

⁷ Burkert, pp. 57, 107.

⁸ For a full discussion of the nature of these sacrifices, see Wenham's commentary on Laws and Sacrifice, pp. 47-128 (see footnote 4 above).

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

¹⁰ de Vaux, p. 453. Consider also this paragraph on p. 451. "Sacrifice is the essential act of external worship. It is a prayer which is acted, a symbolic action which expresses both the interior feelings of the person offering it, and God's response to this prayer. It is rather like the symbolic actions of the prophets. By sacrificial rites, the gift made to God is accepted, union with God is achieved, and the guilt of man is taken away. But these effects are not achieved by magic: it is essential that the external action should express the true inward feelings of man, and that it should be favorably received by God. Failing this, sacrifice is no longer a religious act.

¹¹ "Sacrifice was at the heart of OT worship. An essential ingredient of sacrifice was that it had to be costly." Wenham, p. 51.

¹² Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), p. 92.

¹³ The classic texts are Amos 5:21-27, Micah 6:6-8, Isaiah 1:12-15, and Jeremiah 7:21-23.

¹⁴ See Zechariah 3.

¹⁵ The Zadokite claims were both historical (cf. II Sam. 8:17, 15:24-36, and I Kings), and prophetic (Ezk. 40:46, 43:19, 44:15, 48:11).

¹⁶ For information concerning the issue of the high priesthood during the Maccabean times and the legitimacy of the Hasmonean family, see David deSilva, *Introducing the Apocrypha*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), pp. 255-265.

¹⁷ "When the NT was in the process of formation, any religion without the practice of sacrifice would have been almost inconceivable." Hans-Josef Klauck in his article on sacrifice in the New Testament, *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 5, (New York: Doubleday, 1992), p. 886.

¹⁸ It is of interest, however, that the first Christians, although there is no evidence that they sacrificed at the Temple, freely congregated there for prayer, which indicates that they operated with a sense of holy space. See Acts 2:46, 3:1, and 21:26ff.

¹⁹ Wenham, p. 112 and p. 82 where he specifically links the Last Supper with the peace offering and Christ's death on the cross with the burnt offering.

²⁰ For a full treatment, see Dom Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, chapter IX on "The Meaning of the Eucharist." (London: A & C Black, 1945), pp. 238-267.

²¹ Dix offers an impressive list of sub-apostolic fathers and early fathers who spoke of the Eucharist in sacrificial language, such as Clement, A.D. 96, Ignatius, A.D. 115, Justin, A.D. 150, Irenaeus, A.D. 185, Hippolytus, A.D. 236, Cyprian, A.D. 255, and Augustine. See pp. 103-123.

²² It is important here to understand this sacrifice not as a re-sacrifice of Christ's sacrifice but a re-presentation (*anamnesis*) of Christ's sacrifice offered once for all (Heb. 10:12). See Dix, p. 162.

²³ Alexander Schmemmann provides us with a profound meditation on the spirituality of food in worship in the first two chapters of his *For the Life of the World*, (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1963). Consider this quote: "He [Christ] became man and lived in this world. He ate and drank, and this means that the world of which he partook, the very food of our world became His Body, His life. But His life was totally, absolutely *eucharistic*—all of it was transformed into communion with God and all of it ascended into heaven. And now He shares this glorified life with us" (p. 43).

²⁴ The underlying thrust of Leviticus 17-19 is to distinguish Israel from paganism and what we would consider today as the occult. We have in 17:7 an explicit prohibition to sacrifice goats to the goat demons (i.e., demons were thought to take the shape of goats, something like we see in the satyrs of classical mythology). Next comes the prohibition of drinking the blood of animals (17:10-14), and the explicit connection between this act and occult practices of divination and soothsaying (19:26). Then we have the section on sexual immorality in chapter 18 and the whole idea of unholy mixtures that intentionally undermine the created order. These motifs of goat demons, blood drinking, sex, and unholy mixtures are the foundational building blocks of

pagan/occult ritual.

²⁵ Jesus obviously used metaphor freely in his teachings, symbolic imagery that speaks of spiritual truths about Himself. St. John's Gospel abounds with them (bread of life, 6:35, living bread, 6:51, light of the world, 8:12, 9:5, gate for sheep, 10:7, 9, good shepherd, 10:11, 14, resurrection and the life, 11:25-6, way, truth, and life, 14:6, true vine, 15:1, 5). These metaphors range from concrete images (e.g., bread, gate) to abstract ideas (e.g., truth and life). In all of these, with the exception of the living bread in 6:51, Jesus does not explicitly anchor the idea into material space and time in a concrete, tangible way, thus transforming the metaphor into a physical reality (e.g., Jesus never becomes a "gate" in the concrete world). When the Father declared, "This is My Son. . .," He transformed symbolic idea (i.e., human conception of "son") into physical reality. It was a liturgical act of enthronement of the Messianic King, based on Ps. 2:7. See A. A. Anderson, *Psalms in New Century Bible*, vol. 1 (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1972), p. 63, and Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms I in The Anchor Bible* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1965), pp. 7ff. Jesus' declaration "This is My Body . . . this is My Blood," most certainly belongs to the same order where symbolic idea, displayed as actual bread and wine, is transformed into physical reality (Body and Blood) in context of liturgy.

²⁶ Compare Matthew 26:26-30, Mark 14:22-24, Luke 22:19-20 with I Corinthians 11:23-25.

²⁷ The seven signs are: water changed into wine (2:1-12), healing of the nobleman's son (4:46-54), healing of the man at the pool of Bethesda (5:1-15), feeding of the 5,000 (6:1-21), blind man receiving sight (9:1-41), Lazarus raised from the dead (11:1-44), and the Crucifixion (chapters 18-19). The first sign of the water into wine and the last sign of the crucified Body of our Lord are not unrelated to the middle sign of the bread that is expanded into the eating of the Flesh and Blood. Wine prefigures the Blood of Christ and spiritual inebriation/union, while the crucified Body with the pierced side flowing with blood and water harkens back to the eating and drinking of the Blood.

²⁸ Evangelicals historically follow Calvin's interpretation that the eating and drinking of Christ's Flesh and Blood is symbolic of taking Christ in by faith. See *Calvin's Commentaries*, vol. xvii (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), p. 266. Certain early fathers did not, in fact, link John 6 with the Eucharist but understood it spiritually. The two most notable examples are Clement of Alexandria and Origen, both of whom operated with a platonic cosmology that was not friendly to matter. See Raymond Brown, *The Gospel According to John I-XII in The Anchor Bible* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1966), p. 272. Calvin, though on the opposite end of the exegetical spectrum from Origen, shared with him a similar cosmology that embraced transcendence as real and marginalized immanence and the integrity of the material realm. The preponderance of modern scholarship by both Protestants and Catholics holds at least the 6:51-58 pericope to be Eucharistic. See Brown, pp. 272f., and Gail R. O'Day in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, vol. IX (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), pp. 605ff.

²⁹ See Lev.17:10-12 with Wenham, pp. 244f.

³⁰ For an honest and sympathetic treatment on the strengths and weaknesses of the Protestant world view, see Louis Bouyer, *The Spirit and Forms of Protestantism* (Princeton: Scepter Publishers, 2001 ed. of 1956 1st English ed.).