

Christianity and Animal Sacrifice

The God of the Torah commands the making of sacrifices to God by priests, the Levites. These sacrifices are to be of animals and sometimes fruits and crops. They were offered to honour God and to obtain his pardon and to gain many other favours.

It has been noticed that narcissists often abuse and use animals for they think the animal only exists or should exist for their sake. Using animals as sacrifice is revelling in your power over the vulnerable and helpless and showing off your arrogance before God. You even imagine God is delighted by your antics.

The texts about Yahweh smelling the aroma of sacrifice and liking it are passed over by Christians as symbolic. But how can they be sure if God became the man Jesus. It was before Jesus time but that doesn't matter. Jesus left time when he went to Heaven so that could be how God had a nose. Jesus is in eternity and there is no past or future there. Its all just all timed rolled into the now. There is something disconcerting about God's enjoyment. That is the bottom line.

Why is God so keen on getting animal blood offered to him in the Old Testament worship system? God commands this barbarism in Leviticus 17:10-14 saying it is because the life of flesh is in the blood. All this conveys that sin is serious business. Its anti-life and so its seriousness must never be underestimated. It is so anti-life that it cannot be atoned without destruction. This may not make a lot of sense but you see the point.

One interesting example of it comes from Deuteronomy 21. A murder takes place and is unsolved. The rule is that a heifer's neck is to be broken and the head men in the town must wash their hands and proclaim their innocence. The town then is declared innocent of murder. Some say the Old Testament sin offerings were not used to atone for sin but to cleanse the sinner. But the text says atonement was the objective and there are less brutal ways to cleanse sinners! That would not be cleansing but dirtying!

Jesus went to the Temple regularly and its form of worship was based on animal sacrifice. This counts as affirmation and respect for the horrific sick rites that took place there. He even hit people in the Temple. His problem was they did not respect God or the sacrifices by stealing the money for sacrifices. Not once did he do anything or say anything to help an animal.

Jesus told the leper he healed to go to the priest to make the animal sacrifices that Moses commanded. The man could just go to the priest but he was told to ask for sacrifice as well.

Jesus pointed out in Matthew 12 that it is okay for priests to slay animals on the Sabbath for God told them to do it though the rule is that no work be done on the Sabbath. God is not setting up one law against another. Religious work commanded by God is allowed on the sabbath. No other is. This is an affirmation of the rightness of the horrible murders of animals in the name of religion. Jesus by the way is thinking of Numbers 28:8-9.

Despite that, nobody needs to be informed that Christians do not perform animal sacrifices. Christians say God has done away with sacrifice for Jesus has sacrificed himself so that no other sacrifices are necessary. They teach that the animal offerings did not please God but only prefigured the blood sacrifice that Jesus made of himself on the cross for sins and our physical and spiritual salvation. It is a strange picture of the death of Christ that is not even hinted at in the Torah. God decreed different ceremonies for different animals and occasions. Why all this detail and variety if they represented the one event? Why didn't he have the altar made like a cross and command that the animal be killed on it? And why couldn't the animal always have been the same instead of different animals? Why not lambs only when Jesus claimed to be the Lamb of God? There were lots of sacrificing priests while Jesus was his own priest. The picture of the sacrifice of Jesus does not exist.

It could be argued that "Jesus fulfilled the law of sacrifice in himself, by dying on the cross. The law still exists but has been kept for us. Hence there is now no need for Levitical priests to offer animals to God in blood sacrifice. The ceasing of animal sacrifice does not show that the Law has been done away".

This may be, but it does not mean that animal sacrifice cannot continue. The New Testament says that animal sacrifice was really useless in itself but only served as a sign that atonement for sin was necessary. Jesus provided that atonement. Now if the sacrifices represented that before Jesus came they can still represent it after.

If Jesus atoned fully for our sins it would be best to make further atonement though it is superfluous and unnecessary as a sign of love to God. We could look back on the sacrifice of Jesus by sacrifice just as it allegedly looked forward to him. If

Jesus atoned, the sacrifices of the ancient Hebrews before the time of Jesus may be no more effective than ours after that time. Effectiveness is perhaps not the point of them according to the teaching of the Church. The Church says that the sacrifices were not effective in themselves but were only effective in that the sacrificers unknowingly were invoking the sacrifice of Christ symbolised by the rites. So we could use sacrifice to look back on the sacrifice and invoke it but the Church doesn't do that.

Perhaps, the priesthood and the sacrificing of animals is still meant to be but can't be for the order of Levitical priests has been destroyed since the Temple where alone sacrifices were to be offered, was razed virtually to the ground in the first century.

Since the New Testament does not prohibit animal sacrifice it is safest to assume that we are still commanded by divine law to offer it.

It is thought that the assertion in Hebrews that animal blood could never remove sins (9:9; 10:11) contradicts the promise of the Law that all who offer sacrifices with repentance are forgiven for the blood of the animal makes atonement for the sinner (Leviticus 17:11). But the first time Hebrews says that animal blood does not work it says it is because it does not perfect the conscience. This means that animal blood cannot expiate sin when the person who offers it for himself or gets it offered is imperfect for even sacrifice can't do anything about unrepented sin. Hebrews infers that it can work when you are sinless or repentant to get rid of all trace of sin which according to the Bible nobody ever is or does. If you repent of sins and leave one behind your prayer for pardon cannot be heard because it is blasphemously asking God to remove sins and leave that one.

The letter to the Hebrews says the blood of sheep and goats cannot do away with sin and the sacrifices have been imposed until Jesus made his sacrifice. This does not imply abolition. The Old Testament says the sacrifices forgave sin and the New says they had no such power. The answer seems to be that the sacrifices had no power of their own but only forgive sin by looking forward to the atoning sacrifice of Jesus. That is not stopping us from offering sacrifices to look back on the sacrifice of Jesus as gratitude and not because we are impelled to offer them.

Hebrews 10 says that animal sacrifice gave God no pleasure for it did not stop sin permanently. It does not say that it was unable to atone in the sense that animals could not pay for sins even when the person offering it had become perfect.

Animal blood cannot atone for sins when the person who offers it is still a sinner and since Hebrews 10 is on about sinners offering sacrifice it is not saying that it has no power in itself to atone. It says that the offering priests were not without sin, then it says that these sacrifices were only remembrances of sin for animal blood cannot remove it.

Some contend that Hebrews means that blood cannot pardon your sins and the Torah means that it atones for you in a sense, in an indirect way. In other words, if the blood represented your own blood then by offering sacrifice you were admitting that you deserve death and killing yourself by proxy. But if you really wish you were bleeding for your sins and symbolising this by sacrificing an animal then it would atone. But the Torah did not mean this at all for it never said that the animal represented the sinner. To say that the blood atones is to say that it atones and there is no sense in making things complicated with a fancy convolute interpretation.

It is God's acceptance of the sacrifice of the blood of goats and bulls that removes sin not the blood.

People suppose that, "Hebrews 7 says that the Law was changed when God created a new kind of priest, Jesus, different from the Aaronic Priesthood of the Torah".

The solution might be that: it refers to the law on priesthood not the whole Torah. If it did say a law was changed that would not mean that we must hold that the same is true of the other laws.

To add to the Law is to change it but not change it as in cancel its teaching. Jesus added to the Law the law that he would be the High Priest of another priestly order. The High Priest under Aaron could still function.

However, there is no conflict with the Law because the Law said that only divinely authorised priests were allowed which entitled God to start a new kind of priesthood.

If Hebrews is speaking of a cancellation this could mean that the law ceased for Jesus not for the rest of us because Jesus is the only sacrificing priest mentioned in the epistle for us. But it would seem that if it could cease for Jesus then it could be abrogated. But God never said he means this Law for everybody including his son. It could have been for everybody but not his Son. His son was under it temporarily so when it ceased for him it did not cease for him as in get abrogated. The Christian could think that the Law was for ordinary people and sinners not the immaculate Son of God.

Hebrews says that the sacrifices and ritual washings and food laws were imposed until the time of the new order seemingly

implying that they are abolished (9:10). Imposed is the key word in the text. Imposed means forced on while the gospel says that these things are to be followed voluntarily for God makes it easy for you and you can be saved without them though it is a sin to break the laws concerning them.

The Old Testament tells us that sacrifice is no use unless the person offering it is holy so there is nothing new in the New Testament doctrine. Did God ask people to sacrifice when they could not abstain from sin? Was God a hypocrite? Not if they did their best and gave God the offering so that he could be his own priest. When you have to do something and have no time to repent of all your sins God can accept the sacrifice for he understands. Sinners can offer sacrifice to God in such circumstances as long as they resolve to try and repent.

The texts from the Old Testament it quoted to defend its position, like the bits from Psalm 48, said that God preferred obedience to sacrifice. That is, obedience is the most important thing. The Law said the same thing. Offering sacrifice is no good if you are disobedient. It is insulting God. So by using these texts we know that Hebrews 10 is not rejecting the view that animal blood expiates sin in the way that money expiates a crime when it is paid for a fine.

A scribe asked Jesus what the greatest commandment was and Jesus said it was the one to love God totally and to love ones neighbour as oneself. The scribe said he agreed and that its more important to love God and neighbour than to offer any ritual sacrifice. Jesus told him he was not far from the kingdom of God. This was said merely because the scribe expressed correct belief. There is no mention of his goodness or otherwise. He is told though that he still has some way to go before becoming part of the kingdom of God. The story is not saying that animal sacrifice is to be scrapped. It is only saying that loving God matters and sacrifice offered to God is no good without that love. It is really an endorsement of animal sacrifice but with the right motives.

When the Jews condemned Jesus for helping sinners he told them to learn what God meant when he said that he wanted mercy and not sacrifice (Matthew 9:13). This was because they offered sacrifice and did not show mercy. They put sacrifice before mercy. All Jesus said was that God does not want sacrifice from a person who has got his priorities wrong like that. He was not saying, "Never sacrifice animals for it is wrong and silly even if you are a saint".

Jesus' quotation from God can be read in Hosea 6 which says that it means that God was offended by the sacrifices of the people because they did not love him. That was why he told them that mercy was more important.

The Church says that God said he prefers obedience to sacrifice. This does not imply that sacrifice is wrong.

Acts 15 puts eating blood on a par with fornication. The early Christians were asked by the apostles to refrain from both. Even if it is true that God made all foods clean as the Church says, this does not show that blood is made clean for it was not considered food. Probably one reason why blood was sacred was because God said that blood is life and must be offered to him as a sacrifice. Acts 15 indicates that blood must be treated as sacred because abstaining from blood is a reminder of animal sacrifice and a form of tacit approval of it.

The Levitical Priesthood could still be in force. God made a covenant establishing an everlasting priesthood with Phinehas the grandson of Aaron (Numbers 25:13). The Church says he meant that they would be priests forever not that there would be priests forever. But what would God promise them they would be priests forever for? He was promising that the priesthood would never be abolished. Sacrifice of animals would continue forever.

The theologians read the Bible with a veil over their eyes for they would be advocating animal sacrifice if they did not.

Some religionists say that animal sacrifice is no big deal. They say it is not evil or unethical. They say it is permissible or acceptable for the animal will not last long in the wild anyway. They say and will end up suffering far more by being torn apart by predators instead of having the luck to be slain on an altar. This is a rationalisation unless you are saying you are a predator animal too and there is no moral difference. You are saying the animal is better being killed by you than the animals that will get it in the wild!