

COMMENTARIES ON THE PENTATEUCH



LEVITICUS

ROUSAS JOHN RUSHDOONY

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VALLECITO, CALIFORNIA

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by Mark R. Rushdoony

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Chapter One Law and Holiness (*Zechariah 14:20-21*)

20. In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD; and the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar.

21. Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the LORD of hosts: and all they that sacrifice shall come and take of them, and seethe therein: and in that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the LORD of hosts. (*Zechariah 14:20- 21*)

The vision of Zechariah gives us the purpose of Leviticus. As T.V. Moore noted, "The distinction between sacred and profane was introduced by sin, and would cease with its termination on the earth."¹ The purpose of Leviticus is to give us the legal foundation of holiness in the totality of our lives in order to make all life holy. Zechariah looks ahead to the day when "there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts." The Canaanites possessed the Promised Land at the time of the conquest. Subsequently, many Canaanites continued to live in the land. Even more, many Israelites who regularly worshipped in the Temple were in their hearts Canaanites. They were Israelites by blood and by tradition, but not by faith.

Isaiah also gives us the same vision of world holiness as does Zechariah, declaring:

6. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them....

9. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. (*Isaiah 11:6, 9*)

God's goal is the holiness of all the earth, and the reign of His justice or righteousness in every sphere. How far-reaching, encompassing even the minute, this triumph is to be is set forth in Zechariah's statement about "the bells of the horses." Again quoting T.V. Moore,

The "bells of the horses" were those bells that were fastened to them partly for ornament and partly to make them easily found if they strayed away at night. They were not necessary parts of the harness, and trifling in value. When, therefore, it is said that even they should have the inscription that was engraved on the breastplate of the high priest, this declares the fact that even the most trifling things in this future state of the Church shall be consecrated to God, equally with the highest and holiest.²

The goal is a worldwide Garden of Eden beside which the original Garden will be forgotten. The first was limited, simple, and without the technology produced by dominion man. The second is

worldwide, complex, and made more marvellous by man's technology and cultivation. The high priest's crown had engraved upon it the words, "Holiness to the Lord" (Ex. 39:30). We, having been "washed...from our sins in [Christ's] own blood," have been made "kings and priests unto God and his Father" by Jesus Christ (Rev. 1:5-6). Now the high priest's insignia describes us and all the world. This, Paul tells us repeatedly, is the goal of the Holy Spirit as He works in us (Rom. 8:1-39; etc.). The law is *the way* of holiness for us. Hence, the necessity of the law.

There are ninety or more references to the word *holy* in Leviticus, but, apart from the word, the total concern here is holiness. It is therefore a matter of law.

In the modern perspective, law is seen as a lower order of life; love and spirituality are now commonly seen as a higher order, both morally and religiously. Commentators on Leviticus routinely see its laws as obsolete; they were supposedly given by God to the more primitive Hebrews, whereas Christians now live on a higher plane. Besides being a form of Marcionism, this perspective, which is common to modernists and evangelicals alike, is evolutionary. Greek thinking came into the early church and did much harm. In the modern era, concepts of cultural evolution came into clear focus in Hegel; Darwin added biological evolution, and men received him gladly. They had been schooled into an evolutionary perspective by theologians and were thus prepared for Hegel and Darwin.

An evolutionary faith is intolerant of law, because law presupposes a fixity in the nature of things which evolution cannot tolerate. A lawyer who believes in God and in God-given rules of good and evil will seek to make laws and courts alike conform more and more to true justice as set forth in God's law-word. An evolutionary lawyer will instead work to destroy and eradicate any dedication to absolute law. Evolution requires change, and hence whatever truth there may be in law rests in the fact that laws must change as circumstances change. Law cannot be correlated, for the evolutionist, with God's justice, but must instead be related to the ever-changing needs of the people and their growth: law must serve the people, rather than the people serving and obeying the law.

The artist, Marcel Duchamp, expressed in art these same concepts. He hated verbal logic and the idea of words as propositional truths. In any traditional sense, Duchamp was anti-art, an innovator of junk-art because of his hatred of meaning. He questioned the validity of science, and of law in general. "The word *law* was against his principles."³ In this belief, Duchamp had with him the various arts, modern culture generally, and theology as well. Since Holmes, we must add that the world of law has largely been antinomian also.

Not surprisingly, *Leviticus* has not been popular in our time, nor has *Proverbs*, which gives practical summations of the law. An age given to vague and airy spirituality finds *Leviticus* dull and repressive. In the Bible, *spiritual* is a word which has reference to the work of the Holy Spirit in us. In modern usage, the word *spiritual* has reference also to man's own efforts to live on a "higher" level. This distinction is important. The devil being a spiritual creature, spirituality can be as readily demonic as it can be godly. It can be added that humanistic laws are also demonic.

R. K. Harrison, in his "Introduction" to his commentary on Leviticus, calls attention to some important facts. Among these are, *first*, "Not merely is God a living and omnipotent deity, but He is the essence of holiness." This requires of man a moral and spiritual life in conformity to God's holiness as expressed in His law. *Second*, the sacrificial system tells us that the price of sin is death, but that God provides the sacrifice and the forgiveness. *Third*, "there was no forgiveness for the kind of sin which constituted a repudiation of covenant mercies." We can add that modern theologies have made "possible" a promiscuous and unconditional forgiveness by abandoning God's law. *Fourth*, "no person can be his own savior and mediator." God alone can provide the sacrifice, the savior, and the mediator.⁴

We can add something more. The theme of Leviticus can best be summed up by Leviticus 19:1-2:

1. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,
2. Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy.

We are created in God's image, and to develop the implications of that image we must obey God's law with all our heart, mind, and being. In the nineteenth century, Joseph Parker noted, "We are held in bondage by a mistaken conception of personality. When we think of that term we think of ourselves."⁵ But we are *persons* only because we are made in God's image (Gen. 1:26-28), and we cannot develop our status as persons apart from God's law and Spirit. The slogan of the 1960s and early 1970s, "I want to be ME," was a denial of personhood, since man is nothing in himself. Since man is totally God's creation, and is only a person because he is made in the image of God, man can only be a person under God's law. To deny God and His law is for man to deny status as a person. Quite logically, John Dewey questioned the concept.

According to the shorter Catechism:

Q. 10. How did God create man?

A. God created man male and female, after his own image, in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, with dominion over the creatures. (Gen. 1:27; Col. 3:10; Eph. 4:24; Gen. 1:28).

Man cannot develop his personhood except in terms of God and His law-word. Even as God separated man from the dust of the earth to make him a living soul (Gen. 2:7), so God summons covenant man in Leviticus to separate himself to the Covenant Lord and to become holy even as God Himself is holy. The law or justice of God is the way of holiness.

Chapter Two

Dedication, Atonement, and Holiness

(Leviticus 1:1-17)

1. And the LORD called unto Moses, and spake unto him out of the tabernacle of the congregation, saying,
2. Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, If any man of you bring an offering unto the LORD, ye shall bring your offering of the cattle, even of the herd, and of the flock.
3. If his offering be a burnt sacrifice of the herd, let him offer a male without blemish: he shall offer it of his own voluntary will at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the LORD.
4. And he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt offering; and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him.
5. And he shall kill the bullock before the LORD: and the priests, Aaron's sons, shall bring the blood, and sprinkle the blood round about upon the altar that is by the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.
6. And he shall flay the burnt offering, and cut it into his pieces.
7. And the sons of Aaron the priest shall put fire upon the altar, and lay the wood in order upon the fire:
8. And the priests, Aaron's sons, shall lay the parts, the head, and the fat, in order upon the wood that is on the fire which is upon the altar:
9. But his inwards and his legs shall he wash in water: and the priest shall burn all on the altar, to be a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the LORD.
10. And if his offering be of the flocks, namely, of the sheep, or of the goats, for a burnt sacrifice; he shall bring it a male without blemish.
11. And he shall kill it on the side of the altar northward before the LORD: and the priests, Aaron's sons, shall sprinkle his blood round about upon the altar.
12. And he shall cut it into his pieces, with his head and his fat: and the priest shall lay them in order on the wood that is on the fire which is upon the altar:
13. But he shall wash the inwards and the legs with water: and the priest shall bring it all, and burn it upon the altar: it is a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the LORD.
14. And if the burnt sacrifice for his offering to the LORD be of fowls, then he shall bring his offering of turtledoves, or of young pigeons.
15. And the priest shall bring it unto the altar, and wring off his head, and burn it on the altar; and the blood thereof shall be wrung out at the side of the altar:
16. And he shall pluck away his crop with his feathers, and cast it beside the altar on the east part, by the place of the ashes:
17. And he shall cleave it with the wings thereof, but shall not divide it asunder: and the priest shall burn it upon the altar, upon the wood that is upon the fire: it is

a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the LORD.
(Leviticus 1:1-17)

The first seven chapters of Leviticus give us laws concerning sacrifices. These were of four kinds: the burnt offering, the peace offering, the guilt or trespass offering, and the sin offering. F. Meyrick, using slightly different terms, described these sacrifices thus:

The burnt offering, in which the whole of the victim was consumed in the fire on God's altar, signifies entire self-surrender on the part of the offerer; the meat offering, a loyal acknowledgment of God's sovereignty; the sin offering, propitiation of wrath in him to whom the offering is made, and expiation of sin in the offerer; the trespass offering, satisfaction for sin; the peace offering, union and communion between the offerer and him to whom the offering is made.⁶

This summary falls short with respect to atonement in particular, but it is a convenient statement for introducing the sacrificial laws. The first chapter of Leviticus gives us the laws of burnt offerings, sometimes translated as "a whole offering" because the entire animal was burnt on the altar, except for the skin, which went to the priest (Lev. 7:8).

Five animals are named as suitable for sacrifice: the ox, the sheep, the goat, the dove, and the pigeon. These are all clean animals, and all are domesticated ones. There are thus three conditions required in animal sacrifices: *first*, the only animals acceptable were those that had been specified as clean by God's law; *second*, they were domesticated animals which were commonly used for food; *third*, they were a part of the sacrificer's personal property and wealth, and thus they cost him something. Even the poor had to give a sacrifice which cost them something, a dove or a pigeon.

Thus, in the sacrifice of atonement, nothing man does can earn his redemption: it is entirely an act of sovereign grace on God's part. At the same time, it is not costless to man.

The sacrificer must put his hand on the burnt offering for it to be acceptable to make atonement for him (v. 4). The significance of this is, *first*, that the sacrificer identifies himself with the sacrifice, which becomes a substitute for him, to die in his place. The sacrificer thus acknowledges that in God's presence he stands condemned to death for his sins; God makes it clear that only a perfect, unblemished, and innocent substitute can effect atonement. A blemished sacrifice calls for death; only an unblemished one can make atonement. *Second*, by the laying on of hands, not only does the sacrificer see the sacrificed one as his substitute, but he also gives himself wholly to God. He acknowledges himself to be God's creature, required to serve God with all his heart, mind, and being (Deut. 6:4-9).

In v. 5, we see that it is the blood which makes atonement. According to Leviticus 17:11,

For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.

J. R. Porter has commented on Leviticus 1:5 thus:

As this verse makes clear, there is an inherent power in the blood, the 'life', but to expiate it must go on the altar, that is, it must be transmitted to God. So, in Leviticus, all animal sacrifices make expiation.⁷

This needs to be qualified. There is life and power only in the blood of the God-ordained substitute for man, the one who makes atonement for man's sin. While there is life in the blood of the sacrificer, it is a death-bound life and blood.

The laws of sacrifice give us *ritual*. G. Henton Davies commented that, *first*, God appoints the way of approach to Him. Men cannot approach God or worship Him in terms of their ways and ideas but only through God's appointed mediator and way. *Second*, "the laws and the sacrifices are closely related to the divine self-predication, 'I am Yahweh' (11:45f.), and in the later chapters to the appearing of God (9:4-6, 15:31) and to the covenant relationship (2:13, 11:44f., etc.)"; and, *third*, not only is the life in the blood, but also *the blood is given to us* to make atonement for us (17:11). "The 'given' is 'offered.'"⁸

There is in this law a remarkable conjunction of the voluntary and the mandatory. In v. 2, we are told, "If any man of you bring an offering unto the Lord," i.e., there is only one approach to God, God's way, but we are free to reject it and go to hell. Joseph Parker's comments were especially apt:

...No man was at liberty in the ancient Church to determine his own terms of approach to God. The throne must be approached in the appointed way. We are now living in an era of religious licentiousness. There is a genius of worship, there is a method of coming before God. God does not ask us to conceive or suggest methods of worship. He himself meets us with his time-bill and his terms of spiritual commerce. God is in heaven and we are upon the earth; therefore should our words be few. The law of approach to the divine throne is unchanged. The very first condition of worship is obedience. Obedience is better than sacrifice, and is so because it is the end of sacrifice. But see, how under the Levitical ritual, the worshipper was trained to obedience. Mark the exasperating minuteness of the law. Nothing was left to haphazard.... So the law runs on until it chafes the obstinate mind. But man was to yield. He had no choice. His iron will was to be broken in two and his soul was to wait patiently upon God. When, however, we are in the spirit of filial obedience the very minuteness of the law becomes a delight. God does not speak to us in the gross; every motion is watched, every action is determined, every breathing is regulated; man is always to yield; he is a co-partner in this high thinking. So our inventive genius of a religious kind often stands rebuked before God. We like to make ceremonies; methods of worship seem to tempt one side of our fertile genius, and we stultify ourselves by regarding our inventiveness as an element of our devotion. We like to draw up programs and orders and schemes of service and sacrifice. What we should do is to keep as nearly as we can to the Biblical line, and bring all our arrangements into harmony with the law of heaven. The law can never give way.⁹

The burnt offering, like the peace offering, is a covenant fact. It is commonly separated from the sin and trespass offerings, because these have to do with atonement, whereas the burnt offering has to do with dedication. According to Kellogg,

The reasons for this law are manifest. The Israelite was thereby taught that God claims the best we have. They needed this lesson, as many among us do still. At a later day, we find God rebuking them by Malachi (i. 6, 13), with indignant severity, for their neglect of this law: "A son honoureth his father:...if then I be a Father, where is My honour?... Ye have brought that which was taken by violence, and the lame, and the sick;...should I accept this of your hand, saith the Lord." And as pointing to our Lord, the command was no less fitting. Thus, as in other sacrifices, it was foreshadowed that the great Burnt offering of the future would be the one Man without blemish, the absolutely perfect Exemplar of what manhood should be, but is not.¹⁰

All this is very true, but the burnt offering cannot be separated from atonement. The unblemished sacrifice points to Christ. Rabbi Aaron Rothkoff stated it clearly from the perspective of Judaism: "The burnt offerings, signifying complete surrender to God, were therefore associated with sin offerings in the process of atonement."¹¹

Burnt offering is literally in the Hebrew the "offering that goes up." Only Christ is that acceptable offering before God. The burnt offering rests on the atonement, and it sets forth the fact that our only acceptable service to God is in Christ and through His atonement. We can only be holy and render a holy service to the Father in and through the Son. The laws of Leviticus, from beginning to end, set forth the specified ways of holiness. We can only serve God in His appointed way.

Such a faith goes against the modern grain. Earlier, Duchamp's hostility to law was noted. Its source needs to be noted as well. Marcel Duchamp hated not only law but also *judgment* in any and every sphere. He wanted to see "the concept of judgment...abolished."¹² He sought to create a new language, as well as a new physics, enthroning chance, not God, law, or meaning.¹³ He also sought to create new units of measurement based on chance, not regularity and law. He wrote, "Intuition led me to revere the law of chance as the highest and deepest of laws, the law that rises from the fundament." After Freud, he denied any law or order from God while expressing "profound faith in the unconscious nature of man." He and others held to Rimbaud's affirmation, "The poet becomes a seer by a long, enormous and reasoned derangement of all his senses." Note the emphasis on a reasoned derangement: a deliberate rejection of God and law for chance and irrationality is affirmed. However, naturally insane people were looked upon as of intense interest and a source of inspiration.¹⁴ Duchamp had a "fear of being trapped... by 'beauty,'"¹⁵ which is not surprising, since beauty evidences both order and judgment.

Duchamp is not an accident of history; he represents a deeply rooted trend in the modern world, a hostility to God and law. This hostility has its origin in Genesis 3:5, in the Fall. Not surprisingly, it has profound echoes in modern man's being. As a result, hostility to law is great: it means life by prescription, not by man's autonomous will. Because of this, Leviticus spells

death to the modern mind, because it is, like all of Scripture, a prescriptive book. Leviticus 18:5 declares plainly, “Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, He shall live in them: I am the Lord.” Modern man prefers death (Prov. 8:36).

Chapter Three

Sacrifices and Conspicuous Waste

(Leviticus 2:1-16)

1. And when any will offer a meat offering unto the LORD, his offering shall be of fine flour; and he shall pour oil upon it, and put frankincense thereon:
2. And he shall bring it to Aaron's sons the priests: and he shall take thereout his handful of the flour thereof, and of the oil thereof, with all the frankincense thereof; and the priest shall burn the memorial of it upon the altar, to be an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the LORD:
3. And the remnant of the meat offering shall be Aaron's and his sons': it is a thing most holy of the offerings of the LORD made by fire.
4. And if thou bring an oblation of a meat offering baked in the oven, it shall be unleavened cakes of fine flour mingled with oil, or unleavened wafers anointed with oil.
5. And if thy oblation be a meat offering baked in a pan, it shall be of fine flour unleavened, mingled with oil.
6. Thou shalt part it in pieces, and pour oil thereon: it is a meat offering.
7. And if thy oblation be a meat offering baked in the fryingpan, it shall be made of fine flour with oil.
8. And thou shalt bring the meat offering that is made of these things unto the LORD: and when it is presented unto the priest, he shall bring it unto the altar.
9. And the priest shall take from the meat offering a memorial thereof, and shall burn it upon the altar: it is an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the LORD.
10. And that which is left of the meat offering shall be Aaron's and his sons': it is a thing most holy of the offerings of the LORD made by fire.
11. No meat offering, which ye shall bring unto the LORD, shall be made with leaven: for ye shall burn no leaven, nor any honey, in any offering of the LORD made by fire.
12. As for the oblation of the firstfruits, ye shall offer them unto the LORD: but they shall not be burnt on the altar for a sweet savour.
13. And every oblation of thy meat offering shalt thou season with salt; neither shalt thou suffer the salt of the covenant of thy God to be lacking from thy meat offering: with all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt.
14. And if thou offer a meat offering of thy firstfruits unto the LORD, thou shalt offer for the meat offering of thy firstfruits green ears of corn dried by the fire, even corn beaten out of full ears.
15. And thou shalt put oil upon it, and lay frankincense thereon: it is a meat offering.
16. And the priest shall burn the memorial of it, part of the beaten corn thereof, and part of the oil thereof, with all the frankincense thereof: it is an offering made by fire unto the LORD. (Leviticus 2:1-16)

To understand this chapter, we must understand that the term *meat* offering is now deceptive, the word *meat* now having a restrictive meaning. As originally used in the King James Version, it meant something broader, and here it meant *grains*. The same is true of the word *corn* (v. 14, 16); it here means grains. The word *oblation* means anything offered in worship, i.e., anything rightfully so offered. Oswald T. Allis noted that, “The smallest meal offering, one tenth of an ephah, was more than three quarts.”¹⁶ The Hebrew text does not read *meal* offering, however, but *minchah*, meaning gift or offering.

An offering of grains, the product of man’s work, was required. Either the actual grain or flour could be brought to the altar, or cakes and wafers made from it. Their preparation is strictly specified: the best flour, with good cooking oil, and prepared in any one of three utensils: an oven (v. 4), a pan (v. 5), or a frying pan (v. 7).

The oil, commonly olive oil, has an extensive symbolic meaning in Scripture. Samuel Clark noted:

There were three principal uses of oil familiar to the Hebrews. (1) It was employed to anoint the surface of the body in order to mollify the skin, to heal injuries, and to strengthen the muscles (Ps. civ. 15; cix. 18; cxli. 5; Isa. i.6; Mic. vi.15; Luke x.34; Mark vi.13; James v. 14; &c); (2) it was largely used as an ingredient of food (Num. xi.8; I K. xvii.12; I Chro. xii.40; Ezek. xvi.13,19; Hos. ii.5, & C.); and (3) it was commonly burned in lamps (Ex. xxv.6; Matt. xxv.3, &c). — In each of these uses it may be taken as a fit symbol of divine grace. It might figure as conferring on each believer the strength and faculties required to carry on his work (I Cor. xii.4); as supporting and renewing him day by day with fresh supplies of life (I Cor. iii.16; Tit.iii.5); and as giving light, comfort, and guidance into all truth (Job. xxxii.8; John xiv.16; xv.26).¹⁷

There was, however, a more basic meaning to all Hebrew worshippers. Grain as bread, thick, heavy, whole-grained bread, together with the oil which was the bread and butter of everyday life, was the “daily bread” of the people. The meaning of this sacrifice thus is, *first*, that our daily bread, a symbol of our daily life, is laid upon the altar in surrender to the Lord. *Second*, nothing in this sacrifice is retained by the worshipper. The totality of the worshipper’s life and work is surrendered to God. *Third*, giving all to God means giving in and through the atonement, thereby having access to the Father. Having received life through Him, we in return surrender our lives to Him. *Fourth*, we are acceptable, not because of ourselves, but because of Christ, who *renews* the covenant; hence, the salt can never be lacking in this offering (v. 13). Salt as a preserving agent symbolizes incorruptibility: the covenant in Christ cannot be broken. The salt, or Christ’s covenant, arrested any leavening process and thus set forth “the nullification of any presence of sin.”¹⁸

When the grain as such was offered, it was in three ways. *First* (vv. 1-3), the uncooked meal could be offered; *second* (vv. 4-11), the same meal and oil could be prepared by cooking in specified ways; and, *third*, (vv. 14-16), the best of the new ears could be parched in the fire.

The grain offered had to be the *firstfruits*. As Porter notes,

The Hebrew word for firstfruits here means literally “beginning” and this indicates their significance. In Hebrew thought, the first member of a series contained all that followed (cp. I Cor. 15:22). So when the first produce of herds or crops was offered to God, he in fact received the whole, his rightful due as the giver of all increase, and the remainder was then available for his use. It is the same idea as that lying behind the “token” (verse 2).¹⁹

It should be noted that the priests were to receive much of this offering (vv. 3,10). A fundamental premise of Scripture, as our Lord declares, is, “the labourer is worthy of his hire” (Luke 10:7). Paul cites this in 1 Timothy 5:17-18, and refers to it in 1 Corinthians 9:4-5. This is applicable to the ox which treads out the grain (Deut. 25:4; 1 Cor. 9:9; 1 Tim. 5:18), and it is applicable to all men, including alien workers (Deut. 24:14-15). Wages are a form of communication, and God judges all men for their evil communications or bad pay (Gal. 6:6-10). To divorce morality from economics is evil, and it incurs God’s wrath and judgment. This requirement of good pay certainly applies to those in Christ’s service. As Bush commented:

“The remnant of the meat-offering shall be Aaron’s.” In every dispensation God has evidenced a kind concern for the maintenance of those who were devoted to ministry in sacred things. Those who labor in the word are to be competently supported. “Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? And they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar. Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel.” I Cor. 9:13-14.²⁰

We come now to a fact often noted by critics of the Old Testament, and of the laws of sacrifice in particular. More than a few express horror over the great volume of various foods either consumed on the altar or given to the priests. In both cases, this is seen as wasteful. Some years ago, in Berkeley, California, one lecturer calculated how much food was *destroyed* in sacrifices per thousand families in Israel. He spoke of this as an outrage; think of how many poor people could have been fed with this food! Long before this man, the disciples had voiced like thinking:

3. And being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on his head.
4. And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made?
5. For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her.
6. And Jesus said, Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me.
7. For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always.
8. She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying.

9. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her. (Mark 14:3-9)

Given the foods required by the sacrificial system, grains, meats, and wine, and given the number of Israelites who had to offer up sacrifices, we would have to describe the sacrificial system as, humanly speaking, an example of *conspicuous waste*.

This “waste” of food, however, is not the only form of *required* “waste.” The “waste” of time is equally notable. The required abstention from work one day in seven, and then one year in seven, plus holy days as well, means no small amount of time removed from productivity. In one sense, this can be justified. Land allowed to lie fallow increases its fertility, and men who learn to rest become more productive. All this is true, but there is another factor. To regard the sacrifices of food and time as conspicuous waste is to think humanistically, to think without God. The Bolshevik Revolution moved strongly and viciously against all such waste, and productivity declined dramatically.

More importantly, such “conspicuous waste” is a recognition that it is not our doing and planning that prospers us, but God’s government. Whatever we give to God in time, money, or goods is a recognition that we prosper most when we take hands off our lives and commit them into God’s care. Mrs. Howard Taylor, in her life of William Whiting Borden (1887-1913), *Borden of Yale, '09*, cited words written by young Borden in a notebook in his freshman year:

Lord Jesus, I take hands off, as far as my life is concerned. I put Thee on the throne in my heart. Change, cleanse, use me as Thou shalt choose. I take the full power of Thy Holy Spirit. I thank Thee. May never know a tittle of the result until Morning.

By viewing life and the world as though man were an economic animal, we have warped ourselves.

Note the paradox. We are, *first*, told that “the labourer is worthy of his hire,” and we are not to think in terms of the marketplace but rather in terms of communication and community in paying people. Rewards are thus given some attention. *Second*, material wealth is discarded by sacrifices, and time as a form of wealth is “wasted” in God’s sabbaths. Some would regard both the Biblical requirement concerning pay as well as the sacrifice of time and goods as instances of prodigal and conspicuous waste.

But man is not a creature of the free market; he is neither a political nor an economic animal. He cannot live by bread alone; he needs every word that proceeds from the mouth of God (Matt. 4:4). Man is a religious creature, and he cannot have life on his terms without disaster. As man gives himself to the author of life (John 14:6), he thrives and grows. What appears to others to be conspicuous waste is in reality evidence of life and freedom. It means giving ourselves to life rather than to death. Where men withhold themselves from giving their time, money, goods, and selves to God in Christ, we have the clearest instances of conspicuous waste.

Chapter Four

The Meaning of Peace

(Leviticus 3:1-17)

1. And if his oblation be a sacrifice of peace offering, if he offer it of the herd; whether it be a male or female, he shall offer it without blemish before the LORD.
2. And he shall lay his hand upon the head of his offering, and kill it at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation: and Aaron's sons the priests shall sprinkle the blood upon the altar round about.
3. And he shall offer of the sacrifice of the peace offering an offering made by fire unto the LORD; the fat that covereth the inwards, and all the fat that is upon the inwards,
4. And the two kidneys, and the fat that is on them, which is by the flanks, and the caul above the liver, with the kidneys, it shall he take away.
5. And Aaron's sons shall burn it on the altar upon the burnt sacrifice, which is upon the wood that is on the fire: it is an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the LORD.
6. And if his offering for a sacrifice of peace offering unto the LORD be of the flock; male or female, he shall offer it without blemish.
7. If he offer a lamb for his offering, then shall he offer it before the LORD.
8. And he shall lay his hand upon the head of his offering, and kill it before the tabernacle of the congregation: and Aaron's sons shall sprinkle the blood thereof round about upon the altar.
9. And he shall offer of the sacrifice of the peace offering an offering made by fire unto the LORD; the fat thereof, and the whole rump, it shall he take off hard by the backbone; and the fat that covereth the inwards, and all the fat that is upon the inwards,
10. And the two kidneys, and the fat that is upon them, which is by the flanks, and the caul above the liver, with the kidneys, it shall he take away.
11. And the priest shall burn it upon the altar: it is the food of the offering made by fire unto the LORD.
12. And if his offering be a goat, then he shall offer it before the LORD.
13. And he shall lay his hand upon the head of it, and kill it before the tabernacle of the congregation: and the sons of Aaron shall sprinkle the blood thereof upon the altar round about.
14. And he shall offer thereof his offering, even an offering made by fire unto the LORD; the fat that covereth the inwards, and all the fat that is upon the inwards,
15. And the two kidneys, and the fat that is upon them, which is by the flanks, and the caul above the liver, with the kidneys, it shall he take away.
16. And the priest shall burn them upon the altar: it is the food of the offering made by fire for a sweet savour: all the fat is the LORD's.
17. It shall be a perpetual statute for your generations throughout all your dwellings, that ye eat neither fat nor blood. (Leviticus 3:1-17)

The purpose of the sacrificial system is the restoration of peace and communion between God and man, a relationship which has been destroyed by man's sin. The penalty for man's violation of God's covenant and law is death, and man cannot make atonement for his own sin. Man is a blemished offering; furthermore, his sin places him in enmity towards God, and hence hostile to peace with God. As Paul says in Romans 8:7, "the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (cp. James 4:4). Only with Christ's atoning sacrifice is our enmity with God broken down (Eph. 2:14-16; Col. 1:20). As Vos noted, *first*, Biblical sacrifice sets forth the fact that the gift of life to God, either in expiation or then in consecration, is necessary to restore communion. *Second*, because man is a sinner, a blemished being, he cannot make atonement for sin with his own person. Hence, the necessity of the sinless Christ and His atoning sacrifice.²¹ Moreover, although Christ makes atonement for us, and our atonement is entirely His work, a cost factor remains for us. The animal sacrifices which typified Christ were costly. "The sacrifice must be taken from what constitutes the sustenance of the life of the offerer, and from what forms the product of his life."²² Salvation from sin and communion with God impose responsibilities upon the recipients of God's grace.

The laying-on of hands in the peace offering (v. 2) was accompanied, not by the confession of sins, but by praise and thanksgiving. Micklem noted that peace offerings were the most common type of sacrifice and were followed by the covenant meal of the worshippers, one with another.²³ In Leviticus 7:15-36, we have the laws concerning this matter; the peace offerings and the believers' meal, and the priests' portion, are cited.

Fat and blood are cited as forbidden foods. Harrison has noted that parasites are sometimes found in tissues of even the clean animals.²⁴ In the peace offering, the priest dashed the blood against the sacrificial altar, but the worshipper killed the animal (vv. 2, 8, 13). For most modern men, this would be an unpleasant if not very distasteful task. For farmers and herders, this would be a routine matter; for them, it was a reminder of the necessity of death for peace with God. The implications of this are apparent in the episode of Phinehas (Num. 25:1-18).

To destroy Israel, whom they could not expect to defeat in battle, the Moabites resorted to a devious method. Their religion was the worship of Baal-peor. We know very little about this particular form of Baalism, other than the two activities which accompanied Israel's part in it. *First*, the apostate Israelites took part in a Baalist communion service which involved not only eating but also bowing down to the gods thereof. *Second*, the apostates openly involved themselves in sexual acts with Moabite women. Fertility cult practices were thus an aspect of the worship of Baal-peor. God's judgment, in the form of a plague which killed 24,000 Israelites, followed. The plague was stayed when a high official, Phinehas, a grandson of Aaron, acted against a prominent Israelite, Zimri, a prince of the Simeonites, and the woman Cozbi, the daughter of a prominent Midianite. When Phinehas saw their clear defiance of God's law, he entered the tent "and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her belly. So the plague was stayed from the children of Israel" (Num. 25:8). Psalm 106:28-31 celebrates this fact:

28. They joined themselves also unto Baal-peor, and ate the sacrifices of the dead.

29. Thus they provoked him to anger with their inventions: and the plague brake in upon them.
30. Then stood up Phinehas, and executed judgment: and so the plague was stayed.
31. And that was counted unto him for righteousness unto all generations for evermore.

Phinehas, a very high ranking priest and officer, brought peace by means of death. In his act, we have an insight into the Biblical meaning of peace.

For modern man, peace comes by talk and compromise. Meet with all Marxists and be compliant; talk things out with murderers and delinquents. If a person commits adultery, theft, or arson, find out what is lacking in his or her life and seek to remedy it, and so on and on.

Phinehas' act of judgment was a *legal* act. We are not asked to imitate his act but to follow him in his faithfulness. Men today believe in peace at any price and hence have no peace but instead a growing judgment. Evil cannot be reasoned, bribed, or persuaded into goodness. To assume so is to despise God's word and salvation. The peace offering tells us that our continued communion with God requires the continuing death in us of all that is contrary to His word, and the continuing death all around us of those things which are contrary to His law. The peace offering makes it clear that a continuing communion with God requires a continuing death as the precondition for a growing life. We must exercise judgment, or we shall be judged. This is the significance of Phinehas, and of the peace offering.

In the peace offering, the sacrificer ate a portion, and God got the rest on the altar. There are references to peace offerings in 1 Samuel 11:15, Amos 5:22, and in Ezekiel 45 and 46. In Leviticus, it is the subject also of 7:11-34; 19:5-8; and 22:21-25.

It is noteworthy that the peace offering excludes birds as an acceptable sacrifice. The specified animals are cattle, sheep, and goats. This sacrifice was followed by a sacred meal, and the believer was expected to share it with his family, his friends, and the needy. The use of fowl would have prevented such a sharing.²⁵ This sharing is cited in Deuteronomy 16:11.

S. C. Gayford noted, with respect to v. 5:

The "fat" is often used figuratively to describe the best part of anything: e.g., Nu. 18:12; Dt. 32:14 (RVm, Hebrew, "fat"). The expression "the fat of the land" (Gen. 45:18) has passed into English. The fat of an animal was regarded as the centre and source of its life, in almost as great a degree as its blood; hence like the blood it was given to God and forbidden as human food (11, 16- 17).²⁶

The priest received portions of the meat, sin, and trespass offerings, but he was normally a participant in the peace offering meal. Pfeiffer noted,

The Peace Offering is sometimes called the Thank Offering. While in all the offerings there is a recognition and consciousness of sin and the need for

atonement, the Peace Offering stresses that fellowship which is the portion of the individual who is in a right fellowship with God.

The Peace Offering appears to have invariably followed other sacrifices. This is true on the occasion of the consecration of Aaron and his sons (Leviticus 8), and the services of the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16). Those sacrifices which set forth the concept of atonement from sin logically precede those which stress the joy of fellowship in holy things.²⁷

It is significant that the altar is also called in Malachi 1:7, “*the table* of the Lord.” Communion comes through atonement and flourishes in our thanksgiving. The altar was a covenant table making possible through atonement a covenant feast.

The reference in v. 9 to the “rump” is actually to the tail of a particular variety of sheep. The tail, in the summer and fall, stores food to enable the sheep to live through the snow-bound winter months, with their limited fare. When these sheep were released to pasture in the spring, the tail was a small stump, but by autumn, it carried as much as a third of their weight. (My father, who as a boy tended such sheep on the mountain next to Ararat, said that, as the tail grew, it became necessary to put a wheel or some like device under it, attached securely to the tail.)

W. F. Lofthouse called attention to an important aspect of the meaning of the word translated as *peace* in this offering:

The root of the Heb. term for “peace offering” denotes not simply “peace” in our sense, but “being quits” with another. In the OT generally, the peace offering is a common meal, wherein God, priests, and worshippers sit down, as it were, together, in token that there is nothing which separates them, and that all causes of displeasure on the part of God are at an end. This offering is often spoken of as “sacrifices” par excellence (cf. I S. 11:15, I K. 1:19).²⁸

Our word *peace* has come to mean simply a cessation of physical hostilities, or the absence thereof; such a “peace” can be the occasion of subversion, hatred, and a preparation for massive retaliation, but it is still called “peace.” The Biblical term here is more like our word *requite*, which means to repay good or evil, to make a return for good or evil. In this sense, *peace is the establishment of justice*. God by His grace provides the atonement; man by his response becomes separated unto the Lord, holy unto Him, keeping the covenant laws of justice. This is God’s required requital.

Peace in the Biblical sense is thus inseparable from justice. It begins with the atonement as the satisfaction of justice; it is followed by our regeneration, so that we are now empowered to live by the laws of justice as set forth in God’s law.

Our Lord, in speaking to His disciples of His coming death, makes it clear that, because He is leaving them, two things are being opened up to them by His atonement, the communion of the Holy Ghost, and true peace in Him:

26. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

27. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid (John 14:26-27).

The politics of peace in our time is the policy of injustice and death. There is no Phinehas to stay God's judgment. Both the meaning and the fact of peace escape us. A generation and nations at peace with abortion and homosexuality are at war with God, who will not stay the plague.

The meaning of Leviticus 3 is important. There is no peace where there is no grace and atonement. Peace means requital, justice, and this is impossible apart from God's law. Thus, grace leads us into faithfulness to God's law, His justice, and the result is true peace.

Chapter Five

Responsibility

(Leviticus 4:1-35)

1. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,
2. Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If a soul shall sin through ignorance against any of the commandments of the LORD concerning things which ought not to be done, and shall do against any of them:
3. If the priest that is anointed do sin according to the sin of the people; then let him bring for his sin, which he hath sinned, a young bullock without blemish unto the LORD for a sin offering.
4. And he shall bring the bullock unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the LORD; and shall lay his hand upon the bullock's head, and kill the bullock before the LORD.
5. And the priest that is anointed shall take of the bullock's blood, and bring it to the tabernacle of the congregation:
6. And the priest shall dip his finger in the blood, and sprinkle of the blood seven times before the LORD, before the vail of the sanctuary.
7. And the priest shall put some of the blood upon the horns of the altar of sweet incense before the LORD, which is in the tabernacle of the congregation; and shall pour all the blood of the bullock at the bottom of the altar of the burnt offering, which is at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.
8. And he shall take off from it all the fat of the bullock for the sin offering; the fat that covereth the inwards, and all the fat that is upon the inwards,
9. And the two kidneys, and the fat that is upon them, which is by the flanks, and the caul above the liver, with the kidneys, it shall he take away,
10. As it was taken off from the bullock of the sacrifice of peace offerings: and the priest shall burn them upon the altar of the burnt offering.
11. And the skin of the bullock, and all his flesh, with his head, and with his legs, and his inwards, and his dung,
12. Even the whole bullock shall he carry forth without the camp unto a clean place, where the ashes are poured out, and burn him on the wood with fire: where the ashes are poured out shall he be burnt.
13. And if the whole congregation of Israel sin through ignorance, and the thing be hid from the eyes of the assembly, and they have done somewhat against any of the commandments of the LORD concerning things which should not be done, and are guilty;
14. When the sin, which they have sinned against it, is known, then the congregation shall offer a young bullock for the sin, and bring him before the tabernacle of the congregation.
15. And the elders of the congregation shall lay their hands upon the head of the bullock before the LORD: and the bullock shall be killed before the LORD.

16. And the priest that is anointed shall bring of the bullock's blood to the tabernacle of the congregation:
17. And the priest shall dip his finger in some of the blood, and sprinkle it seven times before the LORD, even before the veil.
18. And he shall put some of the blood upon the horns of the altar which is before the LORD, that is in the tabernacle of the congregation, and shall pour out all the blood at the bottom of the altar of the burnt offering, which is at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.
19. And he shall take all his fat from him, and burn it upon the altar.
20. And he shall do with the bullock as he did with the bullock for a sin offering, so shall he do with this: and the priest shall make an atonement for them, and it shall be forgiven them.
21. And he shall carry forth the bullock without the camp, and burn him as he burned the first bullock: it is a sin offering for the congregation.
22. When a ruler hath sinned, and done somewhat through ignorance against any of the commandments of the LORD his God concerning things which should not be done, and is guilty;
23. Or if his sin, wherein he hath sinned, come to his knowledge; he shall bring his offering, a kid of the goats, a male without blemish:
24. And he shall lay his hand upon the head of the goat, and kill it in the place where they kill the burnt offering before the LORD: it is a sin offering.
25. And the priest shall take of the blood of the sin offering with his finger, and put it upon the horns of the altar of burnt offering, and shall pour out his blood at the bottom of the altar of burnt offering.
26. And he shall burn all his fat upon the altar, as the fat of the sacrifice of peace offerings: and the priest shall make an atonement for him as concerning his sin, and it shall be forgiven him.
27. And if any one of the common people sin through ignorance, while he doeth somewhat against any of the commandments of the LORD concerning things which ought not to be done, and be guilty;
28. Or if his sin, which he hath sinned, come to his knowledge: then he shall bring his offering, a kid of the goats, a female without blemish, for his sin which he hath sinned.
29. And he shall lay his hand upon the head of the sin offering, and slay the sin offering in the place of the burnt offering.
30. And the priest shall take of the blood thereof with his finger, and put it upon the horns of the altar of burnt offering, and shall pour out all the blood thereof at the bottom of the altar.
31. And he shall take away all the fat thereof, as the fat is taken away from off the sacrifice of peace offerings; and the priest shall burn it upon the altar for a sweet savour unto the LORD; and the priest shall make an atonement for him, and it shall be forgiven him.
32. And if he bring a lamb for a sin offering, he shall bring it a female without blemish.
33. And he shall lay his hand upon the head of the sin offering, and slay it for a sin offering in the place where they kill the burnt offering.

34. And the priest shall take of the blood of the sin offering with his finger, and put it upon the horns of the altar of burnt offering, and shall pour out all the blood thereof at the bottom of the altar:

35. And he shall take away all the fat thereof, as the fat of the lamb is taken away from the sacrifice of the peace offerings; and the priest shall burn them upon the altar, according to the offerings made by fire unto the LORD: and the priest shall make an atonement for his sin that he hath committed, and it shall be forgiven him. (Leviticus 4:1-35)

The several sections of chapter 4 all deal with inadvertent sins, or, more accurately, sins of weakness and human frailty. These are not capital offenses. They are, however, serious because they are violations of God's law. Examples of such sins could include using false weights either unknowingly or in weakness and a desire for gain (Lev. 19:35-37; Deut. 25:13-16); perverting or obstructing justice out of fear (Ex. 23:1-2, 6-7); and so on. Such offenses require restitution to man, and also a sacrifice to make restitution to God.

Those required to make sin offerings are as follows:

1. The sins of the priest, or the high priest, are noted first. Some would limit this to the high priest because v. 3 speaks of an anointed priest, but 7:36 makes it clear that all functioning priests were anointed. In vv. 3-12, the atonement of priests is specified.
2. In vv. 13-21, the sin of the congregation, i.e., all the covenant people as church or nation, is specified.
3. In vv. 22-26, it is the ruler whose sins are cited. These were rulers in the tribal spheres.
4. The ordinary people as individuals are referred to in vv. 27, 35.

The offerings required for atonement are very important:

1. A priest: a bull, without blemish (v. 3).
2. The congregation, church, or nation: a bull without blemish (v. 14).
3. A ruler: an unblemished male goat, a kid (v. 23).
4. A commoner: an unblemished female goat, a kid (v. 28).

There is an obvious gradation here. The sin of a priest or religious leader is most serious in God's sight. It is in terms of this that Peter declares, "judgment must begin at the house of God" (1 Peter 4:17). Our Lord says, "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more" (Luke 12:48). Today, as in pagan antiquity, it is commonly assumed that position and power give immunity from law and consequences. God's law declares that the greater the responsibility, the greater the culpability.

The sins involved in these offerings did not include capital offenses. However, as J. R. Porter noted:

On the other hand, inadvertent transgressions also included occasions of ritual impurity. In the priestly theology, sin is an objective, quasi-physical thing — hence, even if committed inadvertently, its consequences cannot be avoided — and so not sharply distinguished from defilement or uncleanness. Thus, sin and guilt-offerings are made on occasions where “sin,” in our usual understanding of the word, is hardly involved (cp. 5:1-3; 14:1-20; 16:16).²⁹

Because our era is so materialistic, it depreciates sins which do not have physical effects, i.e., envy, hatred, jealousy, and the like. Because the spiritual is not seen as altogether real, all major sins which are spiritual are regarded as nothing. Crime has been sometimes redefined to mean physical damage or harm. Since the root of all sin is spiritual and in the heart of man, to depreciate the spiritual soon means to depreciate all crime. Environmental “causes” are said to cause crime, and the willfulness thereof is denied, because man’s will has been depreciated.

The seriousness of the priest’s sin stresses the religious and spiritual roots of sin and justice alike. The blood of the sin offering of the priest was smeared on the altar of incense (v. 7), whereas in all other cases it was smeared on the horns of the altar of the burnt offering (vv. 18, 25, 30). There was a difference also in the priest’s sacrifice: it was burned outside the camp on the sacrificial ash heap (v. 12). There was an especial defilement in his sin, and hence this procedure.

According to Scripture, the fall of man and the entrance of sin and death into the world have religious roots, so that no man can understand sin and evil, justice and injustice, apart from this fact. Our Lord says,

18. But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart: and they defile the man.

19. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. (Matthew 15:18-19)

To deny the religious foundations of life is to blind oneself to reality, and to court death.

The sin offering also provided for a portion to be consumed by the priests (Lev. 10:17), provided it was not their own sin offering (v. 12).

In the sin offering also the worshipper had to identify himself with the animal by a laying on of hands (vv. 4, 15, 24, 29). In so doing, he acknowledged that he deserved the penalty of death before God, but that God had provided an innocent substitute as his sin-bearer.

Pfeiffer called attention to the aspects of the ritual, which involved several steps: presentation (vv. 4, 11, 23, 28); identification (vv. 4, 15, 24, 29); killing and sacrifice (vv. 4, 15, 24, 28); sprinkling the blood (vv. 6-7, 17-18, 25, 30); pouring the remaining blood at the base of the altar of burnt offering (vv. 7, 18, 25, 30); burning the fat portions on the altar (vv. 5-10, 19, 26, 31); and burning the remainder of the carcass in a clean place outside the camp (vv. 11-12, 21).³⁰

The three previous offerings, the burnt offering (chapt. 1), the meat offering (chapt. 2), and the peace offering (chapt. 3), were voluntary offerings; the sin offering was compulsory. The reason for this was well stated by A. C. Gaebelien: "Forgiveness had to be sought and secured."³¹ As we have seen, J. R. Porter wrote of sin as "an objective, quasi-physical thing" with unavoidable consequences (unless atonement and restitution followed). The sin offering underscored this fact: only through atonement could the inexorable consequences of sin be averted. Moreover, not only individuals but also "communities are punished in this world."³² Men cannot escape their involvement in the sins of their community by any withdrawal from it; they have a continuing responsibility to God for service and action wherever they are. Neither can men escape their responsibility for the sins of their church or community by pleading that false priests or pastors misled them. Hosea 4:6-9 speaks to this:

6. My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.
7. As they were increased, so they sinned against me: therefore will I change their glory into shame.
8. They eat up the sin of my people, and they set their heart on their iniquity.
9. And there shall be, like people, like priest: and I will punish them for their ways, and reward them for their doings.

In all conditions, our personal responsibility remains. At the same time, our responsibility as members of a community makes it necessary to forsake indifference to what happens all around us. This does not mean that we are to continue in futile action. Ezekiel was told plainly that he had a duty to warn the people; having done so, he was innocent of their blood (Ezek. 33:1-9).

Moreover, the fact that rulers were specifically included *as a class, like the priests*, is of particular importance. They had and have always a responsibility to God and under God, to be His ministers in terms of His law (Rom. 13:1-4; Deut. 17:14-20). Bonar observed, "A ruler is specially bound to be a man of God."³³ In Proverbs, we have numerous applications of God's requirements of rulers: (3:27; 11:14; 16:10, 12, 14-15; 14:21, 28, 35; 19:12; 20:28; 21:7ff.; 24:6; 28:16, etc.). These requirements of civil rulers are not limited to Israel. In Isaiah, we have a series of judgments against the nations for their sins (chapters. 15-24). God exempts no part of the universe from His law and government. Hence, both civil and religious authorities, as well as the people as a whole, are *either under the atonement or under judgment*.

Bonar gives us an excellent summation of what this atonement means:

The offender comes confessing his sins, and bringing a victim to suffer in his stead. The animal is slain in his room; the man is forgiven, and retains his standing as a protected Israelite — remaining under the shadow of the Guardian Cloud. The sacrifice never failed to produce this effect; but nothing else than the sacrifices ever did — "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." This principle of the Divine government was engraven on the hearts of Israel, *viz.*, whosoever is pardoned any offense must be pardoned by means of another's

death. "The great multitude" of the saved are all pardoned by One of infinite worth having died for them all (see 2 Cor. v. 14).³⁴

Did such a faith exist in the Old Testament era among the Hebrews, or is Bonar reading the New Testament into the Old? More than a few scholars believe so. Lofthouse held that no such idea of substitution exists in Leviticus, but even his own comment condemned him, because he had to recognize that a belief in vicarious atonement preceded Moses:

No idea of substitution seems to be implied though it is true that a ritual tablet from Babylonia states that idea very clearly; "the life of the kid has he given for his own life, its head for his head," etc., since the sin offering is "most holy," a term which could not be applied to the offerer; a meal offering is included, as if the sacrifice were thought of originally as an offering of good; and though the victim is always killed, and by the worshipper.³⁵

This is an absurd and untenable argument. Too many scholars are prone to see primitivism throughout the Bible. To all such men, Job's words to Zophar clearly apply:

1. And Job answered and said,
2. No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you.
3. But I have understanding as well as you; I am not inferior to you: yea, who knoweth not such things as these? (Job 12:1-3)

The Scriptures were not given by God, from Moses' day through the New Testament, to become the esoteric province of Biblical scholars. They were given to the tribesmen of Israel, and to the Jews and Gentiles of first century (A.D.) Rome, to be understood and obeyed. Our Lord accuses the Pharisees, as well as the scribes, of making God's law of no effect through their traditions (Matt. 15:1-9). The traditions of Biblical scholarship sometimes are as deadly as those of the Pharisees, if not more so. They write without fear of God, nor in awe of Him. According to Psalm 33:8-12,

8. Let all the earth fear the Lord: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him.
9. For he spake, and it was done: he commanded, and it stood fast.
10. The Lord bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: he maketh the devices of the people of none effect.
11. The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations.
12. Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance.

This is not to deny that very often "simple believers" have erred again and again in interpreting Scripture; they have thereby provided amusement for "superior" and condescending scholars. The fact remains that these "simple believers" have also been both very right and devoutly active for the Lord, and they have accomplished great things for Christ's Kingdom. When such "simple believers" are safely dead, they provide research data and subjects for ghoulish scholars; alive,

they are avoided like the plague and treated with contempt, even as our Lord was by the religious leaders and scholars of his day. Our Lord speaks of this in Matthew 23:29-33:

29. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous,

30. And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.

31. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets.

32. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers.

33. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?

They could not, and did not, nor can the experts of our day, in every sphere, who close the doors of truth with their unbelief.

One further note: The difference between the sin offering of a ruler (v. 22-23) and “one of the common people” (vv. 27-28) is that the ruler offers a male kid (goat), and the commoner a female kid. From the modern perspective, the female is more valuable; for sacrificial purposes, it is the male. It is important to note the near equivalence of the two. In Biblical law, every free male is a ruler as the head of a household; his sphere is the basic governmental realm, and hence he stands close in significance to all civil rulers.

Chapter Six

Atonement, Confession, Restitution, and Freedom

(Leviticus 5:1-19)

1. And if a soul sin, and hear the voice of swearing, and is a witness, whether he hath seen or known of it; if he do not utter it, then he shall bear his iniquity.
2. Or if a soul touch any unclean thing, whether it be a carcase of an unclean beast, or a carcase of unclean cattle, or the carcase of unclean creeping things, and if it be hidden from him; he also shall be unclean, and guilty.
3. Or if he touch the uncleanness of man, whatsoever uncleanness it be that a man shall be defiled withal, and it be hid from him; when he knoweth of it, then he shall be guilty.
4. Or if a soul swear, pronouncing with his lips to do evil, or to do good, whatsoever it be that a man shall pronounce with an oath, and it be hid from him; when he knoweth of it, then he shall be guilty in one of these.
5. And it shall be, when he shall be guilty in one of these things, that he shall confess that he hath sinned in that thing:
6. And he shall bring his trespass offering unto the LORD for his sin which he hath sinned, a female from the flock, a lamb or a kid of the goats, for a sin offering; and the priest shall make an atonement for him concerning his sin.
7. And if he be not able to bring a lamb, then he shall bring for his trespass, which he hath committed, two turtledoves, or two young pigeons, unto the LORD; one for a sin offering, and the other for a burnt offering.
8. And he shall bring them unto the priest, who shall offer that which is for the sin offering first, and wring off his head from his neck, but shall not divide it asunder:
9. And he shall sprinkle of the blood of the sin offering upon the side of the altar; and the rest of the blood shall be wrung out at the bottom of the altar: it is a sin offering.
10. And he shall offer the second for a burnt offering, according to the manner: and the priest shall make an atonement for him for his sin which he hath sinned, and it shall be forgiven him.
11. But if he be not able to bring two turtledoves, or two young pigeons, then he that sinned shall bring for his offering the tenth part of an ephah of fine flour for a sin offering; he shall put no oil upon it, neither shall he put any frankincense thereon: for it is a sin offering.
12. Then shall he bring it to the priest, and the priest shall take his handful of it, even a memorial thereof, and burn it on the altar, according to the offerings made by fire unto the LORD: it is a sin offering.
13. And the priest shall make an atonement for him as touching his sin that he hath sinned in one of these, and it shall be forgiven him: and the remnant shall be the priest's, as a meat offering.
14. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

15. If a soul commit a trespass, and sin through ignorance, in the holy things of the LORD; then he shall bring for his trespass unto the LORD a ram without blemish out of the flocks, with thy estimation by shekels of silver, after the shekel of the sanctuary, for a trespass offering:

16. And he shall make amends for the harm that he hath done in the holy thing, and shall add the fifth part thereto, and give it unto the priest: and the priest shall make an atonement for him with the ram of the trespass offering, and it shall be forgiven him.

17. And if a soul sin, and commit any of these things which are forbidden to be done by the commandments of the LORD; though he wist it not, yet is he guilty, and shall bear his iniquity.

18. And he shall bring a ram without blemish out of the flock, with thy estimation, for a trespass offering, unto the priest: and the priest shall make an atonement for him concerning his ignorance wherein he erred and wist it not, and it shall be forgiven him.

19. It is a trespass offering: he hath certainly trespassed against the LORD. (Leviticus 5:1-19)

In this chapter, vv. 1-13 continue to give laws respecting the sin offering. For Scripture, sin is not defined as going against our conscience, but as going against the law of God. “Sin is the transgression of the law,” God’s law, whether or not done deliberately or ignorantly (1 John 3:4). As Lange said:

One of the plainest teachings of the sin offering is that everything opposed to the revealed will of God is sin, whether done with the purpose of transgressing it or not.³⁶

In vv. 14-19, and 6:1-7, the trespass offering is given. All these sacrifices, as Calvin, cited by Lange, noted, are not only *laws* but also *sacraments*. There is a promise of grace and mercy in their observance. Without being a sacrament, there is a sacramental character to the administration of justice. Hence, when a man transgresses the law and then makes restitution, there is forgiveness and grace for him. Where men are faithful from first to last, God’s grace and blessings are on them and their land (Deut. 28:1-14).

In v. 1, we have the case of a man who has been adjured to testify in court as to what he has seen. If, through a lapse of memory or carelessness, his witness is not to the whole truth, he must bear his iniquity and make restitution towards both God and man.

In this instance, we see clearly that in Scripture, taking God’s name in vain means a false witness. It is a sin against God and His order, and against man. In the Ten Commandments, we see this dual aspect: “Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain” (Ex. 20:7), and, “Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor” (Ex. 20:16). The purpose of speech is to further God’s order and truth, not to destroy it.

In vv. 2-3, we have accidental defilement from men or animals. In a variety of ways, as God's image bearers, we are a separated and a holy people. It should not surprise us that the anti-Christian activists of the 1960s and 1970s were physically and mentally unclean in many ways.

In v. 4, all idle oaths are declared sinful. A man must not swear to do what he has no intention of doing. Speech must further communication, not confusion. Thus, two of the three sins cited in vv. 1-4 have to do with speech, specifically with oaths. In all three of these sins, usually the sinner alone knows that he has sinned. In the case of a witness, he alone knows that he omitted to testify to some relevant fact. Because his conduct affects both God and man, he cannot keep silent. Our lives have social consequences, whether great or small.

In v. 6, the sin offering is called a trespass offering, so that the two kinds of offerings are equated. The word used for "trespass" is *asham*, guilty, or guilt offering. According to Knight, "The root of the word has to deal with the idea of restitution for any desecration of the holy, and so means something like 'reparation.'"³⁷

According to R. J. Thompson,

All that can certainly be said is that sins against the neighbour are more prominent in the *'asam* and those against God in the *hatta*'t. The *'asam* therefore requires a monetary compensation in addition to the sacrifice. The value of the misappropriation plus a fifth is to be repaid to the wronged neighbour (Lev. vi.5), or, if he or his representative is not available, to the priest (Nu. v.8). The sacrificial victim in the guilt-offering, usually a ram, also could be eaten by the priests as "most holy" (Lv. vii.1-7). The same provision applies (Lv. vi.24-29) to the sin-offerings of the ruler (Lv. iv.22-26) and the common man (Lv. iv.27-31), but in these cases the blood is put on the horns of the altar.³⁸

The trespass offerings of vv. 14-19 have reference to defrauding God. Such sins as v. 15 refers to include eating the firstfruits, which belong to God (Ex. 34:26), or to shearing the first-born sheep (Deut. 15:19), which also belong to God.³⁹ God's property rights in us and in our possessions cannot be violated. "The holy things of the LORD" cannot be touched by us without guilt, even if done unwittingly. The reference in v. 15 is thus to

inadvertently keeping back the things which belong to the sanctuary, and to the service of the Lord, as for instance, the tithes, the firstfruits, or not consecrating or redeeming his firstborn (Exod. xxviii. 38; Num. v. 6-8).⁴⁰

Trespass offerings are thus concerned with 1) *fraud* towards God, and 2) *fraud* towards man.⁴¹ Bonar's use of the word fraud is noteworthy. The fact that the sins in question are unintentional does not eliminate the fact of fraud.

The ritual required 1) the presentation of the sacrifice to the priest (vv. 15, 25); 2) restitution, plus an added fifth to the party wronged (vv. 16); and 3) the priest offers the sacrifice to make atonement. Because all sin is against God, the offerings to God are required.

In all this, a central fact is commonly obscured. In all the bloody sacrifices, the worshipper identified himself with the sacrificial animal by placing his hands on the head of the sacrifice (see 3:2, 8, 13). This could be an aspect even of the firstfruits service where grain and fruit were involved; on such occasions, a confession of God's mercy and grace was required:

4. And the priest shall take the basket out of thine hand, and set it down before the altar of the LORD thy God.

5. And thou shalt speak and say before the LORD thy God, A Syrian ready to perish was my father, and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there with a few, and became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous....(Deuteronomy 26:4-5)

These words were the preface to a long confession of God's deliverance and salvation. In the bloody sacrifices, the emphasis was on the confession of sin. We have the origins of the confessional system in these sacrifices. It tells us something of the narrow tunnel vision of the commentators that this fact is not noted. Apparently they feel that the distance between Israel and the church is too great.

The Catholic Encyclopedia (1911) traces confession only to the New Testament and discusses it under the title of "Penance," describing it as 1) a virtue, 2) a sacrament of the New Law, 3) a canonical punishment inflicted in line with the rules of the early church, and 4) "a work of satisfaction enjoined upon the recipient of the sacrament. These have as their common centre the truth that he who sins must repent and as far as possible make reparation to Divine justice."⁴²

A Protestant Dictionary (1904) is largely Anglican, and its main emphasis in discussing "Confession, Auricular," is to deny the validity of private confession to a priest. In the course of his discussion, M. E. W. Johnson refers only in passing to Biblical law:

With regard to the question of "Divine command," we do not fear to examine Scripture. In the Old Testament, Lev. v. 5-6 and Num. v. 6-7 are quoted upon Rome's side. But upon comparing these together it is clear that what is spoken of is public confession to the Lord, not private confession to a priest.⁴³

What concerned Johnson was to distance Anglican practice from Rome, not to understand what Scripture teaches from beginning to end. Johnson only mentions Leviticus because Leviticus 5:5-6 (and Numbers 5:6-7) specifically requires confession; he does not develop the implications of Leviticus for us today. M'Clintock and Strong, in discussion of "Confession" and "Auricular Confession," neglect the law entirely, although, under "Penance," they cite some precedents in the synogue:

Penance, in the Christian Church, is an initiation of the discipline of the Jewish synagogue, or, rather, it is a continuation of the same institution. Excommunication in the Christian Church is essentially the same as expulsion from the synagogue of the Jews; and the penances of the offender, required for his restoration to his former condition, were not materially different in the Jewish and Christian churches. The principal point of distinction consisted in this, that the

sentence of excommunication affected the civil relations of the offender under the Jewish economy; but in the Christian Church it affected only his relations to that body.⁴⁴

Of course, in time the Christian Church saw civil penalties also introduced. What is clear is that Catholics and Protestants are more concerned with defending church practice than in understanding and enforcing God's law. Without going into the distinction between confession and penance, except to refer the *origins* of penance to the law of restitution, it is apparent that the greater faithfulness as well as the greater abuses to the requirement of confession have been on the Catholic side.

Looking again at Leviticus 5:5-6 and Numbers 5:6-7, we see that there is a confession at the sanctuary. It was in a public place but not necessarily before a public audience. There is a confession to God in the presence of the priest, followed by a restitution to God. At the same time, it is clear from Exodus 22 that there must be a restitution to men. The essential emphasis and meaning is not an ecclesiastical ritual but the restoration of God's order and justice. The emphasis is on the healing of the man and of society by the restoration of a just relationship of man to man and of man to God. There is a body to be healed, Christ's body and Kingdom. There is an order to be restored to the whole earth.

The church's view of confession is in decay in all branches of the church, and one consequence has been the rise of humanistic confessionals in the various forms of psychotherapy. These are deadly in their effects. *First*, they give no true healing. Freud, in fact, denied the possibility of healing; his purpose was to enable men to understand themselves and to live with their "sins." *Second*, there are no social effects, no restitution. In fact, the various forms of psychotherapy are anarchistic in denying any social responsibility. The patient is their only concern. By becoming totally anarchistic, psychiatrists (and physicians) have warped medical ethics and thereby made it easier for the state to control them. A priest, while required to keep the confessional inviolate, *can* withhold absolution until justice is satisfied.

One of the very important problems confronting the church is to develop a sound doctrine and practice of confession. Restitution must be closely tied to confession. Over the centuries, a variety of practices have occurred: public confessions before the congregation where a man's sin affected all, and private confessions in other instances; a personal confession to God, with pre-communion services which summoned the believer to repentance; confession to a board of deacons; and so on. These go beyond our present concern, which is to call attention to the fact that confession and restitution are required by God's law. They are for the healing of men and societies.

Why does the Bible from beginning to end speak of confession and restitution? It is set forth as a religious requirement with implications in every sphere, including the civil. When the synagogue, and later the church, imposed civil penalties, it was an error of understanding, in that a civil order is incapable of providing what repentance alone can do, but they were right in recognizing that civil consequences do exist. Most consequences in the civil order are not susceptible to civil cure, and it is a fallacy of the totalitarian mind to believe that they can be cured by law.

Moreover, confession apart from the atonement is meaningless. If the church forgets, neglects, or undermines the meaning of the atonement, then all its rites are exercises in futility and blasphemy. We should remember that it was the church of our Lord's day which crucified Him. It is easy to call attention to many of the errors of scribes, Sadducees, and Pharisees, but it is also important to remember that the religious leaders then also included many men like Gamaliel, Nicodemus, and Joseph of Arimathea. The greatest evil of these leaders was a *misplaced emphasis*. The gathering which planned the death of Christ also recognized His power: "this man doeth many miracles" (John 11:47). However, Christ's power was likely to create social disturbances which would arouse Rome's anger, "and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation" (John 11:48). Hence, the decision made by the high priest was that "it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not" (John 11:50).

All too commonly, the church equates *the life of faith* with *the life of the church*; however much such an equation might be desired by many, it is not a reality, nor can the life of faith ever be *limited* to the life of the church. Such a belief is an example of misplaced emphasis.

Atonement, confession, and restitution are necessary to the life of a society. They provide deliverance from sin, death, and *the past*. *The past* is a necessary part of our lives, unless the past becomes a corpse inextricably tied to our bodies. The past is important in that it provides us with the tools for defining things. Definition is definition by the past, i.e., past performance, past history, and the like. Men are hired in terms of their "references," a file on their past. At times, the quirks of such definitions can be amusing or frustrating. One Western rancher bought a magnificent ranch, surrounded by mountains and watered by creeks, and spent over fifty years working it. All that time, it was referred to in that country by the name of its previous owner, "the old Wilson ranch." Finally, in his seventies, having had only daughters, with no sons or grandsons interested in ranching, he reluctantly sold the ranch and moved to the county seat. Now, to his disgust, the place finally took his name: it was referred to as "the old Lang ranch." This is a trifling but vivid instance of definition by the past. Whether or not we like it, or accept it, the past frames our days in a multitude of forms. All this may be good, harmless, or disastrous, as when generals fight new wars in terms of old and obsolete ways.

Definition by the past is most deadly in a society with sin and without atonement. A culture which is the outcropping of sin rather than of Christian faith will be past-bound. A past-bound society sees no consequence and therefore stumbles into decay and death. Peter summarizes the attitude of all such as being, "all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" (2 Peter 3:4). Men then cannot visualize judgment.

A past-bound society is unable to cope with the present and the future because it is governed by its past. Past-bound persons and societies carry a sense of guilt, or else a sense of self-pity if they believe life has been unfair to them. Their lives and thoughts are so tied up with self-justification that they cannot confront the problems of the present.

Scripture forbids long-term debt; there must be a release after six years, in the seventh or sabbatical year (Deut. 15:1-6). We are not allowed to limit our future by eating into it by debt.

The standard where possible should be no debt at all (Rom. 13:8), but, when necessary, a short-term debt only. To be debt-free is comparable to atonement, confession, and restitution: it is a release from our past into freedom to live in the present and future. Since these sacrifices required restitution, they were forms of restoring order and also freedom. Sin is described by our Lord as slavery: "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant (or, slave) of sin" (John 8:34). Scripture identifies debt also as slavery (Prov. 22:7). Thus, sin and debt are seen as leading to slavery and death (Prov. 8:36), whereas atonement, confession, and restitution free us for life. Churches, by limiting the scope of Scripture, have failed to proclaim the fullness of our gospel and the richness of our freedom in Christ. "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8:36). This freedom has relevance, implications, and impact in every area of life and thought.

A further note: In Biblical law, no conviction could take place on confession; confession had to be corroborated by evidence. As Otto Scott observed, guilty men feel a need to confess their crimes. Until the United States courts made confessions difficult, a very high percentage of all criminal convictions began with a criminal's confession. The inclination of criminals to confess is still with us; the courts create the problems.

Daniel Harris has called attention to the modern state's mandatory confessional, the Internal Revenue Service tax form which corporations, persons, and businesses have filled out routinely for some time. Confession to the state now exacts a heavy penance.

Chapter Seven

Atonement and Repentance

(Leviticus 6:1-13)

1. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,
2. If a soul sin, and commit a trespass against the LORD, and lie unto his neighbour in that which was delivered him to keep, or in fellowship, or in a thing taken away by violence, or hath deceived his neighbour;
3. Or have found that which was lost, and lieth concerning it, and sweareth falsely; in any of all these that a man doeth, sinning therein:
4. Then it shall be, because he hath sinned, and is guilty, that he shall restore that which he took violently away, or the thing which he hath deceitfully gotten, or that which was delivered him to keep, or the lost thing which he found,
5. Or all that about which he hath sworn falsely; he shall even restore it in the principal, and shall add the fifth part more thereto, and give it unto him to whom it appertaineth, in the day of his trespass offering.
6. And he shall bring his trespass offering unto the LORD, a ram without blemish out of the flock, with thy estimation, for a trespass offering, unto the priest:
7. And the priest shall make an atonement for him before the LORD: and it shall be forgiven him for any thing of all that he hath done in trespassing therein.
8. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,
9. Command Aaron and his sons, saying, This is the law of the burnt offering: It is the burnt offering, because of the burning upon the altar all night unto the morning, and the fire of the altar shall be burning in it.
10. And the priest shall put on his linen garment, and his linen breeches shall he put upon his flesh, and take up the ashes which the fire hath consumed with the burnt offering on the altar, and he shall put them beside the altar.
11. And he shall put off his garments, and put on other garments, and carry forth the ashes without the camp unto a clean place.
12. And the fire upon the altar shall be burning in it; it shall not be put out: and the priest shall burn wood on it every morning, and lay the burnt offering in order upon it; and he shall burn thereon the fat of the peace offerings.
13. The fire shall ever be burning upon the altar; it shall never go out. (Leviticus 6:1-13)

According to Oehler, “the sin-offering and the trespass-offering have *the common end of abolishing an interruption of the covenant relation caused by some transgression.*” Oehler also called attention to an important fact: “The trespass-offering presupposes...*an act of defrauding, which, though chiefly an infraction of a neighbor’s rights in matters of property, is also, according to the view of Mosaism, an infraction of God’s rights in respect to law.*”⁴⁵ Unlike other trespass offerings, these are not inadvertent sins, nor are they sins of ignorance. They are breaches of faith, acts of fraud. Three examples are cited. *First*, a neighbor has loaned something, a tool perhaps, or given someone a valuable item for safekeeping, and then the person

seeks to deny that such a deposit has occurred, or that it was in a given degree or kind. *Second*, through some lie, subterfuge, or fraud, a neighbor is robbed. *Third*, a man loses something, and the finder deliberately keeps it and denies having found it. All such offenses are destructive of community life and the covenant fellowship.

This law does not have reference to a man caught in his fraud. In such a case, conviction in court led to restitution, which was from twofold to fivefold for the guilty party (Ex. 22:1 ff.). In this instance (vv. 1-6), the law has reference to a man who comes forward to confess his sins *before* his offense is detected and legal steps are taken against him. Such a step means that the man has become aware of his offense *and* desires to rectify the evil he has done. As C. D. Ginsburg noted:

The first thing the offender must do, when he realizes and confesses his guilt, is to make restitution of the property which he had embezzled, if he still has it, or if that be impossible, he is to pay the value of it as estimated by the authorised tribunal. Besides this, the offender is to add a fifth part of the principal, to compensate for the loss which the owner sustained during the interval. It will be seen that in Exod. xxii.1-9, when a person was guilty of any of the offenses here specified, the offender was condemned to make a fourfold restitution, whilst in the passage before us the mulct is reduced to the restitution of the principal with the addition of a fifth part. The reason of this difference is that the law in Exodus deals with a culprit who is convicted of his crime in a court of justice by means of witnesses, whilst the law before us deals with an offender who, through compunction of mind, voluntarily confesses his offence, and to whom, without this voluntary confession, the offence could not be brought home. It is this difference which constitutes it a case for a trespass offering. (Comp. Num. v. 7.)⁴⁶

Much earlier, Thomas Scott (1747-1821) made a like point. The key point which motivates the sinners in these cases is the recognition that “he hath sinned and is guilty” and must therefore make restitution (v. 4):

If the offender had been *convicted*, he would have been exposed to punishment by the magistrate; and must, in some of the cases, have made larger restitution to the injured person: but as he voluntarily confessed his crime, which seemed to imply repentance, he was only required to add a fifth part of the value of the defraud or robbery, according to the valuation of the priest, and give it to the injured person: he must, however, also bring a trespass-offering to the Lord. This was evidently intended to show that disobedience to God is the great evil even of those crimes which are injurious to man: and that repentance and works meet for repentance, though needful in order to be forgiven, cannot atone for sin, which can only be expiated by the blood of Christ, and pardoned through faith in his name.⁴⁷

The trespass offering could only be brought to the altar *after* restitution had been made as calculated by the priest. The Berkeley Version of Leviticus 5:15 brings this out more clearly: “When a person behaves unfaithfully and sins unintentionally in matters that are holy to the LORD, then to make matters good he shall bring the LORD a flawless ram of the flock,

evaluated by you in silver coin according to the sanctuary standards; it is a trespass offering.” Since this was true of unintentional sins, it was even more true of intentional ones.

In vv. 8-13, we have the whole or burnt offerings cited. As Knight has pointed out, the word for these offerings in Hebrew is *olah*, and it may be called a *holocaust*, in that the whole offering was to God. The fire was never allowed to die, and was kept alive for centuries, to remind Israel that sin is not a “sometime thing” but continual in our world and lives; hence, the altar of atonement was in continual readiness (Num. 28:3-8; Ex. 29:38-42). Moreover, one symbol for God is fire. “Our God is a consuming fire” (Heb. 12:29). God spoke to Moses out of the fire of the burning bush (Ex. 3:1-6). The word peace, *shalom*, also means, Knight pointed out, “wholeness and completeness.” This offering also speaks of wholeness.⁴⁸ It is the wholeness of God’s judgment on man’s sin that produces the wholeness of the new creation for man and the earth.

For modern man, all these sacrifices are much ado about nothing; sin for the modern man is something to forget about. His goal is never having to say you are sorry. Modern equalitarianism is hostile to humility. The rich are certain that their superiority made them strong and hence have no humility before God. It should be noted that the essential result of equalitarian thinking is destructive to humility *because* it denies that anyone, including God, can be better than we are. People can be inferior to us, but not better. This eliminates the necessity for gratitude. Hence, the rich feel no gratitude towards God, and no humility. Socialized charity destroys gratitude and humility among the poor; charity becomes a right and an entitlement. In the United States today, the rich, the middle classes, and the poor are all recipients, if they choose, of various entitlements. More importantly, liberal theologies in both Protestant and Catholic variations assume that man has entitlements from God, so that entitlements have replaced grace, and natural rights have replaced heaven and hell. Man no longer feels that he needs grace; his need is for *power*, and his social and religious quest is for power, a quest for power from God and nature, for the power to get rich, the power to control people, sexual power, and so on.

Joseph Parker saw the problem a century ago, in part commenting on v. 13:

We have escaped all the Jewish ceremony, all the Puritan tediousness — into what liberty have we come? What is the practical result of all such escapes? A greater love of brevity, a keener sense of liberty, which really means in such lips licentiousness; we have nothing to do, nothing to give, nothing to suffer, all to enjoy, and just when we please, and as much as we please, and thus we have sunk into the idolatry of self. To suppose that discipline has ceased is to give up all that is worth living for. Our object should not be to escape discipline, but to make commandments pleasant, to turn statutes into songs in the house of our pilgrimage, to make obedience not a penalty but a delight.⁴⁹

Turning again to the matter of restitution, Bonar said, with regard to vv. 4-5:

The fifth part is given, in addition to the principal, justly as in the case of holy things being fraudulently withheld. It is a double tithe (two-tenths), and so is

equivalent to a double acknowledgement of the person's right to the thing, of which he had been, for a time, unjustly deprived.⁵⁰

These are cases (vv. 1-7) involving atonement and restitution where there is repentance. The word *repentance* in its Greek form and as used in the New Testament means a change of mind, heart, direction, and course of life.⁵¹ To repent thus means that restitution must follow. The sacrifice of atonement makes restitution to God; we must at the same time have made restitution to man. This fact is referred to in Leviticus 5:15. It is important to note also that our Lord refers to this verse in the Sermon on the Mount, to declare that God rejects our approaches to Him if our relationship to our covenant brother is morally wrong:

23. Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee;
24. Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. (Matthew 5:23-24)

Restitution on the human scene is thus the prerequisite of communion with God.

Such a legal requirement thus negates the modern attitude which never wants to say, "I'm sorry," or, "I have sinned and done that which is evil." It also negates the belief that holiness is best attained by withdrawal from men and society. Leviticus is the "holiness code" of the law. It requires us to see that holiness is attained in the context of this world, in the spheres of community life, work, and action. The Holy God has involved Himself in creation, and in the work of redemption, even to the crucifixion of God the Son. Our holiness requires our action in this world, in the work of Christ's Kingdom. "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness" (Matt. 6:33).

A further note: All the offerings are by God's law to be *unblemished*. This has a double meaning. *First*, it has reference to Jesus Christ, the man without sin who is our atoning representative and substitute before God. This is a widely recognized meaning in church circles. *However, not all offerings are for atonement, but all offerings must be without blemish*. It is thus insufficient to cite the reference as being exclusively to Christ. There is, *second*, a further and associated meaning. All man's offerings to God must be unblemished. We cannot give the leftovers of our lives and substance to God without insulting His majesty. All too commonly, inferior things are done or offered with the excuse, "It's for the Lord," as though the Receiver makes the gift good when it is bad. The old hymn by Charlotte Elliott (1798-1871) declares:

Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidd'st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I Come! I come!

What these words tell us clearly is that our salvation is God's work of grace: we bring nothing to it. If, however, we then continue to bring nothing to God, or bring blemished offerings, we insult God and incur His judgment and wrath. The unblemished atoner deserves our unblemished gifts of thanksgiving and service. Anything less is an offense against His majesty and grace.

Chapter Eight

The “Wholly Burnt” Offering

(Leviticus 6:14-23)

14. And this is the law of the meat offering: the sons of Aaron shall offer it before the LORD, before the altar.

15. And he shall take of it his handful, of the flour of the meat offering, and of the oil thereof, and all the frankincense which is upon the meat offering, and shall burn it upon the altar for a sweet savour, even the memorial of it, unto the LORD.

16. And the remainder thereof shall Aaron and his sons eat: with unleavened bread shall it be eaten in the holy place; in the court of the tabernacle of the congregation they shall eat it.

17. It shall not be baked with leaven. I have given it unto them for their portion of my offerings made by fire; it is most holy, as is the sin offering, and as the trespass offering.

18. All the males among the children of Aaron shall eat of it. It shall be a statute for ever in your generations concerning the offerings of the LORD made by fire: every one that toucheth them shall be holy.

19. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

20. This is the offering of Aaron and of his sons, which they shall offer unto the LORD in the day when he is anointed; the tenth part of an ephah of fine flour for a meat offering perpetual, half of it in the morning, and half thereof at night.

21. In a pan it shall be made with oil; and when it is baken, thou shalt bring it in: and the baken pieces of the meat offering shalt thou offer for a sweet savour unto the LORD.

22. And the priest of his sons that is anointed in his stead shall offer it: it is a statute for ever unto the LORD; it shall be wholly burnt.

23. For every meat offering for the priest shall be wholly burnt: it shall not be eaten. (Leviticus 6:14-23)

For us today, because these sacrifices are no longer a part of our religious duty, they are difficult to distinguish or remember. Their meaning, however, is much more easily remembered, and it is one reason for their neglect. The sacrifices required a man's faith to be central to his life, whereas modern churchmen want their religion to settle some basic questions for them so that they can be freed for the business of life. To bring the totality of their lives and their spheres of action into and under God's jurisdiction is alien to them.

In Leviticus 6:14-18, we have instructions to the priests concerning the meat or meal offering, which was to accompany the burnt offering. No leaven was to be used, because leaven means corruptibility, and the offering which makes us acceptable to God the Father is the sinless and eternal Christ. The priest's portion was to be eaten by the priests in the sanctuary, and hence by males, i.e., the priests. This bread of life is Jesus Christ, who declared, “I am the bread of life” (John 6:35). Paul says, in 1 Corinthians 10:16, “The bread which we break, is it not the

communion of the body of Christ?” Hence the use, after Leviticus, of unleavened bread for communion.

All who touched the offering (v. 18) had to be of the priestly line and must have sanctified themselves for their part in the ritual. No approach to or service for God could be casual. An unblemished offering requires unblemished service. To serve the Lord is a very great responsibility, mandatory for all His covenant people, and hence requires personal holiness. The way of holiness is not what we try to make it but what God requires, and this is the meaning of Leviticus. Some current books on physical fitness advertise the hope that ten minutes a day in prescribed exercise will make us physically fit. Leviticus makes it clear that it requires the totality of our lives to please God.

In vv. 19-23, the meal offering for the priests is set forth. It is to be offered “perpetually,” or, better, regularly (v. 20). Since it is offered by the priests, they cannot eat of it; it is to be “wholly burnt” (v. 22-23). The word used is *kalil*, total. As Knight noted,

The offering by the priest is to be *kalil*, total. So again it is stressed: (a) God’s judgment is upon the entire people of Israel; (b) it is a total judgment; (c) therefore, because God is God and not man, his mercy can only be total also.⁵²

Total judgment and total mercy are God’s way, and man must live in recognition of this fact.

The priest’s meal offering set forth the fact that priests, like all other men, require atonement *and* must dedicate the totality of their lives and being to God the Lord. As Lange observed,

The priests, and the high-priest, like the people, must offer oblations and sacrifices. They were separated from the people only in so far as the functions of their office required; in the individual relation of their souls to God, they formed no caste, and stood before Him on no different footing from others. This is a fundamental principle in all the divine dealing with man: “there is no respect of persons with God,” (Rom. ii. 11, etc.).⁵³

The priest’s *function* separated him from the people, but, with respect to *personal status* before God, his function gave him no advantage with Him. The priest’s function gave him greater responsibilities and hence greater culpability. In antiquity, and again in our time, *function* has been replaced by *status*. High office is enjoyed as a status symbol in civil governments and is secondarily seen as a function, a duty, a responsibility. One state senator, familiar with both state and national scenes, has observed that almost all elected and appointed officials are more governed by *peer pressure* than by their constituents, or by their consciences. They are status conscious instead of responsibility conscious.

The fact that the meal offering of the priests was “wholly burnt” is important. Leviticus 2:1-16 gives us more on the meal offerings, as we have seen. We there saw that, *first*, the meal offering signifies that our daily life in the form of our sustenance, bread, is surrendered to the Lord. *Second*, the totality of the offering, our lives, is surrendered to God. *Third*, our lives are acceptable because of God’s provision of atonement. *Fourth*, we are thus acceptable, not because

of ourselves, but because of God's Redeemer and His saving grace. The priest's offering had to be a like totality, indicating that he had no privileged status which gave him any exemption from the total need for God's grace. No status gives a private or privileged merit before God.

Our Lord sets forth the meaning of this in Luke 17:7-10, and the background of the meal offerings made His meaning obvious to His hearers, whether or not they liked it:

7. But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat?

8. And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink?

9. Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not.

10. So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.

The word *unprofitable*, *achreios*, useless, tells us plainly that God the Lord needs none of us, priests, prophets, or people. We are His creation, and we require His grace to have any place in His work and Kingdom. As Paul says,

For who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it? (1 Corinthians 4:7)

The meal offering requires us to acknowledge that we are *chosen* by God's grace, not because of our superiority. We are acceptable only because of His atonement; hence, the meal offering was offered with the burnt offering. We are totally God's creation, and we can reserve no independent sphere. Predestination means God in His grace chooses us, in mercy, not in approval. Men have determined in their proud imagination that they are predestined and chosen for their merit. The chosen people doctrine in the hands of Jews and Christians has often become such a perversion. It has been true of pagan cultures, as with the ancient Greeks, Nazi Germans, and many, many others, including Anglo- Israelites.

It is noteworthy that, despite the high function of priests and kings, they are seldom seen in a favorable light in Scripture. Their *office* requires a *function*, and, if they exalt themselves in terms of their office, they are obstructions to God's Kingdom. The Bible clearly reveals that God does not permit men to claim a glory in and of themselves.

I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images. (Isaiah 42:8)

Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. (Matthew 6:2)

27. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;

28. And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are:

29. That no flesh should glory in his presence. (1 Corinthians 1:27- 29)

Many other texts make it clear that God does not tolerate man's arrogance and in due time brings forth judgment.

The prophets have a centrally important *function* in Scripture, but they are never allowed to see themselves as important apart from God's word. In 1 Kings 13, we have an account of a prophet sent to Israel and Jeroboam to proclaim God's judgment. God had strictly charged the prophet to listen to none nor to turn aside from his mission but to perform it and return. When he allowed a fellow prophet's word to carry as much and more weight than God's word, God killed the disobedient prophet. His status as prophet gave him no independence from God's word, only a greater responsibility and hence culpability. There is no reason to doubt that 1 Kings 13 was in Paul's mind, knowing Scripture as he did, and also Balaam (Num. 22-24), when he wrote,

8. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.

9. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. (Galatians 1:8-9)

If the words and traditions of angels from heaven cannot be added to God's word, how much less our opinions?

The total offering, "wholly burnt," signifies the total judgment of God upon all, His total mercy upon whom He will have mercy, and our dependence upon His total word and sovereign grace. No flesh can glory in His presence (1 Cor. 1:29).

Chapter Nine

Accidental Holiness

(*Leviticus 6:24-30*)

24. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,
25. Speak unto Aaron and to his sons, saying, This is the law of the sin offering: In the place where the burnt offering is killed shall the sin offering be killed before the LORD: it is most holy.
26. The priest that offereth it for sin shall eat it: in the holy place shall it be eaten, in the court of the tabernacle of the congregation.
27. Whatsoever shall touch the flesh thereof shall be holy: and when there is sprinkled of the blood thereof upon any garment, thou shalt wash that whereon it was sprinkled in the holy place.
28. But the earthen vessel wherein it is sodden shall be broken: and if it be sodden in a brasen pot, it shall be both scoured, and rinsed in water.
29. All the males among the priests shall eat thereof: it is most holy.
30. And no sin offering, whereof any of the blood is brought into the tabernacle of the congregation to reconcile withal in the holy place, shall be eaten: it shall be burnt in the fire. (*Leviticus 6:24-30*)

The sin offering is dealt with briefly here. Vos's comment here is especially noteworthy:

Every sin offers to God what ought not to be offered, an offense, and at the same time it withholds from God what ought to have been given to Him, obedience. If the sin-offering rectifies the former, the trespass-offering would then make restitution for the latter. In its ritual procedure it closely resembles the sin-offering, as we might expect on this view. The trespass-offering derives a unique interest from the fact that it is the only class of sacrifice with which the sacrificial death of Christ is directly connected in the O.T. In Isa. 53:10, the self-surrender of the Servant of Jehovah is designated an "*Asham*," a trespass-offering, and this is quite in harmony with the idea, prevailing in the context, that the Servant not merely atones for the sins of the people, but gives to God what by their disobedience they have withheld.⁵⁴

There was no communion meal after a sin offering; however, that part of the sacrifice which was not burned on the altar was eaten by the priests on the premises (vv. 26, 29). The exception to this was the priests' sin offerings, which were to be burned in the fire (v. 30).

If porous pottery were used, it had to be broken, since it would absorb what properly belonged to God (v. 28). It then became too holy for common use.

The priests were types of Christ, and their duty to eat of the sin offering was a serious responsibility, as we shall see subsequently. Samuel Clark said, in commenting on v. 25:

The key to the subject must, it would seem, be found in those words of Moses to the priests, in which he tells them that God required them to eat the flesh, in order that they might “bear the iniquity of the congregation, to make atonement for them before the Lord” (Lev. x.17).⁵⁵

If a stray drop of blood fell on any garment, it had to be washed within the sanctuary area. The holiness of the ritual was rigorously declared.

In two verses, 18 and 27, we have a very important statement, namely, that anyone who touched the holy offerings “shall be holy.” It is necessary to understand what is meant here. It does not mean that the person is *holy* in the sense of being sanctified in the inner man. The word holy has a variety of implications in Scripture. In Haggai 2:12-14 we have a statement which gives us one facet of meaning:

12. If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and with his skirt do touch bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any meat, shall it be holy? And the priests answered and said, No.

13. Then said Haggai, If one that is unclean by a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean? And the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean.

14. Then answered Haggai, and said, So is this people, and so is this nation before me, saith the Lord; and so is every work of their hands; and that which they offer there is unclean.

Man’s salvation and sanctification are acts of God’s grace, not human effort. Man cannot communicate holiness, but he can communicate uncleanness, because he is both fallen and a creature.

Holiness means separation, not simply separation from evil but dedication to God. Holiness means morality, but not simply moralism, because it requires morality in obedience to God, not because for us it is the best policy. Things as well as persons can be set apart for God’s use, and the goal is the total holiness of all creation (Zech. 14:20-21).

The holiness of God is not to be taken lightly, “for our God is a consuming fire” (Heb. 12:29). We can only approach God in His appointed way, i.e., through Christ. Since Christ restores us into the covenant, we are bound by the covenant law of holiness. Any false approach to God assumes a personal holiness or claims a God-given holiness which incurs His wrath. Thus, when the ark shook a bit when being moved by an ox-cart, Uzzah, the son of Abinadab, steadied it by taking hold of it, and God struck Uzzah down (2 Sam. 6:1-8). Uzzah had assumed a function which belonged only to the priests and Levites; he made himself holy, and he perished. He became holy and therefore died, because it was a holiness he had no claim to whatsoever. At a later date, King Uzziah as civil ruler attempted to function as a priest also, that is, to combine both church and state under himself. As a result, he was struck with leprosy and died a leper (2 Chron. 26:16-23). In Acts 5:1-11, we see the same kind of judgment, in this case death, strike Ananias and Sapphira when they pretended to a false holiness and, as Peter says, lied to the Holy Ghost.

Leviticus 6:18 and 27 give us the law concerning *accidental holiness*, i.e., an inadvertent touching of the sacrifices by unauthorized persons; the reference is not to deliberate cases. James Moffatt rendered the sentence in v. 18 thus: "Anyone who touches these most sacred offerings shall be taboo."

Wenham's comment is good:

Certainly Leviticus underlines the dangers attendant on holiness. Judgment falls when the unclean meets the holy (cf. 7:20; 10:1-3).⁵⁶

Leviticus deals in 7:20 with deliberate transgressions, and it requires that an offender be "cut off from his people," which can mean excommunication and often death (7:21, 25, 27; 17:4, 9; 18:29; 19:8; 20:17-18; 22:3; etc.). In the case of Nadab and Abihu, they brought "strange fire before the LORD," i.e., alien fire, perhaps from a fertility cult altar, and for this they were killed.

Wenham cites Leviticus 27, the laws for the deconsecration of people and their return to the common life. The Nazarite, for example, had to offer every kind of sacrifice except a reparation offering (Num. 6:13-20). Wenham adds, "Whether either of these procedures was adopted in this instance, where the consecration was involuntary, is doubtful."⁵⁷

What is clear is that God has firm boundaries which cannot be violated. A lawless trespass on the grounds of Windsor Palace or the White House is not taken lightly by the authorities. God makes it clear that even an accidental trespass is not to be treated as unimportant, whereas a deliberate one is a very serious offense.

Modern churchmen casually bypass this law of accidental holiness, i.e., of trespass on what belongs to God. This can be done in a variety of ways, one of which is laying hands on God's tithe, which is holy to the Lord (Mal. 3:8-12). *Accidental* holiness is not *deliberate* or wilful; it is a failure to recognize and strictly maintain the holiness of all that belongs to God.

In our time, the wilful usurpation by the state of the God-given prerogatives of His church and Kingdom are high-handed offenses like that of Nadab and Abihu. The intrusion by the church and the state into the sphere of law-making, which is God's prerogative, is a wilful transgression of God's holiness.

It is against God's law to assume a holiness which is not legitimate to our sphere and calling. If we separate ourselves to a function which is not properly ours, we have sinned by assuming a holiness which is not ours. The so-called Biblical feminists are guilty of such claims, as are men who assume that their maleness, rather than God's enscriptured word, gives them authority .

Uzzah's holiness was not accidental but presumptuous. He assumed a freedom and a status which he had no right to claim, and the penalty was death.

Our age is well beyond accidental holiness. It claims prerogatives it has no right to, and it separates itself to functions which belong only to God. It will therefore experience the judgment of Uzzah and Uzziah.

Presumptuous holiness is the refusal to recognize God-ordained boundaries and limitations. It was this presumptuousness which destroyed Uzzah and Uzziah; each felt worthy and competent where they had no right to be. In Scripture, a thing or person can be *separated*, dedicated, or holy either for God's blessing, or for judgment and destruction. We are separated to something and from other things by God's word. Men and women cannot trespass on one another, nor usurp one another's ordained realms. Institutions and people have their limitations, and their boundaries are to limit their jurisdiction and power. Presumptuous holiness claims powers it has no right to, and as a result it is set apart by God for judgment rather than blessing. In Hebrew, the word *holy*, *kawdash*, means both dedicate and defile; *kawdashe* means a male or female prostitute in a fertility cult. In God's sight, all persons and things are set apart or dedicated to and for either God Himself, or against Him. At present, because of the Fall, all too many are set apart for and dedicated to war against the Lord. The vision of Zechariah tells us that in time all things shall be for "holiness unto the LORD" (Zech. 14:20).

Chapter Ten

The Reparation Offering

(*Leviticus 7:1-10*)

1. Likewise this is the law of the trespass offering: it is most holy.
2. In the place where they kill the burnt offering shall they kill the trespass offering: and the blood thereof shall he sprinkle round about upon the altar.
3. And he shall offer of it all the fat thereof; the rump, and the fat that covereth the inwards,
4. And the two kidneys, and the fat that is on them, which is by the flanks, and the caul that is above the liver, with the kidneys, it shall he take away:
5. And the priest shall burn them upon the altar for an offering made by fire unto the LORD: it is a trespass offering.
6. Every male among the priests shall eat thereof: it shall be eaten in the holy place: it is most holy.
7. As the sin offering is, so is the trespass offering: there is one law for them: the priest that maketh atonement therewith shall have it.
8. And the priest that offereth any man's burnt offering, even the priest shall have to himself the skin of the burnt offering which he hath offered.
9. And all the meat offering that is baked in the oven, and all that is dressed in the fryingpan, and in the pan, shall be the priest's that offereth it.
10. And every meat offering, mingled with oil, and dry, shall all the sons of Aaron have, one as much as another. (*Leviticus 7:1-10*)

These verses continue the laws of trespass offerings, and they also presuppose the fact of restitution. Our Lord's statement in Matthew 5:23-24, requiring reconciliation with a brother we have sinned against before we approach the Lord, is the requirement of all trespass offerings. Oehler's comment is pertinent here:

By this grouping we are led to refer the four kinds of offerings to two principal classes, — those which assume that the covenant relation is on the whole undisturbed, and those that are meant to remove a disturbance (of the people or of separate individuals) to God. The latter are offerings of atonement, under which name we may comprehend by sin- and trespass-offerings.⁵⁸

Restitution is inseparable from atonement. Christ on the cross, as in His life of obedience and faithfulness, made restitution to God for us. All believers must therefore make restitution when they sin. The cross thus sets forth the pattern of God's justice for us to follow: it is restitution. As F. W. Grant noted, "in government, God's nature must be declared,"⁵⁹ and this must be done in every sphere of government. God's covenant grace, mercy, protection, providence, and law set forth for us in life the justice declared in His law. The implications are clear: God's goal is the restoration of His order *and* the development of His justice in every area of life and government.

As Knight has noted, these verses set forth two things: *first*, when a man acknowledges his guilt, makes restitution, and then comes to God with his offering, it is the holiest of offerings. We are told, “it is most holy” (v. 1), because man has taken steps to restore God’s order. *Second*, because “the labourer is worthy of his hire,” the priest receives the hide as his portion.⁶⁰ A portion is burned on the altar as the Lord’s, and the rest goes to the priests. According to 1 Corinthians 9:13, “They which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple.”

This law thus establishes the life of faith as a very responsible one. The Sermon on the Mount, and all of the New Testament, does the same. Peace with God and man means requital, restitution, something far removed from antinomianism.

Our Lord makes it plain how radical this requital is, stating, “But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment” (Matt. 12:36). This statement appears only in Matthew, as part of a discourse on a house divided (Matt. 12:25-37). Without this sentence, substantially the same comments are found in Mark 3:23-30 and Luke 11:17-23. The accounts in Matthew and Luke begin, “Knowing their thoughts,” and He spoke in terms of that knowledge. He *first* speaks of the fact that a divided house cannot stand. *Second*, He speaks of the unforgivable sin, to speak against or to blaspheme the Holy Ghost, i.e., to call good evil, and evil good, because the Pharisees and others had just accused Him of healing by demonic power (Matt. 12:22-24; Mark 3:22; Luke 11:14-16). Mark 3:30 makes it clear that our Lord’s comment concerning the sin against the Holy Ghost had reference to this charge against Him. *Third*, our Lord then states that every tree is known by its fruits (Matt. 12:33-35; Luke 6:43-45; cf. Matt. 7:16-20). *Fourth*, in Matthew alone we have the additional statement that there will be a full requital for every idle word (Matt. 12:36-37). We are thus told how far-reaching judgment is, and to what extent the reprobates will be held accountable.

We have a similar statement on requital in Matthew 5:26, requiring payment to “the uttermost farthing,” also found in Luke 12:59. This is a part of our Lord’s declaration of the meaning of the commandment, “Thou shalt not kill” (Ex. 20:13); we cannot defame, defraud, or in any way harm a brother, or any other person, without the requirement of restitution exacting its payment from us.

It should be noted that our Lord does not tell us to be reconciled with an unrepentant man who has wronged us. Rather, it is the sinning person who must make restitution. We must at all times return good for evil (Matt. 5:41-44), but returning good for evil does not mean calling evil good, or forgiving unrepentant evil-doers.

The trespass offering sets forth requital, not confusion. The trespass offering restored or maintained peace between God and those persons who by His grace approached Him. Harrison refers to the trespass offerings of Leviticus 5:14-19 and 7:1-10 as a “reparation offering,” an excellent term.⁶¹ Reparation has the connotation of repairing, restoring, and repaying. It thus emphasizes the fact that sin exacts a price. The reparation must be in two directions, God-ward and man-ward. The sacrifices stress the God-ward aspect and require the man-ward aspect. Christ’s atonement has replaced the old sacrifices, but it has not altered the nature of requital and reparation.

Antinomian churches preach the death of the law and thus reduce Christianity, or their version thereof, to historical and social impotence. As a result, the life of the church and the preaching thereof is one of irrelevance. The Bible, however, makes clear the total relevance of God's revelation to all of history. The sacrifices were constant reminders that a man's faith, or his lack of faith, has social and historical consequences. No man can escape the relevance of his life. If he is not relevant in terms of God's law-word, then he is relevant in terms of fallen man's law-word, whereby he claims to be his own god and law, determining for himself what constitutes good and evil, law and morality (Gen. 3:5). When men abandon God's word for their own, God then moves in judgment against them. The reparation offering means that faith must be relevant.

Chapter Eleven Grace and Peace (*Leviticus 7:11-21*)

11. And this is the law of the sacrifice of peace offerings, which he shall offer unto the LORD.
12. If he offer it for a thanksgiving, then he shall offer with the sacrifice of thanksgiving unleavened cakes mingled with oil, and unleavened wafers anointed with oil, and cakes mingled with oil, of fine flour, fried.
13. Besides the cakes, he shall offer for his offering leavened bread with the sacrifice of thanksgiving of his peace offerings.
14. And of it he shall offer one out of the whole oblation for an heave offering unto the LORD, and it shall be the priest's that sprinkleth the blood of the peace offerings.
15. And the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offerings for thanksgiving shall be eaten the same day that it is offered; he shall not leave any of it until the morning.
16. But if the sacrifice of his offering be a vow, or a voluntary offering, it shall be eaten the same day that he offereth his sacrifice: and on the morrow also the remainder of it shall be eaten:
17. But the remainder of the flesh of the sacrifice on the third day shall be burnt with fire.
18. And if any of the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offerings be eaten at all on the third day, it shall not be accepted, neither shall it be imputed unto him that offereth it: it shall be an abomination, and the soul that eateth of it shall bear his iniquity.
19. And the flesh that toucheth any unclean thing shall not be eaten; it shall be burnt with fire: and as for the flesh, all that be clean shall eat thereof.
20. But the soul that eateth of the flesh of the sacrifice of peace offerings, that pertain unto the LORD, having his uncleanness upon him, even that soul shall be cut off from his people.
21. Moreover the soul that shall touch any unclean thing, as the uncleanness of man, or any unclean beast, or any abominable unclean thing, and eat of the flesh of the sacrifice of peace offerings, which pertain unto the LORD, even that soul shall be cut off from his people. (*Leviticus 7:11-21*)

A question which needs to be asked when we come to the peace offerings is this: why were they necessary? Given the various sacrifices requiring atonement and restitution, was not peace gained by them? Why a further offering for peace? Before answering this question, the basic aspects of this offering need to be cited in brief.

Three kinds of peace offerings are cited. *First*, some are praise or thank offerings (v. 12-15). *Second*, there are the votive offerings. These are made to fulfil a vow or promise made to God during a time of need. *Third*, there are the free-will offerings (v. 16 ff.). The votive and free-will offerings are also cited together in Leviticus 22:21, Numbers 15:3, and Deuteronomy 12:6-7. The free-will offering was one of gratitude (2 Chron. 31:14; 35:8-9; Ps. 54:6). It was common at the great feasts at the Temple. In the case of a free-will offering, a perfect animal was not required

(Lev. 22:23). A grain offering was to accompany the votive offering and the free-will offering (Num. 15:3-4). The fact that the worshipper ate much of this offering made blemishes tenable, i.e., a lame or a blind animal.

This sacrifice was to be shared with the poor, and it was a joyful one, and Psalm 100 was designated for this offering:

1. Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands.
2. Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing.
3. Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves: we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.
4. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name.
5. For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.

The church took over the use of this psalm for thanksgiving, and it appears, for example, in The Book of Common Prayer as *Jubilate Deo*, in Morning Prayer.

The worshipper killed the animal and dressed it out. The priest sprinkled the blood around the altar; the fat was burned on the altar; and the breast, which belonged to the priest, was waved or heaved; the section of meat was waved towards the altar and away from it. The right thigh was also waved before God and given to the priests for their care (vv. 32-34). The rest was eaten by the worshipper and the needy who were his guests. The votive or free-will offerings did not need to be consumed on the same day but could be eaten also on the second day. Failure to observe this requirement made the sacrifice null and void. This requirement made charity a necessity; the family could not consume the animal by itself in two days.

F. W. Grant's comment about the peace offering was to the point:

...peace with God is never merely peace. God can never be simply not at variance with His creatures; there is in His nature no indifference, no neutrality; what He is He is with His whole heart, and, of all things, He nauseates lukewarmness. So to be at peace with Him is to have His love poured out upon us, — it is to be brought into His banqueting-house, and to be made to sit at His table: and thus it is pictured here. The peace-offering is the only one in which the offerer himself partakes of his own offering, and this partaking shows him not only brought into a place of acceptance, but in heart reconciled and brought nigh. That which has satisfied God satisfies him also: peace has become communion.⁶²

This offering is also called a praise offering. Psalm 119:108 refers to it as a state of mind and heart as well as an offering: "Accept, I beseech Thee, the freewill offerings of my mouth, O LORD, and teach me Thy judgments." Hebrews 13:15-16 speaks also of this sacrifice and its meaning:

15. By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.

16. But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

In other words, peace with God presupposes the atonement and then requires praise and thanksgiving from us together with doing good towards one another. The Berkeley Version renders Hebrews 13:16 thus: “Do not forget the benevolences and contributions; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.”

In v. 19, we see the double aspect of the required holiness: the flesh must be clean, and also those who eat it. This was the only animal sacrifice which did not make atonement for sin. It furthered peace with God and man, and well-being.

We can now return to our original question: since atonement brought peace with God, why were continuing offerings necessary to maintain it? There was no insufficiency whatsoever in the atonement. Restitution towards man certainly furthered peace in the community. Why then a further offering for peace?

Hebrews has much to say about the meaning of the sacrificial system, and it concludes its comments by declaring,

28. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:

29. For our God is a consuming fire. (Hebrews 12:28-29)

We are here told, *first*, that we are heirs of an unshakeable kingdom; *second*, that, to serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear, we must have grace; *third*, the Kingdom shall stand forever in all its power and glory, but we face the judgment of our God, who is a consuming fire.

The peace offering serves constantly to remind the worshipper of his need for grace. The praise of Psalm 100 celebrates God’s grace and care.

Louis XIV, after the fearful defeat of his army at Ramillies, said, “God seems to have forgotten all I have done for him.”⁶³ Men are ready to affirm salvation by grace, and then to believe that they have now merited various blessings. Men and women marry, feeling at first privileged to have one another, and then their lives become one of expectations and demands; they expect to be loved rather than loving. Men feel elated at getting a prized position but are then resentful that they are not showered with advantages for doing their work. The economy of our lives shifts easily from grace to expectations. Since man’s original sin is to believe that he can be his own god, and his own source of law and order (Gen. 3:5), all men readily forget grace and live in terms of *their* expectations of God and man. The peace offering, and the many psalms which echo it, requires us to live in gratitude towards God and in community with one another.

In popular thought, this sacrifice came to be regarded as the central one for the covenant people. The atonement gives us salvation; praise, thanksgiving, and communion in community apply and

develop the meaning of our atonement. It is sin that isolates men from God and from one another, and it is the atonement which brings them together. At the communion dinner or feast together, the covenant man and his needy friends celebrated the grace and peace of God.

Not surprisingly, in The Book of Common Prayer, Psalm 100, the *Jubilate Deo*, the peace offering song, precedes the Creed, with its great conclusion,

I believe in the Holy Ghost: the holy Catholic Church; The Communion of Saints:
The Forgiveness of sins: The Resurrection of the body: And the Life everlasting.
Amen.

The psalm and the Creed celebrate God and His grace. The peace offering, because it requires us to share God's bounty, requires those who receive grace from above to manifest grace to those below.

At one time, a deacons' offering at the time of communion was more than a bland formality. Funds were raised for the parish poor, and communion, peace with God, *required* it. Communion with God declines as charity declines. All that remains is *empty* ritual.

Ritual is basic to life, because it requires us to enact our faith, to relate faith to life. The Christian calendar, with its holy days, once governed life. Earlier in this century, almost all that remained of it was Good Friday, Easter, Thanksgiving, and Christmas, followed by New Year's Eve prayer services. Now these are largely secularized. The civil calendar then had Washington's birthday (to honor the founding father), Memorial Day, the Fourth of July, and, later, Armistice Day. These were observed by schools, civic leaders, and churches, in public ceremonies which have now virtually disappeared. The civil holidays now have little of civil allegiance to them; they are occasions for play because of a long weekend.

The only civil day of note now is April 15, income tax day. Individuals and business firms organize their year in terms of it. That modern American ritual is now reduced to tax day and tells us how impoverished we have become.

Chapter Twelve

Fat and Blood: God's Claim on Us

(*Leviticus 7:22-27*)

22. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,
23. Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, Ye shall eat no manner of fat, of ox, or of sheep, or of goat.
24. And the fat of the beast that dieth of itself, and the fat of that which is torn with beasts, may be used in any other use: but ye shall in no wise eat of it.
25. For whosoever eateth the fat of the beast, of which men offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD, even the soul that eateth it shall be cut off from his people.
26. Moreover ye shall eat no manner of blood, whether it be of fowl or of beast, in any of your dwellings.
27. Whatsoever soul it be that eateth any manner of blood, even that soul shall be cut off from his people. (*Leviticus 7:22-27*)

In these verses, we come again to the introductory words, "Speak unto the children (or, people) of Israel." These words introduce the book of Leviticus in 1:2; we meet them again in 4:2; other sections thus far have been prefaced with commands to all individuals: "And when any will offer a meat offering unto the LORD..." (2:1); "And if a soul sin..." (5:1), or "If a soul commit a trespass..." (5:15), and so on. It is a serious error to see Leviticus as a guidebook for priests only: it speaks to every believer. *Faith is more than a matter of affirmation: it is life lived in faithfulness to the details of God's way.* To be near unto God is to be near in Christ, and this nearness rests on Christ's atonement and is developed by our faithfulness. F. W. Grant commented, "*Man soon mistakes familiarity for nearness.*"⁶⁴ Pietism is guilty of this error. We can be close to a throne, but we retain our nearness by faithfulness, not familiarity.

These verses prohibit the eating of fat and of blood. The ban on fat is specified in v. 23: "Ye shall eat no manner of fat of ox, or of sheep, or of goat." According to Hebraic practice, three kinds of fat were involved: 1) the fat on the "inwards;" 2) on the kidneys; and 3) on the flanks. Fat which was a part of the muscular flesh was exempt.⁶⁵

Under no circumstances was blood to be eaten or in any way used. The fat of animals dying a natural death, or killed by wild animals, could be used. Such usage included lighting lamps, and the like. The use or eating of blood in any form was strictly forbidden. It tells us much about our culture that this law seems to most people to be a curiosity rather than a necessity.

Leviticus tells us plainly, "The life of the flesh is in the blood" (Lev. 17:11). Moreover, as Noth observed, "The blood, however, as the seat of the 'life' of the animal was God's property outright and must be given back to God before the sacrifice was offered."⁶⁶

Vos, in his comment, saw the issue clearly, but held that Christians were not bound by this law:

Since animals are not to devour man after a carnivorous fashion, man also is not to eat animals as wild beasts devour their living prey. He must show proper reverence for life as a sacred thing, of which God alone has the disposal, and for the use of which man is dependent on the permission of God. The Levitical law repeats this prohibition, but adds as another ground the fact that the blood comes upon the altar, which, of course, for the O.T. makes the prohibition of blood-eating absolute. Through failure to distinguish between the simple and the complicated motive this practice of absolute abstention was continued in the church for many centuries.⁶⁷

Vos to the contrary, this is not an obsolete law. The facts are, *first*, that God declares that the life is in the blood, and blood is not to be eaten. *Second*, God is the creator and governor of all life, and no life can be taken apart from the conditions of His law-word, e.g., in war, in defending oneself, to execute men who must die according to God's law, for food, to clear the land of beasts dangerous to man, and the like. In other words, life is not ours to take: it belongs to God, our own life included. *Third*, since we did not create life, and we cannot take it except on God's terms, we are taught by this law to respect all life as the creation of God and as under His governance.

As Noordzij has pointed out, this law was at times violated in Israel (1 Sam. 14:32-34; Ezek. 33:25). This occurred in terms of apostasy. Among the pagan peoples of the Near Eastern world, it was believed that the eating of blood fortified life, and it supposedly led to ecstasy and communion with the gods. Cults in Islam to this day tear apart and devour living animals and their blood. Such practices led to excommunication in Israel.⁶⁸

Life as the gift and property of God is as much His now as in the days of Moses. We are no less bound to show reverence for the fact of life in terms of God's law than was Israel. The modern callousness for the taking of life is, like man's sin over the centuries, an aspect of his zeal to play god. Humanism has excelled in the callous treatment of life. Humanists earlier claimed that, once men knew that this life was all that they had, and that only eternal death lay past the grave, men would reverence life, end war and killing, and live in peace. Now, with God and eternity denied, humanistic men treat life as meaningless and with contempt, and the shedding of blood is a callous act — unless it be criminal blood!

What Leviticus requires of us is to take life where God requires it, recognize His law and authority over all of life, and to take no life where God does not permit it. Respect for blood is the ritual and living witness of our submission to the living God. The restoration of faithfulness to this law is evidence of faith in the reality and seriousness of our God.

The prohibition of eating fat is also important. There are excellent health reasons for avoiding both blood and fat, but our concern is theological at the moment. The fat of animals which had died naturally, or were killed by animals, could be used for various purposes. (Palestinian shepherds still use the fat of hogs, placed on and around the holes of vipers, to drive away or eliminate vipers by setting fire to the fat.)⁶⁹

Just as blood represents life, so, too, fat is sometimes used in Scripture to mean rich, prosperous, the best (Gen. 49:20; Neh. 9:24-25, etc.). In this sense, “Fat was also a reminder of God’s blessings, which were to be offered back to Him in thanksgiving.”⁷⁰

The offering up of fat to be consumed on the altar is thus comparable to the tithe. We are taught that the best way to capitalize our future is to capitalize God’s work and Kingdom. The impoverishment of Christ’s realm is the impoverishment of our lives, and our children’s future. By burning *the best*, i.e., the fat, on the altar, the worshipper made it clear that his future depended on God’s work, not his own.

As against this, the economics of the modern era insists that the key to a good society is the radical freedom for self-interest. Superficially, this seems to be a working theory, with no small success. The fact is, however, that the rise of the economy of self-interest was accompanied by the Protestant work ethic *and* the outpouring of tithes and gifts for a great variety of causes. As this Christian giving has declined, the growth of statist causes and taxation has proliferated. Self-interest has more clearly led to socialism than to freedom, and the non-statist funding of society has continued to suffer where evangelical Christianity wanes.

This requirement barring fat from man’s table tells us that not simply the tithe but also our fat, our richness, belongs to God and must be used for His Kingdom. The law and its intention are still valid.

Chapter Thirteen

Tithing and the Kingdom

(*Leviticus 7:28-38*)

28. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,
29. Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, He that offereth the sacrifice of his peace offerings unto the LORD shall bring his oblation unto the LORD of the sacrifice of his peace offerings.
30. His own hands shall bring the offerings of the LORD made by fire, the fat with the breast, it shall he bring, that the breast may be waved for a wave offering before the LORD.
31. And the priest shall burn the fat upon the altar: but the breast shall be Aaron's and his sons'.
32. And the right shoulder shall ye give unto the priest for an heave offering of the sacrifices of your peace offerings.
33. He among the sons of Aaron, that offereth the blood of the peace offerings, and the fat, shall have the right shoulder for his part.
34. For the wave breast and the heave shoulder have I taken of the children of Israel from off the sacrifices of their peace offerings, and have given them unto Aaron the priest and unto his sons by a statute for ever from among the children of Israel.
35. This is the portion of the anointing of Aaron, and of the anointing of his sons, out of the offerings of the LORD made by fire, in the day when he presented them to minister unto the LORD in the priest's office;
36. Which the LORD commanded to be given them of the children of Israel, in the day that he anointed them, by a statute for ever throughout their generations.
37. This is the law of the burnt offering, of the meat offering, and of the sin offering, and of the trespass offering, and of the consecrations, and of the sacrifice of the peace offerings;
38. Which the LORD commanded Moses in mount Sinai, in the day that he commanded the children of Israel to offer their oblations unto the LORD, in the wilderness of Sinai. (*Leviticus 7:28-38*)

With these verses, we come to the end of the laws concerning sacrifices and begin a shorter section on the priesthood. We have here references to the wave offering (v. 30f., cf. 34), and to the heave offering (v. 32f; cf. 34). S. C. Gayford best described their meaning:

The waving was a forward and return motion representing the offering of the breast to God and His handing it back to the priest for his portion. The symbolism is clear from Nu. 8:10-22. The Levites were offered by the congregation as a wave offering to the Lord who gave them back to Aaron (v. 19) to assist him in his ministrations. There was a difference between the wave breast and the heave thigh: the breast was given to God who handed it back to His priest; the thigh was

given directly to the priest. So the priest was the guest of God in the former case and the guest of the sacrificer in the latter, and thus became the mediator between God and man in the common meal.⁷¹

The Hebrew text makes it clear that the breast is a *dedication* (v. 30), and the leg is a *contribution* (v. 34).⁷²

To understand the meaning of the heave offering, the leg or thigh, the contribution to the priests, we must examine Numbers 18:25-28:

25. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,
26. Thus speak unto the Levites, and say unto them, When ye take of the children of Israel the tithes which I have given you from them for your inheritance, then ye shall offer up an heave offering of it for the LORD, even a tenth part of the tithe.
27. And this your heave offering shall be reckoned unto you, as though it were the corn of the threshing floor, and as the fulness.
28. Thus ye shall offer an heave offering unto the LORD of all your tithes, which ye receive of the children of Israel; and ye shall give thereto of the LORD's heave offering to Aaron the priest.

The rest of the tithe, nine-tenths of it, went to the Levites (Num. 18:29-32). The Levites were the instructors of Israel (Deut. 33:10), and they bore the ark of the covenant (Deut. 10:8; 31:9). They assisted in the administration of civil government (1 Chron. 23:28); they were choristers, musicians, guardians, and gatekeepers of the sanctuary (1 Chron. 9:14-33), and overseers (1 Chron. 23:4). Their role in music is cited in Psalm 42:1; 44:1, etc., and 2 Chronicles 20:19. They were connected with the Temple treasury, and with the royal administration (1 Chron. 9:22, 26f.; 23:4, 28, etc.). They also served as judges (2 Chron. 19:8, 11), and assisted the priests (1 Chron. 6:31ff.; 23:27-32; etc.). At the same time, the priests also had duties as officers of health and sanitation (Lev. chaps. 11-14).

The primary role of the priests, however, pertained to the sanctuary and sacrifices. The Levites had a broader role, one which can be described as educational, legal, and cultural.

With the New Testament, the sacrificial work ended, and the work of the ministry became levitical. Even our English word *priest* has no relation to the Old Testament word, and *priest* is a contraction of *presbyter*. The instructional and cultural function is thus levitical and the essence of the Christian ministry. This duty of instructional and cultural authority and leadership was basic to the medieval and early Reformation eras. Christianity could dominate society for two very practical reasons. *First*, it was seen as the duty of the Christian community and its leadership to exercise dominion over society in the name of Jesus Christ. *Second*, God's tax, the tithe, plus gifts and offerings over the tithe, were the financial mainstay of this dominion mandate.

In the medieval era, a steady rebellion by princes and peoples developed against the tithe, and the church resorted to all kinds of disgraceful devices to raise money. The same happened to the Reformation churches, and again there were resorts to painfully bad practices in fund raising.

The medieval church had built schools, universities, hospitals, cathedrals, charitable organizations, and more, and financed music and the arts. With time, this waned and became something barely maintained rather than a force commanding society. Among the churches of the Reformation, by the time of Johann Sebastian Bach, the same cultural force was declining. It lingered longer in America, where most universities had a Christian beginning, but here, too, it diminished in time.

Today, while a revival is under way, only a small minority tithe, and many tithers see the tithe as restricted to the church as a worshipping institution. This is hardly the nature of the tithe in Scripture, since nine-tenths of the tithe went to the Levites. When once tithing again finances such things as Christian scholarship, music, law, and the like, we shall see dramatic changes.

Note that the heave offering had to be given *personally* to the priest, even if through a Levite. Christ's work is done by *persons*; Christian institutions are groups of persons in Christ's service.

We should note further that, if a people tithed faithfully, and also gave gifts over their tithe, the priests and Levites would be prosperous and effectual in their ministry. The economic status of those in Christ's service is God's barometer of the faith of a people. Poor faith means poor Levites, a quest by people for personal advantage rather than God's dominion.

An evil inheritance from Neoplatonism is the equation of spirituality with poverty and a contempt for material things. Such an equation begins with a false view of spirituality which is divorced from Scripture and the Holy Ghost. It then sees poverty as a kind of virtue. There is no evidence that either poverty or wealth makes people spiritual and godly, nor is there any evidence that material wealth makes a people unspiritual and ungodly. The sin common to all the sons of Adam makes us ungodly, and wealth or poverty have little to do with it. Only the sovereign grace of God can make us a new creation, not wealth or poverty.

Our Lord makes it very clear that "the labourer is worthy of his hire" (Luke 10:7). Those who labor worthily in Christ's calling deserve "double honour" (1 Tim. 5:17), i.e., double pay. To His disciples, our Lord says, "Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?" (Matt. 6:31). He did not mean thereby that they would always have their necessary provisions. Rather, He had in mind the law whereby, as Paul summarizes it, God's servants are "partakers with the altar:"

13. Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? And they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar?

14. Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel. (1 Corinthians 9:13-14)

The health of a society in God's sight is revealed by its support of the work of Christian evangelism and dominion, by the preaching of the word, by education, scholarship, music, publications, and more. If we limit our view of what constitutes Christ's work, we limit His Kingdom, and our blessings.

Chapter Fourteen

The Priestly Calling

(Leviticus 8:1-13)

1. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,
 2. Take Aaron and his sons with him, and the garments, and the anointing oil, and a bullock for the sin offering, and two rams, and a basket of unleavened bread;
 3. And gather thou all the congregation together unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.
 4. And Moses did as the LORD commanded him; and the assembly was gathered together unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.
 5. And Moses said unto the congregation, This is the thing which the LORD commanded to be done.
 6. And Moses brought Aaron and his sons, and washed them with water.
 7. And he put upon him the coat, and girded him with the girdle, and clothed him with the robe, and put the ephod upon him, and he girded him with the curious girdle of the ephod, and bound it unto him therewith.
 8. And he put the breastplate upon him: also he put in the breastplate the Urim and the Thummim.
 9. And he put the mitre upon his head; also upon the mitre, even upon his forefront, did he put the golden plate, the holy crown; as the LORD commanded Moses.
 10. And Moses took the anointing oil, and anointed the tabernacle and all that was therein, and sanctified them.
 11. And he sprinkled thereof upon the altar seven times, and anointed the altar and all his vessels, both the laver and his foot, to sanctify them.
 12. And he poured of the anointing oil upon Aaron's head, and anointed him, to sanctify him.
 13. And Moses brought Aaron's sons, and put coats upon them, and girded them with girdles, and put bonnets upon them; as the LORD commanded Moses.
- (Leviticus 8:1-13)

An important and central stress in the modern world is on spontaneity. The various arts are excellent and naive examples of this. The discipline of draughtsmanship, a knowledge of paints and other materials, and apprenticeship are now decried in favor of an unplanned and emotional approach to painting. Modern *avant garde* dancers at the beginning of the century were hostile to the discipline of classical ballet and associated it with Russian autocracy, as part of an old order which had to go.

In the churches, both notes and a written text fell into disfavor and, in some churches, could lead to the termination of a pastorate. It was held that unprepared and spontaneous utterances were somehow inspired, and that the Holy Spirit did not like the use of intelligence and study.

In everyday life, a woman, instead of taking pride in the preparation required to provide very superior food for her table, will say, "It's just something I whipped up." Merit is believed to belong to spontaneity and a lack of preparation, not to intelligent work and planning.

Not surprisingly, the detailed ritual of preparation for the priesthood is not popular reading among churchmen! In every sphere today, people expect perfection but are ill at ease with the disciplined labor which lies behind all good work. Men prefer to ascribe excellence to "genius" rather than to intelligence and work, with the result that we are overrun with poseurs.

There is another aspect to these verses which brings out the difference between our times and the Biblical world. In Moses' day, despite the prevailing unbelief, men were closer to creation, the Flood, and the general revelation given by God through His servants to all men. Noordzij has called attention to the fact that *holiness* in Leviticus (as in all the Bible) is "something substantive, almost something material or physical," whether it is used to describe persons or things, and the same is true of the concepts *clean* and *unclean*.⁷³ We can add that, just as a man by disciplined exercise can build up his muscles and strength, so a covenant man by obeying the laws of holiness can grow in holiness. It becomes an aspect central to his life.

The consecration of priests was important because the priest, *first*, represented the people to God. *Second*, the priest represented what all the people were to become, in that each in his own place was required to dedicate himself, his realm, his life, and his work to God. Earlier, God had told the people through Moses,

4. Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself.
5. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine:
6. And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.... (Exodus 19:4-6)

In Leviticus 8:6, Moses *brought* or *presented* Aaron and his sons; they were presented as a sacrificial offering to God, even as the Levites were so viewed in Numbers 3:12 and 8:16.

The installation of the priests has nine aspects to it: 1) presenting, v. 6; 2) washing, v. 6; 3) clothing, vv. 7-13; 4) hallowing the sanctuary, vv. 10-11; 5) three separate sacrifices, because the priests are sinners like all other men, vv. 14-28; 6) a purificatory rite, v. 30; 7) a sacred meal, v. 31; 8) a period of seclusion; and, of course, 9) the anointing of Aaron, v. 12.⁷⁴ The head alone is anointed, because the head "symbolized the entire man."⁷⁵

We see the anointing of a prophet and of a king (1 Kings 19:16), as aspects of God's dominion calling of men. These three offices of king, priest, and prophet are united in the *messiah*, a word derived from the root for *anoint*.

It has been well stated, "The sinner needs a sacrifice; the believer needs a *priest*."⁷⁶ The priest is necessary both for atonement and mediation. As God declares through Moses,

42. This shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the LORD, where I will meet you, to speak there unto thee.
43. And there I will meet with the children of Israel, and the tabernacle shall be sanctified by my glory.
44. And I will sanctify the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar: I will sanctify also both Aaron and his sons, to minister to me in the priest's office.
45. And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God.
46. And they shall know that I am the LORD their God, that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them: I am the LORD their God. (Exodus 29:42-46)

These verses come at the end of a section on the consecration of priests. The purpose of the sacrifices of atonement, and the priesthood, is set forth, *first*, to provide the avenue whereby God will speak to His people. *Second*, God will dwell with His people and be their God. This is stressed in both v. 45 and 46. All this depends on a true priesthood.

The function of the priest was *the service of God*. Hence, all the covenant people are to be “a kingdom of priests” (Ex. 19:6), because all must serve God. Jesus Christ is the perfect High Priest, and we are priests in Him, called to serve God in every sphere with all our being. Thus, the purpose of the priesthood, and of all of us as priests (Rev. 1:6), is to serve God and establish His rule and Kingdom. Our priestly calling is thus the development and establishment of God's order on earth, in every sphere of life, church, state, school, family, vocation, the arts and sciences, and so on.

The establishment of such an order is a priestly and levitical calling. In the modern world as in antiquity, that goal has been perverted and usurped by the state. The goal of the state is order, but not God's order. Rather, it is the Tower of Babel, a world order without and in defiance of God. Parliaments, Congresses, and legislative bodies under various names, as well as a variety of rulers, represent the false priests of history, seeking a true order and the good society without God. The consequence, as with Babel, is confusion and disorder.

Chapter Fifteen

Consecration and Investiture

(Leviticus 8:14-36)

14. And he brought the bullock for the sin offering: and Aaron and his sons laid their hands upon the head of the bullock for the sin offering.
15. And he slew it; and Moses took the blood, and put it upon the horns of the altar round about with his finger, and purified the altar, and poured the blood at the bottom of the altar, and sanctified it, to make reconciliation upon it.
16. And he took all the fat that was upon the inwards, and the caul above the liver, and the two kidneys, and their fat, and Moses burned it upon the altar.
17. But the bullock, and his hide, his flesh, and his dung, he burnt with fire without the camp; as the LORD commanded Moses.
18. And he brought the ram for the burnt offering: and Aaron and his sons laid their hands upon the head of the ram.
19. And he killed it; and Moses sprinkled the blood upon the altar round about.
20. And he cut the ram into pieces; and Moses burnt the head, and the pieces, and the fat.
21. And he washed the inwards and the legs in water; and Moses burnt the whole ram upon the altar: it was a burnt sacrifice for a sweet savour, and an offering made by fire unto the LORD; as the LORD commanded Moses.
22. And he brought the other ram, the ram of consecration: and Aaron and his sons laid their hands upon the head of the ram.
23. And he slew it; and Moses took of the blood of it, and put it upon the tip of Aaron's right ear, and upon the thumb of his right hand, and upon the great toe of his right foot.
24. And he brought Aaron's sons, and Moses put of the blood upon the tip of their right ear, and upon the thumbs of their right hands, and upon the great toes of their right feet: and Moses sprinkled the blood upon the altar round about.
25. And he took the fat, and the rump, and all the fat that was upon the inwards, and the caul above the liver, and the two kidneys, and their fat, and the right shoulder:
26. And out of the basket of unleavened bread, that was before the LORD, he took one unleavened cake, and a cake of oiled bread, and one wafer, and put them on the fat, and upon the right shoulder:
27. And he put all upon Aaron's hands, and upon his sons' hands, and waved them for a wave offering before the LORD.
28. And Moses took them from off their hands, and burnt them on the altar upon the burnt offering: they were consecrations for a sweet savour: it is an offering made by fire unto the LORD.
29. And Moses took the breast, and waved it for a wave offering before the LORD: for of the ram of consecration it was Moses' part; as the LORD commanded Moses.

30. And Moses took of the anointing oil, and of the blood which was upon the altar, and sprinkled it upon Aaron, and upon his garments, and upon his sons, and upon his sons' garments with him; and sanctified Aaron, and his garments, and his sons, and his sons' garments with him.
31. And Moses said unto Aaron and to his sons, Boil the flesh at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation: and there eat it with the bread that is in the basket of consecrations, as I commanded, saying, Aaron and his sons shall eat it.
32. And that which remaineth of the flesh and of the bread shall ye burn with fire.
33. And ye shall not go out of the door of the tabernacle of the congregation in seven days, until the days of your consecration be at an end: for seven days shall he consecrate you.
34. As he hath done this day, so the LORD hath commanded to do, to make an atonement for you.
35. Therefore shall ye abide at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation day and night seven days, and keep the charge of the LORD, that ye die not: for so I am commanded.
36. So Aaron and his sons did all things which the LORD commanded by the hand of Moses. (Leviticus 8:14-36)

In this chapter, as in chapters 9 and 10, we have an historical account, which, with Leviticus 24:10-23, is the only historical data in Leviticus. Chapter 8 is concerned with the *consecration and investiture* of Aaron and his sons. The consecration sacrifices are, *first*, a sin offering, vv. 14-17; the purpose of this sacrifice is purification. *Second*, there is the burnt offering, vv. 18-21, for dedication. *Third*, there is a consecration offering, vv. 22-23, which was a peace offering (v. 31), to set forth communion. Oil and blood are used together in this instance, not separately, and the garments or vesture are included.

All this is done, we are told, "as the LORD commanded Moses," a recurring phrase (7:38; 8:3-4, 9, 13, 17, 21, 29, 34, 36; 9:6-7, 10, 21; 10:7, 13, 15). The text gives us what God requires in meticulous detail so that in all things God is meticulously obeyed. This is done to stress the necessity of precise obedience. As R. K. Harrison noted:

Obedience is at the heart of both the old and the new covenants; and this, rather than love, is God's prime demand of His followers. The Christian is urged to bring every thought to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 10:5), and to see obedience as one mark of a sanctified personality (1 Pet. 1:2).⁷⁷

Samuel Clark rightly and perceptively noted that, because the rites of consecration lasted a week, they "were connected with the sabbatical number of the Covenant."⁷⁸ This means that, even as the Sabbath means rest for us, rest in the Lord, so the true priesthood means rest for a people. In Judges 3:11, 30, 5:31, and 7:6, 8, while the word used for rest is not the same as *sabbath* (*shabbaton*, rest) but is *shagot*, still we are told that the land had *rest* when the people were godly. In Leviticus 8, the meaning of a week given to the consecration of Aaron and his sons means that the peace and rest of the covenant people is tied to their faithfulness. Paul tells us of Christ, that, "He is our peace" (Eph. 2:14), having abolished the judgment against us and having made us to be reconciled with God.

We have already (Chap. 14) cited Exodus 29:42-46. God there declares the purpose of His sanctuary. *First*, He will there meet with His people. *Second*, God's glory will sanctify the sanctuary, as well as the priests thereof. *Third*, God declares that He will dwell among His people to be their God, "And they shall know that I am the LORD their God." Clearly, we are told that the sanctuary or the church is not as other buildings. It is set apart for a sacred purpose, and any profanation of it is a serious offense. If the Bible means what it says, God requires beauty and glory in all houses of worship dedicated to Him. He tells Haggai, centuries later, that for the people to live in lovely houses while His "house lies waste" is offensive to Him (Haggai 1:4).

Again, God's people are "holy" and set apart for His purposes. How serious this is to God appears in Paul's comment to the Corinthians, namely, that even the unbelieving spouse of a Christian is "sanctified" or separated and to a degree protected by God, and this applies also to the children (1 Cor. 7:14). Too often, Christians are unwilling to face up to the implications of this verse because they view things in terms of a person's faith and works, whereas God sees the unbelieving spouse in terms of His covenant grace and mercy. If we give priority to what man is, we forget what God is.

Now we come to the heart of this chapter, the consecration and investiture of the priests. We must remember that this is an historical account. As history, we must also remember that it comes after the giving of the law, and *after* the incident of Exodus 32, the creation and worship of the golden bull calf. As Wenham noted, "Aaron was not the instigator of this idea, but a very willing accessory." It was Moses' intercession that saved Israel and Aaron from God's wrath.⁷⁹ Now this same Aaron is made high priest and sanctified. A very precise and long ceremony marks this consecration and investiture with the office of high priest. What does it mean to sanctify Aaron? Does this ceremony make him a better man? What does it mean *today* to ordain a clergyman, to consecrate and invest him with a pastoral task?

First, as we have already seen, in Leviticus 4, for example, the greater the calling, the greater the responsibility and the culpability. Our Lord says, "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more" (Luke 12:48). Thus, clearly, because a priest was given a high responsibility, he was also held liable to more judgment. This is true also of churches; 1 Peter 4:17 makes it clear that "judgment must begin at the house of God." Similarly, favored and covenanted nations also bear the brunt of God's judgment if they are faithless, as was true of Israel, and many peoples in the Christian era.

Second, greater responsibility and culpability is also accompanied by greater grace. Aaron was hardly deserving of his position; his later history makes it clear that he had his share of weaknesses. His hostility to Moses' marriage to an Ethiopian woman (Num. 12:1-15) makes clear his weakness, because he was a willing tool for his sister Miriam. Thus, consecration and investiture do not give a man exemption from human frailties, but they do give him more grace and more judgment, depending on the tenor of his life.

The greater the responsibility, the greater is the grace and power given when we look to our God for it. Our Lord requires this dependence on grace, declaring to all His servants,

16. Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.

17. But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues;

18. And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles.

19. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak.

20. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you. (Matthew 10:16-20)

Note here that our Lord gives very practical counsel. Because they face their enemies truly unarmed, they must use wisdom. They must “beware of men;” this does not mean fearing them, but it does call for the exercise of good sense. They will face brutal men and beatings. However, in this context, special grace will be given. “Take no thought” does *not* mean to be unprepared and ignorant, but rather not to be anxious or fearful about their testimony when on trial. Grace shall then be given, and the Holy Spirit shall speak in and through them.

Third, as Lange wrote, the Levitical priesthood was a type of Christ.

Emphasis is everywhere placed upon the fact that they were appointed of God (comp. Heb. v. 4). They were in no sense appointed by the people; had they been so, they could not have been mediators....All was from God....The Levitical priest could be but a type of that Seed of the woman who should bruise the serpent’s head.⁸⁰

Lange held that the Christian ministry “finds its analogy, not in the priests, but in the prophets of the old dispensation, although even here the likeness is imperfect.”⁸¹ The early church saw itself as a Levitical ministry.⁸² The prophets even more than the priests had special endowments or grace, so that Lange’s point requires, as he implied, a full separation of God’s ministry from one age to another, from the Hebraic covenant to the Christian covenant. The New Testament gives evidence of a continuing endowment of grace apart from the gifts of the Spirit. Paul’s letters to Timothy make it clear that Timothy needs instruction and guidance. At the same time, Paul says, “stir up *the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands*. For God has not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind” (2 Tim. 1:6-7). Very plainly, the laying on of hands carried with it certain gifts of grace, and the three which are specified are power, love, and a sound mind. At the same time, it is clear from Paul’s many instructions and warnings that these gifts of grace can be neglected, forgotten, despised, or forsaken. Timothy is ordered to *stir up* or *rekindle* God’s gift. It is a fire which neglect can reduce. Keil and Delitzsch commented:

This investiture, regarded as the putting on of an important official dress, was a symbol of his endowment with the character required for the discharge of the

duties of his office, the official costume being the outward sign of installation in the office which he was to fill.⁸³

The endowment is an act of grace and is grace, and yet it is not a grace which is automatic and concomitant with the ordained man's every act. Paul refers to this consecration and summons all believers, as members of Christ's body (Rom. 12:3-5), to do the same with their own lives:

1. I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.
2. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. (Romans 12:1-2)

Pagan priesthood had an *inherent, autonomous* power. Thus, the priesthood of Egypt, which culminated in the monarch, a priest-king with absolute power, was emphatically unlike the Biblical priesthood.⁸⁴ Egypt had no law code, because the divine priest-king could not be under law, since his word was the sufficient law.⁸⁵ God's priests, apostles, and pastors are under God's revealed law as given in His word. The sin offering makes this fact clear. "Priesthood commences by *self-abnegation*, the confession of sin and renunciation of personal merit."⁸⁶ This "renunciation of personal merit" must be accompanied by a strict obedience to God's every word (Matt. 4:4). "And what was to be the result of this strict adherence to the word of God? A truly blessed result, indeed. 'The glory of the Lord shall appear unto you.'"⁸⁷

Fourth, because all God's people are called to be His servant priests, we are all, when we give ourselves to His service with all our heart, mind, and being, consecrated and invested by His grace to do His work. His grace summons us, and then His grace invests us.

In the ritual of purification, Aaron's right big toe was smeared with blood, also his thumb, and his right ear (v. 24). His ear was first consecrated to listen always to God's word; his hands were consecrated next (the part standing for the whole, the right hand's thumb for both hands) to do God's work, and his feet to walk always in the way of holiness. Psalm 119 is a reflection on this holy duty. The psalmist declares, among other things,

133. Order my steps in thy word; and let not any iniquity have dominion over me.

151. Thou art near, O LORD, and all thy commandments are truth.

165. Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.

It should be noted that in Leviticus 8:10-11 the house of worship is also anointed, with all its furnishings. Again, it must be recognized that this is ordered by God. In our day, men are casual about God's house and its furnishings; too many see more than the barest expenditures here as "wasteful," and yet these same people are often particular about attractive clothing for themselves, and desirable housing. When a woman poured "ointment of spikenard" over our Lord's head, some of the disciples were indignant, saying,

4. ...Why was this waste of the ointment made?
5. For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her. (Mark 14:4-5)

Our Lord, however, rebuked the disciples and commended the woman. The description of the requirements for the tabernacle stress beauty and costly construction. The very garments of Aaron are declared not only to be “holy” but also to be “for glory and for beauty” (Ex. 28:2, 40). To assume that God wanted this to impress Israel because they were a childlike people is a childish opinion and insulting to God. His honor requires the firstfruits of our lives, abilities, and concerns. There is nothing childlike or primitive in a requirement of excellence in the physical and moral spheres, in a requirement of excellence of men and of what men build for Christ’s work and Kingdom.

Chapter Sixteen

The Glory of the Lord

(Leviticus 9:1-24)

1. And it came to pass on the eighth day, that Moses called Aaron and his sons, and the elders of Israel;
2. And he said unto Aaron, Take thee a young calf for a sin offering, and a ram for a burnt offering, without blemish, and offer them before the LORD.
3. And unto the children of Israel thou shalt speak, saying, Take ye a kid of the goats for a sin offering; and a calf and a lamb, both of the first year, without blemish, for a burnt offering;
4. Also a bullock and a ram for peace offerings, to sacrifice before the LORD; and a meat offering mingled with oil: for today the LORD will appear unto you.
5. And they brought that which Moses commanded before the tabernacle of the congregation: and all the congregation drew near and stood before the LORD.
6. And Moses said, This is the thing which the LORD commanded that ye should do: and the glory of the LORD shall appear unto you.
7. And Moses said unto Aaron, Go unto the altar, and offer thy sin offering, and thy burnt offering, and make an atonement for thyself, and for the people: and offer the offering of the people, and make an atonement for them; as the LORD commanded.
8. Aaron therefore went unto the altar, and slew the calf of the sin offering, which was for himself.
9. And the sons of Aaron brought the blood unto him: and he dipped his finger in the blood, and put it upon the horns of the altar, and poured out the blood at the bottom of the altar:
10. But the fat, and the kidneys, and the caul above the liver of the sin offering, he burnt upon the altar; as the LORD commanded Moses.
11. And the flesh and the hide he burnt with fire without the camp.
12. And he slew the burnt offering; and Aaron's sons presented unto him the blood, which he sprinkled round about upon the altar.
13. And they presented the burnt offering unto him, with the pieces thereof, and the head: and he burnt them upon the altar.
14. And he did wash the inwards and the legs, and burnt them upon the burnt offering on the altar.
15. And he brought the people's offering, and took the goat, which was the sin offering for the people, and slew it, and offered it for sin, as the first.
16. And he brought the burnt offering, and offered it according to the manner.
17. And he brought the meat offering, and took an handful thereof, and burnt it upon the altar, beside the burnt sacrifice of the morning.
18. He slew also the bullock and the ram for a sacrifice of peace offerings, which was for the people: and Aaron's sons presented unto him the blood, which he sprinkled upon the altar round about,

19. And the fat of the bullock and of the ram, the rump, and that which covereth the inwards, and the kidneys, and the caul above the liver:
20. And they put the fat upon the breasts, and he burnt the fat upon the altar:
21. And the breasts and the right shoulder Aaron waved for a wave offering before the LORD; as Moses commanded.
22. And Aaron lifted up his hand toward the people, and blessed them, and came down from offering of the sin offering, and the burnt offering, and peace offerings.
23. And Moses and Aaron went into the tabernacle of the congregation, and came out, and blessed the people: and the glory of the LORD appeared unto all the people.
24. And there came a fire out from before the LORD, and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat: which when all the people saw, they shouted, and fell on their faces. (Leviticus 9:1-24)

In this chapter, we have the installation of the priests, the atonement of the congregation, and the blessing of God. In v. 1, we have a reference to “the elders of Israel,” in v. 3, to “the children of Israel,” i.e., the covenant group, Israel. Apart from that, the references are to “the people” (vv. 7, 9, 13, 15, 18, 22-24), and in some of these verses, the word *people* (*am*) is used twice. They are not called Hebrews in this context. A racially “mixed multitude” (Ex.12:38), i.e., a large number of foreigners, had left Egypt with the Hebrews. All are present here. As all these peoples stand before the Lord, they are only identified in terms of Him, as His *congregation* or *people*. We are not told what percentage of Israel was at this time Hebrew. We do know that Abraham, in his rescue of Lot, commanded 318 men from his own household. These were the fighting men, with the elderly and the young males remaining with women and female children, and the herds. This gives us about 1,000 males in Abraham’s household, and, as this group continued, and was united later with Isaac and Jacob and their establishments, only two males out of 1,000, Abraham and Isaac, were of Abrahamic blood. Israel, with those of Hebraic blood increasing while a large mixed multitude was added to the various tribes, was from the beginning a *religious congregation*, a church, not a race. This is still true of the Jews.

We have here, *first*, the sin offering (vv. 1-3). Part of this offering was burned on the altar, but the flesh and hide outside the camp (vv. 8-11). As Scott noted,

The priests ate the sin-offerings of the people, as *typically bearing their iniquity*; but they could not bear their own sin; and therefore they ate no part of any sin-offerings sacrificed for themselves, but the whole was carried forth out of the camp, as taken quite away by Christ the great Antitype.⁸⁸

There was no approach to God without atonement, and hence the necessity of the sacrifices, the priesthood, and the altar and the Tabernacle as the meeting place between God and man. The sacrifices stressed the price of sin, and more. Many years ago, a doctor in the deep South told me of his early practice in a clinic, dealing with victims of violence and venereal disease. He remarked wryly that it de-glamorized sin for him and made it clear that sin is a messy business. The bloody sacrifices emphasize this truth: sin is an ugly fact which has as its final consequence the judgment of death. Sin has no pretty conclusion.

Second, we have the burnt offerings (vv. 12-16), in which all was consumed on the altar. This set forth the requirement of total dedication by the believer. There is a grim historical fact here. In v. 2, Aaron is required to sacrifice, for his atonement, an unblemished male calf. (The people's sin offering was a goat, v. 15.) In Exodus 32, Aaron had taken part in the worship of a golden bull calf, and now for atonement he must sacrifice a living one. Then, in the burnt offering, he set forth the requirement of total obedience and dedication, God's requirement of himself and of all. There could be no private reservations or corners where God could neither enter nor reign in any man's life.

Third, there followed, in logical order, the meal offering (v. 17), which meant the dedication of one's work and production to God. The burnt offering was the dedication of one's life and person, the meal offering, of his work.

Fourth, the peace offering (vv. 18-21) celebrated the communion now established between God and His covenant people. The peace offering was concluded by the blessing pronounced by Aaron, apparently that which was set down in Numbers 6:24-26:

24. The LORD bless thee, and keep thee:
25. The LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee:
26. The LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.

Now came fire from heaven, as well as the glory of the Lord, which "appeared unto all the people" (vv. 23-24). The same fire from heaven set forth God's acceptance of the sacrifices of Gideon (Judges 6:20-21), Elijah (1 Kings 18:38), and of Solomon at the dedication of the Temple (2 Chron. 7:1-2).⁸⁹

It was believed by the rabbis that this fire from heaven was kept alive on the altar until the building of Solomon's Temple, when it fell afresh; its history thereafter is less certain, given the periods of neglect.

According to Porter, "In the Old Testament, the word glory almost always means the visible appearance of wealth and splendour which indicates a man's importance." God's glory had already been seen as a fiery cloud (Ex. 16:10; 24:15-17).⁹⁰ One can say that God's glory also appeared against Egypt as a series of plagues which destroyed it. We cannot separate God's glory from His nature and being. Hence, where God manifests His glory, we see deliverance and blessing on the one hand, and judgment and death on the other. Hence, as soon as the people are reconciled to God, God's blessings are poured out on them.

The great appearance of God's glory is to come with Christ's second advent. It follows thus that Christ's return is also the Last Judgment. It is the full expression of both His covenant law and judgment and also of His grace and deliverance. It is an ugly fact that premillennialism has partially separated the return of Christ (the "rapture") from the Last Judgment, because the two are inseparable. The glory of God fully unveiled and revealed cannot be a secret event, nor a harmless one. Amos in his day saw the folly of antinomian expectations:

18. Woe unto you that desire the day of the LORD: to what end is it for you? The day of the LORD is darkness, and not light.

19. As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him.

20. Shall not the day of the LORD be darkness, and not light? Even very dark, and no brightness in it? (Amos 5:18-20)

Gideon had better sense. When he saw, on a limited basis, the glory of the Lord, in the appearance of “the angel of the Lord,” he, knowing himself to be a sinner, feared that he would die (Judges 6:19-23). Jerusalem saw God the Son in His incarnation, rejected Him, and perished. Those who look to the “any moment” return of Christ in order to be raptured out of the world’s sin and grief are asking for their damnation. Christ’s Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20) is a mandate for work, not escape.

Chapter Seventeen

Pharisaism and Sacrilege

(*Leviticus 10:1-11*)

1. And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not.
2. And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD.
3. Then Moses said unto Aaron, This is it that the LORD spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace.
4. And Moses called Mishael and Elzaphan, the sons of Uzziel the uncle of Aaron, and said unto them, Come near, carry your brethren from before the sanctuary out of the camp.
5. So they went near, and carried them in their coats out of the camp; as Moses had said.
6. And Moses said unto Aaron, and unto Eleazar and unto Ithamar, his sons, Uncover not your heads, neither rend your clothes; lest ye die, and lest wrath come upon all the people: but let your brethren, the whole house of Israel, bewail the burning which the LORD hath kindled.
7. And ye shall not go out from the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die: for the anointing oil of the LORD is upon you. And they did according to the word of Moses.
8. And the LORD spake unto Aaron, saying,
9. Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations:
10. And that ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean;
11. And that ye may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the LORD hath spoken unto them by the hand of Moses. (*Leviticus 10:1-11*)

We have here an example of *sacrilege*. Sacrilege is theft directed against God; it is an attempt to infringe on His sovereignty and to appropriate what belongs to God for the service of man, or to commingle God's prerogatives with man's will. God not only claims our firstfruits and tithes but also ourselves and our will as His to command. We are God's property and possession; we were created for His purposes and not our own.

We are not told that Nadab and Abihu did what God had *forbidden*, but what He had not *commanded*.⁹¹ We are given the laws of holiness, and nothing we can do or add to God's law-word can enhance our holiness; autonomy, literally self-law, only renders us unholy. Calvin noted,

Their crime is specified, *viz.*, that they offered incense in a different way from that which God had prescribed, and consequently, although they may have erred from ignorance, still they were convicted by God's commandment of having negligently set about what was worthy of great attention. The "strange fire" is distinguished from the sacred fire which was always burning upon the altar: not miraculously, as some pretend, but by the constant watchfulness of the priests. Now, God had forbidden any other fire to be used in the ordinances, in order to exclude all extraneous rites, and to shew His detestation of whatever might be derived from elsewhere. Let us learn, therefore, so to attend to God's command as not to corrupt His worship by any strange inventions.⁹²

The word *strange* (*zar*), as Wenham points out, can refer to people who are not priests (Ex. 30:33; Lev. 22:12; Num. 16:40) or to outsiders or aliens (Deut. 25:5).⁹³ Since the golden calf cult had been a recent event, it is possible that the fire of some such fertility cult's altar was used as an "ecumenical" step. However, such a step is not necessary here to explain the incident. What occurred may have been a single step designed somehow to *improve* the administration of the required ritual. Man's propensity for "improving" on God's requirements is a very great one. It has, over the centuries, greatly altered the meaning of Scripture as men have labored to uncover supposedly hidden meanings. Thus, the Parable of the Good Samaritan is obviously meant to set forth the love of one's neighbor. As one clergyman has written,

The Church, on the other hand, looks beyond this superficial and simplistic interpretation to provide us the faithful with a complete and comprehensive understanding of the Lord's Words.

"A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho." Jerusalem sits on a hill and is the city of the Lord; Jericho, on the other hand, is in the valley and was a city of worldly pleasures. The man had turned his back on God and was slipping down into a sinful life of worldly pleasures.

"and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead." The wages of sin is death. Here we see how a man's sins can rob him, destroy his life and kill him. The robbers are his sins.

"Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side." Here the priest and Levite represent the Laws and the Prophets, who only are complete in the Christ. They of themselves are incapable of salvation.

"But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion, and went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring oil and wine;" Samaritans, although of Jewish blood, were hated by the Jews. Here the Samaritan represents our Lord, who was a Jew, but not accepted by them. Only our Savior can cure the wounds of our sins and cure us. The wine represents His

life-giving Blood shed for our sins and the oil the gifts of the Holy Spirit which cures, seals and comforts.

“then he set him on his own beast and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.” Christ took upon Himself the care of mankind. He gave of Himself for the salvation of mankind.

“And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, ‘Take care of him;’” The inn and innkeeper here refer to the Holy Church. The Lord has commissioned the Church to care for the soul of His people. But He also provided the Church with two (two denarii — not three or more) aids in which the Holy Church should care for His children, the Holy Scriptures and Holy Tradition. With these two elements the Church guards and guides us for the Lord.

“and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.” Here is the greatest promise of all, our Lord promises to return. He shall not leave us but return to secure our care and salvation.

This simple and short parable reveals Christ’s love for mankind and His promise of salvation and the Second Coming. Yet it is only through the Church that the hidden truths of the Holy Scriptures become obvious to us.⁹⁴

This interpretation comes from the Church of Armenia; it represents a type of interpretation common to Orthodox churches as well, and to Roman Catholics and Protestants. It is clever and pious, but it is not the plain word of God, but rather man’s embroidered word. Examples of this are all around us. One Protestant clergyman recently preached a series of sermons on *Esther* with the theme of “The Authority of the Church,” which he located in Haman! Another taught on the laws of diet for many weeks, supposedly proving that to be truly Christian we must eat pork!

All that departs from the plain word of God is sacrilege and blasphemy, because, with the Pharisees, it substitutes man’s interpretation for God’s word.

It needs to be recognized that the Pharisees were seeking to go beyond God’s word — to be more than the law requires. Nadab and Abihu may have intended to improve on God’s law and add to the measure of holiness, if possible. To illustrate, Scripture does permit divorce in some instances as a remedy to evil, but some have held, Protestants, Catholics, and Eastern churches alike, that because they recognize the centrality of the family in Scripture, all divorce is wrong. Again, the Bible requires temperance, but some have tried to improve on this by opposing all alcoholic beverages. These are both sincere efforts to produce greater holiness, but when we seek a greater holiness than Scripture requires we forsake holiness for will-worship. Pharisees are sincere people, but this does not absolve them of sin. A Catholic nun of a Jewish background has sought to mitigate or explain away the guilt of the Sanhedrin for Christ’s crucifixion on the grounds of their moral concern for Israel and their deep religious sincerity.⁹⁵ However, neither anti-Semitism nor anti-Christianity are excusable on the grounds of sincerity! It is possible that Hitler was sincere in his hostility to both Jews and Christians, but this would not excuse him.

God's sentence on Pharisaism is death. It was a quick sentence in the case of Nadab and Abihu, but, whether quick or slow, it is always death. For men to seek to be more holy than God is to presuppose that they are above God, and this sin has brought death ever since Adam. In v. 3, God declares through Moses that He *must* be sanctified among all who are His covenant people, and they must honor Him. To seek to improve on God is to dishonor Him.

Moses then called on Aaron's cousins, Mishael and Elzaphan, to remove the bodies of Nadab and Abihu. The high priest could not, as the servant of God and life, come into contact with death (21:10-12), and this requirement is extended to the successors of Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar (v. 6). The higher the office or function, the greater is the responsibility for separation and dedication to God's service; this we have already noted in Leviticus 4. It is a premise often repeated in Scripture, *e.g.*,

You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities. (Amos 3:2)

For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more. (Luke 12:48)

For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? (1 Peter 4:17)

The commandment, then, to Aaron, Eleazar, and Ithamar in vv. 6-7 forbade them to do either of two things. *First*, whereas others were free to mourn the deaths of Nadab and Abihu, they were in no way to take part in the funeral or show any sign of mourning. *Second*, they were not even to leave the tabernacle during this time. Their work had to take priority over the funeral, their calling over death. As Wenham has pointed out, our Lord cites this legal requirement to show how serious is the priority of God's kingdom⁹⁶:

59. And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.

60. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. (Luke 9:59-60)

26. If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.

27. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. (Luke 14:26-27)

The family is God's basic institution, but not even the family can take priority over God's calling and purpose. Parker's comment on v. 7 was especially telling:

The reason is given in the words — "For the anointing oil of the Lord is upon you." That oil must separate between you and the appearance of unbelief; that oil

is a restraint as well as an inspiration. Is it not so now, varying the terms and the relation of things? If we could enter into the spirit of that restriction, what different men we should be!⁹⁷

In vv. 8-11, we are told that the Lord speaks to Aaron. As Wenham has noted, this is the only time in Leviticus that God speaks directly to Aaron apart from Moses. Coming after his sons' misdeeds, it is a reconfirmation of Aaron's office as high priest.⁹⁸ God commands Aaron and all priests, saying, *first*, that when serving as priests, they cannot drink wine or strong drink and must enter the tabernacle in sobriety. It is possible that Nadab and Abihu had been to some degree intoxicated, and hence this law. However, just as the addition to the ritual of any strange or alien element is forbidden, so the addition to man of anything such as wine and strong drinks, mind-altering drugs, or anything to "improve" on one's perception, is strictly banned.

Second, the reason is now given. In Wenham's translation, "It is your duty to distinguish between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean" (v. 10). This ability to distinguish between the sacred and the secular included both the things sacrificed, i.e., the condition of the animals, for example, and the persons sacrificing. Thus, when Eli rebuked Hannah, presuming her to be drunk, perhaps to be one of the daughters of Belial his sons consorted with, his statement was wrong with respect to Hannah, but he was right in seeking to bar hypocritical or sinful presences from the sanctuary (1 Sam. 1:10-16; 2:22).

Third, sobriety was required in order also that the clergy might more clearly teach Israel God's laws as delivered through Moses.

Wine, we are told, can enhance joy and relieve grief (Ps. 104:15; Gen. 27:28, etc.), but it cannot enhance our teaching nor our work. Here again, the line is clear between Holiness and Pharisaism. In all its forms, Pharisaism is sacrilege; it infringes on God's sovereignty and seeks to correct or improve on God's property or word by man's way and word. It is an arrogation and a presumption to claim the wisdom to improve on God's law. Thus, fanciful, allegorical, and symbolic interpretations of God's law-word and worship are forbidden. While an originally intertestamental group gave its name to this temper, Pharisaism has existed since Eden wherever men believe that their wisdom can correct or add to God's wisdom and mind.

Chapter Eighteen

Pharisaism and the Law

(*Leviticus 10:12-20*)

12. And Moses spake unto Aaron, and unto Eleazar and unto Ithamar, his sons that were left, Take the meat offering that remaineth of the offerings of the LORD made by fire, and eat it without leaven beside the altar: for it is most holy:

13. And ye shall eat it in the holy place, because it is thy due, and thy sons' due, of the sacrifices of the LORD made by fire: for so I am commanded.

14. And the wave breast and heave shoulder shall ye eat in a clean place; thou, and thy sons, and thy daughters with thee: for they be thy due, and thy sons' due, which are given out of the sacrifices of peace offerings of the children of Israel.

15. The heave shoulder and the wave breast shall they bring with the offerings made by fire of the fat, to wave it for a wave offering before the LORD; and it shall be thine, and thy sons' with thee, by a statute for ever; as the LORD hath commanded.

16. And Moses diligently sought the goat of the sin offering, and, behold, it was burnt: and he was angry with Eleazar and Ithamar, the sons of Aaron which were left alive, saying,

17. Wherefore have ye not eaten the sin offering in the holy place, seeing it is most holy, and God hath given it you to bear the iniquity of the congregation, to make atonement for them before the LORD?

18. Behold, the blood of it was not brought in within the holy place: ye should indeed have eaten it in the holy place, as I commanded.

19. And Aaron said unto Moses, Behold, this day have they offered their sin offering and their burnt offering before the LORD; and such things have befallen me: and if I had eaten the sin offering today, should it have been accepted in the sight of the LORD?

20. And when Moses heard that, he was content. (*Leviticus 10:12- 20*)

For some reason, Moses felt it necessary now to repeat God's law concerning "meat" or cereal offerings, and the priests' due, as well as the wave and heave offerings (vv. 12-15). It is possible that Nadab and Abihu, before the strange fire incident, had been careless with respect to these laws also. Sin is usually not an isolated act but a pattern of life and a way of life.

Moses stresses the fact that his reminder represents no personal perspective but a mandate from the Almighty, "for so I am commanded" (v. 13). The law in its totality is God's word and commandment.

Parker's comment is again excellent:

"And Moses spake unto Aaron...Take the meat offering," — and he adds, — "for so I am commanded." Moses was not the fountain of authority. There is a spirit in

man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding. This was not a clamorous interference with Aaron, an interference merely for the sake of tumult or the assertion of endangered right; it was the representation of a divine purpose and a holy command. This is an instance which shows how the law was looked after. Men make laws and forget them; they refer to statutes three hundred years old, venerable with the dust of four centuries, and they surprise current opinion by exhumations which show the cleverness and the perseverance of the lawyer. Men are fond of making laws; when they have ignoble leisure, they “improve” it (to use an ironical expression) by adding to the bye-laws, by multiplying mechanical stipulations and regulations, and forgetting the existence of such laws in the very act of their multiplication. God has no dead-letters in his law-book. The law is alive — tingling, throbbing in every letter and at every point. The commandment is exceeding broad; it never slumbers, never passes into obsolescence, but stands in perpetual claim of right and insistence of decree. It is convenient to forget laws; but God will not allow any one of his laws to be forgotten. Every inquiry which Moses put to Israel was justified by a statute; he said, “I do but represent the law; there is nothing hypocritical in my examination; there is nothing super-refined in my judgment; I am simply asking as the representative of law how obedience is keeping up step with the march of judgment?”⁹⁹

Moses, however, did more than remind the priests of certain aspects of the law: he checked up on their obedience. The result was that a breach of ritual became evident, and Moses was angry. The priests had not eaten a portion which was for their consumption but had rather burned it. Samuel Clark summarized ably what was at stake:

The Law had expressly commanded that the flesh of those Sin-offerings the blood of which was not carried into the Sanctuary should belong to the priests, and that it should be eaten by them alone in a holy place. See on ii. 3. The Sin-offerings of which the blood was carried into the Sanctuary were those for the High-priest and for the people, iv. 5-16. But on this occasion, though the Sin-offering which had been offered by Aaron was for the people (ix.15), its blood was not carried into the Tabernacle. See ix.9, x.18. The priests might therefore have too readily supposed that their eating the flesh, or burning it, was a matter of indifference. A doubt was in some way raised in the mind of Moses as to the fact, and he “diligently sought the goat of the Sin-offering, and behold, it was burnt.” In his rebuke he tells them that the flesh of the Sin-offering is given to the priests “to bear the iniquity of the congregation to make atonement for them before the Lord.” The appropriation of the flesh by the priests is thus made an essential part of the atonement. See on vi. 25.¹⁰⁰

Clark’s point was especially important in calling attention to the fact that the priests were “to bear the iniquity of the congregation, to make atonement for them before the LORD” (v. 17). As types of Christ, this was basic to their function. In a restricted sense, this is still true. A pastor, in hearing confessions and requiring repentance and restitution, becomes a burden-bearer of the people’s sins. He cannot make atonement for them, but he has a *ministerial* function in declaring

to them that, when they meet the requirements of God's law-word, their sins are remitted to them, or, when they refuse to meet God's requirements, their sins are retained or bound to them. According to our Lord,

And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. (Matthew 16:19)

Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. (Matthew 18:18)

And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained. (John 20:22-23)

This is not a *legislative* power: it does not give the power to define sin or to absolve it on man's own grounds, in terms of his self-made law, i.e., autonomously. This is a *ministerial* power. In terms of God's definition of sin in His law, and in terms of His definition of restitution and forgiveness, we have the confidence of perfect agreement between what we do on earth and what God does in heaven. Thus, if a man steals \$100, he is bound; his sin is not remitted and forgiven, and when a pastor tells him so, he knows that his word is in consonance with heaven. What he binds on earth is bound in heaven. Likewise, if such a man restores \$200, then his sin is loosed, remitted and forgiven, and we can be certain that it is remitted in heaven. Christ asserts here the perfect consonance between God's law, our faithful application of it, and what occurs in heaven. Our God is the God who is faithful to His revealed word, and we have the assurance of His faithfulness.

When Moses found that Aaron, Ithamar, and Eleazar had neglected a point of law in the ritual, he was angry and rebuked them (vv. 16-18). Aaron's answer was a simple one. Not a spirit of disobedience but a fearfulness and a sense of sin had led to the failure to eat their portion of the goat of the sin offering. Given the sin and death of two members of the family, Aaron, Ithamar, and Eleazar identified themselves with the sin of the people rather than with their office as priests. According to John Gill, rabbinic teaching turned this episode into a legal precedent: "The Jews say, a high-priest may offer, being a mourner, but not eat; a common priest may neither offer nor eat; and which they illustrate by this passage, that Aaron offered and did not eat, but his sons did neither."¹⁰¹ This view is an error, however, in that it assumes that the human condition outweighs the power of grace. While Moses accepted or was satisfied with Aaron's answer, he does not give us a legal precedent. Lange referred to Hosea 9:4 in justification of Aaron's act.¹⁰² The reference in that text is to sacrifices and offerings made without repentance and does not apply to Aaron's case.

Wenham has called attention to the relationship of Leviticus 10 to the New Testament, not in the form of explicit references but as underlying the text. Our Lord tells the disciples that He must have priority over their families (Matt. 8:21-22; cf. Lev. 10:6-7). Christ's servants must be temperate, according to Paul (1 Tim 3:3, 8; Lev. 10:9). Furthermore, the fact that greater

responsibilities incur greater culpabilities is referred to in Luke 12:48, 1 Peter 4:17, and in James 3:1, “We who teach shall be judged with greater strictness.”¹⁰³

Furthermore, the condemnation of Pharisaism is in all the Gospels, and in the Epistles also. The requirement of unswerving obedience to God’s every word is declared by our Lord in the temptation, “It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4). Christ had just been tempted by Satan’s “good” word: you, Jesus, being hungry, can now appreciate the hunger of the poor. If you are a son of God, do the “right” thing and turn these stones into bread and relieve world poverty miraculously. The devil was hoping to use Pharisaism to “convert” Christ to an anti-God position in the name of humanitarianism. In all three of the temptations, our Lord’s answer is in terms of the strict word of God: “It is written.” This is the meaning of Leviticus 10.

Chapter Nineteen

“Why Will Ye Die?”

(*Leviticus 11:1-8*)

1. And the LORD spake unto Moses and to Aaron, saying unto them,
2. Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, These are the beasts which ye shall eat among all the beasts that are on the earth.
3. Whatsoever parteth the hoof, and is clovenfooted, and cheweth the cud, among the beasts, that shall ye eat.
4. Nevertheless these shall ye not eat of them that chew the cud, or of them that divide the hoof: as the camel, because he cheweth the cud, but divideth not the hoof; he is unclean unto you.
5. And the coney, because he cheweth the cud, but divideth not the hoof; he is unclean unto you.
6. And the hare, because he cheweth the cud, but divideth not the hoof; he is unclean unto you.
7. And the swine, though he divide the hoof, and be clovenfooted, yet he cheweth not the cud; he is unclean to you.
8. Of their flesh shall ye not eat, and their carcase shall ye not touch; they are unclean to you. (*Leviticus 11:1-8*)

In chapters 11-16 of Leviticus we have laws concerning uncleanness and its remedy. The word *unclean* is *tawmay* in the Hebrew, meaning religiously and morally defiling and polluted, or so it is usually defined. This definition is formally correct, but a Greek dualism of mind and body underlies it, because for Scripture that which defiles a man religiously or morally defiles him *totally*. He is then unclean or polluted. He is then separated from men *totally*, in the physical as well as spiritual sense. Thus, any interpretation which does not stress the total nature of uncleanness will misinterpret this chapter, and others like it.

Another problem confronts us with this chapter. According to many, the New Testament ostensibly invalidates the dietary laws. Three texts are commonly cited. *First*, Mark 7:14ff. is used, because our Lord declares that “There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him” (Mark 7:15). Such a text proves too much! Did our Lord mean that eating or drinking poison or human feces will not defile us? By taking the text out of its context, the text is misinterpreted. At issue in Mark 7:1-23 is the criticism by the Pharisees and Scribes of the disciples for eating bread “*with defiled, that is to say, unwashen hands*” (Mark 7:2). Thus, it was *not* Leviticus 11 which was under discussion but “the tradition of the elders,” “the tradition of men,” “the commandments of men,” etc. (Mark 7:3, 7, 9, etc.). By means of these, our Lord says, they were “Making the word of God of none effect....” (Mark 7:13). Our modern commentators, in discussing *uncleanness*, separate the moral and religious from the physical uncleanness. The Pharisees had reduced *uncleanness* to a physical fact and supplanted God’s law with their tradition. Our Lord asserts the *priority* of the religious and its total application. “That which comes out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men,” comes all

forms of defilement and sin, all lawlessness (Mark 7:20-23). Thus, in spite of the fact that “some” (Mark 7:2) of the disciples had not followed the Pharisees’ ritual of washing (their hands may still have been clean), they were not unclean. *Uncleanness* begins in the heart of man, and his disciples were not unclean, whereas the punctilious Pharisees and scribes were. To read more into the text is invalid. Had our Lord meant that pork was now “kosher,” he would have been charged with contempt of God’s law. On the contrary, however, He charged the scribes and Pharisees with exchanging God’s law for their traditions.

Second, Acts 10:15 is cited, Peter’s vision. Peter, however, does not see the vision as permission to eat forbidden meats. Rather, he sees it as the destruction of the nationalistic separation from the Gentiles as unclean:

34. Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:

35. But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him. (Acts 10:34-35)

To treat all Jews as clean and all Gentiles as unclean is invalid, Peter recognizes. The point of the vision is not diet but the world mission of the church and the common standing of all believers in Christ.¹⁰⁴

Third, 1 Corinthians 10:23ff. is used against the dietary laws. Here again, the issue is not the dietary laws; it is meat offered to idols and then sold “in the shambles,” the meat market of the day (1 Cor. 10:25). Paul is discussing the legitimacy of eating meats which, as a matter of course in Gentile cities, were butchered before a pagan altar and then sold. The issue is not forbidden meats. The issue is rather whether or not such otherwise properly killed and bled meats were “kosher” if slaughtered at a pagan altar. This is a very different question. The question, as Paul sees it, is this: is the idol something, and does a man who eats the meat simply as food purchased in the shambles or market thereby participate in the sacrifice? To introduce another meaning is not a valid interpretation.

A *fourth* text is sometimes cited, Titus 1:15, “Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.” There is no reference here to diet; the reference is “to Jewish fables” (Titus 1:14) which denied the fact that all things were created by God “very good” (Gen. 1:31), and which saw metaphysical rather than moral evil in creation.

A *fifth* text is 1 Timothy 4:1-5. The practices Paul condemns are ascetic celibacy and vegetarianism, both aspects of Eastern thought which had moved westward. To use such a text means straining for excuses to set aside God’s dietary laws.

Returning again to the Biblical view of man, we must remember that uncleanness is a religious fact which affects man totally. Socrates could give a discourse on virtue while engaged in homosexuality because the Greek view located virtue in the spirit and depreciated the body. No such thinking is permitted by Scripture. The careful Biblical legislation of things physical is offensive to the Greek mentality, which believes at times that a man’s life is as noble and

virtuous as a man thinks himself to be. Thus, these laws are religious, moral, hygienic and more, *because God gave them.*

In v. 1, we see that “the LORD spake unto Moses and to Aaron.” Normally, God spoke to Aaron through Moses. Here, however, as in Leviticus 13:1, 14:33, and 15:1, He speaks to both. Hoffman suggested that this was because these sections deal with uncleanness, and the priests were commissioned to distinguish between the clean and the unclean and to instruct Israel.¹⁰⁵ This seems unlikely, because the sacrificial laws involve the priests as much if not more, and yet they are primarily addressed to Moses, and to Aaron through him.

Diet is very personal, and, in a sense, very private, no matter how publicly we may dine. What we eat is governed by our particular tastes, and it affects us personally. When we speak, our words can please or hurt others, inform or misinform them. When we eat, however, we affect our personal health, not public health, whereas our words have a clear public impact. Eating is thus in a sense a very private affair.

At the same time, it is the fact of eating, or nourishing ourselves, which is made central to our worship of God, the communion service. The very private act is made a public sacrament, because we are required to serve God with all our *heart, mind, and being*, i.e., from the privacy of our lives to the most public of acts, we must be totally the Lord’s.

A sentence by Pfeiffer sets forth both the problem and the answer: “To the Israelite, every detail of life must be governed by the law of God, and lived to the glory of God.”¹⁰⁶ In this sentence, we see the church’s disaster. Why should this requirement to live all of life, governed in every detail by the law of God, be limited “to the Israelite?” How can it be? Precisely because we are the people of Christ, it is all the more applicable to us.

The concepts of *holy* and *unholy* (or, profane) and of *clean* and *unclean* are related but not identical. The word *holy* means dedicated, sacred, or separated; it implies a positive character, and to be holy means to be filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, or it can refer to a place or thing set apart for God’s use. *Clean* means free from that which is polluting, free from sin or from wrongful use. According to Noordtzij, the relationship between holiness and cleanness can be stated thus: “no holiness without cleanness.”¹⁰⁷

Finally, it is noteworthy that Joseph Parker felt that this chapter shows “that laws were not bound by local circumstances.” Things were forbidden which were beyond availability in the wilderness.¹⁰⁸ If “we deny the whole of the eleventh chapter of Leviticus,” if we see it as unworthy and as “frivolity,” then “the frivolity...is on our part.” Then too, “We *do* elect and we *do* reject.” Parker continued:

A very popular argument is upset by this chapter. There is an argument which runs in this fashion: Why should we not eat and drink these things, for they are all good creatures of God? The temptation of man is to find a “good creature of God” wherever he wants to find one.

The very fact that God could take such pains in keeping us back from the use of such animals, begins the infinite argument that his anxiety is to save the soul from poison, corruption, death. “Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?”¹⁰⁹

Parker was quoting, in his concluding words, Ezekiel 33:11. This is the issue.

Chapter Twenty

Clean and Unclean

(*Leviticus 11:1-8*)

1. And the LORD spake unto Moses and to Aaron, saying unto them,
2. Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, These are the beasts which ye shall eat among all the beasts that are on the earth.
3. Whatsoever parteth the hoof, and is clovenfooted, and cheweth the cud, among the beasts, that shall ye eat.
4. Nevertheless these shall ye not eat of them that chew the cud, or of them that divide the hoof: as the camel, because he cheweth the cud, but divideth not the hoof; he is unclean unto you.
5. And the coney, because he cheweth the cud, but divideth not the hoof; he is unclean unto you.
6. And the hare, because he cheweth the cud, but divideth not the hoof; he is unclean unto you.
7. And the swine, though he divide the hoof, and be clovenfooted, yet he cheweth not the cud; he is unclean to you.
8. Of their flesh shall ye not eat, and their carcase shall ye not touch; they are unclean to you. (*Leviticus 11:1-8*)

Noordtzij has called attention to the far-reaching implications of uncleanness. The worship of foreign gods was uncleanness, and it polluted both a people *and their land* (Jer. 2:7, 23; 3:2; 7:20; Hos. 6:10; etc.). Turning to mediums and prophesying spirits (Lev. 20:6), pagan mourning rituals and forms (Lev. 19:27-28; Deut. 14:1), and religious prostitution (Lev. 19:29), were forms of uncleanness. Other forms of uncleanness included contact with death or decomposition (Lev. 11:8, 11, 24-40; 21:1-4, 11; Num. 6:6-7; 9:6-7; Lev. chs. 13-14); bodily discharges, menstruation, and copulation (Lev. 15); the eating of some meats (Lev. 11; Deut. 14:4-21); etc. Some of these were things which were “natural” in and of themselves, such as menstruation and copulation, but still had to be separated from worship. No aspect of the fertility cult faith could be allowed near to God’s worship; fertility cults stressed the power of human acts to determine God’s actions.

It is noteworthy that *some* of the forbidden animals had a place in pagan cults precisely because they were regarded as allied to demonic powers. Most notable of these was the pig. This, however, was not the reason for God’s prohibitions.¹¹⁰

It is interesting to note how Jews in the intertestamental period regarded the dietary laws. According to IV Maccabees 5:19-26, Eleazar told Antiochus, in defending the whole of God’s law,

Accordingly, you must not regard it as a minor sin for us to eat unclean food; minor sins are just as weighty as great sins, for in each case the Law is despised. You mock at our philosophy as though living under it were contrary to reason. On

the other hand, it teaches us temperance so that we are in control of all our pleasures and desires; and it gives us a thorough training in courage so that whatever our different attitudes may be we retain a sense of balance; and it instructs us in piety so that we most highly reverence the only living God. Therefore, we do not eat unclean foods. Believing that God established the Law, we know that the creator of the world, in giving us the Law, conforms it to our nature. He has commanded us to eat whatever will be well suited to our souls, and has forbidden us to eat food that is the reverse.¹¹¹

In very recent years, Harrison has called attention to the hygienic aspect of the dietary laws, noting that these laws “have been amply justified by subsequent studies in the general area of preventive medicine.”¹¹²

In vv. 1-8, we have a statement with regards to judging clean and unclean animals. This is neither a scientific nor an unscientific statement, because it is *not* intended for scientific experts but for the people, to guide their daily lives. As a result, it is an *empirical* description, i.e., describing what an animal is visibly. To be clean, the animal must part the hoof and chew the cud. Thus, the coney, or rock-badger, and the hare, animals we may or may not have correctly identified, empirically seem to chew the cud, but they are unclean all the same. Most but not all the clean animals were also those which could be offered as sacrifices.

It is noteworthy that all over the world diet is normally determined by three things: availability, taste, and custom. The Bible requires that God’s judgment determine the diet. One consequence of this was a more systematic attention to food production and development by ancient Israel, and by Christendom since then. Because God’s law sees religion as a matter of *action and life*,¹¹³ diet is an inescapable part of the life of faith. It is not an accident that the word *unclean* (or defiled) is used over 100 times in chapters 11-16. When we are linked with God by His covenant, we cannot be linked to anything outside His will. This is very strongly stressed in Leviticus 20:24-26:

24. But I have said unto you, Ye shall inherit their land, and I will give it unto you to possess it, a land that floweth with milk and honey: I am the LORD your God, which have separated you from other people.

25. Ye shall therefore put difference between clean beasts and unclean, and between unclean fowls and clean: and ye shall not make your souls abominable by beast, or by fowl, or by any manner of living thing that creepeth on the ground, which I have separated from you as unclean.

26. And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the LORD am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be mine.

The dietary laws have as their purpose our *cleanness* so that we can be separated into association with God the Lord. This holy association is their essential reason. Physical benefits clearly flow from the observance of these laws. R. E. McMaster, Jr., in *The Reaper*, vol. X, no. 11, 6 March 1986, has summarized important medical research by The Livingston-Wheeler Foundation on the relationship between the eating of pork and cancer (among other things). Because ours is a total faith, and because of the unity of our being as mind and body, we must recognize that the law is

a unity which speaks to our lives as a unity. These laws thus speak for our physical health, but, above all, for our necessary holiness before God.

We must remember another important fact. A donkey or ass was and is unclean *as food*, but not as a living, working animal. A lamb is a clean animal, but, if found dead in the field, or killed by a wild animal, it is unclean (Ex. 22:31).

It is noteworthy that the rules of clean meats excluded all beasts of prey.

It is important to remember that while the dietary laws are given in detail in Leviticus 11, and summarized in Deuteronomy 14, they were not new when given to Moses. The distinction between clean and unclean animals was familiar to Noah (Gen. 7:2-3, 8-9; 8:20). Nothing in the text warrants limiting the distinction in Genesis to animals for sacrifice: the reference is to “*every clean beast*” (Gen. 7:2). Noah thus knew the distinction between clean and unclean animals. Again, when Noah is told to abstain from eating blood, the law is given together with the prohibition of murder (Gen. 9:4-6). However, it is obvious from Genesis 4:8-14 that men from the beginning have known that murder is against God’s law.

In Genesis 9:4-6, God separates *blood*, which means life, from man’s power, whether that blood be of animals or men. Blood can only be taken or shed in terms of God’s law, not in terms of man’s will. The sacredness of life means that man cannot treat blood as his to control and shed. According to Stigers, Genesis 9:6, “Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man,” means that “the murderer has assaulted the government of God and so *lies beyond the protection of the divine will.*”¹⁴ Because *all* life is God’s creation, the shedding of blood is subject to God’s government.

Many pagans believed that the drinking of blood gave them the power of the life taken. Thus, in such instances, two evils were present: *first*, the taking of life, the shedding (and drinking or eating, in some instances) of blood in contempt of God’s law, and, *second*, the attempt to gain lawless power.

According to God’s law-word, He alone is the source of power. If His people should come to believe that health, power, and wealth can be gained in contempt of Him, then God’s judgment follows:

18. But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he swore unto thy fathers, as it is this day.

19. And it shall be, if thou do at all forget the LORD thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish.

20. As the nations which the LORD destroyed before your face, so shall ye perish; because ye would not be obedient unto the voice of the LORD your God. (Deuteronomy 8:18-20)

Chapter Twenty-One

Immunity

(*Leviticus 11:9-28*)

9. These shall ye eat of all that are in the waters: whatsoever hath fins and scales in the waters, in the seas, and in the rivers, them shall ye eat.
10. And all that have not fins and scales in the seas, and in the rivers, of all that move in the waters, and of any living thing which is in the waters, they shall be an abomination unto you:
11. They shall be even an abomination unto you; ye shall not eat of their flesh, but ye shall have their carcases in abomination.
12. Whatsoever hath no fins nor scales in the waters, that shall be an abomination unto you.
13. And these are they which ye shall have in abomination among the fowls; they shall not be eaten, they are an abomination: the eagle, and the ossifrage, and the ospraying,
14. And the vulture, and the kite after his kind;
15. Every raven after his kind;
16. And the owl, and the night hawk, and the cuckow, and the hawk after his kind,
17. And the little owl, and the cormorant, and the great owl,
18. And the swan, and the pelican, and the gier eagle,
19. And the stork, the heron after her kind, and the lapwing, and the bat.
20. All fowls that creep, going upon all four, shall be an abomination unto you.
21. Yet these may ye eat of every flying creeping thing that goeth upon all four, which have legs above their feet, to leap withal upon the earth;
22. Even these of them ye may eat; the locust after his kind, and the bald locust after his kind, and the beetle after his kind, and the grasshopper after his kind.
23. But all other flying creeping things, which have four feet, shall be an abomination unto you.
24. And for these ye shall be unclean: whosoever toucheth the carcase of them shall be unclean until the even.
25. And whosoever beareth ought of the carcase of them shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the even.
26. The carcases of every beast which divideth the hoof, and is not clovenfooted, nor cheweth the cud, are unclean unto you: every one that toucheth them shall be unclean.
27. And whatsoever goeth upon his paws, among all manner of beasts that go on all four, those are unclean unto you: whoso toucheth their carcase shall be unclean until the even.
28. And he that beareth the carcase of them shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the even: they are unclean unto you. (*Leviticus 11:9-28*)

The first dietary law of Scripture appears in Genesis 1:29f., which declares that all fruits and vegetables are permitted as food.

In Leviticus 11, all herbivorous animals which meet the two specifications of a divided hoof and chewing the cud are clean; ten animals, both wild and domestic, are specifically named in Deuteronomy 14:4-5.

All birds of prey are forbidden. Since the rabbis held that whatever comes from an unclean thing is unclean, the eggs of forbidden birds have usually been held to be unclean.

With respect to fish, the requirements are fins and scales. Here some division has existed among Orthodox and Conservative Jews; in England, the sturgeon is banned, but in America both the sturgeon and the swordfish are permitted.

Four kinds of insects, all locusts, are permitted, and these were usually desert fare in difficult times (Matt. 3:4). The bee is not included in the list of clean insects, but, because the honey is a “transferred nectar,” it is clean.

Not all portions of clean animals can be used as food, *i.e.*, the sciatic nerve (Gen. 32:32), and abdominal fat (Lev. 3:17, 7:23-25), are forbidden. Blood is of course also forbidden as a food, and in Ezekiel 33:25-26, the eating of blood is equated with idolatry and murder, and also with adultery. The rabbis taught that obedience to the dietary laws had to be theological. Rather than saying, “I do not like the flesh of swine,” it is better to say, “I like it but must abstain seeing the Torah has forbidden it.”¹¹⁵ In most cases, Jews have in past centuries erred on the side of over-strictness in order to be safe. Thus, in the late ninth or early tenth century A.D., Daniel Al-Kumisi held, “in general he who fears God must keep away from all things subject to doubt as to their permissibility.”¹¹⁶ Some rabbis saw physical and spiritual consequences, including a blunting of intellectual powers, in the eating of forbidden foods. Maimonides gave an exclusively hygienic explanation, as did others in the medieval era. This was easy to do, given the extensive immunity of Jews as against Christians in the times of epidemics and plagues.¹¹⁷

In the last century, Reform Jews began to abandon the dietary laws as unspiritual and as debasing to true religion, as John D. Rayner stated it in 1968.¹¹⁸ At about the same time in the past century that Reform Jews separated themselves from the dietary laws, an American Presbyterian scholar, Samuel Henry Kellogg (1839-1899), called attention to their validity, and the better health and longevity of Orthodox Jews:

In this matter we are not left to guessing; the facts are before the world, and are undisputed. Even so long ago as the days when the plague was desolating Europe, the Jews so universally escaped infection that, by this their exemption, the popular suspicion was excited into fury, and they were accused of causing the fearful mortality among their Gentile neighbours by poisoning the wells, and springs. In our own day, in the recent cholera epidemic in Italy, a correspondent of the *Jewish Chronicle* testifies that the Jews enjoyed almost absolute immunity, at the least from fatal attack.¹¹⁹

Kellogg cited data concerning the mean average of Jewish and non-Jewish lifespans in Prussia, Hungary, Croatia, Germany, and elsewhere; the data was markedly in favor of the Jews, and this despite the fact that the Jews “generally are poor, and live under much more unfavorable sanitary conditions than their Gentile neighbours.”¹²⁰

With the modern emphasis on health foods, it is a remarkable fact of human perversity that God’s proven dietary laws are so commonly bypassed.

Very early, Jews added intelligent methods to the care and preparation of the permitted meats:

To render meat “kosher,” both of mammal and fowl, it must be put in cold water for an hour, then an hour in salt, and finally be set on an earthen vessel having holes for draining. Lastly it must undergo another washing in cold water.¹²¹

The historical data makes it clear, as does also recent research, that the forbidden foods have a destructive effect on the immune system of our bodies. As such, they are a form of poisoning, a food-type which goes counter to the body’s normal working and vitality. The word *abomination* is applied to the forbidden foods. A more modern translation is *filth*. This word, *shegats*, appears only in Leviticus 11, although there are two other words translated as *abomination*. Our separation from filth unto holiness and God’s service not only makes us useful to the Lord, but also gives us health and life in His service.

Wenham, in his comment on vv. 24-45, calls attention to four aspects thereof. *First* (vv. 24, 27, 31, 39), it is dead animals which pollute men. *Second*, all dead animals, unless killed according to the law, are unclean. If clean animals die a natural death, they are unclean (v. 39). They cannot be eaten, and they render a man unclean when they are handled (vv. 39-40). *Third*, such an uncleanness is temporary, lasting only until evening of the day it occurs (vv. 24-25, 27-28, etc.). Other forms of pollution can last a week (15:13), two months (12:5), or indefinitely (13:45-46). *Fourth*, household articles become unclean on contact with unclean carcasses and must be washed (vv. 25, 28, 32, 41). Unclean animals do not pollute when alive, but they do pollute when dead.¹²²

It is noteworthy that the Biblical classification of animals is an important means of knowledge. Too often, modern classifications represent evolutionary ideology; they rest on older classifications but have been subjected to new frameworks. C. D. Ginsburg gave us a summary of the definitions of clean and unclean fish, as established in the era of the second Temple:

(1) All fishes with scales have invariably also fins, but fishes which have fins have not always scales. Any fish, therefore, or even a piece of one exposed by itself for sale in the market, which exhibits scales may be eaten, for it is to be taken for granted that it had fins, or that the fins cannot be seen because of their extraordinary smallness. But, on the other hand, a fish with fins may exist without scales, and hence is unclean; (2) Clean fishes have a complete vertebral column, but the unclean have simply single joints, united by a gelatinous cord. To the former class belong, (a) “the soft fins,” or the salmon and trout, the capellan and grayling, the herring, the anchovy and the sardine, the pike and carp families, the

cod, the hake and the haddock, the sole, the turbot, and the plaice; (b) “the spiny fins,” as the perch, the mackerel, and the tunny. To the latter class belong the shark tribe, the sturgeons with their caviare, the lamprey, and the nine-eyed eel; (3) The head of clean fishes is more or less broad, whilst that of the unclean kinds is more or less pointed at the end, as the eel, the mammalian species, &c.; (4) The swimming bladder of clean fishes is rounded at one end, and pointed at the other, whilst that of the unclean fishes is either rounded or pointed at both extremities alike. It is in allusion to this law that we are told in the parable of the fisherman, which is taken from Jewish life, that when they drew to shore the net with every kind of fish, the fishermen sat down (i.e., to examine the clean and the unclean), and gathered the good (i.e., the clean), into the vessels, but cast the bad (i.e., the unclean) away (Matt. XIII. 48). The orthodox Jews to this day strictly observe these regulations, and abhor eating those fishes which are enumerated under the four above-named criteria of not clean. It is moreover to be remarked that fishes without scales are also still regarded in Egypt as unwholesome, and that the Romans would not permit them to be offered in sacrifice.¹²³

Such a division and classification has as its purposes man’s holiness and health. The result of such a classification, when respected and applied, is our sanctification, and also our immunity. The fact that recent studies have shown that obedience to God’s dietary laws strengthens our immunities should not blind us to the fact that though this may be a new “discovery,” it is also an affirmation of God’s law, namely, that obedience gives health, prosperity, and fertility:

11. Thou shalt therefore keep the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which I command thee this day, to do them.

12. Wherefore, it shall come to pass, if ye hearken to these judgments, and keep, and do them, that the LORD thy God shall keep unto thee the covenant and the mercy which he swore unto thy fathers:

13. And he will love thee, and bless thee, and multiply thee: he will also bless the fruit of thy womb, and the fruit of thy land, thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep, in the land which he swore unto thy fathers to give thee.

14. Thou shalt be blessed above all people: there shall not be male or female barren among you, or among your cattle.

15. And the LORD will take away from thee all sickness, and will put none of the evil diseases of Egypt, which thou knowest, upon thee; but will lay them upon all them that hate thee. (Deuteronomy 7:11-15)

Chapter Twenty-Two

Diet and Religion

(*Leviticus 11:29-47*)

29. These also shall be unclean unto you among the creeping things that creep upon the earth; the weasel, and the mouse, and the tortoise after his kind,
30. And the ferret, and the chameleon, and the lizard, and the snail, and the mole.
31. These are unclean to you among all that creep: whosoever doth touch them, when they be dead, shall be unclean until the even.
32. And upon whatsoever any of them, when they are dead, doth fall, it shall be unclean; whether it be any vessel of wood, or raiment, or skin, or sack, whatsoever vessel it be, wherein any work is done, it must be put into water, and it shall be unclean until the even; so it shall be cleansed.
33. And every earthen vessel, whereinto any of them falleth, whatsoever is in it shall be unclean; and ye shall break it.
34. Of all meat which may be eaten, that on which such water cometh shall be unclean: and all drink that may be drunk in every such vessel shall be unclean.
35. And every thing whereupon any part of their carcase falleth shall be unclean; whether it be oven, or ranges for pots, they shall be broken down: for they are unclean, and shall be unclean unto you.
36. Nevertheless a fountain or pit, wherein there is plenty of water, shall be clean: but that which toucheth their carcase shall be unclean.
37. And if any part of their carcase fall upon any sowing seed which is to be sown, it shall be clean.
38. But if any water be put upon the seed, and any part of their carcase fall thereon, it shall be unclean unto you.
39. And if any beast, of which ye may eat, die; he that toucheth the carcase thereof shall be unclean until the even.
40. And he that eateth of the carcase of it shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the even: he also that beareth the carcase of it shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the even.
41. And every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth shall be an abomination; it shall not be eaten.
42. Whatsoever goeth upon the belly, and whatsoever goeth upon all four, or whatsoever hath more feet among all creeping things that creep upon the earth, them ye shall not eat; for they are an abomination.
43. Ye shall not make yourselves abominable with any creeping thing that creepeth, neither shall ye make yourselves unclean with them, that ye should be defiled thereby.
44. For I am the LORD your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy: neither shall ye defile yourselves with any manner of creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

45. For I am the LORD that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.

46. This is the law of the beasts, and of the fowl, and of every living creature that moveth in the waters, and of every creature that creepeth upon the earth:

47. To make a difference between the unclean and the clean, and between the beast that may be eaten and the beast that may not be eaten. (Leviticus 11:29-47)

Most of the comments on Leviticus 11 are embarrassing to read. We are told that the lack of refrigeration is responsible for the dietary laws. This is absurd, since most of the laws cannot be related to the lack of refrigeration. One seminary professor has read these laws as having a symbolic meaning; thus, “In Leviticus 11, meditation, which is pictured by chewing the cud, is a primary mark of cleanness.” If God wanted us to “meditate,” He would have told us so without this elaborate dietary symbolism! Yet, we are assured, “the strongest aspect of the dietary regulations is symbolic.”¹²⁴

Noordtziij was wiser in noting, “Implicit in these verses is the notion that uncleanness was something contagious.”¹²⁵ Leviticus gives us basic laws concerning sanitation and contagion which have to varying degrees governed Christendom until recently and greatly furthered social protections.

Some of the requirements set forth in these verses are, *first*, that dead animals, insects, etc., pollute. Whatever they touch must be washed, and the person involved must bathe. *Second*, porous pottery vessels must be broken. What can be washed must be, but porous items can absorb infectious bacteria. *Third*, death is a form of pollution and comes from some kind of ailment. It is not a natural fact of creation but rather of the Fall, and hence represents something wrong. As a general rule, then, death is to be viewed as involving disease, and hence cleansing is the rule. *Fourth*, all “creeping things,” mice, rats, and the like, are forbidden as food. *Fifth*, physical contacts can convey contagion. *Sixth*, health is a goal of holiness, because the resurrection of the body is our future. This does not mean that sickness *is* sin, but that sickness is an aspect of the fallen world we live in, and we must seek holiness, and *God requires this* as His right over us.

Since the rise of Romanticism, one area of life after another has been reduced to *feeling*. Romanticism is hostile to law and regards the orderly life of law as repressive and at best inferior. The nature of man is held to reveal itself in its passions, not in the “submissive” life of law, virtue, and reason. The effect of Romanticism has been great on churches and on synagogues, so that a religion of feeling has replaced ancient orthodoxies. About thirty years ago, one Jewish writer on the dietary laws observed:

There is a well-known story about a rabbi who, upon coming to a new congregation, was taken aside by the president and in a friendly manner advised not to talk about certain topics from the pulpit: Hebrew Schools — because the children had to take music and dancing lessons and needed the afternoons for play; the Sabbath — because in America one was compelled to work on the Sabbath to make a living, and making a living came first; the Dietary Laws, *Kashrut* — because it was only an ancient health measure, out of place in modern

times, and, furthermore, too much trouble for the women to bother with two sets of dishes. The rabbi, surprised at the counsel he was receiving, asked anxiously: “If I cannot talk about the Hebrew Schools, and I cannot talk about the Sabbath and I cannot talk about *Kashrut*, what can I talk about?” The president replied in mild astonishment: “Why, that is no problem at all, Rabbi; *just talk about Judaism!*”

This story, bitter though it may sound, reflects a good deal of what has passed for Jewish life in the past decades in America.¹²⁶

The same story can be duplicated in the churches: no preaching about the law, no preaching on Romans, no preaching on controversial subjects, and so on and on. *Faith has been separated from life and action and reduced to feeling.* Many who identify themselves as Jews or Christians are truly ignorant of the essentials of their faith. In marriages, men and women guilty of all kinds of offenses still feel that all kinds of actions can be wiped out by the simple statement, But I love him, or her. Feeling replaces faithfulness.

As against this emphasis on feeling, which is not a new one in history, there have been reactions again and again in both Judaism and Christianity to a substitution of tradition for law. Very early, for example, some groups in Judaism became rigid and extreme in their interpretations of the law, seeking in effect to be holier than God; this has also taken place within the church.

The precision of God’s law has as its purpose the simple obedience required. For example, when the law was given to Moses on the mount, certain requirements were made of the people who were to receive the covenant law. *First*, they were to consecrate themselves to God, to prepare to receive and obey God’s covenant law. *Second*, they were to don freshly washed clothes to mark this new relationship. *Third*, to avoid associating their covenant with fertility cults, they were to avoid sexual relations for the time (Ex. 19:14-16).

This *separation* of their reception of God’s law from anything which could resemble fertility cult practices is a simple fact. It has, however, been used to vindicate asceticism, which means importing an alien matter into a simple fact.

God’s requirement is, “ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy” (v. 45). Holiness is freedom from sin and conformity to God and His law with all our heart, mind, and being, in word, thought, and deed. It is a consequence of grace and the working of the Holy Spirit in us (Rom. 6:22, John 3:5). We are commanded to “Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord” (Heb. 12:14).

Diet is an aspect of holiness. Every major religion has dietary laws: Judaism, Mohammedanism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism, and so on, are marked by strict rules concerning acceptable foods. Among other cultures, food taboos are commonplace. Ceremonies of eating are worldwide, and a sacredness is often attached to shared foods because it means a sharing of life. In some instances, the marriage ceremony has involved sharing a meal together. Eating a meal together has been a common ratification of an alliance. Food is often figuratively used for life, salvation, and for Christ, as the Welsh hymn shows:

Guide me, O thou great Jehovah,
Pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but thou art mighty;
Hold me with thy pow'ful hand;
Bread of heaven, Bread of heaven,
Feed me till I want no more,
Feed me till I want no more.
(William Williams, 1745)

In the Old Testament, the shewbread, and in the church, the sacramental bread, attest to the relationship of food to religion. We do not need to agree with the doctrines of transubstantiation and consubstantiation to recognize that food is typical of a variety of things in religion, and that material food and spiritual food are closely linked.

The current widespread separation of diet from religion is an unusual fact of history. Because religion is total in its relevance, diet is a normal aspect of religious regulations. Particularly when the Biblical rules have been so demonstrably important in maintaining life and health, their neglect is amazing. G. Campbell Morgan said of these laws:

It may at least be affirmed that these requirements were based on the soundest laws of health. God, who perfectly understands the physical structure of man, knows what is good and what is harmful. There can be very little doubt that a careful examination of these provisions will demonstrate the sanitary wisdom of them all.¹²⁷

Not too long ago, a woman took legal steps against a church which suspended or excommunicated her for adultery. Her attitude was expressed very bluntly: "What has God to do with my sex life?" If God's purpose in Christ is to provide us with fire and life insurance and no more, then God has nothing to do with our sex life or our diet. In which case we have only an imaginary god, not the Sovereign and triune Lord and Creator.

Chapter Twenty-Three

“The Churching of Women”

(*Leviticus 12:1-8*)

1. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,
2. Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If a woman have conceived seed, and born a man child: then she shall be unclean seven days; according to the days of the separation for her infirmity shall she be unclean.
3. And in the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.
4. And she shall then continue in the blood of her purifying three and thirty days; she shall touch no hallowed thing, nor come into the sanctuary, until the days of her purifying be fulfilled.
5. But if she bear a maid child, then she shall be unclean two weeks, as in her separation: and she shall continue in the blood of her purifying threescore and six days.
6. And when the days of her purifying are fulfilled, for a son, or for a daughter, she shall bring a lamb of the first year for a burnt offering, and a young pigeon, or a turtledove, for a sin offering, unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, unto the priest:
7. Who shall offer it before the LORD, and make an atonement for her; and she shall be cleansed from the issue of her blood. This is the law for her that hath born a male or a female.
8. And if she be not able to bring a lamb, then she shall bring two turtles, or two young pigeons; the one for the burnt offering, and the other for a sin offering: and the priest shall make an atonement for her, and she shall be clean. (*Leviticus 12:1-8*)

We come now to the laws of the purification of women after childbirth, a regulation very alien to the modern mind. Ironically, this was once a very understandable rule to many cultures, and it was readily acceptable to the European converts. The Book of Common Prayer has a rite for “The Thanksgiving of Women after Child-Birth; commonly called The Cherishing of Women.” Anthropologists have given all kinds of fanciful interpretations to such rites, and their interpretations are better at “confirming” their preconceived theories than at explaining the rites.

Perhaps the best way to approach these laws is to begin with the basic division between clean and unclean, since such is the concern of this law and many others. Nathaniel Micklem’s comment is a good place to begin:

12:2. The translation *unclean* is peculiarly infelicitous here, for it inevitably suggests disapprobation or disgust, and it anticipates a Manichaeian view of evil inherent in the flesh. The passage might be paraphrased: “When a woman has borne a son, proper feeling requires that she remain in seclusion for a week: then

the child is to be circumcised: even then she is to stay at home for a month, and her first journey abroad shall be to church.”¹²⁸

Micklem’s statement is very important in that it strikes against any implicitly Manichaean interpretation of the text. However, his paraphrase, “proper feeling requires that she remain in seclusion for a week,” gives the text a humanistic frame of reference. The term *unclean* cannot be read in Manichaean terms, but its meaning is still a broad one. It can refer, for example, to things immoral *and* to things which cannot be called immoral. Thus, leprosy is not immoral, but it is unclean. Incest, bestiality, and sodomy are both unclean and immoral. Childbirth, menstruation, and nocturnal emissions by men are not immoral, but they are unclean. Thomas Scott called attention to the fact that a woman’s uncleanness after childbirth is *ceremonial*, not moral or essential.¹²⁹

It will enable us to understand the particular kind of uncleanness referred to in Leviticus 11 and 12 if we realize what it has reference to. The leper’s uncleanness means contagion. The woman after childbirth may be *liable* to contagion but is not a *source* of it. In fact, for certain religious observances, the unclean and the clean ate together even as they lived together. Thus, in Deuteronomy 15:19-23, we read:

19. All the firstling males that come of thy herd and of thy flock thou shalt sanctify unto the Lord thy God: thou shalt do no work with the firstling of thy bullock, nor shear the firstling of thy sheep.
20. Thou shalt eat it before the Lord thy God year by year in the place which the Lord shall choose, thou and thy household.
21. And if there be any blemish therein, as if it be lame, or blind, or have any ill blemish, thou shalt not sacrifice it unto the Lord thy God.
22. Thou shalt eat it within thy gates: *the unclean and the clean person shall eat it alike*, as thy roebuck, and as the hart.
23. Only thou shalt not eat the blood thereof; thou shalt pour it upon the ground as water.

What, then, does cleanness and uncleanness have reference to? According to Maimonides,

All Israelites are warned to be clean at the three feasts, since they must be ready to enter into the Temple and eat of Hallowed Things. And insofar as it is said in Scripture, *and their carcasses ye shall not touch* (Lev. 11:18; Deut. 14:8), this applies only to the duration of the feast. Even if a man becomes unclean, he does not become liable to punishment by scourging. But about other days of the year not even a warning has been given.¹³⁰

This enables us to understand an instance of uncleanness, although the word is not used, in one of our Lord’s Parables, the parable of the marriage feast (Matt. 22:1-14). One guest arrived in his own clothing and refused to don the King’s gift of raiment. As a result, he is cast “into the outer darkness,” bound “hand and foot” (Matt. 22:13). The meaning was not lost on the people, nor on their leaders. To come into God’s presence claiming an independent righteousness was a declaration of independence from God. To illustrate, over the years, I have heard many say that,

although they are not Christians, they are “not worried” about the afterlife “if there is one,” and they will take their chances; while “not proud” of everything in their lives, “on the balance” they feel that their lives stand up very well, and, if there is a heaven, they will be there. *Such statements are an assertion of autonomy from God*; this was the stand of the indicted wedding guest. Men are not *clean* before God because they believe they are, but only because God in Christ regenerates and cleanses them.

In Leviticus 12, the uncleanness comes from childbirth, an uncleanness with reference to the Temple or sanctuary and rituals comparable to communion. Why so for childbirth, as well as other aspects of sexuality? The cleanness and “undefiled” nature of marital sex is plainly stated, as in Hebrews 13:4. Again, we are told, “Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD; and the fruit of the womb is his reward” (Ps. 127:3). True, this is a fallen world, and man is a fallen creature, but the truth lies deeper. Over the centuries, people have associated childlessness with being accursed, as witness Rachel (Gen. 30:1) and Hannah (1 Sam. 1:4-10). At the same time, many have seen the ability to have many children as the greatest of blessings. Both attitudes are false, because Scripture, in the rite of circumcision, makes it clear that *our hope is not in generation but in regeneration*. All too many religions have exalted generation.

The wedding guest, satisfied with himself and his own righteousness or justice, was cast out of God’s presence. The requirements for approaching the Lord’s Table stress the necessity of coming into God’s presence worthily (1 Cor. 11:20-34), which means not by self-righteousness but by God’s grace. Hence, the stress on *confession*, whether private, corporate, or to a pastor or priest, is a necessary part of eliminating uncleanness and coming before God as clean in Christ.

In Luke 2:24, we see Christ, Mary, and Joseph fulfilling the requirements of Leviticus 12; the sacrifice of a pair of turtle-doves indicates that they were poor.

Twice the time for purification is required for a woman after giving birth to a girl as to a boy. Here as in other laws there are physiological aspects as well as ecclesiastical ones. The fact that we are ignorant of these as yet should give us the humility to reserve judgment and to accept the fact, hard as it is for the human mind to accept, that God is wiser than we are. In Paul’s words,

23. But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness;
24. But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.
25. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. (1 Corinthians 1:23-25)

If we begin with the premise that God is wise and just, even when we cannot understand Him, we may do badly in the sight of men, but we will be blessed by God.

An interesting perspective on this chapter comes from Rabbi Hertz, in his latter years chief rabbi of England. He cited, with reference to v. 4, the fact that “The meaning is here that by virtue of the offerings, the cause which had made it impossible for her to come to the Sanctuary was *obliterated*.” With respect to the doubled time span prior to the Temple purification after the

birth of a female child, he noted, “It cannot be because a female was regarded as more defiling than a male, since the mother’s purification was the same for either sex.”¹³¹

Chapter Twenty-Four

The Laws on “Leprosy”

(*Leviticus 13:1-59*)

1. And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron, saying,
2. When a man shall have in the skin of his flesh a rising, a scab, or bright spot, and it be in the skin of his flesh like the plague of leprosy; then he shall be brought unto Aaron the priest, or unto one of his sons the priests:
3. And the priest shall look on the plague in the skin of the flesh: and when the hair in the plague is turned white, and the plague in sight be deeper than the skin of his flesh, it is a plague of leprosy: and the priest shall look on him, and pronounce him unclean.
4. If the bright spot be white in the skin of his flesh, and in sight be not deeper than the skin, and the hair thereof be not turned white; then the priest shall shut up him that hath the plague seven days:
5. And the priest shall look on him the seventh day: and, behold, if the plague in his sight be at a stay, and the plague spread not in the skin; then the priest shall shut him up seven days more:
6. And the priest shall look on him again the seventh day: and, behold, if the plague be somewhat dark, and the plague spread not in the skin, the priest shall pronounce him clean: it is but a scab: and he shall wash his clothes, and be clean.
7. But if the scab spread much abroad in the skin, after that he hath been seen of the priest for his cleansing, he shall be seen of the priest again:
8. And if the priest see that, behold, the scab spreadeth in the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean: it is a leprosy.
9. When the plague of leprosy is in a man, then he shall be brought unto the priest;
10. And the priest shall see him: and, behold, if the rising be white in the skin, and it have turned the hair white, and there be quick raw flesh in the rising;
11. It is an old leprosy in the skin of his flesh, and the priest shall pronounce him unclean, and shall not shut him up: for he is unclean.
12. And if a leprosy break out abroad in the skin, and the leprosy cover all the skin of him that hath the plague from his head even to his foot, wheresoever the priest looketh;
13. Then the priest shall consider: and, behold, if the leprosy have covered all his flesh, he shall pronounce him clean that hath the plague: it is all turned white: he is clean.
14. But when raw flesh appeareth in him, he shall be unclean.
15. And the priest shall see the raw flesh, and pronounce him to be unclean: for the raw flesh is unclean: it is a leprosy.
16. Or if the raw flesh turn again, and be changed unto white, he shall come unto the priest;

17. And the priest shall see him: and, behold, if the plague be turned into white; then the priest shall pronounce him clean that hath the plague: he is clean.
18. The flesh also, in which, even in the skin thereof, was a boil, and is healed,
19. And in the place of the boil there be a white rising, or a bright spot, white, and somewhat reddish, and it be shewed to the priest;
20. And if, when the priest seeth it, behold, it be in sight lower than the skin, and the hair thereof be turned white; the priest shall pronounce him unclean: it is a plague of leprosy broken out of the boil.
21. But if the priest look on it, and, behold, there be no white hairs therein, and if it be not lower than the skin, but be somewhat dark; then the priest shall shut him up seven days:
22. And if it spread much abroad in the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean: it is a plague.
23. But if the bright spot stay in his place, and spread not, it is a burning boil; and the priest shall pronounce him clean.
24. Or if there be any flesh, in the skin whereof there is a hot burning, and the quick flesh that burneth have a white bright spot, somewhat reddish, or white;
25. Then the priest shall look upon it: and, behold, if the hair in the bright spot be turned white, and it be in sight deeper than the skin; it is a leprosy broken out of the burning: wherefore the priest shall pronounce him unclean: it is the plague of leprosy.
26. But if the priest look on it, and, behold, there be no white hair in the bright spot, and it be no lower than the other skin, but be somewhat dark; then the priest shall shut him up seven days:
27. And the priest shall look upon him the seventh day: and if it be spread much abroad in the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean: it is the plague of leprosy.
28. And if the bright spot stay in his place, and spread not in the skin, but it be somewhat dark; it is a rising of the burning, and the priest shall pronounce him clean: for it is an inflammation of the burning.
29. If a man or woman have a plague upon the head or the beard;
30. Then the priest shall see the plague: and, behold, if it be in sight deeper than the skin; and there be in it a yellow thin hair; then the priest shall pronounce him unclean: it is a dry scall, even a leprosy upon the head or beard.
31. And if the priest look on the plague of the scall, and, behold, it be not in sight deeper than the skin, and that there is no black hair in it; then the priest shall shut up him that hath the plague of the scall seven days:
32. And in the seventh day the priest shall look on the plague: and, behold, if the scall spread not, and there be in it no yellow hair, and the scall be not in sight deeper than the skin;
33. He shall be shaven, but the scall shall he not shave; and the priest shall shut up him that hath the scall seven days more:
34. And in the seventh day the priest shall look on the scall: and, behold, if the scall be not spread in the skin, nor be in sight deeper than the skin; then the priest shall pronounce him clean: and he shall wash his clothes, and be clean.
35. But if the scall spread much in the skin after his cleansing;

36. Then the priest shall look on him: and, behold, if the scall be spread in the skin, the priest shall not seek for yellow hair; he is unclean.

37. But if the scall be in his sight at a stay, and that there is black hair grown up therein; the scall is healed, he is clean: and the priest shall pronounce him clean.

38. If a man also or a woman have in the skin of their flesh bright spots, even white bright spots;

39. Then the priest shall look: and, behold, if the bright spots in the skin of their flesh be darkish white; it is a freckled spot that groweth in the skin; he is clean.

40. And the man whose hair is fallen off his head, he is bald; yet is he clean.

41. And he that hath his hair fallen off from the part of his head toward his face, he is forehead bald: yet is he clean.

42. And if there be in the bald head, or bald forehead, a white reddish sore; it is a leprosy sprung up in his bald head, or his bald forehead.

43. Then the priest shall look upon it: and, behold, if the rising of the sore be white reddish in his bald head, or in his bald forehead, as the leprosy appeareth in the skin of the flesh;

44. He is a leprous man, he is unclean: the priest shall pronounce him utterly unclean; his plague is in his head.

45. And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean.

46. All the days wherein the plague shall be in him he shall be defiled; he is unclean: he shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his habitation be.

47. The garment also that the plague of leprosy is in, whether it be a woollen garment, or a linen garment;

48. Whether it be in the warp, or woof; of linen, or of woollen; whether in a skin, or in any thing made of skin;

49. And if the plague be greenish or reddish in the garment, or in the skin, either in the warp, or in the woof, or in any thing of skin; it is a plague of leprosy, and shall be shewed unto the priest:

50. And the priest shall look upon the plague, and shut up it that hath the plague seven days:

51. And he shall look on the plague on the seventh day: if the plague be spread in the garment, either in the warp, or in the woof, or in a skin, or in any work that is made of skin; the plague is a fretting leprosy; it is unclean.

52. He shall therefore burn that garment, whether warp or woof, in woollen or in linen, or any thing of skin, wherein the plague is: for it is a fretting leprosy; it shall be burnt in the fire.

53. And if the priest shall look, and, behold, the plague be not spread in the garment, either in the warp, or in the woof, or in any thing of skin;

54. Then the priest shall command that they wash the thing wherein the plague is, and he shall shut it up seven days more:

55. And the priest shall look on the plague, after that it is washed: and, behold, if the plague have not changed his colour, and the plague be not spread; it is unclean; thou shalt burn it in the fire; it is fret inward, whether it be bare within or without.

56. And if the priest look, and, behold, the plague be somewhat dark after the washing of it; then he shall rend it out of the garment, or out of the skin, or out of the warp, or out of the woof:

57. And if it appear still in the garment, either in the warp, or in the woof, or in any thing of skin; it is a spreading plague: thou shalt burn that wherein the plague is with fire.

58. And the garment, either warp, or woof, or whatsoever thing of skin it be, which thou shalt wash, if the plague be departed from them, then it shall be washed the second time, and shall be clean.

59. This is the law of the plague of leprosy in a garment of woollen or linen, either in the warp, or woof, or any thing of skins, to pronounce it clean, or to pronounce it unclean. (Leviticus 13:1-59)

In Leviticus 13 and 14, we have extensive and specific legislation on what is called in the English *leprosy*. This term is misleading. *First* of all, words change their meanings, or are applied to different objects as time passes. The older term, *rheumatism*, is now obsolete, although it was once a good medical term. *Arthritis* replaced it, and one doctor has predicted that this latter term, because it describes several ailments, will in turn be replaced. Other instances of words with changed meanings include *buffalo*; the American buffalo is actually *bison*. *Second*, the English word *leprosy* comes, not from the Hebrew text, but from the Greek *lepra*, which in Greek referred to a disease very unlike those described in Leviticus 13. *Third*, as Wenham has pointed out, in Leviticus 13 a variety of diseases are described, twenty-one different cases in vv. 2-46, and three in vv. 47-58. *Fourth*, what we now call leprosy, or Hansen's disease, may have been unknown before the fifth century A.D.¹³² According to Harrison, however, clinical leprosy was known in Mesopotamia in the third millennium B.C., and one case in an Egyptian mummy is said to be documented.¹³³ However, the evidence seems clear that Hansen's disease is not the subject of this chapter. Moreover, the evidence points to a variety of related ailments covered by the one general word, in English *leprosy*. Noordtjiz noted, "The Meshuah (*Negaium* I 4) thus asserts that there were no fewer than 16, 36, or even 72 types of *sara 'het*, and this could never be the case if the term referred solely to leprosy."¹³⁴ *Fifth*, many medical and Biblical scholars have sought to identify the ailments described, with limited success. It is not unreasonable to assume that many of these ailments are no longer with us; hence, to assume that they must be identified in terms of diseases we know is perhaps an error.

What we do know, according to Hertz, is that the "leper" suffered from a *physical* infirmity; this infirmity barred him from the sanctuary; while so infirm, he was accounted as dead with respect to membership in the Kingdom of Priests, since physical defects disqualified a priest. On recovery, the man was formally rededicated as a covenant man.¹³⁵ The text is very precise in providing the means of *diagnosis*; the priest thus had a medical function.

It is important to note that the concern is for the welfare of the family and the community; neither can be sacrificed out of pity for the victim. It is thus noteworthy that we have here *the source* of the idea of *quarantine*. The concept is Biblical. As applied by Orthodox Jews and by orthodox Christians, it has included the quarantine not only of infected persons but also of infected animals and plants. The quarantine of ships is a centuries-old practice. Quarantine laws can, where required, supersede property rights. Such laws have been important in the

development and progress of Christendom over other areas. It is significant that a concern for quarantine laws declines as Biblical faith wanes. We must recognize that there is a correlation between the decline of quarantine and the decline of a victim's rights. The criminal has been given more and more "rights" by the courts, and the victim's right to restitution has declined with the rise of modernism.

Quarantine, it should be noted, is a *moral fact*: it asserts that there is a good and an evil response to a situation. Quarantine does not say that the sick man is evil, but that to expose others to a serious illness or disease is evil, and therefore separation is good, healthy, and necessary. To punish or execute criminals, and to require restitution, is a form of quarantine in that it separates wrongdoers by court action and judgment from the rest of the population until either execution is carried out or restitution is made. It is not an accident that quarantine is under attack, and that it is not used with respect to the AIDS epidemic; it is a logical concomitant of the moral relativism of our time.

In vv. 1-8, before a *confirmed* diagnosis, there was a week of *isolation* pending further medical evidence. At the end of that time, there was either a discharge from quarantine, or an exclusion from community life.

Some forms of these ailments infected clothing. The clothing had to be quarantined also, inspected after a week, and then either washed and restored, or else burned (vv. 47-59). We are ignorant of the nature of these infections. Tests of the person apparently infected concentrated on the skin and the scalp, and also the hair. On occasion, the quarantine could be continued for another seven days (v. 33). It was recognized that contagion could be spread by both contact, hence isolation, and also breathing, and hence the necessity of covering the mouth (v. 45). No one, however important, was exempt from quarantine. It was applied even to Miriam, Moses' sister, for one week (Num. 12:9ff.).

The priest had a part here, even though doctors were common enough in antiquity, because the priest is the guardian of the faith and of the sanctuary. Whoever else took part in the diagnosis, it was therefore the priest who pronounced the decision. The total health of the people had to be his governing concern, both spiritual and physical health. An exclusively spiritual concern meant an abdication of responsibility.

G. Campbell Morgan said of this chapter and its regulations:

In the instructions two principles of perpetual importance are manifested. The first is the necessity for guarding the general health of the community and the second is that no injustice be done to the individual in the interest of the community. These two principles are perpetual in their application.¹³⁶

Morgan was right on both counts. However, these laws had as their essential purpose the holiness of God's Kingdom and covenant people. Animals used in sacrifice had to be unblemished. The priests had to be whole men, undeformed, and morally upright. Sanitation was set forth in God's law as an aspect of holiness. The rigorous nature of these laws is noteworthy. Soon after they were given, Miriam, Moses' sister, was barred from the community for a week.

Although Uzziah was one of Judah's greatest kings, he was, after being stricken with "leprosy," kept "in a several house, being a leper" (2 Chron. 26:21), i.e., in a segregated house. In non-Biblical cultures, such quarantines were not normal, and emphatically not the case for powerful rulers.

A very common temptation of many older commentators has been to read all kinds of meanings into the text. The starting point is usually the fact that these ailments called leprosy mean a form of living death, and hence leprosy is made a type of death. So much is true, up to a very limited point. But the simple and blunt fact is that we have here laws governing an important area of personal health and community safety. *The text means nothing more.* Calvin gave healthy corrective to such misinterpretations, one too seldom heeded. He said in part:

I am aware how greatly interpreters differ from each other, and how variously they twist whatever Moses has written about LEPROSY. Some are too eagerly devoted to allegories; some think that God, as a prudent Legislator, merely gave a commandment of a sanitary nature, in order that a contagious disease should not spread among the people. This notion, however, is very poor, and almost unmeaning; and is briefly refuted by Moses himself, both where he recounts the history of Miriam's leprosy, and also where he assigns the cause why lepers should be put out of the camp, viz., that they might not defile the camp in which God dwells, whilst he ranks them with those that have an issue, and that are defiled by the dead.¹³⁷

Thus, there are two extremes which must be avoided. *First*, we must not see these as allegorical statements and thus neglect their plain and obvious meaning. These are sanitary regulations. *Second*, we cannot see these laws are merely sanitary rules: they are a part of the laws of holiness, and laws of clean and unclean. Although they are terms having a physical as well as a moral and spiritual implication, they have an essential relationship always to *holiness*. The goal of God's creation is a mature and godly man developing, in religious and physical health, all the potentialities of his being and of the material world around him. All God's laws have this focus and purpose.

Chapter Twenty-Five

The Ritual of Cleansing

(Leviticus 14:1-57)

1. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,
2. This shall be the law of the leper in the day of his cleansing: He shall be brought unto the priest:
3. And the priest shall go forth out of the camp; and the priest shall look, and, behold, if the plague of leprosy be healed in the leper;
4. Then shall the priest command to take for him that is to be cleansed two birds alive and clean, and cedar wood, and scarlet, and hyssop:
5. And the priest shall command that one of the birds be killed in an earthen vessel over running water:
6. As for the living bird, he shall take it, and the cedar wood, and the scarlet, and the hyssop, and shall dip them and the living bird in the blood of the bird that was killed over the running water:
7. And he shall sprinkle upon him that is to be cleansed from the leprosy seven times, and shall pronounce him clean, and shall let the living bird loose into the open field.
8. And he that is to be cleansed shall wash his clothes, and shave off all his hair, and wash himself in water, that he may be clean: and after that he shall come into the camp, and shall tarry abroad out of his tent seven days.
9. But it shall be on the seventh day, that he shall shave all his hair off his head and his beard and his eyebrows, even all his hair he shall shave off: and he shall wash his clothes, also he shall wash his flesh in water, and he shall be clean.
10. And on the eighth day he shall take two he lambs without blemish, and one ewe lamb of the first year without blemish, and three tenth deals of fine flour for a meat offering, mingled with oil, and one log of oil.
11. And the priest that maketh him clean shall present the man that is to be made clean, and those things, before the LORD, at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation:
12. And the priest shall take one he lamb, and offer him for a trespass offering, and the log of oil, and wave them for a wave offering before the LORD:
13. And he shall slay the lamb in the place where he shall kill the sin offering and the burnt offering, in the holy place: for as the sin offering is the priest's, so is the trespass offering: it is most holy:
14. And the priest shall take some of the blood of the trespass offering, and the priest shall put it upon the tip of the right ear of him that is to be cleansed, and upon the thumb of his right hand, and upon the great toe of his right foot:
15. And the priest shall take some of the log of oil, and pour it into the palm of his own left hand:
16. And the priest shall dip his right finger in the oil that is in his left hand, and shall sprinkle of the oil with his finger seven times before the LORD:

17. And of the rest of the oil that is in his hand shall the priest put upon the tip of the right ear of him that is to be cleansed, and upon the thumb of his right hand, and upon the great toe of his right foot, upon the blood of the trespass offering:

18. And the remnant of the oil that is in the priest's hand he shall pour upon the head of him that is to be cleansed: and the priest shall make an atonement for him before the LORD.

19. And the priest shall offer the sin offering, and make an atonement for him that is to be cleansed from his uncleanness; and afterward he shall kill the burnt offering:

20. And the priest shall offer the burnt offering and the meat offering upon the altar: and the priest shall make an atonement for him, and he shall be clean.

21. And if he be poor, and cannot get so much; then he shall take one lamb for a trespass offering to be waved, to make an atonement for him, and one tenth deal of fine flour mingled with oil for a meat offering, and a log of oil;

22. And two turtledoves, or two young pigeons, such as he is able to get; and the one shall be a sin offering, and the other a burnt offering.

23. And he shall bring them on the eighth day for his cleansing unto the priest, unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, before the LORD.

24. And the priest shall take the lamb of the trespass offering, and the log of oil, and the priest shall wave them for a wave offering before the LORD:

25. And he shall kill the lamb of the trespass offering, and the priest shall take some of the blood of the trespass offering, and put it upon the tip of the right ear of him that is to be cleansed, and upon the thumb of his right hand, and upon the great toe of his right foot:

26. And the priest shall pour of the oil into the palm of his own left hand:

27. And the priest shall sprinkle with his right finger some of the oil that is in his left hand seven times before the LORD:

28. And the priest shall put of the oil that is in his hand upon the tip of the right ear of him that is to be cleansed, and upon the thumb of his right hand, and upon the great toe of his right foot, upon the place of the blood of the trespass offering:

29. And the rest of the oil that is in the priest's hand he shall put upon the head of him that is to be cleansed, to make an atonement for him before the LORD.

30. And he shall offer the one of the turtledoves, or of the young pigeons, such as he can get;

31. Even such as he is able to get, the one for a sin offering, and the other for a burnt offering, with the meat offering: and the priest shall make an atonement for him that is to be cleansed before the LORD.

32. This is the law of him in whom is the plague of leprosy, whose hand is not able to get that which pertaineth to his cleansing.

33. And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying,

34. When ye be come into the land of Canaan, which I give to you for a possession, and I put the plague of leprosy in a house of the land of your possession;

35. And he that owneth the house shall come and tell the priest, saying, It seemeth to me there is as it were a plague in the house:

36. Then the priest shall command that they empty the house, before the priest go into it to see the plague, that all that is in the house be not made unclean: and afterward the priest shall go in to see the house:

37. And he shall look on the plague, and, behold, if the plague be in the walls of the house with hollow strakes, greenish or reddish, which in sight are lower than the wall;

38. Then the priest shall go out of the house to the door of the house, and shut up the house seven days:

39. And the priest shall come again the seventh day, and shall look: and, behold, if the plague be spread in the walls of the house;

40. Then the priest shall command that they take away the stones in which the plague is, and they shall cast them into an unclean place without the city:

41. And he shall cause the house to be scraped within round about, and they shall pour out the dust that they scrape off without the city into an unclean place:

42. And they shall take other stones, and put them in the place of those stones; and he shall take other mortar, and shall plaister the house.

43. And if the plague come again, and break out in the house, after that he hath taken away the stones, and after he hath scraped the house, and after it is plaistered;

44. Then the priest shall come and look, and, behold, if the plague be spread in the house, it is a fretting leprosy in the house: it is unclean.

45. And he shall break down the house, the stones of it, and the timber thereof, and all the mortar of the house; and he shall carry them forth out of the city into an unclean place.

46. Moreover he that goeth into the house all the while that it is shut up shall be unclean until the even.

47. And he that lieth in the house shall wash his clothes; and he that eateth in the house shall wash his clothes.

48. And if the priest shall come in, and look upon it, and, behold, the plague hath not spread in the house, after the house was plaistered: then the priest shall pronounce the house clean, because the plague is healed.

49. And he shall take to cleanse the house two birds, and cedar wood, and scarlet, and hyssop:

50. And he shall kill the one of the birds in an earthen vessel over running water:

51. And he shall take the cedar wood, and the hyssop, and the scarlet, and the living bird, and dip them in the blood of the slain bird, and in the running water, and sprinkle the house seven times:

52. And he shall cleanse the house with the blood of the bird, and with the running water, and with the living bird, and with the cedar wood, and with the hyssop, and with the scarlet:

53. But he shall let go the living bird out of the city into the open fields, and make an atonement for the house: and it shall be clean.

54. This is the law for all manner of plague of leprosy, and scall,

55. And for the leprosy of a garment, and of a house,

56. And for a rising, and for a scab, and for a bright spot:

57. To teach when it is unclean, and when it is clean: this is the law of leprosy. (Leviticus 14:1-57)

One of our problems as we approach Biblical law is that we face centuries of error on the subject. *First*, when Paul attacked the law as Pharisaism redefined it, he made it clear that his purpose was not to multiply or make void God's law but rather to establish it (Rom. 3:31). Too many churchmen saw fit to see this as the elimination of God's law. *Second*, in the late medieval era, pietism undermined the law, as did mysticism, so that a ladder of ascent to God began to govern popular thought. Again, more than a few saw the "remedy" from the medieval view as freedom from God's law together with the church's law. The Lutheran attack on the penitential system became in time an attack on God's law as Protestant pietism sought to rid itself of non-pietistic elements in the faith. *Third*, the rise of dispensationalism, modernism, and premillennialist expectations of the end all worked to make law unimportant. *Fourth*, when the state is maximized, Biblical law is minimized. God's law provides us with government and with the means of government in all the spheres of life: personal, familial, educational, ecclesiastical, vocational, societal, and also in the civil realm. Because government in these areas is preempted by the modern state, God's law is minimized, and in large part declared to be obsolete.

One of the more striking aspects of Leviticus 14, which deals with the cleansing of disease, is that the matter of discharging a person who has had one of the ailments described in Leviticus 13 is both a *health examination* and a *ritual*. To pass from quarantine to freedom is thus more than a medical discharge. It is a ritual or a *rite*. The word *rite* comes from an ancient Greek word akin to *arithmetic*; it means a number, a precise calculation in its root form. A rite is the form of *worship*, an English word made up of *worth*, and *ship*, i.e., the worthy vessel or ship. Thus a rite of worship is the correct or proper means of approaching God. In its Biblical meaning, the rites of worship require an inward faithfulness with an outward fidelity to the forms of worship. Thus, the rite whereby the diseased person was given a clean bill of health marked his readmission into the covenant fellowship and worshipping community. When we look at the liturgies of the early church, we find that they were marked by a prayer of intercession for all God's people, a continuing prayer in many churches.

Four mandatory sacrifices took place prior to readmission to the covenant community: the purification offering, the burnt offering, the reparation offering, and the cereal offering. The man about to be discharged had to live in a segregated manner, separated both from the diseased community and the healthy one, for seven days, and on the eighth day he brought his sacrifices and was a free man (v. 8).

Infected houses are dealt with in vv. 33-53. The house carrying an infection is quarantined. The diseased portion of the house, or all of it, may be destroyed if the infection remains.

Holiness involves wholeness, and this is the goal of the law. We have a summary of Leviticus 13-14 in 14:54-57.

It is noteworthy that Maimonides, in *The Book of Cleanness*, spoke of an infected man as a "Father of Uncleaness," and he applied the same term to an infected house. Because a father is

the progenitor of children, so too the infected man or house is a progenitor or father of uncleanness.

This law is the most minute and detailed of all the forms of purification. Only the form for the purification from contact with a dead body (Num. 19) and for the cleansing of a defiled Nazarite (Num. 6) are comparable. But there is much more here. As F. Meyrick noted,

The whole nation was in a sense a priestly nation, and the restoration of the lapsed member to his rights was therefore a quasiconsecration.¹³⁸

After seven days' sojourn in the camp, but not in his own tent, the leper was allowed to approach the tabernacle with two he-lambs without blemish, one ewe-lamb without blemish of the first year, and three tenth-deals of fine flour, mingled with oil, and one log of oil. These were to be used as a trespass offering, a sin offering, and a burnt offering. These suggest respectively a sense of *unprofitableness* or shortcoming, *atonement*, and *personal consecration*. The blood of the trespass offering is to be applied to the right ear, thumb of the right hand, and great toe of the right foot, and the oil of consecration to be added thereto. This corresponds exactly to the consecration of the priests (ch. VIII). It suggests that it is *out of a* sense of past unprofitableness that future consecration *comes* (cf. Luke XVII. 5-10).¹³⁹

The doctrine of the priesthood of all believers is clearly set forth in both Testaments, and, in the ritual of cleansing, the healed man is confronted by the fact that he must see himself as God's priest, required to dedicate the totality of his life and calling to the triune God.

Many commentators have seen the forms of "leprosy" or diseases described in Leviticus 13-14 as types and symbols of sin. However, as Harrison reminds us, the Bible never does so.¹⁴⁰ Disease is simply presented as disease, one consequence of a fallen world. Quarantine is a separation of disease, and moral quarantine is a separation of evil from society. This is very important to note. We do not flee *from* disease and sin, but rather separate sin and contagious disease from the community. Our Lord says, "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil (or, the evil one)" (John 17:15). Modern separationism too often quarantines the healthy and the moral, not the diseased and the criminal members of society.

In these chapters, the "leper" or diseased person is described as unclean, not as immoral. It is noteworthy that, as Parker observed, "Men turn away from the perusal of such chapters, and look complacently upon moral leprosy."¹⁴¹

It is also important to note that the observance of these laws helped eliminate Hansen's disease, or true leprosy, faster in Europe than in other continents. In Europe, there were at least 9,000 hospitals for leprosy alone, maintained by Christian charity. Louis VII of France left legacies to more than 2,000 hospitals for lepers in his country; no ruler of our times has manifested any comparable charity. The Normans in France applied quarantine strictly, both in Normandy and in England. Thus, the very wealthy and influential Knight, Amiloun, was expelled from his castle to

become a beggar when he contracted leprosy. The Lateran Council of 1172 required that special churches be built for lepers, and, in time, both hospitals and churches were available for lepers.¹⁴²

In looking at the modern application of this law, we must recognize, *first*, that the sacrificial rites are no longer valid, since Christ's sacrifice replaces them all. This, however, does not eliminate the necessity of a Christian ministry to the sick, and a ritual for restoration to health is certainly in order. *Second*, as has been noted, the fact of quarantine is of Biblical origin and rests on a Biblical doctrine of *order*. As the Biblical world and life view is undermined, so too is the concept of quarantine. The refusal to apply quarantine to AIDS patients is symptomatic of a disregard for Biblical order. It goes hand in hand with disregard for *moral* order. The consequences of such a disregard can only be deadly.

Chapter Twenty-Six

Holiness and Health

(Leviticus 15:1-33)

1. And the LORD spake unto Moses and to Aaron, saying,
2. Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When any man hath a running issue out of his flesh, because of his issue he is unclean.
3. And this shall be his uncleanness in his issue: whether his flesh run with his issue, or his flesh be stopped from his issue, it is his uncleanness.
4. Every bed, whereon he lieth that hath the issue, is unclean: and every thing, whereon he sitteth, shall be unclean.
5. And whosoever toucheth his bed shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even.
6. And he that sitteth on any thing whereon he sat that hath the issue shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even.
7. And he that toucheth the flesh of him that hath the issue shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even.
8. And if he that hath the issue spit upon him that is clean; then he shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even.
9. And what saddle soever he rideth upon that hath the issue shall be unclean.
10. And whosoever toucheth any thing that was under him shall be unclean until the even: and he that beareth any of those things shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even.
11. And whomsoever he toucheth that hath the issue, and hath not rinsed his hands in water, he shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even.
12. And the vessel of earth, that he toucheth which hath the issue, shall be broken: and every vessel of wood shall be rinsed in water.
13. And when he that hath an issue is cleansed of his issue; then he shall number to himself seven days for his cleansing, and wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh in running water, and shall be clean.
14. And on the eighth day he shall take to him two turtledoves, or two young pigeons, and come before the LORD unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and give them unto the priest:
15. And the priest shall offer them, the one for a sin offering, and the other for a burnt offering; and the priest shall make an atonement for him before the LORD for his issue.
16. And if any man's seed of copulation go out from him, then he shall wash all his flesh in water, and be unclean until the even.
17. And every garment, and every skin, whereon is the seed of copulation, shall be washed with water, and be unclean until the even.
18. The woman also with whom man shall lie with seed of copulation, they shall both bathe themselves in water, and be unclean until the even.

19. And if a woman have an issue, and her issue in her flesh be blood, she shall be put apart seven days: and whosoever toucheth her shall be unclean until the even.
20. And every thing that she lieth upon in her separation shall be unclean: every thing also that she sitteth upon shall be unclean.
21. And whosoever toucheth her bed shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even.
22. And whosoever toucheth any thing that she sat upon shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even.
23. And if it be on her bed, or on any thing whereon she sitteth, when he toucheth it, he shall be unclean until the even.
24. And if any man lie with her at all, and her flowers be upon him, he shall be unclean seven days; and all the bed whereon he lieth shall be unclean.
25. And if a woman have an issue of her blood many days out of the time of her separation, or if it run beyond the time of her separation; all the days of the issue of her uncleanness shall be as the days of her separation: she shall be unclean.
26. Every bed whereon she lieth all the days of her issue shall be unto her as the bed of her separation: and whatsoever she sitteth upon shall be unclean, as the uncleanness of her separation.
27. And whosoever toucheth those things shall be unclean, and shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even.
28. But if she be cleansed of her issue, then she shall number to herself seven days, and after that she shall be clean.
29. And on the eighth day she shall take unto her two turtles, or two young pigeons, and bring them unto the priest, to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.
30. And the priest shall offer the one for a sin offering, and the other for a burnt offering; and the priest shall make an atonement for her before the LORD for the issue of her uncleanness.
31. Thus shall ye separate the children of Israel from their uncleanness; that they die not in their uncleanness, when they defile my tabernacle that is among them.
32. This is the law of him that hath an issue, and of him whose seed goeth from him, and is defiled therewith;
33. And of her that is sick of her flowers, and of him that hath an issue, of the man, and of the woman, and of him that lieth with her that is unclean. (Leviticus 15:1-33)

This is one of the chapters in the law often cited by people who argue that the law is impossible nonsense. The very precision and subject matter condemn it for many, who feel, as did Viscount Melbourne, that, "Things have come to a pretty pass when religion is allowed to invade the sphere of private life."¹⁴³ Melbourne's statement highlights a curious fact: he objected to allowing Christianity any role in a man's *private* life: for him it was a formal fact of *public* life. Twentieth century man denies to Christianity any jurisdiction in public life and relegates it to the private sphere for those who choose to allow it there. In reality, the jurisdiction of Biblical faith is cosmic and total, and therefore inclusive of both public and private spheres.

It is noteworthy also that Knight cites this chapter as one of the sources of near immunity of Jews from plagues and epidemics over the centuries. He observes, “the near immunity of the Jew from infection in reality sprang from the fact that he kept strictly the laws on hygiene that we find in our book of Leviticus.”¹⁴⁴

There are several distinct sections in Leviticus 15. *First*, in vv. 2-15, we have reference to a diseased sexual discharge in men. The Septuagint seems to identify this as gonorrhoea, and most commentators agree. However, the requirements of this law are clearly applicable to all sexual diseases. The law specifies various sanitation requirements for the course of the disease. On being pronounced clean, various sacrifices are required. Treatment is not prescribed, but the prevention of contagion is stressed. The priest formally readmits the cured man to covenant life and pronounces him cured; the treatment was left to practitioners.

Second, vv. 16-18 require purification, simple bathing, after normal sexual relations in marriage. The key to this section as to all of this chapter is v. 31, which makes it clear that it has reference to the Sanctuary; *people were unclean in relation to the Sanctuary* for these specified conditions. Their condition might be, as in vv. 2-15 and 25-30, a diseased one, or it might not. There were hygienic considerations in the laws, but the common factor in all is also the requirement of purification before participating in the life of the Sanctuary. This is still the practice in Orthodox Judaism, and was for centuries a church requirement. This meaning in Jewish practice over the centuries is noted in Hertz’s comment that the reference is to the Sanctuary. Hertz said also:

The uncleanness described in v. 16-18 did not apply to laymen. It involved merely absence from the ‘camp’, which in Rabbinic exegesis was taken to mean the Sanctuary proper and the Levite encampment around the Sanctuary. It also involved abstention from sacrificial food (*terumah and maaser*). If the prescribed priestly ablutions had been taken, the prohibition ceased in regard to the Levite encampment and maaser.¹⁴⁵

The sections which refer to women and their discharges apparently have a like reference, given the statement of v. 31. They echo also the commandment of Exodus 19:10-15, which, among other things, barred the fertility cult belief that sexuality is a central means of communion with God. There is no hint that sexuality is other than God-created and good. There is, however, a strong bar against the association of sexuality with worship. Pagan antiquity, and continuing cults to the present, have viewed God essentially as the generative source and hence best served and worshipped by generative acts. Thus, the practice of prostitution, and often of various perversions, was a part of temple or shrine devotion. In such faiths, prostitution by the woman and castration by the man constituted the supreme acts of religious devotion. God’s law bars all such practices.

Third, in vv. 19-24 we have laws concerning menstrual discharges. Again, this has reference to the Sanctuary. In Leviticus 18:19 sexual intercourse during menstruation is banned, and in 20:18 we have reference to this as a violation of the separateness and integrity of a woman. Thus, while she cannot, if a Levite’s wife, partake of the Sanctuary meals, she has in relation to her husband the affirmation of freedom. She is not his creature but God’s, and both man and wife are under His law.

Fourth, in vv. 25-30 we have a general reference to abnormal discharges by a woman, and these may or may not be contagious and /or diseased. Again, the required precautions follow.

Fifth, in vv. 31-33, we have a summary statement. In v. 31 the central purpose is given, to maintain the holiness of the Kingdom of Priests and of the Sanctuary. This makes clear an important fact: for modern man, health concerns are essentially personal and then social. For Scripture, health is a religious matter. Holiness requires our total dedication to God, and our total health, moral, physical, and theological, so that we may render the best possible service to the triune God. By making health an essentially personal concern, we have made it clear that man's chief concern is his own well-being in terms of purely personal goals. When a wife tells her husband to take better care of himself for the family's sake, she is aware, however fragmentarily, that health is more than a personal matter. Scripture tells us that it is a religious one, a matter of holiness and service to God.

At this point an important distinction must be made again. Sickness and death exist because this is a fallen world. They are *in origin* the results of sin; as we contract ailments, these may or may not be the results of sin. A disease contracted can be a consequence of sin, as are the majority of cases of sexually transmitted diseases. A cold or the flu *may* be a result of carelessness, and it may not be; we live in a world which, being fallen, exposes us to some hazards. Thus, particular instances of sickness cannot be *per se* defined as immoral; to do so is immoral. What must be stressed is that holiness requires that wholeness of person which sets forth the total health of man.

The quarantined persons are not, if godly, separated from God; they are separated from the covenant community in order to preserve the general health and the working ability of society.

Chapter Twenty-Seven

The New Beginning

(Leviticus 16:1-3)

1. And the LORD spake unto Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they offered before the LORD, and died;
2. And the LORD said unto Moses, Speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not at all times into the holy place within the vail before the mercy seat, which is upon the ark; that he die not: for I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat.
3. Thus shall Aaron come into the holy place: with a young bullock for a sin offering, and a ram for a burnt offering. (Leviticus 16:1-3)

One of the damaging aspects of modern church practice and of popular thought as well is the separation of the incarnation and the atonement. To separate the two is to do serious injustice to Scripture. In the early church, more than a few problems existed, due to Greco-Roman influences, and, as a result, the understanding of many doctrines was primitive and fragmentary. At this point, however, the unity of the incarnation and of the atonement, of Christmas and Easter, was clear for them. Thus, St. Ephrem the Syrian, in all his writings on the incarnation, hails the unity of the birth and the crucifixion as God's saving act. In his "Rhythm the Second," on the subject of Christ's birth, Ephrem declared:

Let us praise Him, that prevailed and quickened us by His stripes! Praise we Him, that took away the curse by His thorns! Praise we Him, that put death to death by His dying! Praise we Him, that held His peace and justified us! Praise we Him, who rebuked death that had overcome us!... Glory be to God that cured weak humanity!... His Son became a Medicine, that sheweth sinners mercy. Blessed be He that dwelt in the womb, and wrought therein a perfect Temple, that He might dwell in it, a Throne that He might be in it, a Garment that He might be arrayed in it, and a Weapon that He might conquer in it.¹⁴⁶

Such a unity is implicit in Leviticus 16, the ritual of the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur. In these first three verses, we are reminded of Leviticus 10, of Nadab and Abihu, and their sin and death. We are, in fact, told that these words of Leviticus 16 were spoken by God to Moses immediately after that episode. According to Rabbi Hertz, the two men were executed by God for "intoxication, unholy ambition, arbitrary tampering with the service, and introducing 'strange fire' into the Sanctuary." He added, "The story of Nadab and Abihu is a parable for young Israel in every generation."¹⁴⁷

Our concern here is with the fact that the ritual of atonement is given "after the death of the two sons of Aaron" (v. 1). Sacrifices of atonement had been previously given and long practiced. Now a *day* of atonement, an observance by the covenant nation and by all the covenant people, is required. The fact of atonement was not new; the day of atonement, Yom Kippur, was.

Moreover, it was linked to the death of Aaron's two sons. The reference to their death is deliberately tied to this new observance.

In Genesis 4:1, we read, "And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD." Eve's statement is an important one. Cassuto's analysis of its literal meaning is telling:

... the first woman, in her joy at giving birth to her first son, boasts of her generative power, which approximates in her estimation to the Divine creative power. The Lord formed the first *man* (ii.7), and I have formed the second *man*... (literally, 'I have created a man with the Lord'): *I stand together* (i.e. *equally*) WITH HIM *in the rank of creators*.¹⁴⁸

Clearly, Eve regarded Cain as in some sense a personal triumph and a future hope. God had created, and now she had also created, and history now had a new beginning because of her son. Cain, of course, was the first murderer, and a man in flight from God and man.

The institution of circumcision is clearly related to this fact. It is a covenant rite, and it is a symbolic castration whereby parents declare that neither for them nor for their posterity is there hope in generation but only in regeneration. Circumcision in its meaning is thus a renunciation of any humanistic hope. It means that our future can only have promise if it is in the triune God.

Men commonly corrupt their own futures and their own potentialities. Gies, in her study of knighthood, tells us how knights changed when that status, after 1050, became hereditary, handed down from father to son: "what had been a rank became a hereditary caste," and ability was replaced by birth. In time, their lives and their tournaments became "an adjunct of theatrical productions and partook of their character."¹⁴⁹ When men seek to be their own gods, they turn their lives into theater, acting out their imagination and seeing their realization, not in truth and service, but in name and renown. The builders of the Tower of Babel said, in part, "Let us make us a name" (Gen. 11: 4).

God confounds all such plans and hopes. With Aaron, whose sons God had ordained to be a hereditary priesthood, it no doubt seemed to indicate an institutionalized holiness in his bloodline. The incident of the golden calf made Aaron's sin clear, and the incident of Nadab and Abihu undercut any *necessary* personal holiness in the persons filling holy "offices" or functions. In fact, Aaron is told that he has no admission into the Most Holy Place except once a year, on the tenth day of the seventh month (v. 29 and 34; Lev. 23:26-32; 25:9; Ex. 30:10). According to v. 3, preparatory sacrifices had to precede Aaron's entrance into the Holy of Holies, God's presence.

In v. 2, we have a reference to the "mercy seat," a translation that goes back to Martin Luther. We do not have two words in the original Hebrew, but one, *Kapporeth*, meaning *covering*. Knight's comment here is especially important: God's atoning grace and love cover, not the sin, but the sinner. As Knight says, "there is no such thing as sin without a sinner. 'Sin' is only the symptom of a diseased personality," so that the *Kapporeth* covered the sin because it so covered the sinner.¹⁵⁰ Roman Catholic versions usually translate the word as "the propitiatory," which is

good, and the recent Jewish rendering of the Torah gives it very literally as “the cover.”¹⁵¹ However, Luther’s translation was not an arbitrary one. It was based on Psalm 99:1,

The LORD reigneth: let the people tremble: he sitteth between the cherubims; let the earth be moved.

The sinner is covered from God’s judgment by God’s atoning grace and mercy. Man’s future is therefore seen in terms of God’s grace and man’s response of faithfulness in exercising dominion by means of God’s law. Man is restored by grace and regenerated to do God’s work. There is no validity to Eve’s hope in Cain, no hope in generation, only in regeneration.

It is, however, at this point that the offense of the faith is particularly strong. Vinnie Ream, the young woman who sculptured Lincoln, was internationally honored for her art. Like most Americans, she was a churchgoer and sang in choirs. On one occasion, while in Europe, she took to church with her the skeptic, George Brandes. In this instance, it was Vinnie Ream who was angry, calling the pastor “the most stupid donkey I have ever heard in my life.” The pastor’s sermon was on the text, Christ’s words, “Thy sins are forgiven thee.” Vinnie Ream declared, “What am I benefited if ever so many heavenly beings say to me: ‘I pretend you have not done it,’ if I know that I have!”¹⁵²

Eve begins life outside Eden confounded in her hopes by the child of her hopes, Cain; the priesthood of God’s covenant people began its history confounded by the sin of Aaron with the golden calf, and the sin of Nadab and Abihu. The new beginning is not of man nor of generation, but by God’s atoning and regenerating grace.

Man and history have a new beginning, and it is from God, and it is His atonement.

Turning again to the separation of incarnation and atonement, Christmas and Easter, it is important to note its implications. The separation began to a large measure with St. Francis, who made the crèche, and the humility of the incarnation, a popular object of piety. This affected the unity of emphasis on the incarnation as God’s invasion of history to destroy the power of sin and death, the atonement and resurrection as the destruction of both, and the Last Judgment as the total triumph and righting of all things. The Spiritual Franciscans, in faithfulness to St. Francis, favored an early form of Kenosis, forsaking property, progress in Christian culture, and the development of dominion, in favor of an abandonment of this world. In the course of time, Kenosis affected the Easter event: the emphasis centered on the humiliation of the cross, sometimes to the downgrading of the empty tomb. The sign of triumph, the empty cross, became a crucifix with a dead Christ. Not triumph but humiliation became the gospel for some. Such an emphasis did much to break down the medieval culture, and to damage both the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation. To separate the incarnation, atonement, resurrection, ascension, and Last Judgment one from the other is to damage their meaning.

Chapter Twenty-Eight

The Scope of Atonement

(*Leviticus 16:4-10*)

4. He shall put on the holy linen coat, and he shall have the linen breeches upon his flesh, and shall be girded with a linen girdle, and with the linen mitre shall he be attired: these are holy garments; therefore shall he wash his flesh in water, and so put them on.
5. And he shall take of the congregation of the children of Israel two kids of the goats for a sin offering, and one ram for a burnt offering.
6. And Aaron shall offer his bullock of the sin offering, which is for himself, and make an atonement for himself, and for his house.
7. And he shall take the two goats, and present them before the LORD at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.
8. And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the LORD, and the other lot for the scapegoat.
9. And Aaron shall bring the goat upon which the LORD'S lot fell, and offer him for a sin offering.
10. But the goat, on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat, shall be presented alive before the LORD, to make an atonement with him, and to let him go for a scapegoat into the wilderness. (*Leviticus 16:4-10*)

We have here, as a key part of the Day of Atonement, the scapegoat ritual. As Calvin noted, "This was the only expiatory sacrifice in the Law without blood."¹⁵³ However, the fact that the two goats accomplish a common task of atonement means that the scapegoat is involved in the shedding of the blood by the other goat. The term "scapegoat" has passed into common usage with the clear awareness of its meaning. A scapegoat is someone who is innocent but upon whom all the guilt and punishment falls. The scapegoat is made the sin-bearer for the sinning and guilty parties. The term *scapegoat* translates *Azazel*, the meaning of which none know, though many give various imaginative renditions. *Scapegoat* tells us clearly what this goat was.

In v. 4, we see that the high priest, except for his mitre, was dressed on the Day of Atonement like an ordinary priest. The central focus on that day was not on himself but on atonement, and on the sin-bearer. On this day as always he began by bathing, a prerequisite for all on approaching the Sanctuary. This law was observed into this century in that, however often people bathed otherwise, they bathed before the Sabbath observances.

Before beginning the ritual of the scapegoat, the high priest made sacrifices for himself (v. 3), and only then proceeded with the atonement for the people. Kellogg commented:

There are three fundamental facts which stand before us in this chapter, which must find their place in any explanation which may be adopted. 1). Both of the goats are declared to be "a sin-offering;" the live goat, no less than the other. 2).

In consistency with this, the live goat, no less than the other, was consecrated to Jehovah, in that he was “set alive before the Lord.” 3). The function expressly ascribed to him in the law is the complete removal of the transgressions of Israel, symbolically transferred to him as a burden, by the laying on of hands with confession of sin.¹⁵⁴

In vv. 20-28, we have more on the scapegoat.

In v. 6, we are told that the high priest’s sacrifices were for himself and for “his house,” i.e., including his wife as well as his children. At this time, according to Hebrew tradition, he made a confession of sins:

In the traditional account of the rites of the Day of Atonement, preserved in the Mishnah, the High Priest made this confession: ‘O God, I have sinned, I have committed iniquity, I have transgressed against Thee, I and my household. I beseech Thee by Thy Name, grant Thou atonement for the sins, and for the iniquities, and for the transgressions wherein I have sinned, and committed iniquity and transgressed against Thee, I and my household.’ In his confession, the High Priest used the ineffable Name of God, the Tetragrammaton, in its true pronounciation; whereupon the assembled priest and people of the Court prostrated themselves to the ground, and exclaimed, ‘Blessed be His Name, Whose glorious Kingdom is for ever and ever.’¹⁵⁵

As we have previously noted, confession is tied always to atonement. Grace brings forth confession, because grace clearly reveals to us our sin and lawlessness.

There is a separation, in this ritual, of sin from the people *and the land*. Oehler said,

By the application of the blood of the first goat to the second, it was moreover declared, that only in virtue of the atonement effected by the blood of the first goat are the people placed in a condition to send away their sins as forgiven.... The act of sending away the goat is thus described (Lev. XVI. 21 sq.): “And let Aaron lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions according to all their sins, and let him put them upon the head of the goat, and send him away by a man ready at hand into the wilderness....”¹⁵⁶

We must not forget that the very ground is cursed because of man’s sin (Gen. 3:17). Again and again, Scripture speaks of the link between man’s sin and the land:

24. Defile not ye yourselves in any of these things: for in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out before you:
25. And the land is defiled: therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants.

26. Ye shall therefore keep my statutes and my judgments, and shall not commit any of these abominations: neither any of your own nation, nor any stranger that sojourneth among you:

27. (For all these abominations have the men of the land done, which were before you, and the land is defiled;)

28. That the land spue not you out also, when ye defile it, as it spued out the nations that were before you.

29. For whosoever shall commit any of these abominations, even the souls that commit them shall be cut off from among their people.

30. Therefore shall ye keep mine ordinance, that ye commit not any one of these abominable customs, which were committed before you, and that ye defile not yourselves therein: I am the LORD your God. (Leviticus 18:24-30)

At the very least, these verses tell us that God has established a symbolic relationship between man and the land, and, as a result, man's sins recoil on him in a number of ways.

The ritual of the scapegoat is very much in mind throughout the New Testament. It is very plainly referred to by St. Paul, in 2 Corinthians 5:21, as the climax of a passage:

17. Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed; behold, all things are become new.

18. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;

19. To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

20. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

21. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. (2 Corinthians 5:17-21)

Jesus Christ, says Paul, is our scapegoat, the One whom God "hath made...to be sin for us," i.e., the sin-bearer. Because He is our sin-bearer, we are now justified. In fact, we have been "made the righteousness (or, justice) of God in him." This is a startling statement. The sin-bearer or scapegoat removes our sin from us to make us God's justice! We are new creatures, or, a new creation, *the justice people*, a part of the new creation. We have a work of reconciliation as ambassadors of Christ, acting "in Christ's stead," summoning all peoples to this cleansed and renewed status and to the ministry of reconciliation. It must be stressed that this reconciliation is to God; it is God's law we have offended, and God whom we have rebelled against. Thus, we must be reconciled to Him and then do His work on earth.

The iniquities of the people were laid upon the head of the goat. The two goats are in a sense one goat, with a common function. The sin of the people requires two things. *First*, the death penalty must be executed on all sinners. This is done vicariously; the goat represents the people and dies for their sins. *Second*, the living goat is separated from the land and the people. We are made a new creation and are no longer the old man but a new man in Christ.

As Knight has pointed out, atonement is not a passive act:

The verb “to make atonement” (*kipper*) describes an actual action. In the same way, the New Testament insists that Christ’s death on the Cross was not a passive acceptance of the forces of evil; it was a deliberate *action* on Jesus’ part in obedience to the will of God.¹⁵⁷

It is thus a *deliberate* action with a deliberate *end*: a renewed people, and a renewed land. We cannot limit the scope of the Gospel and of atonement to man: it is cosmic in purpose.

Paul tells us that Christians must be *the justice people*. An archaic English word for judges was *justicer*. This is the calling of all Christians. The people who are justified are to be God’s justice people. For people who call themselves Christians to be indifferent to justice is to deny their Justifier.

Atonement exists in other religions, but it is essentially an amoral practice whose concern is “*to placate evil and to propitiate powers that are or may become unfriendly.*”¹⁵⁸ This is the concern of “primitive” atonement according to Alexander. However, even in those non-Christian religions where a recognition of sin in some sense existed, and confession was necessary, there was a serious problem. The god or gods represented certain forms of power and were not necessarily moral power. To illustrate this on a very human level, one can offend a Stalin on the one hand, or a St. Paul on the other; the offenses can be almost identical, but the character of the relationship and the nature of the meaning of the offense will be radically different.

The God of Scripture is Almighty and all righteous. The gods of other religions do not offer this fact, i.e., the holiness of God. Holiness in paganism is essentially a sense of dread. Holiness in Scripture is a total separation to God’s justice and truth.

False atonement propitiates evil. A culture without Christ’s atonement will seek to placate evil. This can mean being more kindly towards a criminal’s “rights” than those of a victim. It can mean a generous treatment of Marxist tyrant states. It is a logical necessity for unatoned men to placate evil, because for them evil is the locale of power. They seek power from below, not from God Almighty.

Chapter Twenty-Nine

Vicarious Atonement

(Leviticus 16:11-28)

11. And Aaron shall bring the bullock of the sin offering, which is for himself, and shall make an atonement for himself, and for his house, and shall kill the bullock of the sin offering which is for himself:

12. And he shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from off the altar before the LORD, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and bring it within the vail:

13. And he shall put the incense upon the fire before the LORD, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that is upon the testimony, that he die not:

14. And he shall take of the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it with his finger upon the mercy seat eastward; and before the mercy seat shall he sprinkle of the blood with his finger seven times.

15. Then shall he kill the goat of the sin offering, that is for the people, and bring his blood within the vail, and do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it upon the mercy seat, and before the mercy seat.

16. And he shall make an atonement for the holy place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins: and so shall he do for the tabernacle of the congregation, that remaineth among them in the midst of their uncleanness.

17. And there shall be no man in the tabernacle of the congregation when he goeth in to make an atonement in the holy place, until he come out, and have made an atonement for himself, and for his household, and for all the congregation of Israel.

18. And he shall go out unto the altar that is before the LORD, and make an atonement for it; and shall take of the blood of the bullock, and of the blood of the goat, and put it upon the horns of the altar round about.

19. And he shall sprinkle of the blood upon it with his finger seven times, and cleanse it, and hallow it from the uncleanness of the children of Israel.

20. And when he hath made an end of reconciling the holy place, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar, he shall bring the live goat:

21. And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness:

22. And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness.

23. And Aaron shall come into the tabernacle of the congregation, and shall put off the linen garments, which he put on when he went into the holy place, and shall leave them there:

24. And he shall wash his flesh with water in the holy place, and put on his garments, and come forth, and offer his burnt offering, and the burnt offering of the people, and make an atonement for himself, and for the people.

25. And the fat of the sin offering shall he burn upon the altar.

26. And he that let go the goat for the scapegoat shall wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh in water, and afterward come into the camp.

27. And the bullock for the sin offering, and the goat for the sin offering, whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the holy place, shall one carry forth without the camp; and they shall burn in the fire their skins, and their flesh, and their dung.

28. And he that burneth them shall wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh in water, and afterward he shall come into the camp. (Leviticus 16:11-28)

Leviticus makes it very clear that sin is not a casual matter, and it is also costly. The sinner had to do two things: *first*, he made restitution to God, with confession and a sacrifice. Since a bullock could cost, in terms of 1986 prices, \$300-\$500, depending on its size and weight, and sheep did not come cheaply either, the monetary price of sin was a very serious one! *Second*, restitution had to be made to man, and, since it ranged between a twofold and a five-fold restitution, this meant that sinning was very expensive! Since New Testament times, both Judaism and Christianity have cheapened the meaning of sin. What is said here gives only the personal side of the cost. In Leviticus 26, Deuteronomy 28, and many other passages, we are bluntly told of the even greater social costs and consequences.

But this is not all. In the Old Testament, five different Hebrew words describe with differing emphases what is translated by the one English word, *transgression*; in the New Testament, there are four words which are translated as *transgression*, and this can be called five if we include *anomos* and *anomia* as separate words.

In v. 16, the word *transgressions* is a word used by prophets to describe Israel's sin. *Pesha* means rebellion; it refers to a personal break from, and action against, the personal God. It is used here in the plural and means *rebellious actions*. Snaith said that it meant "sin against a personal God rather than a transgression of laws laid down by him."¹⁵⁹ It means, rather, that man has rebelled against the personal God by breaking the laws laid down by Him. God's law is a very personal fact: it is the expression of His holiness and justice.

On the day of atonement, the priest entered the most holy place. Oehler's comment here is important:

...on the day of atonement, the priest who approaches with the blood of atonement must envelope himself in a cloud of incense (Lev. XVI. 13) when he raises the curtain. This expresses the fact that full communion between God and man is not to be realized, even through the medium of the atonement to be attained by the Old Testament sacrificial institutions — that, as is said in Heb. IX. 8, as yet the way to the (heavenly) sanctuary was not made manifest....

The kapporeth rests on the ark, in which are the *tables of the law*, the testimony. This means that God sits enthroned in Israel on the ground of the covenant of law which He has made with Israel. The testimony is preserved in the ark as a *treasure*, a jewel. But, with this goes a *second* consideration; while the law is certainly, in the first place, a testimony to the will of God *toward* the people, it is also (comp. what is said in Deut. XXXI. 26f. of the roll of the law deposited beside the ark of the covenant) a testimony *against* the sinful people, — a continual record of accusation, so to speak, against their sins in the sight of the holy God. And now, when the kapporeth is over the tables, it is declared that God's grace, which provides an atonement or covering for the iniquity of the people, stands above His penal justice.¹⁶⁰

Among other things, it is important to note that Oehler called attention to the relation, *first*, between law and mercy. The law is given as covenant law: it is God's grace to his people. In the law, God gives to covenant man the way of life. God declares:

4. Ye shall do my judgments, and keep mine ordinances, to walk therein: I am the LORD your God.

5. Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am the LORD. (Leviticus 18:4-5)

Again, in Deuteronomy 4:1, God says, concerning His laws, "do them, that ye may live" (cf. John 15:4). The law is not given as a burden, although it is such to the rebels, but as a blessing. If we do not sin presumptuously, then the grace of the law manifests itself to us as mercy.

Second, the law is a treasure to the covenant people, and hence the law is in God's most holy place. The *cover* of the law is atonement or expiation, so that the law is given as an act of grace, and mercy continues to flow to the people of the covenant. To be brought into the grace and salvation of God is to be made a part of the realm of mercy and law; the law was given in grace and mercy, and the people of the law live under grace and mercy.

Third, the law is judgment against those who despise it, for to despise the law is also to despise God's mercy. The mercy seat is on the ark of the covenant; its treasure is the law, and it is the Great and Supreme Judge who gives mercy, not an anti-judge who is hostile to the law.

Fourth, at the same time, on the day of atonement, all the iniquities of the covenant people are confessed by the high priest on the head of the goat to be sent away, the scapegoat. These *iniquities* mean crookedness, "willful departures from the law of God." The ordinary sacrifices did not include presumptuous and high-handed sins. The day of atonement purged away all sins.¹⁶¹ Atonement affects our total lives; it is our entrance into the Kingdom.

A startling aspect of the ritual is in vv. 16-19, one common to most sacrifices but especially noteworthy here. The altar itself is covered by the atonement by sprinkling it with blood seven times. To use W. F. Lofthouse's term, this altar of burnt offering is "unsinners."¹⁶² Atonement is the beginning of the reconstitution of all things, visible and invisible, physical and spiritual.

In v. 21, we see again the ritual of the laying on of hands. This implies an identification in judgment, i.e., the death of the sacrificial animal is accepted as one's own deserved death penalty. It is also a transfer; in some services, sin and guilt are transferred, in others power and station. Vos's comment here is especially important. A transfer involves two parties, the one transferring, and the one receiving. Thus, the recipient is not a mere double of the man who makes the offering: it is a second person. What is here transferred is the sin and "the liability to death-punishment on the part of the offerer." In the ritual of the two goats, the penalty of death was transferred to the goat which was to be sacrificed. With the other goat, the sins were ritually removed from the people and the land. The two goats were "in reality one sacrificial object."¹⁶³

We have here *vicarious atonement*. The subject is offensive to fallen man, because he loves to see himself in a godlike isolation. But, "The vicarious principle has a large place in the Kingdom of God on earth. Involuntarily and also voluntarily we suffer for others and others for us. Man bears the penal consequences of his brother's sins."¹⁶⁴

Otto Scott has called attention to the fact that inheritance is in a sense a vicarious element in our lives. We not only suffer vicariously for what others have done, but we also gain what others have done. Thus, to reject the atonement because it gives us a vicarious benefit is to deny a commonplace fact of our lives, namely, that remotely past events benefit us today. Such a denial is a rejection of history. We may have been against every president of our lifetime, but we bear vicariously the burden of their sins long after their deaths. We may hate the economic beliefs and practices of our era, but we bear the burden of those sins all the same. *Vicarious suffering is a commonplace fact. Only God can provide vicarious atonement.*

The consequence of atonement is *freedom*. This deliverance is a freedom from the sin and guilt of our past. Only with this freedom can we find ourselves able to use the past successfully in forging the future. Only with the atonement is it possible for all things to work together for us in Christ. (Rom. 8:28).

The order of the ritual is well summarized by Samuel Clark:

It is important, in reference to the meaning of the Day of Atonement, to observe the order of the rites as they are described in these verses. (1) The Sin-offering for the priests (v. 11). (2) The High priest enters the First time, within the vail, with the incense. (vv. 12-13). (3) He enters the Second time with the blood of the priest's Sin-offering (v. 14). (4) The sacrifice of the goat "for Jehovah" (v. 15). (5) The High priest enters the Third time within the vail with the blood of the goat (v. 15). (6) The atonement for the Tent of meeting (v. 16). (7) The atonement for the Altar of Burnt-offering in the court (vv. 18-19). (8) The goat sent away to Azazel (vv. 20-22). (9) The High priest bathes himself and resumes his golden garments (vv. 23-24). (10) The Burnt-offerings for the High priest and the people, with the fat of the two Sin-offerings, offered on the Altar (vv. 24-25). (11) The accessory sacrifices mentioned Num. XXIX. 8-11, appear now to have been offered. (12) According to Jewish tradition, the High priest again resumed his white dress and entered a Fourth time within the vail to fetch out the censer and the bowl.¹⁶⁵

The goal of all of this was, in Wenham's words, "That sin be exterminated from Israel."¹⁶⁶ According to Psalm 103:12, "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us." Micah 7:19 declares, "Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." Atonement has as its purpose the freedom of man and the earth from sin for God's Kingdom and justice, for the dominion of righteousness. The vicarious atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ leads to our vicarious righteousness, our justification, and to our freedom to become Christ's instruments and members of righteousness or justice, to bring about His dominion of justice and truth in all the earth.

We cannot escape God's order. It is inherent in every atom of being. God's order is inescapable order: to deny it or rebel against it is to invite judgment and reprobation. Atonement is central to God's order, and men cannot escape its force. They may seek atonement through sadomasochistic activities or variations thereof. In commenting on the ideas of William Blake, Schulz noted:

The point to keep in mind is that self-annihilation represents an alternative to the hated doctrine of atonement. In demanding of every individual the exercise of selfless love, the principle of self-annihilation brings the sacred hierarchy of the Christian mystery within the grasp of every person. It reduces holy exclusivity to the scale of humanity.¹⁶⁷

Self-annihilation, and Kenosis is a form of it, accomplishes only a sustained defeat. The alternative to the "hated doctrine of the atonement" is death.

Chapter Thirty

Atonement, Freedom, and Justice

(Leviticus 16:29-34)

29. And this shall be a statute for ever unto you: that in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, ye shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, whether it be one of your own country, or a stranger that sojourneth among you:

30. For on that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that ye may be clean from all your sins before the LORD.

31. It shall be a sabbath of rest unto you, and ye shall afflict your souls, by a statute for ever.

32. And the priest, whom he shall anoint, and whom he shall consecrate to minister in the priest's office in his father's stead, shall make the atonement, and shall put on the linen clothes, even the holy garments:

33. And he shall make an atonement for the holy sanctuary, and he shall make an atonement for the tabernacle of the congregation, and for the altar, and he shall make an atonement for the priests, and for all the people of the congregation.

34. And this shall be an everlasting statute unto you, to make an atonement for the children of Israel for all their sins once a year. And he did as the LORD commanded Moses. (Leviticus 16:29-34)

Wenham renders “a statute forever” as “a permanent rule.”¹⁶⁸ This requirement is stressed in vv. 29, 31, and 34. The day of atonement is to be observed permanently with fasting (“afflict your souls”), abstinence from work, and with rest. In terms of this, at one time Good Friday was a holy day; later, the respite from work was limited to three hours, from noon to three o'clock in the afternoon; now even that is rapidly disappearing. The fasting was to promote humility: man's salvation and his freedom from the fall came at the price of atonement, the vicarious sacrifice of God's appointed and unblemished One. F. W. Grant wrote, concerning the cessation from work:

Lastly, in connection with all this, we have a sabbath of rest appointed, in which all work is solemnly forbidden. In connection with atonement the meaning is most simple. Whether for Israel or for the believer now, no work of man must supplement the glorious work which has been done for sinners.¹⁶⁹

Man can add nothing to God's work of atonement: he must rest in it and place his total trust in its sufficiency. Paul echoes this requirement when, after setting forth Christ's work of justification for us, he declares, “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage” (Gal. 5:1). Our rest is in the finished and complete work of atonement. The atonement is the justification of man. Man, the condemned rebel, is made righteous, just or innocent by God's grace. Man is made a new creation in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). He is released from the death penalty: he dies in Christ, and he is made a new man by Christ's regenerating power. We are converted from outlaws into the people of the law.

At two critical points, churchmen have gone radically astray. *First*, men have set a contrast between God's law and freedom.¹⁷⁰ To do so, God's law is called Jewish, and God is portrayed as having outgrown His own justice by the time of the New Testament! This is at the least blasphemy. *Second*, to cite Richard Overton, a seventeenth century English radical, it has often been held that, "justice is my naturall right, my heirdome, my inheritance by lineall descent from the loins of Adam, and so to all the sons of men as their proper right without respect of persons." Overton went on to assert that liberty and justice are human rights. He insisted on "a natural innate freedom," and that "every man by nature...(is) a King, Priest and Prophet in his owne naturall circuite and compasse." As Mullett noted, "Overton universalized freedom and gave it an entirely natural base."¹⁷¹ In terms of this, the moral universe was turned upside down. In the name of the gospel, man was freed from God's law, God's justice. In the name of natural rights, justice and freedom were converted from moral attributes into abstract rights. Freedom is then defined as a freedom from some outward restraint, and justice as something the environment must provide for us. The state claims to be that environment, and, quite logically, it increasingly sees the restraint to freedom and justice as coming from the triune God.

Such a perspective makes freedom and justice less and less likely. It is a way of saying that the world must be virtuous in order to make our sins safe. Woodrow Wilson gave us a political version of this great heresy in his messianic effort to make the world safe for democracy by a war to end wars and a League of Nations. It has become a humanistic commonplace to view freedom and justice as abstract things unrelated to the heart of man and his moral nature. The fact of atonement tells us that only by means of atonement can justice and freedom enter the world. The atonement is the moral renewal of man; he is made a new creation ethically, not metaphysically. This atonement requires the moral death of the old man, and the creation of a regenerate man by God's grace. Louis Goldberg has commented:

There is tragedy in the current attempt to have a Day of Atonement without the shedding of the blood of a sin offering. While repentance, prayer, and good deeds, used by the Jewish people today as a substitute for the ritual of Leviticus 16, demonstrate a search for God, they are not enough to effect atonement for sin.¹⁷²

The requirement for observing the day of atonement stresses the need for man to recognize that he can never justify himself before God, or have any legitimate claim against God. Man must recognize that he stands justified entirely by God's sovereign grace. No man can make atonement for his own sins, because no man can obligate God, or impose necessity upon Him, which self-atonement would do. The issue is at heart the same as that described by Otto Scott with respect to Galileo. Pope Urban VIII favored Galileo's theories and encouraged him to publish them. As Scott notes:

He made only one stipulation, saying that Galileo could not "really maintain that God could not have wished or known how to move the heavens and the stars some other way.... To speak otherwise than hypothetically would be tantamount to constraining the infinite power and wisdom of God within the limits of your personal ideas."

Galileo chose to do precisely that, and to disseminate his manuscript as widely as possible. Urban did not object to Galileo's theology, whereby God was limited to what Galileo chose to believe. Urban's angry and justified comment went to the heart of the matter: "He can not necessitate Almighty God."¹⁷³ Those who believe in self-atonement believe that they can necessitate God and compel His favor. At the same time, by making freedom and justice into abstract conditions and rights, men can indict God for slavery and injustice without admitting that these are moral conditions created by man.

It is, however, the insistence of Rabbi Hertz that the initiative on the day of atonement is with man; although v. 30 says clearly, "on this day shall atonement be made for you," Hertz still held that atonement rests on human initiative. In this he followed Rabbi Akiba.¹⁷⁴ Within the church, Arminianism has also stressed human initiative, whereas some non-Arminians have dropped the law of God and looked for concepts of abstract natural justice to replace it.

It should be noted that the sacrifices of the day of atonement are the only ones connected with the ark. This is also the only *required* fast day in the Bible. In practice, exceptions were traditionally made for pregnant women, the sick, and children. In some churches, the food money for Good Friday was given by the family to further missionary work or to alleviate some need in Christ's name.

In conclusion, it can be said that the meaning of atonement is the reestablishment of freedom and justice in man and society. More accurately, it is the reopening of the possibility of freedom and justice for man, society, and God's earth. By means of atonement, God reestablishes His dominion over us in the form of His covenant of grace. By His sovereign grace, we are taken out of our moral slavery and injustice and commanded to grow in holiness and knowledge so that we might establish justice and dominion under Christ over all things.

With the atonement, man is justified, and by God's regenerating power, man is morally renewed and made a new creation. He is now a man with a different nature, and he is a member of the new humanity of the last Adam, Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:20-22; 45-50). As a member of Adam's humanity, his nature had the governing quality of sin, of the will to be his own god (Gen. 3:5). Now, his governing quality, his nature, is not sin but justice, or, righteousness. Sin is not something which has an abstract, objective existence; it is a moral, or, immoral quality of man. All too many people see sin in Platonic terms, as an abstract and governing Idea in being. This leads to the absurdity and immorality of objectifying sin and separating it from man's moral nature. It results in the common belief that "we should love the sinner and hate the sin." But if a man commits murder and adultery, those sins are not things that have an existence apart from the man; they do not act out crimes without a criminal. There is no sin without a sinner. Sin is the word, thought, or deed of a man; it is the expression of his immoral nature. Murder is evil, and therefore murderers are evil; no man commits murder out of the goodness of his heart! Rape is evil, and it is an expression of the evil in a rapist. Sin in a man commonly results in an objective *act*, murder, adultery, theft, false witness, and the like. Sin can manifest itself in words, thoughts, and deeds, in historical events or results, but sin itself gains no independent or metaphysical being thereby. Only by positing a metaphysical ultimacy to evil, as in Manichaeism, can man give it an independent being, and the statement, "hate the sin, but love the sinner," has a Manichaean root.

Chapter Thirty-One

Blood and Life

(Leviticus 17:1-16)

1. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,
2. Speak unto Aaron, and unto his sons, and unto all the children of Israel, and say unto them; This is the thing which the LORD hath commanded, saying,
3. What man soever there be of the house of Israel, that killeth an ox, or lamb, or goat, in the camp, or that killeth it out of the camp,
4. And bringeth it not unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, to offer an offering unto the LORD before the tabernacle of the LORD; blood shall be imputed unto that man; he hath shed blood; and that man shall be cut off from among his people:
5. To the end that the children of Israel may bring their sacrifices, which they offer in the open field, even that they may bring them unto the LORD, unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, unto the priest, and offer them for peace offerings unto the LORD.
6. And the priest shall sprinkle the blood upon the altar of the LORD at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and burn the fat for a sweet savour unto the LORD.
7. And they shall no more offer their sacrifices unto devils, after whom they have gone a whoring. This shall be a statute for ever unto them throughout their generations.
8. And thou shalt say unto them, Whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers which sojourn among you, that offereth a burnt offering or sacrifice,
9. And bringeth it not unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, to offer it unto the LORD; even that man shall be cut off from among his people.
10. And whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, that eateth any manner of blood; I will even set my face against that soul that eateth blood, and will cut him off from among his people.
11. For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.
12. Therefore I said unto the children of Israel, No soul of you shall eat blood, neither shall any stranger that sojourneth among you eat blood.
13. And whatsoever man there be of the children of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, which hunteth and catcheth any beast or fowl that may be eaten; he shall even pour out the blood thereof, and cover it with dust.
For it is the life of all flesh; the blood of it is for the life thereof: therefore I said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall eat the blood of no manner of flesh: for the life of all flesh is the blood thereof: whosoever eateth it shall be cut off.

15. And every soul that eateth that which died of itself, or that which was torn with beasts, whether it be one of your own country, or a stranger, he shall both wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even: then shall he be clean.

16. But if he wash them not, nor bathe his flesh; then he shall bear his iniquity. (Leviticus 17:1-16)

Men in many an age have flattered themselves and believed that wisdom was born with them, and that they represent the dawn of a higher consciousness. Job satirically answered Zophar's self-assured wisdom with words relevant for the Zophars of our time: "No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you" (Job 12:2). The conceits of self-assured wisdom lead to a remarkable blindness. This is certainly true where the laws of blood, as we find them in Leviticus 17, are concerned. Supposedly, these laws represent a primitive outlook which we have outgrown in our wisdom.

But so-called "primitive" peoples were often more self-conscious and self-aware than modern scholars! Blood meant life to them. Frazer, in writing on "Incarnate Human Gods," reported:

One of these modes of producing inspiration is by sucking the fresh blood of a sacrificed victim. In the temple of Apollo a woman, who had to observe a rule of chastity, tasted the blood of the lamb, and thus being inspired by the god she prophesied or divined. At Aegira in Achaia the priestess of Earth drank the fresh blood of a bull before she descended into the cave to prophesy. Similarly among the Kuruvikkarans, a class of bird-catchers and beggars in Southern India, the goddess Kali is believed to descend upon the priest, and gives oracular replies after sucking the blood which streams from the cut throat of a goat. At a festival of the Alfoors of Minahassa, in Northern Celebes, after a pig has been killed, the priest rushes furiously at it, thrusts his head into the carcase, and drinks of the blood. Then he is dragged away from it by force and set on a chair, whereupon he begins to prophesy how the rice-crop will turn out that year. A second time he runs at the carcase and drinks of the blood; a second time he is forced into the chair and continues his predictions. It is thought that there is a spirit in him which possesses the power of prophesy.¹⁷⁵

The goal in such practices is that of Genesis 3:5, to be as God, to exercise divine power by consuming life. The power to kill has always been important to fallen man because it is the exercise of the control of life. What God reserves to Himself, man claims. The first murder in history took place soon after the fall (Gen. 4:8). Lamech boasted of his power to kill (Gen. 4:23-24). Murder is the exercise of ultimate power as fallen man sees it, to take life.

In some societies, those who exercised power had a restricted diet in order to heighten their powers.

The *Gangas* or fetish priests of the Loango Coast are forbidden to eat or even see a variety of animals and fish, in consequence of which their flesh diet is extremely

limited; often they live only on herbs and roots, though they may drink fresh blood.¹⁷⁶

American Indians carried on a quest for scalps as a means of manifesting their power and prowess; some Western gunmen notched their guns to boast of shed blood. The triumph manifested by many abortionist doctors is in this tradition. It is one of the ironies of the twentieth century that men have most abhorred war and killing, and have most commonly indulged in it. Obviously, their professions of peace have shallow roots.

The Bible is neither respectful nor flattering where man is concerned; this makes its thrust seem ugly and primitive to the genteel humanists, with their self-assured moral refinement and benevolence.

Leviticus 17 regulates man's behavior with respect to blood. *First*, sacrifices could only be made at the sanctuary in the wilderness, and, on entry into Canaan, at designated places (Deut. 12:5-6), which included for a time Bethel and Shiloh. Failure to comply meant excommunication.

Second, no sacrifice could be offered in the fields or at pagan altars, but only at God's appointed places (Lev. 17:7; Deut. 12:5-6, 11-14).

Third, blood or life is God-created and can only be taken in compliance with His law. Blood cannot be eaten without blood-guiltiness. The penalty is cited as excommunication, but the sin is equated with manslaughter and murder. In v. 4, we see that failure to abide by this law is equated with shedding blood. When a man killed a game animal, the blood had to be drained and covered with dirt or dust (v. 13). To respect blood means to respect God and His creation.

Concern over blood has long been lacking in Christendom. The Jehovah's Witnesses, although given to many heresies, have been unique in their respect for Biblical laws on blood, and their opposition to blood transfusions. Their basis has been Leviticus 17:14 and Acts 15:28-29; taking blood "in any form" has been wrong for them. The possibility of acquiring AIDS through transfusion (as well as hepatitis B) has begun to make an impression on others now. Dr. Henry B. Solomon, M.D., editor of the journal, *Pathologist*, has raised questions about the value of blood transfusions. Such transfusions have never been as safe or as necessary as routinely asserted. Dr. Solomon has written:

There is a significant survival disadvantage when ... transfusions are given to patients undergoing surgery for cancer of the lung, breast, and colon.... Jehovah's Witnesses have insisted ... that transfusions are a bad idea. Perhaps one of these days they will be proved to be wrong. But in the meantime there is considerable evidence to support their contention, despite protestations from blood bankers to the contrary.¹⁷⁷

It is particularly noteworthy that these restrictions on the eating of blood (vv. 10-16) are applied not only to believers, but to all within the land, including all aliens who were settled among them. It is a danger to all, both religiously and physically.

There are five specific regulations in Leviticus 17. The *first*, vv. 3-7, requires sacrifices to be made only where God's law so specifies. When separated from God's appointed place, demonic and alien practices intrude, as men practice will-worship and assert the sufficiency of their wisdom.

Second, vv. 8-9, these requirements apply to all, Israelites and foreigners alike.

Third, vv. 10-19, the eating of blood is forbidden to all. Because all creatures and all life are God's property and creation, no man has any claim or jurisdiction over life apart from God's law. Blood is the life of every creature (Lev. 19:26; Deut. 12:23-25; Ezek. 33:25; Zech. 9:7). Obedience to God is a condition of a continuing possession of the land:

25. Wherefore say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD: Ye eat with the blood, and lift up your eyes toward your idols, and shed blood: and shall ye possess the land?

26. Ye stand upon your sword, ye work abomination, and ye defile every one his neighbour's wife: and shall ye possess the land? (Ezekiel 33:25-26)

Fourth, vv. 13-14, animals unsuitable for sacrifice, i.e., game animals, could not be treated callously; their blood had to be drained and then covered.

Fifth, vv. 15-16, clean animals which met their death other than by human hands are not to be eaten.¹⁷⁸

A very practical consequence of these laws was to make the butchering and preparation of foods, and meats in particular, a matter of religious and hygienic concern. It is not surprising, therefore, that observance of these laws has led to better health. Even in recent history, in Soviet Armenia, all farmers routinely went to a stone butchering block near the door of their church to kill the animal, shed the blood, and to leave the priest's portion as the law prescribes.

Knight has called attention to an important aspect of these laws. Leviticus 17-26 is commonly called the Holiness Code, although the whole book's concern is holiness. In paganism, the meaning of holiness is comparable to the Polynesian word "taboo," meaning, "Do not touch, or you are in danger." It is also the Maori "mana," an impersonal power. But God, who is called the Holy One of Israel, is *the covenant God*, whose law is grace, mercy, and life to His people. "So God's holiness was the power of his loving, righteous, saving *presence* in Israel's midst." "The law is God's gracious gift." Israel was not a superior nation or people; its advantage was the grace of God, and the law is an aspect of that grace.¹⁷⁹ We are thus required to be holy and dedicated to God in all our lives and being, including our diet.

Kellogg titled Leviticus 17 "Holiness in Eating" and said, in part:

The moral and spiritual purpose of this law concerning the use of blood was apparently twofold. In the first place, it was intended to educate the people to a reverence for life, and purify them from that tendency to bloodthirstiness which has so often distinguished heathen nations, and especially those with whom Israel

was to be brought in closest contact. But secondly, and chiefly, it was intended, as in the former part of the chapter, everywhere and always to keep before the mind the sacredness of the blood as being the appointed means for the expiation of sin; given by God upon the altar to make atonement for the soul of the sinner, “by reason of the life” or soul with which it stood in such immediate relation. Not only were they therefore to abstain from the blood of such animals as could be offered on the altar, but even from that of those which could not be offered. Thus the blood was to remind them, every time they ate flesh, of the very solemn truth that without shedding of blood there was no remission of sin. The Israelite must never forget this; even in the heat and excitement of the chase, he must pause and carefully drain the blood from the creature he has slain, and reverently cover it with dust;—a symbolic act which should ever put him in mind of the Divine ordinance to the forgiveness of sin.¹⁸⁰

Let us remember that this prohibition against eating or drinking blood was stressed by the Council of Jerusalem in Acts 15:29. Given this fact, our Lord’s words in John 6:53-56 are all the more striking:

53. Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, Verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.
54. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life: and I will raise him up at the last day.
55. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.
56. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.

It was more than a little offense these words carried to their hearers: by New Testament times, the prohibition against blood was strictly observed. At the same time, nothing more clearly sets forth the meaning of these laws of Leviticus 17 than our Lord’s words. The life is in the blood, and God is the author of all life. In idolatry, humanism, and the eating or drinking of blood we seek life *below* the level of life that God has ordained. Jesus Christ declares, “I am the way, the truth, and *the life*” (John 14:6). Man outside of Christ will look for life in evolutionary terms, backward in time and downward into “primeval chaos.” In Cornelius Van Til’s words, he integrates himself downward into the void. Our Lord’s reference to the elements in the sacrament of communion is an obvious one. To seek life by integration downward is death. To seek life in blood rather than from the source of life, the triune God, is evil, and it is death. To observe Leviticus 17, in its fullest sense, means to live in Christ; to live in Christ means to reject the eating of blood and every quest for life outside of Christ. It means recognizing that only the blood of Christ can make atonement for sin; otherwise, as our Lord says, “ye have no life in you” (John 6:53).

In the bloody sacrifices, the blood was drained, i.e., *shed*; it was then taken to the *altar*. Leviticus 17:11 is echoed in Hebrews 9:22, “And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.” This statement has reference to the law, to God’s altar, and God’s provision. The mere shedding of blood by man can effect no remission of sin but rather aggravates it. When the blood is applied to the altar, the blood of the unblemished

sacrifice, then there is remission of sin and the offering of one's life to God who made and remade it.

The word *devils* in v. 7 (*seirim*) means shaggy goats, goat-like deities, or demons. Pan, Silenus, satyrs, fauns, and like gods were worshipped in ancient Egypt and thus were known to the Hebrews. The reference of early Christians to pagan deities as demons thus had an Old Testament origin. These pagan goat-deities were fertility cult gods. Just as drinking or eating blood was held to be the appropriation of life and divine powers, so too sexual perversions and ritual prostitution invoked the life force as a means of personal and social renewal. Of these *devils* referred to in v. 7, John Gill wrote:

The word here used signifies *goats*, and these creatures were worshipped by the Egyptians, and so might be by the Israelites, whilst among them; this is asserted by several writers. Diodorus Siculus says, "they deified the goat, as the Greeks did Priapus, and for the same reason; and that the Pans and the Satyrs were held in honour by men on the same account; and Herodotus observes, that the Egyptians paint and engrave Pan as the Greeks do, with the face and thighs of a goat, and therefore do not kill a goat, because the Mendesians regard Pan among the gods; and of the Mendesians he says, that they worship goats, and the he-goats rather than the shegoats; wherefore in the Egyptian language both Pan and a goat are called Mendes; and Strabo reports of Mendes, that there Pan and the goat are worshipped: if these sort of creatures were worshipped by the Egyptians in the time of Moses, which is to be questioned, the Israelites might be supposed to have followed them in it; but if that be true which Maimonides says of the Zabii, a set of idolators among the Chaldeans, and other people, whom they supposed to be in the form of goats, the Israelites might have given in to this form of idolatry from them....¹⁸¹

It should be remembered that the law associates bloody sacrifices with peace offerings. The goal is not death but salvation, life, and peace.

Chapter Thirty-Two

The Ground of Law

(*Leviticus 18:1-5*)

1. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,
2. Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, I am the LORD your God.
3. After the doings of the land of Egypt, wherein ye dwelt, shall ye not do: and after the doings of the land of Canaan, whither I bring you, shall ye not do: neither shall ye walk in their ordinances.
4. Ye shall do my judgments, and keep mine ordinances, to walk therein: I am the LORD your God.
5. Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am the LORD. (*Leviticus 18:1-5*)

Leviticus 18 is a catalogue of sexual sins and thus not a popular chapter. Within the past decade, a Chalcedon supporter, then pastor of a large fundamentalist church, was dismissed by the congregation a week after reading and preaching on this chapter. He was accused of engaging in negative rather than positive ministry, and the initiative for his dismissal came from men clearly guilty of some of these offenses.

This chapter is notable also because it follows immediately after the ritual for the Day of Atonement. Moreover, the old Jewish rituals give Leviticus 18 as one of the Readings of the Day of Atonement.¹⁸² Atonement mandates certain things: it is a moral fact with moral consequences. Hence, the covenant people, as the just people, are told bluntly that their lives must be radically different from the lives of Egyptians and Canaanites (vv. 3-5).

The premise of all law is, “I am the LORD your God” (v. 2), words which precede the Ten Commandments and the whole of God’s law. Because God is the sovereign creator, and their covenant Lord, He must be obeyed. Oehler commented:

The words in ver. 2 have a double import. They apply, in the first place, to the whole Decalogue; thus they contain the general presupposition of the law, the ground of obligation for Israel, which lies in the nature of his God and the fact of his redemption. But, in the second place, they are the special ground of the command not to worship other gods besides Jehovah.¹⁸³

As we have noted, the foundation of all law is the Lord God, and we are His people. Two emphases are made. *First*, that this God is our covenant God, and hence He must be heard and obeyed. God never gives advice: He commands us. *Second*, God is the holy God, the only true God, and His holiness requires our holiness. Without holiness, there can be no communion. Biblical holiness is moral, whereas pagan doctrines of the holy stress dread, paranormal incidents, and the like. We are commanded to keep God’s law in order to live. God says of His law, “if a man do, he shall live, (or, be kept alive) in them” (v. 5). Life is linked to law and

morality. Of the pagan cultures, it is said, “neither shall ye walk in their ordinances”(v. 3), i.e., you shall not live by their laws. The law we live by manifests our religion. Thus, where two religions exist side by side, one must convert the other, because a land cannot function long if two contradictory systems of law prevail. Because the churches of the modern era have been content to live in terms of humanistic law, they have escaped full-fledged conflict at the price of surrender.

Porter called attention to the meaning of the words, “shall have life through them” in v. 5, stating: “Keeping the divine commandments brings prosperity and success, which is what the Hebrews primarily understood by *life*.”¹⁸⁴ Life is thus not seen as a marginal existence but as a triumph in the Lord.

The laws of marriage are given after laws relative to worship and atonement because true worship has moral results. Modern thought has tried to separate religion and ethics and to make worship an aesthetic concern. While worship is not to be unaesthetic, to reduce religious worship to an aesthetic experience is to say that it is man who must be pleased, rather than God worshipped. Such an emphasis makes man sovereign, whereas the repeated declaration of the law, “I am the LORD your God” (vv. 2, 4-5), tells us that God is the sovereign. While dullness is not a merit in worship, the belief that worship must interest a congregation is both false and evil. For men to seek personal pleasure and gratification as the grounds for worship is to say in effect that worship must be pleasing to man, not God. Such an assumption is all too common.

Man-centered worship, humanistic worship, is a lie, Paul tells us. To serve man in worship becomes idolatry:

22. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,
23. And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things,
24. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves;
25. Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. (Romans 1:22-25)

Man-centered worship, Paul says, leads to idolatry (which can mean worshipping graven images, or enthroning our own will, tastes, and wants as supreme). Such worship also leads to a moral degeneracy which culminates in homosexuality. Just as Leviticus 18 prefixes its commandments concerning sexuality with the requirement of strict adherence to the covenant God and His law, so Paul declares that the just shall live by faith, and then he cites the degeneracy of the faithless. In both instances, a strict correlation between faith and life is declared.

The sexual practices forbidden in Leviticus 18 were common to both Egypt and Canaan. The Biblical doctrine of man finds easy verification in all of history. Man’s *total depravity* means that every aspect of his being is infected, corrupted, and governed by his sin, and hence the necessity for God’s law.

Man, having been created in God's image, is born with a desire for dominion. Fallen man, however, does not want godly dominion, only ungodly dominion, and hence his desire for lawless sexuality as a means of dominating and exploiting others.

It should be stressed that Leviticus 18 gives us laws concerning marriage rather than sex as such. Paganism always deals with sex *per se* and views sexuality as a resource whereby man can find pleasure and self-realization. In such a perspective, marriage becomes merely one sexual option among many. The goal of present legislation is to broaden the sexual options of men, women, and children as a step in human liberation.

Implicit in this trend is a concept of sovereignty, the sovereignty of man and his freedom to express his nature. It was in some degree the premise of ancient paganism. In Genesis 19:4-5, the men of Sodom demanded the right to sodomize Lot's guests; they declared that Lot saw himself as morally superior (Gen. 19:9), and they were going to humble him and demonstrate their power. Man, by declaring himself sovereign, rejects God, and with God, His law. Camus stated it bluntly: "Since God claims all that is good in man, it is necessary to deride what is good and choose what is evil."¹⁸⁵

But God declares that He alone is sovereign, and it is His will that must be done. This holy and good will of God is His law.

Chapter Thirty-Three

Laws of Marriage

(*Leviticus 18:6-18*)

6. None of you shall approach to any that is near of kin to him, to uncover their nakedness: I am the LORD.
7. The nakedness of thy father, or the nakedness of thy mother, shalt thou not uncover: she is thy mother; thou shalt not uncover her nakedness.
8. The nakedness of thy father's wife shalt thou not uncover: it is thy father's nakedness.
9. The nakedness of thy sister, the daughter of thy father, or daughter of thy mother, whether she be born at home, or born abroad, even their nakedness thou shalt not uncover.
10. The nakedness of thy son's daughter, or of thy daughter's daughter, even their nakedness thou shalt not uncover: for theirs is thine own nakedness.
11. The nakedness of thy father's wife's daughter, begotten of thy father, she is thy sister, thou shalt not uncover her nakedness.
12. Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy father's sister: she is thy father's near kinswoman.
13. Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy mother's sister: for she is thy mother's near kinswoman.
14. Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy father's brother, thou shalt not approach to his wife: she is thine aunt.
15. Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy daughter in law: she is thy son's wife; thou shalt not uncover her nakedness.
16. Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy brother's wife: it is thy brother's nakedness.
17. Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of a woman and her daughter, neither shalt thou take her son's daughter, or her daughter's daughter, to uncover her nakedness; for they are her near kinswomen: it is wickedness.
18. Neither shalt thou take a wife to her sister, to vex her, to uncover her nakedness, beside the other in her life time. (*Leviticus 18:6-18*)

The *first* thing to note with respect to these laws is that they govern marriage. We are given a list of *forbidden marriages*. All non-marital sex is illicit; not all unions of male and female are permitted, i.e., not all men nor all women are eligible marital partners.

In the earliest days of mankind, the genetic potentialities of Adam and Eve carried all the possibilities of all races and peoples; hence, close marriages then were not as genetically close and consequently hazardous as marriage today between two Irish or two Germans. After the expansion of the human race, closely related unions were banned by God, and, all over the world, were recognized in time as wrong. They did persist, however, in certain elements of society, namely royalty, nobility, and the very wealthy. As a student, I recall the contemptuous

amusement of a professor as he described a list, posted from the medieval era, in a cathedral; it began with the commandment, “Thou shall not marry thy grandmother.” He would ask his classes each year, “And who would want to marry his grandmother?,” and then proceed to comment on the stupidity of medieval Christians. His attitude rested on ignorance. In many societies, the compelling reason for all incestuous unions was the consolidation of power and property, and marriage was seen, not as an end in itself, but as an instrument towards power and property. As a result, the medieval church, to prevent continual inbreeding, went beyond the forbidden degrees of Leviticus in its rules on marriage. Despite the church’s efforts, the nobility and especially the royalty of Europe contributed substantially to its own irrelevance and its physical and mental deterioration by its inbreeding. The history of Europe might well have been different had the royal families been less inbred and less unstable and stupid.

Second, these laws are all addressed *to men*. The Bible never denies the guilt of women in sexual offenses; if the woman is promiscuous, she is often seen, as in Proverbs 7:1-27, as the aggressor and primary offender. Normally, however, the primary guilt is the man’s, and hence these laws are directed to men. The Bible gives headship in marriage to men, and this also means greater responsibility and culpability. The establishment of a family normally requires a man’s initiative, and hence the law speaks here to men.

Third, we have the repeated use of the phrase, “uncover the nakedness,” which, we are told, “is a synonym for sexual intercourse.”¹⁸⁶ However, as Noth noted, in some cases, “the ‘nakedness’ of a woman was considered to belong to her husband.”¹⁸⁷ Illicit relations with a woman are seen as in part an aggressive act against the husband or father, so that a woman is sexually exploited, and a man shamed and degraded. Since neither men nor women are seen in Scripture in atomistic terms but as members of families, a sexual offense involves more than the man and woman engaged in a sexual act. To a degree, only the female prostitute and the male prostitute or sodomite are considered as isolated and non-familistic individuals. This is why the common opinion that these are simply laws dealing with illicit sexuality is wrong. All the possible unions cited here, as well as those implied, are certainly illicit, but the focus is on marriage. The focus of sexuality in Scripture is the family, and Biblical law mandates the permitted forms thereof.

Fourth, the Biblical laws concerning marriage are all God-centered, not man-centered. Historically, the laws of marriage have been, in non-Biblical cultures, governed by human needs and desires. We have seen that unions within the forbidden degrees have occurred to retain property and power. This was common in the royal families of ancient Egypt and Persia, where brother and sister marriages were routine, and in recent centuries as well, at least among the chiefs or rulers in Siam, Burma, Ceylon, Uganda, and the Hawaiian Islands. In Pentecost Island of the New Hebrides, it was the custom to marry the daughter’s daughter of a brother. Polyandry, in which all brothers share a wife in common, has existed in order to preserve property intact over the generations. Ancestor worship was once very widespread and was a means of insuring the centrality of the family in humanistic terms. In such cultures, ultimate authority normally resided with the family and its customs and traditions. This view of authority did more than give stability to society; it tended towards fixity, as in pre-Marxist China. The family assumed responsibility for its members, so that a man without a network of kinship could not be readily trusted, because no one was accountable for him. As Margery Wolf noted, “Wealth cannot make up for this deficiency (of a family) any more than it can make up for the loss of arms and legs.

Money has no past, no future, and no obligations. Relatives do.”¹⁸⁸ Without question, this kind of family network gave security, but it failed to give moral strength to society. The strength of family networks as the basis of society is no more a moral force than is the totalitarian control of a power state. Moral force comes from the triune God.

In a God-centered society, the rites and ceremonies of marriage make it clear that marriage is under God and according to His laws. Christian marriage and Biblical law place both husband and wife, and their children as well, under God’s law. Marriage is a restraint upon both husband and wife, and it imposes duties and responsibilities. It is more the assumption of mature tasks under God than it is self-fulfilment, and only as the tasks and duties are assumed and continually met does it provide self-fulfilment. As Foley noted,

... we are taught by the gospel that restraints are imposed and self-denial demanded, not for their own sakes, but as a means to truer and more abiding blessedness. Holy matrimony has been divinely instituted for man’s good, and to be a source of blessing. In happy married life man is to find his truest and most lasting happiness, and to reach the fullest perfection of which his nature is capable.¹⁸⁹

In humanistic cultures and marriages, the inability of husband and wife to transcend themselves and their egocentricity is a source of continual problems of an insoluble nature. Problems are common to all marriages; in a Christian marriage, they are normally soluble. It is an ironic fact that, whereas earlier the modern temper saw marriage as the bondage of a woman, the newest bit of pseudo-wisdom declares, “marriage is the best revenge.” It was men who, with the rise of humanism, began to speak of marriage as bondage. It should not surprise us that, after a few centuries of such idiocy on the part of men, women should begin to voice a like stupidity. All such thinking is anti-Christian; it presupposes a war of the sexes, not their harmony. For the fallen man, all creation is at war with him (“the stars in their courses fought against Sisera,” Judges 5:20), because the fallen man is at war against God. The consequence of the fall is total, blind, and insane warfare: man against God, man against man and woman, man against the world around him, and man against himself. Fallen man, in his blindness, stupidity, *and sin*, works to turn God’s magnificent harmony in creation to a realm of war. In the end, he kills himself, not God, and not God’s purposes in creation.

Fifth, it must be recognized that not every forbidden degree of union is listed. Thus, the union of a father or mother with a daughter or son is not listed because it is assumed to be forbidden. Better, it is all banned in v. 6, which reads, in Robert Young’s *Literal Translation of the Holy Bible*, “None of you unto any relation of his flesh doth draw near to uncover nakedness; I am Jehovah.” “Relation of his flesh” is translated by Noordtzij as “flesh of his body,” and the word translated as *body* has reference at times to sexual organs. The family is a physical unity, and “sexual relations with such a close blood relative really constituted nothing more or less than sexual intercourse with oneself.”¹⁹⁰ Thus, all close relatives are excluded as marital partners.

It has often been noted that similar laws existed in many cultures of antiquity. This is not entirely true: for slaves, who were commonly non-persons before the law, such laws did not apply *if* the

man guilty of the offense were a free man cohabiting with slave women. There are several examples of this in various cultures, as witness the following from Hittite laws:

194: If a free man cohabit with (several) slave-girls, sisters and their mother, there shall be no punishment. If blood-relations sleep with (the same) free woman, there shall be no punishment. If father and son sleep with (the same) slave-girl or harlot, there shall be no punishment.

195: If however a man sleeps with the wife of his brother while his brother is living, it is a capital crime. If a man has a free woman (in marriage) and then lies also with her daughter, it is a capital crime. If a man has a daughter in marriage and then lies also with her mother or her sister, it is a capital crime.

200: (A): If a man does evil with a horse or a mule, there shall be no punishment. He must not appeal to the king nor shall he become a case for the priest. — If anyone sleeps with a foreign (woman) and (also) with her mother or (her) sister, there will be no punishment.¹⁹¹

Examples of people being non-persons before the law are not uncommon in Christendom. In the United States, the U.S. Supreme Court declared slaves to be property and not persons in the Dred Scott Case, and the unborn were denied personhood in *Roe v. Wade*.

The only exception made with respect to the forbidden degrees is the levirate, which requires, when a close relative dies without an heir, that the next of kin take the widow and provide an heir (Deut. 25:5-10; cf. Matt. 22:23ff.).

In v. 18, we have a prohibition of polygamy. It is of note that, while adultery was condemned as treason to marriage and society, polygamy was tolerated as a lesser form of marriage. However, we have two interesting statements made concerning polygamy: (a) a second wife will *vex* the first. The word *vex* has lost much of its force in today's English; in the Hebrew *tsarar* comes from the word to cramp; it means adversary, enemy, afflict, besiege, bind up, and oppress. It is at least an evidence of disrespect if not a hostile act to add wife to wife. Moreover, (b) it means "to uncover her nakedness," which means, at the very least, to shame her. If this is what a plural wife means to the first wife, we are told implicitly that adultery is an even greater act of hostility and shame. What is required of godly marriage is *holiness*; what unlawful sexuality results in at the least is *shame*.

We have seen that union within the forbidden degrees is common as a means to consolidating power and property. Rabbi J. H. Hertz called attention to this, noting:

It was a practice among Eastern heirs-apparent to take possession of the father's wives, as an assertion of their right to the throne, that action identifying them with the late ruler's personality in the eyes of the people. This explains Reuben's conduct in Gen. XXXV. 2.¹⁹²

There is a *sixth* fact to be noted. As Wenham has pointed out, in the Bible, marriage establishes a new life and a new relationship. Marriage makes a girl more than a daughter-in-law; she

becomes a daughter to her husband's parents (Ruth 1:11; 3:1).¹⁹³ Biblical law thus literally applies Genesis 2:24, "they shall be one flesh." Hence, the forbidden degrees include in-laws. The modern perspective bypasses this Biblical fact entirely. Atomistic man feels no ties to family, kinfolk, and in-laws are trifles so he severs them readily. In contrast, paganism has often made ties of blood and marriage ironclad and irrevocable. The Bible tells us that they are very real but still not determinative, because man and marriage must be under God's law. The faith establishes a new relationship:

46. While he yet talked to the people, behold his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him.

47. Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee.

48. But, he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? And who are my brethren?

49. And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren!

50. For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother. (Matthew 12:46-50)

On another occasion, our Lord goes further to declare,

26. If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.

27. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. (Luke 14:26-27)

Our supernatural relationship to God and our supernatural family in Christ must take precedence over and govern our relationship to our natural family.

Chapter Thirty-Four Sin and the Land (*Leviticus 18:19*)

19. Also thou shalt not approach unto a woman to uncover her nakedness, as long as she is put apart for her uncleanness. (*Leviticus 18:19*)

The transgression cited in this law is referred to also in *Ezekiel 18:5-9*:

5. But if a man be just, and do that which is lawful and right,
6. And hath not eaten upon the mountains, neither hath lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, neither had defiled his neighbour's wife, neither hath come near to a menstruous woman,
7. And hath not oppressed any, but hath restored to the debtor his pledge, hath spoiled none by violence, hath given his bread to the hungry, and hath covered the naked with a garment;
8. He that hath not given forth upon usury, neither hath taken any increase, that hath withdrawn his hand from iniquity, hath executed true judgment between man and man,
9. Hath walked in my statutes, and hath kept my judgments, to deal truly; he is just, he shall surely live, saith the LORD God.

Clearly, by citing this law of *Leviticus 18:19* as one of the marks of a righteous man, *Ezekiel* tells us of its importance in the sight of God. Because in *Institutes of Biblical Law* I have a chapter based upon this text, I found how important sexual intercourse during menstruation is to many people, especially feminists; there was an aggressive insistence on the validity, and, with some, the necessity for this practice as a proof of love. Other references to this offense include *Leviticus 12:2; 15:24; and 20:18; and Ezekiel 22:10*.

There is a marked difference between animals and human beings in this sphere. As Burns wrote:

With female animals who ovulate, this second period is often accompanied at its close by a flow of blood from the vagina — but make no mistake, this is not true menstruation. Ovulation bleeding and menstrual bleeding are basically different phenomena, although some nature writers have confused them as being the same. Menstruation does not occur in mammals below primates. With these subprimates, vaginal bleeding occurs at the time of heat and ovulation rather than during the period of infertility as in the human female, when the unfertilized ovum is sloughed off, accompanied with a discharge of blood.¹⁹⁴

To confuse the distinction between men and animals is in itself an act of lawlessness.

Christian commentators have usually said little about this law. Because of the indictment of Ezekiel, post-exilic Hebrew commentators had much to say, and Maimonides went into the matter at length.¹⁹⁵

The reference in this law is to both menstrual and post-childbirth bleeding and discharge. The reference to this in Leviticus 15:24 is to ceremonial uncleanness; in Leviticus 18:19, it is cited as a moral offense.¹⁹⁶ Rabbi Hertz called attention to the physical benefits of obedience to this law. An investigation over a number of years of 80,000 Jewish women who observed this and related laws showed a dramatically lower uterine cancer rate, and the rate of cancer for their men was even lower.¹⁹⁷ In recent years, this conclusion has been questioned. However, what we can say is that the faithfulness to the whole law, i.e., dietary as well as sexual, results in better health, although it may be difficult to say that one aspect of the law or another is primarily responsible. For unwitting violations of this law of Leviticus 18:19, a man was ceremonially unclean for seven days (Lev. 15:24); willful violation led to being “cut off” (Lev. 20:18), an expression which could mean death, excommunication, or exile. Leviticus 18:24-25 indicates expulsion from the country or exile. We are clearly dealing with a matter much more serious than is normally recognized, and, because of this neglect, we should give especial attention to this law.

Ezekiel 18:5-9 tells us how serious this law is. In Ezekiel 18:4, God declares bluntly, “the soul that sinneth, it shall die.” In vv. 5-9, the conditions of life and justice are set forth: faithfulness to God’s law (v. 9) is the heart of the matter; the man who is obedient “shall surely live.” This obedience is in word, thought, and deed; it is faith and life.

We have specific laws cited in vv. 6-8. *First*, we have idolatry (v. 6); to eat on the mountains has reference to idolatrous sacrifices and their communion meals. The idols are those of Israel; thus the reference is to syncretistic religion, to the amalgamation of pagan faiths with the worship of the covenant God.

Second, we have sexual offenses which involve more than sexuality. Adultery is a sin against God and against man, i.e., one’s neighbor as well as one’s wife. Sexual intercourse with a menstruous woman is against God’s law, and is a degradation of both the woman and the man.

This sin is all too common in the twentieth century. Men demand it as an act of aggression and domination, precisely because the woman is *offended* by it, and, with feminism, many women demand it as a proof of love for the same reason, i.e., because it is offensive to the man. Ezekiel calls adultery *defilement*; the Hebrew word *tame* (*taw-may*), means to pollute, to make unclean. The same word is used in Ezekiel 18:6 and Leviticus 18:24-25, 27, 30. We are plainly told that *all* the sins cited in Leviticus 18 defile the land. Men now are beginning to recognize that there is a symbiotic relationship between trees and rainfall; the destruction of forests can destroy rainfall and the soil’s fertility. Scripture tells us that there is a far stronger relationship between man’s moral nature, his obedience to God’s law, and the defilement and destruction of the land.

Third, we have been told that the righteous do not take part in idolatrous feasts and sacrifices, look to idols, commit adultery, or violate the prohibition concerning the menstruant woman. Now other areas are cited, ones dealing with our relationship to other people in commerce, neighborly relations, and charity. Debt exploitation and interest are cited as central sins. So, too,

are the maltreatment of people and the lack of charity. The lack of charity does not refer to a lack of charitable *feelings* but the lack of charitable *acts*, giving bread to the hungry, covering the naked with a garment, and so on.

Fourth, in v. 8, we are told that the righteous man “hath executed judgment between man and man,” or, as Greenberg rendered it, “arbitrates faithfully between men.”¹⁹⁸ This arbitration is not in terms of making peace for the sake of peace, irrespective of justice, but in terms of peace with justice.

It should be noted that the stress in these verses is on action. A man’s faith reveals itself in action, “by their fruits ye shall know them” (Matt. 7:20), because “faith without works is dead” (James 2:26), i.e., it is nonexistent. Pharisaism has as its premise the belief that works can be a substitute for and can exist without faith, without strict fidelity to God’s law as our life. Pietism assumes that faith can exist without works, an equally false assumption.

Another means of seeking to evade the plain meaning of the law is symbolic interpretation. Thus, Eisemann, following the Talmud (Sanhedrin 81a), interpreted v. 6 in terms of a previous assumption or presupposition. With respect to v. 5, the “just” man or the true *zaddik*, he said, “Surely a person would have to go beyond these simple requirements to be considered a true *zaddik*.” In terms of this, the man who does not “eat upon the mountains” is a man “so completely good that he can stand completely upon his own merits,” without drawing on his father’s works of supererogation. The man who does not lift up his eyes to idols is a modest and humble man. Defiling a neighbor’s wife is read as “interfering with his livelihood,” and approaching a menstruating woman is “permitting oneself to be supported by charity.”¹⁹⁹ Supposedly all this sets a much higher standard than does God’s simple meaning!

Not all rabbinic scholars follow this kind of interpretation. Thus, Rabbi Fisch saw the meaning in terms of Leviticus and a faithful reading of the law.²⁰⁰

The emphasis here as throughout the law is on the inescapable connection between man’s morality and the physical world around him. Without a recognition of this relationship there can be no true understanding of Scripture, or of Christ’s work.

Chapter Thirty-Five Abomination and Confusion (*Leviticus 18:20-23*)

20. Moreover thou shalt not lie carnally with thy neighbour's wife, to defile thyself with her.
21. And thou shalt not let any of thy seed pass through the fire to Molech, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the LORD.
22. Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination.
23. Neither shalt thou lie with any beast to defile thyself therewith: neither shall any woman stand before a beast to lie down thereto: it is confusion. (*Leviticus 18:20-23*)

These verses are titled by Wenham, "Other Canaanite Customs to be Avoided."²⁰¹ In v. 21, we have the heart of the problem, Molech worship, which could mean child sacrifice, as in Carthage.²⁰² It could also mean, as Snaith suggests, that possibly children were given to the authorities to be trained as male and female prostitutes; the fact that this law comes together with prohibitions of various forms of sexuality and is followed by references to sodomy and lesbianism certainly is evidence of this.²⁰³

The word Molech (Melek, Milcom, Melcom) means *king*, the king as a god, and the primary reference is to state worship. Normally, passing a child through the fire to Molech was not human sacrifice, although emergency situations could lead to such acts; under normal circumstances it was the dedication of the child to the state, a statist analogue to baptism whereby the child was to live and die for the state. While Snaith's suggestion is valid, and some children were dedicated to prostitution, this was not true of all children, and yet all had to be taken to the fire of Molech for dedication in this religious faith. If the central meaning were sexual, the law would openly say so. We have such a law in Leviticus 19:29, "Do not prostitute thy daughter, to cause her to be a whore: lest the land fall to whoredom, and the land become full of wickedness." Thus, the primary reference is to Molech *worship*. At the same time, it is set in the context of a table of sexual sins. What is the connection?

Molech worship shifts the center of the moral universe from God to the state. Molech worship is very much with us in the ancient and modern priority of the state over the triune God. By giving centrality to humanistic concerns, men enthrone Molech and his worship. Those who champion cultural conservatism are thereby affirming Molech because they shift their moral concern from the will of God to pragmatic considerations. Thus, Finn believes that the goals of Christians can be achieved by an abandonment of a Christian perspective for "cultural conservatism."²⁰⁴ In every such compromise venture, the goals of the lowest common denominator prevail.

Molech or state worship gives priority to political and pragmatic considerations and is thus the analogue to all the sexual sins cited in Leviticus 18:6-19. These practices are man's property and

power considerations made paramount, and they also involve his perversity in setting his will against God's moral law.

This is what Paul tells us in Romans 1:16-32. Men who will not live by faith change the truth of God into a lie; they enthrone the creature rather than the Creator. This is the greatest act of perversion. It leads logically to the burning out of man; the Greek word in Romans 1:27 is *exekauthesan*, to burn out, from *ekkaio*. This burning out begins with the abandonment of God's law for man's will, and it concludes with homosexual practices. Such people receive for their practices, in their bodies, "that recompense of their error which was meet." (Rom. 1:27). There is no reason to suppose that diseases like AIDS did not occur in earlier eras, as in the Roman Empire. The poet Catullus, for example, belonged to the "bisexual" set where, according to Horace Gregory, "sex and madness, art, beauty, grief, guilt, slander, even murder were accepted as the order of the day or night."²⁰⁵ It must be added that disease was an even more present fact.

Thus, Leviticus 18:21 cites Molech worship as the prelude to the burning out of man and the defilement of the earth which leads to the expulsion of man.

Turning now to v. 20, the law against adultery, it is important to note that in Biblical law adultery means sexual intercourse with a married or betrothed woman. With an unbetrothed girl, the law specifies the required payment of the "dowry of virgins." The girl's father could require or reject marriage, but in either case the dowry was mandatory (Ex. 22:16-17; Deut. 22:28-29). The penalty for adultery is death for both the man and the woman (Deut. 22:20-25; Lev. 20:10) because the society of God's Kingdom is family based, and adultery is thus treason to society. In Canaanite society, which was Baal or Molech based, adultery was not treasonable and might be religiously required. Note that the law speaks of adultery as self-defilement, or, to "make thyself unclean." Marriage and the family are the foundations of society, and also of our personal lives. Because of the centrality of the family, sins against it are seen in Scripture not only as very serious offenses, but also as self-defilement and stupidity. According to Proverbs 6:27-33,

27. Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned:
28. Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned?
29. So he that goeth in to his neighbour's wife; whosoever toucheth her shall not be innocent.
30. Men do not despise a thief, if he steal to satisfy his soul when he is hungry:
31. But if he be found, he shall restore sevenfold; he shall give all the substance of his house.
32. But whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding, he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul.
33. A wound and dishonour shall he get; and his reproach shall not be wiped away.

Rabbi Hertz said of adultery:

This prohibition is so vital to human society that it is included in the Ten Commandments, immediately after the protection of life, as being of equal importance with it.²⁰⁶

In v. 22, homosexuality is condemned, and in v. 23, bestiality. The two verses are properly one sentence and one subject. Two terms are applied to these sins: *abomination* and *confusion*. Abomination means *filth*, and, according to W. F. Lofthouse, confusion means “a disturbance and violation of the order of nature, and therefore something repulsive.”²⁰⁷ Bonar rendered the meaning of *confusion* as “audacious depravity.”²⁰⁸

Both homosexuality and bestiality are acts of chaos. Religions of chaos believe in evolution out of a primeval chaos, and hence social revitalization requires a regular return to chaos by performing acts of chaos. Herodotus spoke of witnessing, in the Mendesian district of Egypt, the public copulation of a goat and a woman.²⁰⁹ According to Gill, Strabo, Aelianus, and Plutarch reported like religious acts.²¹⁰

The penalty for homosexuality is death (Lev. 20:13; Rom. 1:32), and also for bestiality (Lev. 20:15-16; Ex. 22:19). As we have noted, Lofthouse describes “confusion” as the violation of the order of nature,” and Porter speaks of homosexuality and bestiality as a “violation of nature.”²¹¹ This is certainly true if we recognize the order of nature to be God’s created order, but the text declares these sins to be an *abomination* and *confusion* because they violate God’s law and purpose, as the natural world itself does in its fallen estate.

For Knight, these laws were given to Israel “to fit that stage” in their education in which, because they were comparable to children, “they required clear guidelines.”²¹² Ostensibly, we are more mature and do not need the law! How anyone living in the twentieth century can be patronizing of the Hebrews and assume that churchmen and non-churchmen today have a maturity which invalidates the law is amazing.

Even more amazing is the insistence of homosexuals that all the references to homosexuality in Scripture do not actually condemn that practice! The books written to defend this view are marvels of evasive scholarship.

Not only does the Bible *without exception or qualification* condemn the practice, but it also uses language of a particular bluntness in describing homosexuals. Sodomites are called *dogs* in Deuteronomy 23:18 and Revelation 22:15; the latter text declares that they are outside God’s Kingdom. According to Harrison, the term *dogs* was applied to “male cultic prostitutes *or to homosexuality generally*.”²¹³ This means that *dogs* applies to sodomites and lesbians alike and has reference to activities which have a resemblance to canine practices.

It is a grim fact that, not only have humanists in the twentieth century championed the “rights” of homosexuals, but they have also given to those sodomites who have AIDS a protected status never before enjoyed by sufferers of contagious diseases. That homosexuals should seek a privileged status is understandable; all sinners want privileges. But the greater sin is on the part of those who grant them. A new hagiography has also developed to describe the deaths of these “saints” of sodomy. Thus, *The Stockton Record*, in a concluding article on a particular homosexual, described the death-bed scene sympathetically and in detail. At times the dying man spoke of the possibility that God was punishing him. He dismissed such thoughts, however, declaring, “But then again I might be interpreting it wrong. I’ve always brought happiness and

love to everyone I met. It's what's in your heart.... Only you know how close you are to God, and God knows, and that's it." Speaking of his "flamboyant" lifestyle as a homosexual in San Francisco, he said, smiling, "I've had a wonderful life." When he died, his mother said, "My baby boy has gone to God."²¹⁴ The absurdities of some old saint's legends have been far surpassed by the now common elegies for the "saints" of sodomy.

With his usual insight, Wenham calls attention to the statement in v. 21, "neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God," which occurs also in Leviticus 19:12; 20:3; 21:6; and 22:32. To profane is to make unholy.²¹⁵ Profaning God, not the "violation of the natural order," is the key to these laws; we cannot impose the psychiatric opinions of earlier eras, i.e., 1850-1950, onto Scripture. The opposite of holiness is profanity, the unclean. Leviticus 10:10 requires that we put a "difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean." According to Grayston, "holiness is the condition of approach to God, cleanness of intercourse with all society." While uncleanness is closely tied to sin, there is a difference. Sin essentially comes from within, whereas uncleanness comes from outside, and it is man's moral duty to avoid whatever is unclean. Cleanness is thus essential to holiness. In the law, washing purifies one from many forms of uncleanness, and baptism thus symbolizes this cleansing, i.e., "the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:5). Christ "gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar (or, unique) people, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14).²¹⁶ These laws are given to make us holy (Lev. 19:2), and to keep us from defilement (Lev. 18:24-30).

Profanity leads to uncleanness, to blindness, and to judgment and death, as Jeremiah 6:10-19 makes clear.

Chapter Thirty-Six

The Expulsion

(*Leviticus 18:24-30*)

24. Defile not ye yourselves in any of these things: for in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out before you:
25. And the land is defiled: therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants.
26. Ye shall therefore keep my statutes and my judgments, and shall not commit any of these abominations; neither any of your own nation, nor any stranger that sojourneth among you:
27. (For all these abominations have the men of the land done, which were before you, and the land is defiled;)
28. That the land spue not you out also, when ye defile it, as it spued out the nations that were before you.
29. For whosoever shall commit any of these abominations, even the souls that commit them shall be cut off from among their people.
30. Therefore shall ye keep mine ordinance, that ye commit not any one of these abominable customs, which were committed before you, and that ye defile not yourselves therein: I am the LORD your God. (*Leviticus 18:24-30*)

The two key words here are to *defile*, or to pollute, and to *spue*, or to vomit. This is blunt language. What is said in these verses is amplified in Leviticus 26:14-38: God promises judgment for faithlessness to Him and to His covenant law. There is a double defilement: when the people defile themselves, they thereby also defile the land. Then a single vomiting takes place: the land spues out the defiling people. God clears the land of the offending people, whether they be Canaanites or Israelites, and, we must add, whether they be of the “white, black, brown, red, yellow,” or any other race. Divisions which are important to men are unimportant to God: His law is; He governs in terms of it. Israel as a nation is warned, as is everyone as an individual (v. 29). God makes it clear that Israel has no license to sin, no more than the peoples of Canaan. The covenant gives no protection in such cases, because sin is the transgression of the covenant law (1 John 3:4). All, therefore, must “keep” (v. 30), obey and guard, God’s law strictly.

We have thus the sharp and clear statement of the relationship between man’s faithfulness to God and the land around us, the weather, the soil, and its fertility. C. D. Ginsburg commented:

The physical condition of the land, therefore, depends upon the moral conduct of man. When he disobeys God’s commandments she is parched up and does not yield her fruit (Deut. XI. 17). “The land is defiled” when he defiles himself. When he walks in the way of the Divine commands she is blessed (Lev. XXV. 19; XXVI. 4); “God is merciful unto his land and to his people” (Deut. XXXII. 43). Hence, “the earth mourneth” when her inhabitants sin (Isa. XXIV. 4-5), and “the

earth is glad” when God avenges the cause of His people (Ps. XCVI. 11-13). It is owing to this intimate connection between them that the land, which is here personified, is represented as loathing the wicked conduct of her children and being unable to restrain them. She nauseated them. The same figure is used in verse 28; chap. XX. 22; and in Rev. III. 16.²¹⁷

Being a foreigner and an unbeliever gives no exemption from God’s moral law: the law applies to “any stranger that sojourneth among you” (v. 26). The people to whom Moses spoke are told that the future destruction and expulsion of the Canaanites is an already accomplished legal fact before God. Therefore, they are in a very real sense declared to be witnesses of God’s judgment (vv. 24-28). To us, an even more extensive evidence is given, and we are witnesses to God’s judgments as recorded in all of Scripture and in all of history since then.

We should carefully note the fact of expulsion: there are two facets to it. *First*, and essentially, God casts out defiled people from a land (v. 24). *Second*, the land itself vomits out a defiled people (vv. 25, 28).

It is *the land* which does the vomiting. The people become a poison to the land, and the land therefore vomits out the people. This relates to a fact once common to many cultures, spoken of in earlier years by missionaries, and of which I know of only one written account, dating back to 1935. Sinclair wrote:

A better explanation came from Dr. Sapara, the British trained medicine man of Lagos.

“Poison ordeals are old and crude,” he explained. “They are backwoods behavior and yet they work. An innocent man being compelled to submit to a poison ordeal will toss off his brew quickly as something to have done with. He knows he’s innocent and has faith in the attending doctor. A guilty man is in terror. He sips, but he’s frightened to drink it all. What he does drink, he drinks slowly. The particular barks and herbs used have a terribly nauseating effect if taken quickly. They turn a stomach and come up at once, causing no damage. But if taken slowly they are deadly. But such things are crude, fit only for bush.”²¹⁸

Central to this fact of vomiting out a poison was innocence. This is precisely the focal point of these verses: the land is innocent. The transgression of God’s covenant law is by man, and man’s being is poisoned by sin. The land therefore spues out man.

The land suffers because of man. In Genesis 3:17, we are told, “cursed is the ground for thy sake.” The sin of Adam and Eve brought the effects of sin and the fall to the earth also. The earth therefore limited its returns to man, who now had to work hard, and often to reap thorns and thistles rather than a good harvest (Gen. 3:17-19).

The fall of man brought about his expulsion from the Garden of Eden. In Romans 4:25, and 5:16-18 and 20, Paul speaks of man’s *offense*, *paraptoma*, a fall sideways, a deviation, a transgression. The Garden of Eden was a fenced, ordered, and disciplined place, a sinless place

and a place for dominion work under God. In the fall, man turned aside from his God-appointed calling to a self-appointed calling. As a result, man was expelled from Eden, and his return was prevented. Eden had vomited out its occupants because God ordered it.

The Flood was another expulsion. Because of man's sin and the defilement of the earth, a radical judgment destroyed the antediluvian world, with its longer lifespan for man and its easier life, to bring about the earth as we know it (Gen. 6:1-8:22). Many expulsions have since followed, including the expulsion of the Canaanites, the exile, the fall of Jerusalem, the fall of various nations since, to our present time of judgment. It should be noted that Israel in the Biblical eras was a fertile, well-watered, and wooded land. Its present character in particular shows the devastation of many conquerors, especially the Turks.

Thus, the judgment promised in Leviticus 18:24-30 is one often repeated in Scripture in word and deed. We miss the meaning of these verses if we fail to recognize that they are a common affirmation of Scripture and of history, from creation to the Second Coming and the last judgment. They are a constant emphasis of the prophets, as witness Jeremiah 6:10-19:

10. To whom shall I speak, and give warning, that they may hear? behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken: behold, the word of the LORD is unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it.

11. Therefore I am full of the fury of the LORD; I am weary with holding in: I will pour it out upon the children abroad, and upon the assembly of young men together: for even the husband with the wife shall be taken, the aged with him that is full of days.

12. And their houses shall be turned unto others, with their fields and wives together: for I will stretch out my hand upon the inhabitants of the land, saith the LORD.

13. For from the least of them even unto the greatest of them every one is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely.

14. They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace.

15. Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore they shall fall among them that fall: at the time that I visit them they shall be cast down, saith the LORD.

16. Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein.

17. Also I set watchmen over you, saying, Hearken to the sound of the trumpet. But they said, We will not hearken.

18. Therefore hear, ye nations, and know, O congregation, what is among them.

19. Hear, O earth: behold, I will bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto my words, nor to my law, but rejected it.

This judgment is further developed in Jeremiah 7:1-15, 8:10, and throughout Jeremiah. Houses, fields, wives, and daughters were all going to be handed over to others by the judgment of God.

Because they rejected God's law, God was rejecting them. Because they had defiled themselves and the land, the Lord would cast them out of the land. Because there was a breach between God and the people, there would soon follow a breach between the land and the people. All this, like so much of the prophetic teachings, is simply the application of Leviticus 18:24-30. But this is not all. No one who reads with seeing eyes can fail to see that our Lord, in Matthew 24, is applying the judgment of Leviticus 18:24-30 to Judea.

Today, also, these judgments apply to an age arrogant in sin and given to making saints out of sodomites. Unless men turn to Christ to be made whole, and then become the people who hear and obey His law, they too shall be rejected and spued out.

Chapter Thirty-Seven

Holiness and Community

(*Leviticus 19:1-8*)

1. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,
2. Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall be holy: for I the LORD your God am holy.
3. Ye shall fear every man his mother, and his father, and keep my sabbaths: I am the LORD your God.
4. Turn ye not unto idols, nor make to yourselves molten gods: I am the LORD your God.
5. And if ye offer a sacrifice of peace offerings unto the LORD, ye shall offer it at your own will.
6. It shall be eaten the same day ye offer it, and on the morrow: and if ought remain until the third day, it shall be burnt in the fire.
7. And if it be eaten at all on the third day, it is abominable; it shall not be accepted.
8. Therefore every one that eateth it shall bear his iniquity, because he hath profaned the hallowed thing of the LORD: and that soul shall be cut off from among his people. (*Leviticus 19:1-8*)

Leviticus 19 is sometimes called the Old Testament Sermon on the Mount because of its many familiar laws, in particular, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (v. 18). These laws have a strong emphasis on community life. The foundation of community life is holiness: hence the command, “Ye shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy” (v. 2). Community life begins with communion with God. All the modern political efforts to establish the Great Community worldwide on humanistic and political foundations are thus doomed to fail. The foundation of all true community requires community with God, and it begins with our holiness. The foundations of social order are theological; attempts at social peace and unity apart from the triune God are merely repetitions of the fallacy of the Tower of Babel, and, like it, are doomed to confusion.

Then, because the family is the basic social unit under God, we are immediately told, “Ye shall fear every man his mother, and his father” (v. 3). The Hebrew word *fear* is *yare*, (*yawray*), meaning to dread, revere, fear. In the Ten Commandments, the word is *honor* (Ex. 20:12; Deut. 5:16). We are not required to love our parents, because they may be unlovable, nor is this a blanket requirement of obedience, because obedience is not required of adults, nor is there any right for parents to require of children an obedience in evil. The honor, fear, or reverence is a parental due for the Lord’s sake and because of the institution of the family. Parental authority is theological, and it is a sin on the part of parents to see their position in humanistic terms. In this law, as in Leviticus 20:19 and 21:2, the order of the Ten Commandments is reversed; instead of “thy father and thy mother,” it is mother and then father. Because we have here the law of holiness, priority is given to the mother.²¹⁹ Holiness in Scripture is not an abstract fact but a very personal one. Hence holiness with respect to family life requires a particular honor and respect

for the mother. The normal usage of the word *yare* is with respect to God. God is the Creator of all life, and the mother is the immediate source of our lives, and hence the common term. This is a law of *holiness*; it means that our conduct towards our parents is not governed by personal considerations but by God's law. Scott said of holiness, that

Holiness consists in separation from sin, devotedness to God, and conformity to his moral excellences, which are also transcribed in his holy law. Without holiness we cannot walk with God, or have fellowship with him; and, though an *external*, or *ceremonial*, purity was called being "holy to the LORD;" yet it was only an *emblem* of that purity of heart which was especially intended.²²⁰

Though "the LORD is rich in mercy and goodness," yet his perfect holiness renders it impossible that we should be happy in him, or that he should delight in us, unless we be made holy also; those therefore, whomso he especially loves, he effectually sanctifies.²²¹

It is important to note that in v. 3, in a single statement, we have the requirement of reverence for parents and the observance of the Sabbath. The common theme is *rest*. The Sabbath is to be a day of rest, and, in Ruth 3:1, marriage is called *rest*. For modern man, rest means inactivity, whereas for Scripture it means, in part, being where we belong, in God's appointed place for us and under His law-word. Marriage is our rest, because it is God's plan for us. The Sabbath is a day of rest because it is a part of our relocation, the refocusing of our lives, in God's purpose. The God who made us ordained both marriage and the Sabbath in terms of our beings and requirements. Revolutionary movements have struck at both marriage and the Sabbath; the ancient Mozdakites abolished marriage, and the French and Russian Revolutions, the Sabbath, only to their own detriment.

In v. 4, idolatry is forbidden. The usual interpretation of the word for idols, *elilim*, is that it means *nothings*; Wenham has suggested that it means *godlings*, or *weaklings*, a reference to the impotence of pagan gods.²²²

In vv. 5-8, we have a reference to peace offerings (Lev. 3:1-17; 7:11-26). The peace offering, a voluntary offering, was made at the sanctuary. It was a communal meal, shared with the Levites and with all servants and workers as well as with the members of one's family (Deut. 12:12, 18-19). At the same time, certain portions were given to the priest (Lev. 7:14, 30-36).

The sanctuary thus was not only a place for sacrifice and worship, but also a place for community life, one in which God's teachers, the Levites as well as the priests, had a share.

At the same time, the law very strictly forbids retaining any of the sacrificial animal to the third day. In other words, the sacrificing family could not plan on using their peace offering continuously for themselves. The lamb or bullock offered as a peace offering obviously contained food enough to satisfy a family many days, together with the bread also offered. A man going to the sanctuary could plan to make his peace with God and feast well for many days, were it not for this law. In thankfully reaffirming his peace with God, a man had to develop community with God's servants. Because all the food remaining on the second day had to be

burned on the third day on penalty of excommunication (v. 8), it was much the more logical choice for a man to share his food than to burn it up.

This is not a popular law with modern man, but it is a law which is sharply indicative of God's assessment of man. A regular objection to Biblical law holds, "You can't compel people to be good." This is a fallacy, because laws do precisely this, in an external yet necessary way. Laws against murder do *not* abolish murder, but they certainly restrain murder when well enforced. Would men be less murderous if all laws against murder were abolished? Or would men be less prone to steal if laws against theft were dropped?

The U.S. Internal Revenue Service code was not set up by Congress with benevolent intentions, but, by recognizing the deductibility of religious and charitable constitutions, it has avoided impeding such gifts. Countries where no such deductions are allowed show a markedly lower rate of giving per person.

Community is a necessity to the Kingdom of God and for the business of living. God does not leave the matter up to the individual's conscience *except* to a limited degree. The law reads, "If ye offer a sacrifice of peace offerings unto the LORD, ye shall offer it at your own will" (v. 5). There is nothing mandatory about the peace offering *except* that, *if* we offer it, we must do so on God's terms, not ours. That condition is that we manifest our community with His servants. There is no communion without community.

In other laws, as in the next two verses (Lev. 19:9-10), our community with the needy is required. Community begins with God, but it cannot stop there.

Chapter Thirty-Eight Justice and Community (*Leviticus 19:9-15*)

9. And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest.
10. And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather every grape of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger: I am the LORD your God.
11. Ye shall not steal, neither deal falsely, neither lie one to another.
12. And ye shall not swear by my name falsely, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the LORD.
13. Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour, neither rob him: the wages of him that is hired shall not abide with thee all night until the morning.
14. Thou shalt not curse the deaf, nor put a stumblingblock before the blind, but shalt fear thy God: I am the LORD.
15. Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty: but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour. (*Leviticus 19:9-15*)

The more liberal the scholar, the less respect he has for past opinions and for Christian thought. In terms of his humanism and his evolutionary faith, he holds to the kind of belief denounced by Job, namely, that wisdom was born with him and will die with him (Job 12:2). Such men believe that the Pentateuch is a collection of heterogeneous documents, basically unrelated, which were brought together by an editor. It is also “obvious” to them that this editor lacked their intelligence. Leviticus 19, for example, is seen as a miscellaneous collection by these men.

This view is not surprising. Such men love to segregate and classify everything as though they were dealing with dead objects, and hence dissection and classification are seen as necessities. The Bible, however, is not a textbook: theology is not separated from law and history, nor are personal experiences abstracted from God’s revelations to the men receiving them. The context is life, not the laboratory dissecting table.

The *premise* in all of Scripture, as in Leviticus 19, is that God is the creator of all things, the sovereign King and Lawgiver, and that all of the aspects of life and creation must be governed by His law-word: “I am the LORD” (vv. 10, 14). Hence, in these seven verses, charity, honest dealings with workers and neighbors, no lying, no false swearing or witness, no abuses of the handicapped, and justice are all cited. There is always the unifying force, i.e., all of creation and life must be subject to God’s law.

In vv. 9-10, gleaning by the poor is set forth as God’s requirement. This law appears again in Leviticus 23:22, and also in Deuteronomy 24:19-22; in this last text, it is made clear that “the stranger, the fatherless, and...the widow” are to be the beneficiaries. Moreover, there is a

reminder: “And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt: therefore I command thee to do this thing” (Deut. 24:22). Implicit in this reminder is the threat of another time of bondage for the neglect of God’s law.

The modernist, Martin Noth, saw the law of gleaning as a social law, but saw behind it a primitive, pre-Israelite motive, “of leaving these remains for the fertility-spirits of the soil as their share in the crop.”²²³ This undocumented statement, more revelatory of his presuppositions than anything else, does not deserve an answer.

John Gill called attention to an important aspect of the law of gleaning, and why it follows immediately after the law on peace offerings:

This follows upon the peace-offering: and as Aben Ezra observes, as the fat of them was to be given to God, so somewhat of the harvest was to be given for the glory of God to the poor and stranger.²²⁴

In *Ruth* we see the generous and godly application of this law of gleaning. Recognizing Ruth’s virtue, Boaz made sure that she had an extra amount of gleanings in her path (Ruth 2:1-23). We should note that the gleaners here worked just behind the hired harvesters. By this means, the gleaning was made personal; harvesters were conscious of the needy working just behind them and could be moved to generosity.

The premise of gleaning, as of all law, is that “the earth is the LORD’s” (Ex. 9:29); in terms of this, God can as readily command Egypt as Israel, and His law is applicable to all.

The laws of other nations, as with Roman law, stressed the protection of the ruling class. God’s law speaks of the poor as our “brothers,” and they are to be helped. Helping the needy was and is a religious duty, according to the law. In terms of this, some rabbis held that a person should thank the needy for giving one an opportunity to show mercy. According to Noordtzi, the word *wrought* in Ruth 2:19 can be rendered, *favored*, and he held that Ruth said, of her gleaning in Boaz’s fields, “The name of the man whom I have favored is Boaz.”²²⁵ The Hebrew word can be rendered as *favored*, or *bestowed*, but this interpretation does not seem tenable here.

In vv. 11-12, several offenses against our fellow members in the community are cited. These are all seen as related to another one. An example is cited by Hertz: Absalom, who stole the people’s good opinion of his father David by ingratiating himself with all who were impatient over the delay in justice, i.e., in the hearing of cases. Absalom’s purpose was not justice but to seize power. Hence, according to 2 Samuel 15:2-6, Absalom *stole* the hearts of the people.²²⁶ Deception in any form is proscribed, including false oaths. William Blake’s lines illustrate one facet of such deception:

A truth that’s told with bad intent,
Beats all the lies you can invent.

The prohibition of theft is tied to the gleaning law. Since we and our possessions are the Lord’s, neither in business *nor in charity* can we steal or deal falsely. The Lord *requires* us to help the

needy. We swear falsely by God's name even when we call ourselves His people and are neither honest with other men, nor with the needy.

According to Samuel Clark,

The meaning of the eighth Commandment is here expanded into the prohibition of (1) theft, (2) cheating, (3) falsehood. When the act of deception was aggravated by an oath the third Commandment was of course broken as well as the eighth. Ex. XX. 7-15.²²⁷

In v. 13, we are told that God's law is a restraint upon the strong, to prevent the exploitation of the weak. Paul echoes this in his frequent comments about the weak and the strong, as does James. This is case law. The humblest form of labor was work done for a daily wage, and this was especially common in relation to farm work during the harvest. Delays could mark the premature completion of a harvest, delays due to the weather, and other factors. Whatever the circumstances, the worker hired for such occasional work had to be paid promptly and daily. He could not be kept dangling, coming back for his wages when he might be working elsewhere, or be in need of the money. Deuteronomy 24:14-15 declares this to be offensive to God. Bonar wrote:

Far from defrauding, or withholding what is due to thy neighbour, thou shalt not even *delay* giving him what he is entitled to. This precept is directly pointed against incurring *debt*. Fraudulent bankruptcies, and pretexts for withholding payments, are condemned by it; but willingly remaining in debt to any one is also pointedly condemned. "Owe no man anything, but to love one another." In James v. 4, this is spoken of as a sin of *the last days*.²²⁸

The law *requires* the rich to be honest, considerate, and helpful to the poor. Where this law is violated, and the needy exploited, judgment time has come (Amos 8:4-6).

In v. 14, the abuse of the deaf and the blind is forbidden. The interpretations of this have been significant. It is a cheap and fraudulent power to mislead the blind, or to curse the deaf, but God sees and hears. Historically, and rightly so, many commentators have seen this as applying to the abuse of any absent person, or of dead parents and others. Deuteronomy 27:18 pronounces a curse on all who lead the blind astray. For centuries, even before our Lord's time, this has been understood as including misdirecting the ignorant, or the false teaching of any. It means the defamation of any who are helpless.

In v. 15, we are told that justice means no respect for persons, i.e., no favoritism to the poor because they are poor, or to the rich because they are rich, nor to anyone in terms of their race or religion. Thus, while the law insists on the protection of the poor from injustice, it does not allow injustice to prevail out of partiality for them. Class justice is an untenable doctrine, but it is now the basic doctrine of socialism in all forms, and always evil. Justice is to be done to all, because justice is not a class doctrine but God's nature and His requirement of us.

In order to facilitate impartiality in a trial, some Jewish authorities, especially Maimonides, held that both parties in a case, the rich and the poor, had to be dressed alike and seated alike.²²⁹ Bonar said:

“*Causes* must be heard, not *persons*,” says Trappe. There must be in us no affectation of kindness to the poor, even as there must be no fawning flattery of the great. Especially in matters of judgment the judge must be impartial. The eye of God is on him; and as He is a just God, and without iniquity, He delights to see His own attributes shadowed forth in the strict integrity of an earthly judge.

If these are God’s holy principles, it follows that the misery and oppression and suffering of the lower classes will furnish no reason for their acquittal at His bar, if they be found guilty. Suffering in this world is no blotting out of sin. Hence we find at Christ’s appearing, “*the great men and the mighty men, and every bondman*,” cried to the rocks, “Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne” (Rev. VI. 15).²³⁰

The law cannot be man’s will or purpose, but only God’s word, the expression of His nature. Thus, the modern beliefs in class justice, racial justice, economic justice, and so on, are all perversions of justice and law: they enthrone man’s will as law. Verse 15 sums up the preceding verses and is also a preface to the following verses of Leviticus 19.

Noth is right in stating that this is not simply a word to judges, but to all members of the community.²³¹ Hence it is that the next verse, closely tied to v. 15, condemns slander.

If these are laws of justice, then why are they interspersed with laws *requiring* charity? If the earth is the Lord’s (Ex. 9:29), then we rob God when we do not tithe, when we do not give Him what is His rightful portion (Mal. 3:8-12), and we are again guilty of theft and injustice when we are not given to charity. Charity is not the poor’s due in essence, but it is God’s requirement of us; it is God’s possession, given to those to whom He assigns it.

Community life thus has a God-centered focus. If we are in communion with God, we are in community with His people, rich and poor. In Christ we receive grace, and the grace of God must manifest itself through us to all.

Chapter Thirty-Nine

The Love of Our Neighbor

(*Leviticus 19:16-18*)

16. Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people: neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbour: I am the LORD.

17. Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him.

18. Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD. (*Leviticus 19:16-18*)

The words, “thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (v. 18), are very much used and abused by humanists. They are taken to justify statism and socialism, as though God were here commanding statist rather than personal action. The seven words, “thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,” are subject to many misinterpretations. We have already cited *one*, namely, using them to justify coercive statist action as the substitute for neighborly relationships. What the law requires of us is community. This means a covenant community, in the Lord and according to His law. Statist coercion is the death of community, and statist welfarism destroys the relationship of man to man. However, not only is the *means* towards the realization of this community under God subverted, but also its meaning. It must be pointed out, *two*, that love in Scripture is not mere emotion. It is the fulfilling, the putting into force, of the law. As Frederick Nymeyer pointed out some years ago, to love our neighbor means to obey God’s commandments as they relate to him. This means, “Thou shalt not kill” (Ex. 20:13), i.e., we respect his life. “Thou shalt not commit adultery” (Ex. 20:14) means that we respect the sanctity of his home. “Thou shalt not steal” (Ex. 20:15) means that his property must be respected, and “Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour” (Ex. 20:16) means that we respect his name and reputation, and seek neither to kill his good name nor to rob him of his due respect. “Thou shalt not covet” (Ex. 20:17) means that in word, thought, and deed, we avoid all that would defraud him of any of these things; whether we do it legally or illegally, it is a sin. Good emotions are not substitutes for law-abiding actions. Our Lord’s brother James, echoing the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 7:15-20), spoke sharply against empty good feelings and good words:

14. What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?

15. If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food,

16. And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body: what doth it profit?

17. Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. (*James 2:14-17*)

The whole of the Sermon on the Mount is against such hypocrisy.

In the first of these verses, we are forbidden to be *talebearers*. The word means slanderers; it has reference to false and malicious talk. The second half of this law is closely related to the first: “neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbor.” “To stand against his blood” is to stand against his life. By damaging his name, both in court and in local gossip, we damage his life, i.e., we stand against his blood. Later rabbinic teaching held that slander killed three people: the one slandered, the one slandering, and the one hearing the slander.²³² As Knight observed, slandering “is a form of injustice.”²³³ Without the benefit of a trial, all slander serves to give a false or unjust judgment about a person and leaves him only a negative recourse. Slander suits are difficult to win and often do as much damage in themselves as the slander does. They are also very costly. Thus, slander is striking against the blood or life of a man.

It is worthy to note that the rabbis held that this law was violated if, in a trial, a man could appear as a witness for the defense and failed to do so; he was then guilty himself. Anyone in any context who remained a passive observer of evil was guilty of evil (*Sandhedrin* 73a).²³⁴ God very plainly condemns passivity as evil, and as complicity with crime. All such people are called *wicked*. In Psalm 50:16-22, we are told:

16. But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?
17. Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee.
18. When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him, and hast been partaker with adulterers.
19. Thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit.
20. Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother; thou slanderest thine own brother's son.
21. These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes.
22. Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.

The wicked are bystanders who do nothing when crimes are committed. God indicts them for their *passivity* where crimes are committed and for their *activity* in slander. They stand by and see theft, and adultery, and do nothing, but they give their mouth to evil and deceit. Such people are covenant breakers and have no sense of community; they will slander their own relatives.

The word *talebearer* comes from a word meaning *peddler*. The talebearer is a peddler of slander. In 1 Peter 4:15, we are told, “But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil-doer, or as a busybody in other men's matters.” The slanderer is commonly a busybody.

Twice in these three verses, and fourteen times in this chapter, God declares, “I am the LORD.” Because He is holy, the covenant people must be holy, and holiness manifests itself in the activities and relations of everyday life. Failure to recognize this leads to false doctrines of holiness.

We come now to v. 17, which in Robert Young's literal translation reads: "Thou dost not hate thy brother in thy heart; thou dost certainly reprove thy fellow, and not suffer sin on him." The point here as elsewhere is missed by Biblical scholars. Their knowledge and qualifications far surpass mine, but their common weakness is their view of such texts in isolation from others; as a result, they see this statement as a sentence, not as a part of a unified body of law. In v. 17, we do not have mere advice: we have a law, and the law has a context for application. Our Lord refers to this law very plainly. In Matthew 18:11-14, He declares that His coming is "to save that which was lost." He tells us of the shepherd with a flock of a hundred who goes hunting for the stray sheep, and concludes, "Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish." What this requires of us, He then declares:

15. Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.
16. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.
17. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.
18. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.
19. Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.
20. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. (Matthew 18:15-20)

This is clearly law: the legal recourse is declared. The reference is to the structure of elders over ten families, over fifty families, over hundreds, and on up to the great council. This was established before the giving of the law to settle all disputes (Ex. 18:13-26; Deut. 1:9-18). This requirement had become neglected in Judea in our Lord's day, as experts in the law took over these functions, *and* as the process became legalistic and unloving. The same has been the case since church courts have become harsh and legalistic; they are hostile to theonomy, but are intensely dedicated to church law. Our Lord sets forth the requirement of Leviticus 19:17 and Exodus 18:13-26 in the context of the Parable of the Lost Sheep. Matthew 18:15-17 is *invalid* apart from its context. That context is to save the lost, to manifest Christ's redeeming grace, and to go the extra mile to rescue the lost. *Only* if these terms are met, in strict faithfulness to God's every word (Matt. 4:4), and as the manifestation of God's grace and love, do Matthew 18:18-20 apply. Then and only then does man's judgment have the binding force of being bound in heaven, because it is in word and Spirit faithful to God's law.

In the Christian era, the requirements of Exodus 18:13-26, Deuteronomy 1:9-18, and Leviticus 19:17 have had a renewed emphasis in Judaism. Again, scholars, to my knowledge, have not studied the influence of Christianity upon Judaism, but there is reason to believe that rabbinic scholars were extensively influenced; they adopted much of Christianity while rejecting Christ. The Talmud shows an awareness of Christ and His teachings. It is now known that a possibly original Hebrew version of Matthew's Gospel, with some corruption, is still embedded in a fourteenth century Hebrew treatise by Rabbi Shem-Tob Ben Shaprut. The treatise is called "Even Bohan," the Touchstone.²³⁵ We know that over the centuries, contacts between church and

synagogue were many, both hostile and friendly. It is nonsense to suppose that there was no influence of one on the other, or that the influence went only one way.

Luke 17:3-4 also echoes Leviticus 19:17, as does James 5:19-20. According to Luke 17:3-4,

3. Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him.
4. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.

The verb *rebuke* is the Greek *epitimeson*, to rebuke or adjudge; it has a somewhat juridical reference. Its only noun form in the New Testament is in 2 Corinthians 2:6, *epitimia*, where it refers to the judicial punishment of someone and is translated as “punishment.” *Repent* in Luke 17:3 is *metanoese*, and “turns” in Luke 17:4 is *epistreke*, converts. In the case of *metanoese* (*metanoia*), the meaning is to turn around, to change the course of one’s life in word, thought, and deed. *Epistrepho* means conversion, a fundamental change and a turning to the Lord. Thus, our Lord tells us, when the offender is truly converted by means of the rebuke, he is to be forgiven. If he repeats his sin, he will make restitution and turn again to the offended. As long as he truly repents, which requires restitution, he is to be forgiven and helped as a brother in the Lord.

Paul again refers to this requirement of covenantal life on other occasions:

23. And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;
 24. And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.
 25. Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.
 26. Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:
 27. Neither give place to the devil. (Ephesians 4:23-27)
-
19. Against an elder receive not any accusation, but before two or three witnesses.
 20. Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.
 21. I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality. (1 Timothy 5:19-21)

Again we have references to the same procedure of confrontation and restoration. In Ephesians, Paul sets this requirement of legal and redemptive adjudication in the context of our life in the Holy Spirit. When we are justly angry, we are not to nurse our anger, but to act at once in terms of Matthew 18:11-20 rather than giving place to the devil by following his course instead of God’s required course of action. Among the many New Testament references to Leviticus 19:17 are the following:

1. Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

2. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. (Galatians 6:1-2)

And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed. (Hebrews 12:13)

19. Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him;

20. Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins. (James 5:19-20)

The New Testament is the revelation of the redeemer, God incarnate, and a commentary on His law-word, the Old Testament, by God the Son and God the Spirit.

In v. 18, we come to the familiar words of "love thy neighbour as thyself." Our Lord in Matthew 5:43 deals with the perversions of this law. The perversions were very real, but it is a mistake to assume that the real meaning of Leviticus 19:18 was unknown. Another error is the common assumption that "neighbour" in this law meant only a fellow Israelite. In Leviticus 19:33-37, it is clear that these requirements apply to all. Foreigners are to receive the same justice as all Israelites. The Talmud declared, "If a man finds both a friend and an enemy in distress, he should first assist his enemy in order to subdue his evil inclination."²³⁶

Leviticus 19:18 appears repeatedly in the New Testament, as in Matthew 22:39; Luke 10:27; Romans 13:9; Galatians 5:14; James 2:8; etc.

This law has three aspects. *First*, bearing a grudge is banned. Our memory is to be purged and our outlook thereby altered. We view men and events in terms of our memory. In this respect, memory is an invaluable and necessary tool for learning, because our knowledge of the past gives us discernment for the present and future. Thus, where a man has repented and made restitution, we warp ourselves by continuing to harbor a grudge. This aspect of Leviticus 19:18 deals with our mind and memory.

Second, before calling for the cleansing of our mind, our actions are commanded: no vengeance. Vengeance belongs to God (Deut. 32:35; Ps. 99:8; Jer. 50:15; Ezek. 25:14, 17; Nahum 1:2; 2 Thess. 1:8), and will be manifested either through His law or apart from human agencies, in time or in eternity.

The *third* aspect of this law is the requirement to love our neighbor, to abide by God's law in relation to him, for love is the fulfilling or putting into force of the law (Rom. 13:8-10).

The reason why we must obey this law is then given: "I am the LORD." It is His prerogative to command us because it is He who made us.

A very interesting insight on the meaning of this verse is given by both Porter and Knight, who render the key words, "you shall love your neighbour as a man like yourself," as someone who is, like you, a creature of God, a sinner, and as much in need of grace as you are.²³⁷ Such an interpretation ties the meaning to the covenant, to being members one of another, and to the requirement of grace and mercy to the unconverted.

A commentary on the meaning of Leviticus 19:18 is given by our Lord. The Parable of the Good Samaritan is an answer to the question, “And who is my neighbour?” Our Lord defines the meaning of love in terms of action, and our neighbor in terms of all men (Luke 10:25-37). Calvin noted:

Not only those with whom we have some connection are called our *neighbours*, but all without exception; for the whole human race forms one body, of which all are members. And consequently should be bound together by mutual ties; for we must bear in mind that even those who are most alienated from us, should be cherished and aided even as our own flesh; since we have seen elsewhere that sojourners and strangers are placed in the same category (with our relations;) and Christ sufficiently confirms this in the case of the Samaritan. (Luke x. 3)²³⁸

God’s purpose through His new humanity, the covenant people, becomes clear and open. The new humanity is to include the nations of this world, with all their glory (Rev. 21:24-26). The beginnings of this new humanity are in God’s covenant and the covenant Redeemer. As we establish His law, His government through the family and the elders, through our membership one in another, and by His grace reorder all things, so we extend the new humanity and the new creation.

Chapter Forty

Boundaries and Confusion

(Leviticus 19:19)

19. Ye shall keep my statutes. Thou shalt not let thy cattle gender with a diverse kind: thou shalt not sow thy field with mingled seed: neither shall a garment mingled of linen and woollen come upon thee. (Leviticus 19:19)

This is a law with a long and curious history. Repeatedly in history, men have recognized its truth. More than a century ago, when the first edition of Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown's *A Commentary* (1864-1870) appeared, it was noted that mingled seed had bad effects on and was injurious both to the soil and to the plants, and that garments of mingled linen and wool were unhealthy.²³⁹ In our own time, non-Christians have warned us of the health hazard in mingled clothing. People however, both in food and clothing, have been more governed by styles and tastes than by God's law and health considerations. This is especially noteworthy, because God promised an abundant blessing for faithfulness to His law.

According to Wenham, man "must keep separate what God created separate." This means a ban on alliances with ungodly nations, or marriages with unbelievers, and on attempts to negate the validity of God's "kinds," i.e., by attempting to produce hybrid animals.²⁴⁰

The order of the world is God-created and sacred. Man must do his work within the framework of that order. It has been a constant temptation to attempt to overturn that order. Thus, about forty years ago, some men claimed that they had succeeded in breeding mules, or so one "creative evolutionist" insisted. God's law, however, is against confusion. We are told in Deuteronomy 22:9-11,

9. Thou shalt not sow thy vineyard with divers seeds: lest the fruit of thy seed which thou has sown, and the fruit of thy vineyard, be defiled.
10. Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together.
11. Thou shalt not wear a garment of divers sorts, as of woollen and linen together.

Another application of the same requirement is given in Deuteronomy 22:5:

The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the LORD thy God.

God's fundamental order must not be despised or violated. Homosexuals, feminists, and many scientists are determined, however, that God's order must not stand.

Many efforts have been made over the centuries to undermine these laws. Since the law forbids the gendering of animals with a diverse kind, beginning with the rabbis and through generations of commentators, it has been held that buying and using mules is not forbidden, only crossbreeding a horse and ass to produce one. This is like saying that it is illegal to steal, but not illegal to receive stolen goods. Again, it is said that, because the high priest wore both linen and wool, priests were exempt. The law, however, forbids mingling the materials, using cloth of mingled threads.

This law begins with the declaration, “Ye shall keep my statutes.” *Statutes* is *chuggah* (*Khookkaw*), a decreed limit, an ordinance. It is translated as *ordinance* in Jeremiah 33:25. Hertz wrote that

the word may mean here, as in Jer. XXXIII, 25, fixed laws which God had instituted for the government of the physical universe. The purpose of the following regulations would then be: man must not deviate from the appointed order of things, nor go against the eternal laws of nature as established by Divine Wisdom. What God has ordained to be kept apart man must not seek to mix together.²⁴¹

Bush said of the prefix, “Ye shall keep my statutes,” “These words are here inserted lest the ensuing ordinance should be deemed of little moment and so neglected.”²⁴² We tend to regard that which is unimportant to us as of minor or no importance to God. Bush noted:

As to *seeds*, it would in many cases be very improper to sow different kinds in the same spot of ground, as many species of vegetables are disposed to mix and thus produce a very degenerate crop. Thus if oats and wheat were sown together, the latter would be injured, the former ruined. The turnip and carrot would not succeed conjointly, when either of them separately would prosper and yield a good crop; and if this be all that is intended, the precept here given is agreeable to the soundest agricultural maxims.²⁴³

It is ironic that from time to time men are determined to prove that such laws are mere superstition; they sow various vegetables between the rows of young vines or fruit trees, with sad results. As Scott observed,

These practices might be considered, as an attempt to alter the original constitution of God in creation: and the law may not unaptly be regarded, as implying a command of “simplicity and godly sincerity” in all things.²⁴⁴

More than a few scholars, such as Noordtzij, treat this law with condescension. For Noordtzij, it is “primarily directed against what the Israelites considered to be unnatural associations.” He concludes that this law was “an inheritance from a distant past, just as our society still has customs that ultimately derive from a similar mode of thought.”²⁴⁵

Far more discerning is Oehler’s comment:

The traditional division of the law of Moses into *moral*, *ceremonial*, and *juristic laws*, may serve to facilitate a general view of theocratic ordinances; but it is incorrect if it seeks to express a distinction within the law, and to claim a difference of dignity for the various parts. For in the law, the most inward commandment, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,” stands beside “Thou shalt not sow thy field with two kinds of seed,” Lev. XIX. 18,19. That Israel must be holy, like God, is the ground alike of the command not to be defiled by eating the flesh of certain animals, XI. 44 ff., and of the command to honor father and mother, XIX. 2 f. In fact, the ceremonial law gives special expression to the antagonism of the true religion to heathen nature-worship, by showing that while in the latter the Deity is drawn down into nature, in the former what is natural must be consecrated and hallowed to God. The whole law, in all its parts, has the same *form* of absolute, unconditional command. Before the making of the covenant, the people had the choice whether they would bind themselves by the law that was to be given; but after they pledge themselves, all choice is taken away. Because of this strictly objective character of the law, human judgment cannot be allowed to make distinctions between the different precepts. Whether such distinctions are to be made can be decided only by the Lawgiver, who appoints, it is true, a severer punishment for certain moral abominations, and for the transgression of such precepts as stand in immediate relation to the covenant idea (e.g., circumcision, the Sabbath, etc.) than for other transgressions. But, so far as man is concerned, the most inconsiderable precept is viewed under the aspect of the obedience demand for the whole law: “Cursed is he that fulfils not the words of this law, to do them,” Deut. XXVII. 26.²⁴⁶

These laws forbid the blurring of God-created distinctions. The nature and direction of sin is to blur and finally erase all the God-ordained boundaries. Man’s original sin (Gen. 3:5) was and is his attempt to deny and obliterate the distinction between God and man. Homosexuality, bestiality, and a variety of other sexual sins have as their purpose the obliteration of all such boundaries. Many of these offenses, including bestiality and incest, have been mandated by pagan religions as the essential affirmation of man’s freedom from and defiance of God’s law.

The violation of the boundaries set by God’s law goes hand in hand with the savage insistence on obedience to man-made laws. Violations of tax laws can sometimes now lead to more severe penalties than murder.

As we trivialize God’s law, we see the exaltation of man’s law. There is an inner logic in man’s statism and lawlessness. The insistence on denying God-given boundaries has many facets. In the mid-1950s, an economic analyst, Baxter, predicted a growing emphasis on unisex. Since then, we have seen the denial of the differences between male and female, and much more.

God’s laws are case laws. If vegetable seeds are not to be mingled, nor an ass and a horse crossbred, then in the human realm it follows that the confusion of God-ordained boundaries is even more serious.

The boundaries set by God shall stand. Those who deny them shall destroy themselves in their denial of the fundamental order of being.

Chapter Forty-One

Sexuality and Confusion

(*Leviticus 19:20-22*)

20. And whosoever lieth carnally with a woman, that is a bondmaid, betrothed to an husband, and not at all redeemed, nor freedom given her; she shall be scourged; they shall not be put to death, because she was not free.

21. And he shall bring his trespass offering unto the LORD, unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, even a ram for a trespass offering.

22. And the priest shall make an atonement for him with the ram of the trespass offering before the LORD for his sin which he hath done: and the sin which he hath done shall be forgiven him. (*Leviticus 19:20-22*)

We come again to a very unpopular law, but an important one. Men resent the Bible's evaluation of man, and hence find the plain references to it disquieting. The law refers to a "bondmaid." Bondservice in Scripture has reference to servitude to pay off a debt. Rabbi Hertz saw this law as referring to "the union with a heathen bondmaid betrothed to a Hebrew slave."²⁴⁷ There is no hint of this in the text. The term is *bondmaid*, *shiphchah* (*shifkhaw*); the Hebrew word comes from another, *mishpachah*, a family, from *to spread out*. The bondmaid had a place in the family, however temporary, and thus was not something to be used. Her status was legally protected. Moreover, as F. Meyrick noted,

The words, *she shall be scourged*, should be translated, *there shall be investigation*, followed, presumably, by the punishment of scourging, for both parties if both were guilty, for one if the woman were unwilling. The man is afterwards to offer a trespass offering. As the offence had been a wrong as well as a sin, his offering is to be a trespass offering.²⁴⁸

Robert Young, in his *Literal Translation of the Holy Bible*, rendered the phrase, "an investigation there is." J. R. Porter translated it as "inquiry shall be made." The Hebrew word, *biggoreth*, rendered by some as *scourged*, appears only once in the Bible and most likely means *examination*.²⁴⁹

These verses need to be considered in relationship to Deuteronomy 22:23-24:

23. If a damsel that is a virgin be betrothed unto an husband, and a man find her in the city, and lie with her;

24. Then ye shall bring them both out unto the gate of that city, and ye shall stone them with stones that they die; the damsel, because she cried not, being in the city; and the man, because he hath humbled his neighbour's wife: so thou shalt put away evil from among you.

In both Leviticus 19:20-22 and Deuteronomy 22:23-24, we have unmarried but betrothed girls. For the free woman, the penalty is death as it is for the man; this has reference, not to rape, but to lawless sex. In the case of the bondmaid, diminished freedom means diminished responsibility on her part. The man in the case is another matter: the reference is to “whosoever lieth carnally with a woman, that is a bondmaid, betrothed to an husband.” This can apply to her master, or his son, or to a male bondservant in the household, or any other man. In any of these instances, the man would have the greater responsibility and power. At any rate, an investigation was required in order to assess the penalty. In Exodus 22:16-17, the penalty for lawless sex with an unbetrothed maid was the payment of a dowry whether or not marriage followed, and marriage if the girl’s father required it. The reduced girl could not be divorced at a later date (Deut. 22:28-29). In this instance, the investigation determined the penalty, which could not be death. The law regarding women prisoners of war who were married by their captors protected them from abuse or degradation; mistreatment gave them freedom, i.e., a divorce (Deut. 21:10-14). In terms of this, it follows that an abused bondmaid could gain both her freedom and some compensation as a result of the inquiry and the assessment of guilt. Keil and Delitzsch had this to say in part:

Even the personal rights of slaves were to be upheld; and a maid, though a slave, was not to be degraded to the condition of personal property. If any one lay with a woman who was a slave and betrothed to a man, but neither redeemed nor emancipated, the punishment of death was not to be inflicted, as in the case of adultery (chap. XX. 10), or the seduction of a free virgin who was betrothed (Deut. XXII. 23sq.), because she was not set free; but scourging was to be inflicted, and the guilty person was also to bring a trespass-offering for the expiation of his sin against God.²⁵⁰

Their comment is erroneous in calling the bondmaid a slave; there is a difference. It is also in error in its reference to scourging, but it is correct in seeing that the law is protective of all peoples. According to the Mishnah, scourging is the punishment, but this is not what the text specifies.

The reference to the bondmaid as “not at all redeemed” can be better understood in modern English as not *fully* redeemed. Each day a bondservant worked lessened his or her redemption price. According to a Jewish tradition, no daughter of Israel could be a bondmaid.²⁵¹ However, Exodus 21:7 deals with this possibility and fact.

The trespass offering was required of the man, but it is wrong to see it as the limit of his punishment. As Lange said,

Versions and authorities vary as to whether the punishment was to be inflicted on both parties, on the man alone, or on the woman alone (A.V.). The last is supported on the ground that the man’s punishment consisted in his trespass offering; but this is so entirely inadequate that this view may be dismissed. Probably both parties were punished when the acquiescence of the woman might be presumed, and the man alone in the opposite case. This would be in accordance with the analogy of Deut. XXII. 23-27, and would account for the indefiniteness of the Hebrew expression.... The supposition that both were ordinarily to be

punished also agrees best with the following plural — *they shall not be put to death.*²⁵²

There is another aspect to this law, one which was seen in antiquity and is now disregarded. This law follows Leviticus 19:19, which prohibits cross-breeding of diverse kinds, and also mingled threads in a garment, *i.e.*, of linen and woolen. In Leviticus 19:20-22, the improper mixture is of two kinds. *First*, it is a lawless relationship, outside of marriage and outside the protective bonds of family life and status. *Second*, the man and the woman are unequal in status. This does not mean that the slave girl could not be a capable and talented person. Her status did not give her anything but weakness as against the man. It was thus an exploitive relationship and hence an improper and lawless “mixture.” While clearly giving headship to the man, God’s law is also protective of the woman so that the relationship might be covenantal, *i.e.*, contractual and under law, rather than exploitive.

The significance of the trespass offering requirement is very clearly set forth by Oehler:

The trespass-offering presupposes... *an act of defrauding*, which, though *chiefly an infraction of a neighbor’s rights in the matter of property*, is also, according to the views of Mosaism, *an infraction of God’s rights* in respect to law.²⁵³

Reference was made earlier to the fact that laws like this one are commonly unpopular and hence neglected. Modern man is not comfortable with references to bondservice and other facts now piously disavowed in name. Kellogg’s comments are thus very much in order:

We live in an age when, everywhere in Christendom, the cry is “Reform;” and there are many who think that if once it be proved that a thing is wrong, it follows by necessary consequence that the immediate and unqualified legal prohibition of that wrong, under such penalty as the wrong may deserve, is the only thing that any Christian man has a right to think of. And yet, according to the principle illustrated in this legislation, this conclusion in such cases can by no means be taken for granted. *That is not always the best law practically which is the best law abstractly.* That law is the best which shall be most effective in diminishing a given evil, under the existing moral condition of the community; and it is often a matter of such exceeding difficulty to determine what legislation against admitted sins and evils, may be the most productive of good in a community whose moral sense is dull concerning them, that it is not strange that the best of men are often found to differ. Remembering this, we may well commend the duty of a more charitable judgment in such cases, than one often hears from such radical reformers, who seem to imagine that in order to remove an evil all that is necessary is to pass a law at once and for ever prohibiting it; and who therefore hold up to obloquy all who doubt as to the wisdom and duty of so doing, as the enemies of truth and of righteousness. Moses, acting under direct instruction from the God of supreme wisdom and of perfect holiness, was far wiser than such well-meaning but sadly mistaken social reformers, who would fain be wiser than God.²⁵⁴

What Kellogg noted almost a century ago has proven to be totally right. Laws have been framed to replace God's law; these laws have reflected abstract goals and doctrines unrelated to the facts of man's nature and society. Laws can control men and require them to be outwardly good, but laws cannot give man a new nature, nor can they control evil if they mislocate it.

Humanistic laws locate evil in society, in the environment; evil is the family, or capitalism, or communism, or any number of other things which we may consider to be good or bad. Evil is not an abstraction: it is moral perversity in man. Communism as an economic system can, in abstraction, be conceived to be an ideal system and the solution to all human problems. Angels might conceivably live happily in a communist society, but men are not angels; they are sinners. As sinners, they are in nature not created for such a society as communism. Hypothetical mathematics cannot be used to build bridges, nor hypothetical economics to establish an economic order. Humanistic laws are abstract and ideal, not related to the realities of man's nature and being, and as a result they bring in social chaos.

God's law is in terms of God's creation and of God's purpose for man. It furthers man's freedom and God's purpose for man and the world. The purpose of Leviticus 19:20-22 is to prevent confusion. Men must not use their power to destroy God's order. Homosexuality and bestiality are obvious cases of confusion, but so, too, is any unequal and exploitive relationship.

Chapter Forty-Two

Circumcision, Trees, and Us

(*Leviticus 19:23-25*)

23. And when ye shall come into the land, and shall have planted all manner of trees for food, then ye shall count the fruit thereof as uncircumcised: three years shall it be as uncircumcised unto you: it shall not be eaten of.

24. But in the fourth year all the fruit thereof shall be holy to praise the LORD withal.

25. And in the fifth year shall ye eat of the fruit thereof, that it may yield unto you the increase thereof: I am the LORD your God. (*Leviticus 19:23-25*)

This is on the surface a simple law with respect to the care of fruit trees. As usually observed, it has meant stripping the young tree of its blossoms or its barely formed fruit. As a result, the tree grows better in the first three years of its life. This is sound practice; the tree will later bear more richly because of it.

There is, however, another aspect to this law, one which points beyond farming. It is the use of the word *uncircumcised*. Only by keeping the tree from bearing fruit for three years is it then regarded as *circumcised*. This is a religious term, having reference to a covenant rite whereby the cutting of the foreskin is a representation of our death to hope in generation and our confidence in God's work of regeneration. The use of this word here is not accidental.

Before God would allow Moses to begin his ministry, Moses had to see to it that one of his sons was circumcised (Ex. 4:20-26). Before Passover in Egypt and before Israel's deliverance, all Israelites, including their servants, had to be circumcised (Ex. 12:43-51). Again, a generation later, before entering the Promised Land, all the uncircumcised had to be circumcised before eating of the Passover meal and entering Canaan (Josh. 5:2-9). Circumcision was *required* before men and their families could eat the Passover offering.²⁵⁵ Both Moses and Joshua began their great tasks of leading a people, out of Egypt in the case of Moses, and into Canaan in Joshua's case, by these acts of circumcision that preceded the Passover.²⁵⁶

Before looking further into the meaning of circumcision in this context, let us turn to its application to trees.

In its first three years, the fruit tree is to be regarded as comparable to a male infant during its first eight days up to the rite of circumcision: it is unconsecrated.²⁵⁷ It is noteworthy that even among the ancient Babylonians fruit trees were left unharvested until after the fourth year.²⁵⁸ Faithfulness to this law means no loss at all; in the fifth year, the harvest will, by its abundance, reward the faithful one. From the planting of the trees to the harvesting thereof, all must be done in terms of God's law: this is the law of holiness. Wenham's comment here is beautiful:

Holiness involves the total consecration of a man's life and labor to God's service. This was symbolized in the giving of one day in seven, and a tithe of all produce, and also in the dedication of the firstfruits of agriculture. This principle covers not only crops (Exod. 23:19; Lev. 23:10; Deut. 26:1ff.) but also animals (Exod. 34:19-20; Deut. 15:19) and even children (Exod. 13:2; Num. 8:16ff.). By dedicating the first of everything to God, the man of the Old Covenant publicly acknowledged that all he had was from God, and he thanked him for his blessings. (I Chr. 29:14).²⁵⁹

“The garden-fruit was also to be sanctified to the Lord.”²⁶⁰ If the laws of holiness apply to fruit trees, how much more so to man, to us! When, after three years, the tree is harvested, the fruit, or the proceeds of its sale, *must* go to God. “It teaches us, as in all analogous cases, that God is always to be served before ourselves.”²⁶¹

We should note that this law, like all God's laws, has benefits in every direction. We glorify God by our obedience. The fruit trees are stronger because they are allowed to give all their strength to growth for three years. Finally, the farmer receives a better harvest in due time.

These verses, like so many others, are not immune to absurd interpretations. Peake held that the fruit during the first three years may have been left for the field spirits!²⁶²

In laws such as this, holiness is extended to the natural world, for holiness is a total concept: there is no sphere of creation which is excluded from its requirements.

Four times in Leviticus (14:34; 19:23; 23:10; 25:2), as C. D. Ginsburg has noted, we are given laws looking ahead to the occupation of Canaan.²⁶³ The purpose of this particular law is “to praise the Lord” (v. 24), and the word translated as *praise* is derived from *halal*, as in *hallelujah*; it means to jubilate. God commands us because the earth is His, and we are His. His laws are for our prosperity in Him, and hence are to further our jubilation.

This should help us to understand why an agricultural fact is described by a covenantal term. Circumcision is entrance into the covenant, as is baptism in the New Testament, and some have suggested that the word baptism could be used here.

In terms of this, the circumcision-Passover relationship could be transcribed for the church as the baptism-resurrection nexus. By our baptism into Christ, i.e., our atonement and regeneration, we are the people of the new creation, of the resurrection.

The matter does not end here. Scripture makes it clear that faithfulness to the Lord is the way of life, whereas unfaithfulness and unbelief is the way of death. Proverbs 8:36 declares, “he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death.”

It is not accidental that a single fact of farming which is productive of better and richer harvests is given an unusual name, *circumcision*. Neither is it incidental that faithfulness is blessed by a deferred but richer harvest.

The people of the circumcision, of baptism, are the people of the Passover, of the resurrection. We are thereby prepared to yield a rich and enduring harvest to the Lord. We are not called to be fruitless to Christ. If we are in Christ, the Vine, we are the branches who are to bear fruit abundantly (John 15:1-8).

Circumcision is a spiritual death, as is baptism also, and a mark of a supernatural life, power, and meaning. It leads to the Passover, to resurrection, and then to the making of all things new (Rev. 21:5).

Chapter Forty-Three

Profanity

(*Leviticus 19:26-31*)

26. Ye shall not eat any thing with the blood: neither shall ye use enchantment, nor observe times.
27. Ye shall not round the corners of your heads, neither shalt thou mar the corners of thy beard.
28. Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks upon you: I am the LORD.
29. Do not prostitute thy daughter, to cause her to be a whore; lest the land fall to whoredom, and the land become full of wickedness.
30. Ye shall keep my sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary: I am the LORD.
31. Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them: I am the LORD your God. (*Leviticus 19:26-31*)

These are laws concerning *profanity* in the Biblical sense. In v. 29, the word *prostitute*, which appears nowhere else in the Bible (normally the word *whore* is used), must be translated more accurately as *profane*. The origin of the word *prostitute* is in Latin, and it comes from a root meaning “to place;” such a woman is placed in an exposed and vulnerable way of life and is unprotected. *Profane* means outside the temple, outside of God.

Since this verse tells us much about the entire passage, let us begin by analyzing its meaning. As it reads in modern English, it is a tautology; if a daughter is prostituted, she *is* made a whore; it is not a future possibility, as “to cause her to be a whore” would indicate. The Hebrew word *profane* has the meaning also of *dissolve*. The reference thus is to allowing a girl to do something outside of God which dissolves the God-ordained family relationship and has devastating effects on the land. How then does a man profane his daughter? The ancient rabbinic interpretation is very clear on this, and especially important in its modern relevance. To profane a daughter meant and means to allow any ungodly relationship with a man, including a non-marital sexual relationship. The rite of marriage is viewed as the sanctification of the man and the woman in their sexuality. It is in terms of God’s law, the normal and godly estate; hence, if a father permits any profane or ungodly conduct by his daughter, the effects on society are far-reaching. As Hertz noted, the land would fall into harlotry and become full of lewdness, which means, “looking upon the ‘demand’ for harlotry as a normal condition of things, and tolerating the consequent ‘supply’ of human beings for such a life of shame.”²⁶⁴

The requirement of this law thus begins *first*, with the authority and the responsibility of the father. He must not condone or tolerate any ungodly or profane activity. The law speaks of daughters, being a case law, but it applies to all members of the family, sons and other members of the household included. The father’s responsibility is to refuse sanction to any profane activity, and the decision must be his.

Second, if sanction or permission cannot be given to any profane living, neither can an inheritance, a subsidy, or any other form of assistance. The family capital must be used to capitalize our Christian future, not profanity.

Third, this law stresses the social consequences of private acts. What the family does profoundly affects society. Thus, in v. 29 we see clearly the thrust of all these verses: holiness is a total concept, and profanity in any sphere has societal results.

The prohibition of eating blood (v. 26) was dealt with in Leviticus 17:10ff. Maimonides wrote of the pagan rites of blood: men killed a beast, received its blood in a pot, and then drank the blood to gain the animal's power and to establish communion with spirits.²⁶⁵ In this verse, eating or drinking blood is associated with the pagan practices of divination and soothsaying. When God gives us His revelation, to seek knowledge from ungodly sources is an act of defiance and apostasy. The word *enchantment* is *nachash*, virtually the identical word as in Genesis 3:1, where it is translated as *serpent*. Its root meaning is to hiss or whisper, and it refers to all efforts to circumvent God's law-word. Thus, the Tempter in the Garden of Eden, Satan, is called a serpent, a whisperer, one who believes that defiant and secret words of rebellion and independence can alter God's reality. God's reality is never governed by the creature's word. The future cannot be determined apart from or in defiance of the triune God.

We have in v. 27 a law now regarded as merely a curiosity. Some Jews, by allowing the sidelocks to grow long, go beyond the requirement of v. 27 to ensure their obedience. It is interesting to note that Tsar Nicholas I of Russia tried to force the Jews out of compliance with this law in order, apparently, to facilitate assimilation, whereas earlier, Maria Theresa of Austria ordered strict obedience in order to make all Jews readily identifiable. However, much of the present-day observance of this law by Jews represents the influence of Kabbalism and Hasidism rather than ancient practice.²⁶⁶

There are two aspects to this law. *First*, it was and still is the practice of some peoples, Arabs in particular, to shave off all the hair of the head except a dish-like tuft on the crown. Others shaved off the top of their crown to have a tonsure. The marginal readings to Jeremiah 9:26; 25:23; and 49:32 all refer to the Arabian practice. The people of God were to abstain from such practices to distinguish them from their unbelieving neighbors.

Second, the beard similarly was not to be deformed in various ways. Most scholars call attention to a wide variety of pagan practices wherein various religious requirements led to deforming the natural character of head hair and beard. This is true enough, but peripheral to the basic meaning. Wenham, commenting on vv. 27-28, noted, with his usual insight and clarity:

This law conforms to other holiness rules which seek to uphold the natural order of creation and preserve it from corruption (cf. v. 19; 18:22-23; 21:17ff.). God created man in his image and pronounced all creation very good (Gen. 1). Man is not to disfigure the divine likeness implanted in him by scarring his body. The external appearance of the people should reflect their internal status as the chosen and holy people of God (Deut. 14:1-2). Paul uses a similar line of argument in I

Cor. 6. The body of the believer belongs to Christ, therefore, “glorify God in your body” (1 Cor. 6:20).²⁶⁷

The relevance of God’s law is a continuing one. Unnatural styles have too often warped man’s head and body.

In v. 28, ornamental cuttings in the flesh or cuttings to show mourning, as still practiced by some peoples, and tattoos, practiced by virtually all, are forbidden. It is noteworthy that in the Turkish Empire, and in other nations, slaves were routinely tattooed, commonly on the forehead. Man’s body is God’s creation, and it is a sin to disfigure or mar it. Knight wisely noted that the word *flesh* in the Hebrew covers the whole being of man, his personality, soul, and body. Such disfiguring includes what is in our minds and thoughts, as well as “dabbling with the occult.”²⁶⁸ We are God’s workmanship, and any tampering with His work is a sin and an outrage. Birth defects are aspects of a fallen world; their correction is not at all wrong. It is tampering with God’s order that is condemned. God underlines the importance of this law by declaring again, “I am the LORD.”

In v. 30, God requires Sabbath-keeping and reverence for His sanctuary, once more with the reminder, “I am the LORD.” The Sabbath and the Law as a whole are given by God as His love and care for man, and are to man a way of privilege and glory. Some rabbis of old held that the greater the number of commandments from God, the more man’s life can be sanctified and beautified. Thus it was said:

Beloved are the Israelites, for God has encompassed them with commandments.... (*Men.* 43b.)

R. Phinehas said: Whatsoever you do, the commandments accompany you. If you build a house, there is Deut. XXII, 8 (battlements); if you make a door, there is Deut. VI, 9 (text on door); if you buy new clothes, there is Deut. XXII, 11 (linsey-woolsey); if you have your hair cut, there is Lev. XIX, 27 (corners of beard); if you plough your field, there is Deut. XXII, 10 (ox and ass together); if you sow it, there is Deut. XXII, 9 (mixed crop); if you gather harvest, there is Deut. XXII, 19 (forgotten sheaf). God said, ‘Even when you are not occupied with anything, but are just taking a walk, the commands accompany you,’ for there is Deut. XXII, 6 (bird’s nest).²⁶⁹

In v. 31, any trust in or resort to mediums and wizards (or, occultist “wise-men”) is strictly forbidden. To do so, as Bonar noted, is to “choose rather the fellowship of God’s enemies.”²⁷⁰ At issue is the source of knowledge: do we seek it under God or outside and in defiance of God? All ungodly quests for knowledge are profanity.

Chapter Forty-Four

Reverence

(*Leviticus 19:32-37*)

32. Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I am the LORD.
33. And if a stranger sojourn with thee in your land, ye shall not vex him.
34. But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.
35. Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, in meteyard, in weight, or in measure.
36. Just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin, shall ye have: I am the LORD your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt.
37. Therefore shall ye observe all my statutes, and all my judgments, and do them: I am the LORD. (*Leviticus 19:32-37*)

Biblical law takes less space than any modern law book and yet totally covers life. It governs not only our action, but also our words, thoughts, and attitudes. We are warned not to put our “trust in princes, nor in the son of Adam, in whom there is no help” (Ps. 146:3). When men turn to God to trust and obey Him, then God is our help and government, with far-reaching benefits, as Psalm 146:5-10 makes clear:

5. Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the LORD his God:
6. Which made heaven, and earth, the sea, and all that therein is: which keepeth truth for ever:
7. Which executeth judgment for the oppressed: Which giveth food to the hungry. The LORD looseth the prisoners:
8. The LORD openeth the eyes of the blind: the LORD raiseth them that are bowed down: the LORD loveth the righteous:
9. The LORD preserveth the strangers: he relieveth the fatherless and widow: but the way of the wicked he turneth upside down.
10. The LORD shall reign for ever, even thy God, O Zion, unto all generations. Praise ye the LORD.

The stranger, the fatherless, the widow, the oppressed, the hungry, the unjustly prisoned (*i.e.*, captives), the blind, and more, are all the objects of God’s care and must be cared for by us also. But this is not all: the aged must be honored, even as parents are honored (Ex. 20:12). A generation that will not honor and respect its forbears will be despised and condemned by God. The command thus is to rise up when the aged come into our presence, and it is reinforced by the notice: “I am the LORD.” For children to oppress their elders, and women to rule over men (Isa.

3:5, 12), is a mark of the end of a culture and its coming judgment. The modern cult of youth is not Scriptural.

J. R. Porter correctly noted:

Reverence for *the aged* is not primarily on humanitarian grounds. It is rooted in the divine ordering of society and hence is coupled with the injunction *fear your God*.²⁷¹

Kellogg was right in declaring that “reverence for the aged” in the law “closely connects...with the fear of God.”²⁷²

The Biblical goal for us is age with wisdom and justice, and this is declared to be “beauty.” Instances of this in Proverbs are the following:

The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness. (16:31)

The glory of young men is their strength: and the beauty of old men is the gray head. (20:29)

The Biblical goal is age with wisdom and justice, or righteousness, whereas the modern goal is perpetual youth, with hedonistic pursuits and pleasures. It has not occurred to modern scholars, because of their thorough naturalism, that this depreciation of maturity and age may be one reason why so many men become impotent even in their forties.

Calvin noted:

Many old men, indeed, either by their own levity, or lewdness, or sloth, subvert their own dignity; yet, although grey hairs may not always be accompanied by courteous wisdom, still, in itself, age is venerable, according to God’s command.²⁷³

The Bible records only one case of open disrespect for age, by Elihu in Job 32:9, “Great men are not always wise: neither do the aged understand judgment.” God rebuked Eliphaz the Temanite, and his two friends, declaring, “ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath” (Job 42:7-8). God totally ignored Elihu. God “accepted” Job’s three friends, after they made sacrifices of repentance, and “the LORD also accepted Job” (Job 42:9-10), but again Elihu is bypassed as a nothing.

Until recent years, in more than a few cultures, all rose up when an older man or woman entered a room. This is clearly set forth in the whole of Scripture, and Paul tells Timothy that a young pastor, while having a nominal authority over older members of the church, must also exercise deference even when duty requires some comment:

1. Rebuke not an elder, but intreat him as a father; and the younger men as brethren;
2. The elder women as mothers; the younger as sisters, with all purity. (1 Timothy 5:1-2)

The placement of this law is not accidental. In v. 30, the Sabbath rest, and respect for God's sanctuary, is required. God is our Creator, sustainer, and future. In v. 31, evil attempts to read the future outside of God are condemned; the future has a causal relationship to our past and present in terms of God's law. In v. 32, respect for our past and present, our elders, is commanded as a manifestation of our fear of God.

In vv. 33-34, we are told what the love our neighbor involves (Lev. 19:18). The law specifies strangers, aliens, and it refers to their captivity in Egypt to indicate what a godless treatment of aliens can be. Yet some commentators insist that the application of this law "was only to those who worshipped Israel's God."²⁷⁴ This is *not* how the text reads; only if one reads the Bible with evolution in mind is such a reading "tenable." Alleman's treatment of Genesis gives reasons for regarding his view as the importation of a modern perspective into the text. Jamieson was closer to the meaning here in declaring:

The Israelites were told to hold out encouragement to strangers to settle among them, that these might be brought to the knowledge and worship of the true God; and with this view they were enjoined to treat such persons, not as aliens, but as friends, on the ground that they themselves, who were strangers in Egypt, were at first kindly and hospitably received in that country.²⁷⁵

It is worthy of note that, if a culture is strong, the migrants into its boundaries seek to learn and follow its ways; they become strong proponents and defenders of it. When the culture weakens, both aliens and citizens begin to desert it.

How seriously this law is regarded by God appears in Deuteronomy 27:19:

Cursed be he that perverteth the judgment of the stranger, fatherless, and widow.
And all the people shall say, Amen.

In Matthew 25:40, our Lord says, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these *my brethren*, ye have done it unto me." As we treat our fellow believers in need, so we treat Christ. Paul and the apostolic fellowship declare, in Hebrews 13:1-2,

1. Let brotherly love continue.
2. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

The reference here is to Genesis 18, the story of Abraham and the three strangers.

In vv. 35-37, justice in commercial dealings is required. The *ephah* was the standard dry measure, somewhat more than a bushel, and the *hin* a liquid measure, about 1¼ to 1½ gallons, although some authorities differ. Snaith rightly noted:

These verses are against false measurements of length, weight, and quantity. Scales were used not only for weighing what was sold, but also for weighing the money paid, the coins, such as they were, being by no means standardized or secure from clipping.²⁷⁶

Money was originally *weights* of gold and silver, not “coins,” and hence was honest money.

Porter wisely noted:

Dishonesty in commercial transactions would be a sign of injustice throughout the whole of society, generally at the expense of the poor, so it is often condemned in the prophets and elsewhere in the Old Testament (cf. Ezek. 45:10-11; Amos 8:5; Deut. 25:13-15).²⁷⁷

Dishonesty in commerce is evidence of bad character and an absence of godliness. The alternative to such dishonesty is not a withdrawal from the world of commerce but integrity within it.

Leviticus 19 begins and ends with the declaration, “I am the LORD.” This is the Lord’s word, and, if we submit to Him as Lord, we submit to His word. We cannot separate the two.

We show our *reverence* for the triune God in the way we treat our elders, all strangers or foreigners, and all men with whom we have commercial transactions or monetary dealings. We thereby manifest whether or not we fear God.

Furthermore, as Harrison noted, “Obedience to the divine will is the key to blessing in life.”²⁷⁸

Chapter Forty-Five

Molech Worship

(*Leviticus 20:1-5*)

1. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,
2. Again, thou shalt say to the children of Israel, Whosoever he be of the children of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn in Israel, that giveth any of his seed unto Molech; he shall surely be put to death: the people of the land shall stone him with stones.
3. And I will set my face against that man, and will cut him off from among his people; because he hath given of his seed unto Molech, to defile my sanctuary, and to profane my holy name.
4. And if the people of the land do any ways hide their eyes from the man, when he giveth of his seed unto Molech, and kill him not:
5. Then I will set my face against that man, and against his family, and will cut him off, and all that go a whoring after him, to commit whoredom with Molech, from among their people. (*Leviticus 20:1-5*)

This law is among the less popular laws of Scripture, if we can call any law popular when it militates against man's sin. The word *Molech* has several forms: Moloch, Milcom, Melek, Malcam, and Malcan; it means king, or counselor. It has reference to king or state worship. Giving one's seed to Molech meant declaring the child to be the property of the civil ruler, to be used at his will. In a ceremony setting forth this fact, the child was passed over a brazier of incense, or an altar of sacrifice, to indicate the surrender and dedication of the child to the ruler. In the event of a national crisis, the child could be killed as a sacrifice.

This cult was widespread in antiquity. It was also associated with the bull cult, the calf or bull being a symbol of fertility and divine kingship.²⁷⁹ The king-god was sometimes represented on seals by streams of water issuing from his body, or from a vase in his hand.²⁸⁰ Hooke concluded,

As we have suggested, the interchange between the god, the king and the sacred tree seems to point to the fact that the tree, which it may not be misleading to call the tree of life, is a symbol of the life-giving functions of the king.

A king-god was "an individual who was regarded by the community as the focus and embodiment of the magical powers which were necessary for its well-being."²⁸¹

It is easy for modern man to view Molech worship as a primitive superstition. The fact is, however, that modern man, against evidence and reason, expects the state, the modern king-god, to be a tree of life and to solve political, economic, educational, medical, cultural, and other problems. Given the long history of the messianic state, modern man seems to be far more gullible and superstitious than the men of antiquity.

It should be noted that the identification of Molech with the king and his order is slighted and even questioned by some scholars. The writings of such men raise questions, render all answers fuzzy, and sometimes manifest an antipathy to the most obvious answers. Given the religious skepticism of such scholars, both truth and factuality are blurred because their vision is blurred. With the wrong glasses, our physical vision is impaired; with the wrong faith, our intellectual vision begins to suffer.

The medievalist Henry Focillon called attention to the fact that at one time historians viewed the year A.D. 1000 as a time of apocalyptic fear and even terror at the supposed imminent end of the world. Focillon revised that view without eliminating the importance of the year. All too many scholars of recent generations have ridiculed the idea that the year 1000 was at all important. This, said Focillon, is because the calendar has lost its importance for us. When the Christian Church shaped culture, the calendar expressed great and exalted certainties: Christmas, Easter, Saints' days, pilgrimages, and more. Time and the year were a frame for man's action in Christ. There was thus a meaning to the calendar. Now dates are more limited and are political. For a Frenchman like Focillon, they are 1793, 1830, and 1848.²⁸² Modern man's calendar has no cosmic meaning, and hence dates, men, events, and especially moral imperatives have a limited meaning.

Let us now turn to the text. Porter holds that "the crime is child-sacrifice to a foreign deity."²⁸³ We need not assume that this necessitates the actual execution of the child. The covenant child belongs to God: any alienation of the child from God is a serious offense. How seriously God regards this is apparent, not only from this law, but also from our Lord's echo of it in Matthew 18:6:

But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

Note that in both Leviticus 20:1-5 and Matthew 18:6, stones are referred to in the execution of offenders. Offenses against children are not taken lightly. They have their root in the fact that the covenant child is God's property. (This is the meaning of infant baptism.) In v. 5, it is called committing "whoredom with Molech," or, in modern versions, prostituting themselves to Molech.

The primary offense against the child is religious; it means anything other than seeing the child as God's property and as an object of our stewardship. All other offenses against the child are subsidiaries to this. Hannah's words concerning her son Samuel set forth the meaning of this law:

27. For this lad I prayed, and the LORD has granted me what I prayed Him for;
28. I have therefore handed him back to the LORD; as long as he lives he is returned to the LORD. (1 Samuel 1:27-28; Berkeley Version)

Snaith held that this law says nothing about the burning of children as human sacrifices. It means, he said, dedicating them to temple male and female prostitution, which is a profanation of the sanctuary and God's Name.²⁸⁴ This is a possible interpretation, but what is clear is the protection of children as God's property, not the state's, nor the parents'.

Two kinds of penalties are cited. *First*, the "people of the land," or their courts, must execute all who are guilty of various forms of child abuse. *Second*, God Himself moves against such people. A culture which is indifferent to child abuse has no future.

In v. 5, the primary offender is seen as the father in all cases where the family is guilty. Because of his authority, the father has the greater culpability.

Death by stoning was the severest penalty of the law. According to C. D. Ginsburg,

The Jewish canonists have tabulated the following eighteen cases in which death by stoning was inflicted: (1) of a man who had commerce with his own mother (chap. xx. 11); (2) or with his father's wife (ch. xx. 1); (3) or with his daughter-in-law (chap. xx. 12); (4) or with a betrothed maiden (Deut. xxii. 23, 24); (5) or with a male (chap. xx. 13); (6) or with a beast (chap. xx. 15); (7) of a woman who was guilty of lying with a beast (chap. xx. 16); (8) the blasphemer (chap. xxiv. 10-16); (9) the worshipper of idols (Deut. xvii. 2-5); (10) the one who gives his seed to Molech (chap. xx.2); (11) the necromancer; (12) the wizard (chap. xx. 27); (13) the false prophet (Deut. xiii. 6); (14) the enticer to idolatry (Deut. xiii. 11); (15) the witch (chap. xx. 17); (16) the profaner of the Sabbath (Num. xv. 32- 36); (17) he that curses his parent (chap. xx. 9); and (18) the rebellious son (Deut. xxi. 18-21).²⁸⁵

According to Hebraic practice, the one sentenced to die was first exhorted to confess his sins and repent; next, he was given "some stupefying draught" to render him more or less insensible.²⁸⁶ It is noteworthy that v. 4 stresses the fact that the entire community must be involved in this opposition to child abuse and the separation of the child from God; the child is *not* man's property. Nathaniel Micklem held that the offense was "the dedication of the children to 'the king.'"²⁸⁷ Whenever the child is seen as human property, state property, or his own lord, he is separated from God the Creator and from the protection of God's law. The culmination of the secularization of the child is his sacrifice to human or statist purposes. Thus, it is not surprising that Molech worship could end in child sacrifice (Ps. 106:37-38; Jer. 7:31; 19:4f; Ezek. 23:37-39; Micah 6:7). According to Ezekiel, such practices were common to those who made a formal profession of faith:

37. They have committed adultery, and blood is in their hands, and with their idols have they committed adultery, and have also caused their sons, whom they bare unto me, to pass for them through the fire, to devour them.

38. Moreover this they have done unto me: they have defiled my sanctuary in the same day, and have profaned my Sabbaths.

39. For when they had slain their children to their idols, then they came the same day into my sanctuary to profane it; and lo, thus have they done in the midst of mine house. (Ezekiel 23:37-39)

The Law declares repeatedly that, when a people reject God, the earth rejects them and spues them out. Children, we are told, are an inheritance from God (Ps. 127:3), and in Ezekiel 23:37, God says that children are born unto God. To reject our duty to rear children in terms of God's covenant is thus a rejection of our inheritance and our future.

A final point. The common hostility to this and like texts in the Law is because of the death penalty. We live in a time when the death penalty is not popular, but, even among those who favor the death penalty, the law is commonly rejected. *First*, the penalty applies to a covenant people directly, but, indirectly, all godless cultures are under a penalty of death. *Second*, many who are ready to accept the death penalty *for crimes against man* reject it *for crimes against God*. Man is more important in their thinking, and crime is reduced to offenses against mankind and its properties. Such a view is humanistic. *Third*, in due time, God brings radical judgment on cultures which despise the Name and honor of God, and who feel that transgressions of His law are nothing at all.

In this instance, Molech worship, we have the death penalty because *an oath is violated*. To understand this, let us look at the word *sacramentum*, an old Latin word meaning a soldier's oath. Every Roman soldier took an oath, a *sacramentum*, never to desert the Roman eagle, the military standard. To break that oath and to run from the enemy meant death, or, *at least*, the decimation of the legion, every tenth man being killed.

It is difficult for modern man to appreciate the meaning of an oath. The oath of office required by the U.S. Constitution, when that document was written, still had its ancient religious and Biblical meaning: it invoked the wrath of God for violation, or man's charges of impeachment or treason. We are very much under the influence of Renaissance humanism now, an attitude best summed up by Shakespeare in *Hamlet*. Polonius, in speaking to Laertes, declares:

This above all, — to thine own self be true;
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man. (Act I, scene 3)

However, it is precisely when we are true to ourselves that we are false to both God and man. We then give priority to our changing whims and thoughts, with deadly results. Men cannot be true to an oath when they are true to themselves. An oath means that our vow to God takes priority over ourselves.

Now circumcision and baptism are both forms of an oath. In circumcising or baptizing a child, we give that child to God, and we swear before God and man to rear that child as the Lord's possession. We thereby commit the child to a rearing not for ourselves or for his own sake, but for the Lord. (In adult baptism, we make the vow for ourselves.)

In giving one's seed to Molech, a man by means of this pagan sacrament or oath gave his son to the state and vowed that the child was the property of the state: Molech worship is thus very much with us, although most people fail to recognize it. It takes many forms, one of which is public or state school attendance.

It is a sign of the times that many Protestant churches refuse to apply the word *sacrament* to baptism. This means that they refuse to see it as an oath binding themselves irrevocably to God, with the penalty of His judgment for desertion if they turn their backs on their baptismal vow.

The sacrament of communion is a double oath. God the Son, in His incarnation, vowed to become the all-sufficient sacrifice for sin to redeem His people:

4. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins.
5. Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me:
6. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast no pleasure.
7. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.
8. Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law;
9. Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. (Hebrews 10:4-9)

Jesus Christ came to do away with the insufficient laws of sacrifice with His sufficient sacrifice. The words of institution in communion set forth His vow or sacrament. In receiving the sacrament, a man must examine or test himself (1 Cor. 11:28); the word used is *dokimazeto*, from *dokimos*. In the Septuagint, it is used in Proverbs 25:4 for the refining of silver by fire, the testing of its character. The word is also related to an *oath*, because it was used for the investigating or testing that preceded a man's installation into office. In the New Testament, the word is used with reference to church members, those under the oath of baptism. Haarbeck noted, "The passages of Scripture which speak of testing, trial, recognition and rejection are addressed only to members of the church."²⁸⁸

To return to the meaning of an oath or sacrament: to deny an oath was to die. Hebrews 6:2 speaks of the doctrine of baptism, and then continues:

4. For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost,
5. And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,
6. If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.
7. For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God:
8. But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned. (Hebrews 6:4-8)

The reference here is not to sins that reveal our shortcomings, but to sins of lawlessness and of contempt for God and His law. Those who partake of the sacrament unworthily eat and drink damnation to themselves, and for this reason, Paul noted, many in Corinth were weak, sickly, or had died (1 Cor. 11:29-30).

The modern state, like the pagan state of antiquity, is guilty of Molech worship. God promises judgment to all false gods and to all who falsely take oaths to Him and in His name.

Chapter Forty-Six

Profane Knowledge and Power

(*Leviticus 20:6*)

6. And the soul that turneth after such as have familiar spirits, and after wizards, to go a whoring after them, I will even set my face against that soul, and will cut him off from among his people. (*Leviticus 20:6*)

We have in *Leviticus 20:6* the condemnation of spiritualism and mediums, and of all attempts to ascertain the future outside of God. It is not an accident that this law follows the law against Molech or state worship. Both in antiquity and again in the modern era, men have sought to gain knowledge of and to determine the future apart from God. This is what modern statism is all about. The modern state seeks to replace God's predestination with statist planning and controls. Marxism is the most conspicuous example of this, but all forms of modern statism are dedicated to this same task.

The alternative to predestination is chance, and a cosmos of total chance is an impossibility and is contradicted by the obvious order of creation. Ever since the Tempter advanced the goal of every man as his own god and law (*Gen. 3:5*), man has been trying to replace God's controls with man-made controls. For fallen man, there must be a new government, on man's shoulders, a new kind of law, a new goal to history, and a new man-made creation. Physicians thus find it, for example, far more appealing to attempt organ transplants than to teach God's laws of health; they can only play god when they attempt to set aside God's order.

The temptation to seek knowledge of the future apart from God is a *denial of God's law*. *Leviticus 26* and *Deuteronomy 28* tell us how to know the future. Paul tells us that "the wages of sin is death" (*Rom. 6:23*); this is knowledge about the future. Men hope, however, that the wages of sin will prove to be life, and hence the constant recourse to humanistic forms of determination or knowledge.

Early in his reign, Saul attempted to abolish all forms of necromancy (*1 Sam. 28:9*); later, he had recourse to the witch of Endor (*1 Sam. 28:10-25*).

How closely Molech worship and necromancy are related is made very clear by *Deuteronomy 18:9-14*:

9. When thou art come into the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations.
10. There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch,
11. Or a charmer, or a consulter with the familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer.

12. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out before thee.
13. Thou shalt be perfect with the LORD thy God.
14. For these nations, which thou shalt possess, hearkened unto observers of times, and unto diviners: but as for thee, the LORD thy God hath not suffered thee so to do.

God judged the Canaanite nations because they sought knowledge and determination apart from God. The modern state, by means of planning, humanistic laws, and humanistic education, seeks the same thing. The law here defines all attempts at knowledge and determination apart from God as evil. By contrast, Moses declares that God will raise a Prophet, a reference to the Messiah, and all false prophets, false determiners, must be condemned.

The punishment of those who resort to necromancy is left in God's hands (v. 6), whereas the necromancer himself is to be executed (v. 27). Herman Cohen's comment on this is to the point:

Not to realize the vital necessity of these laws concerning witchcraft and the vital duty of its extirpation, is to fall a victim to the superstition that witchcraft was mere harmless make-believe that did not call for any drastic punishment. At the bottom of this skeptical attitude towards the laws of witchcraft is indifference towards the unique value of monotheism. In a conflict of this nature — witchcraft *versus* monotheism — there can be no hesitancy or mutual tolerance of the opposite points of view. It is a question of To be or not to be for the ethical life.²⁸⁹

Cohen's use of the word *witch*, which in Scripture refers to a poisoner, is out of place here, but his point is that all dabbling with the occult is dangerous to persons and to society. It also declares God to be a liar whose word is not the determining word. Moreover, God's word is not one which bypasses moral decisions for us; hence, it is not a popular word, because men want a first word all their own, and one which resolves all moral problems by decree. Man's first word becomes a substitute for morality and work, and hence its appeal to man. The word of God, to be received, requires the remaking of our lives, thoughts, and actions, and it is at best received slowly by men because of their sin. As Isaiah declares:

13. But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken.
14. Wherefore hear the word of the LORD, ye scornful men, that rule this people which is in Jerusalem.
15. Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves:
16. Therefore, thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste. (Isaiah 28:13-16)

To the ungodly, God's truth, however patiently and slowly taught, is as no more than a childish babbling. Their trust is in their lies, their humanistic plans and determinations. They believe that their lies are a sure protection from disaster. By contrast, God declares that only His Messiah is a sure foundation, and "he that believeth shall not make haste." Man's attempt to bypass morality and work in creating a humanistic paradise represents *haste*, the attempt to recapture Eden apart from God. The believer shall not make haste. While God created the heavens and the earth in six days (Gen. 1:31), man cannot do so! Only by the slow, patient obedience of faith can man reestablish God's reign (Mark 4:28).

To preserve knowledge and power outside of God is described as "to go a-whoring," or to prostitute oneself (Lev. 17:7). Those who seek knowledge and determination apart from God and His law are compared to male and female prostitutes; in the realm of the mind, it is the equivalent of prostitution in the realm of the body.

It is noteworthy that the judgment on such persons and nations was seen by the ancient rabbis, according to the Targum of Jonathan, as destruction by pestilence or plague.²⁹⁰

The knowledge and power sought outside of God is *profane*. For modern man, the only valid knowledge and power is profane of necessity, because its essential character for him must be its imagined independence from God. To declare our independence from God is, however disguised, a form of total war against Him. All such efforts are futile and suicidal.

In Leviticus 20:27, we are told that the penalty for necromancy is death. Modern man has a special horror of any death penalty for offenses against God. However, the mass murder of *Christians* does not trouble modern man. Dr. David Barrett, the British-born editor of the *World Christian Encyclopedia*, reported that the annual murder of Christians in 1987 and in the years previous was 330,000 the world over. The number is rising. Of these deaths, 95 percent go unreported in the media, and those reported usually get minimal coverage.²⁹¹ Barrett's reports stress full confirmation and thus err heavily on the side of understatement. It is significant that this continuing holocaust goes unreported and troubles none or few of our sensitive liberals. Their "sensitivity" masks a deep callousness.

Chapter Forty-Seven

Holiness and the Family(*Leviticus 20:7-9*)

7. Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy: for I am the LORD your God.
8. And ye shall keep my statutes, and do them: I am the LORD which sanctify you.
9. For every one that curseth his father or his mother shall be surely put to death: he hath cursed his father or his mother; his blood shall be upon him. (*Leviticus 20:7-9*)

These verses are repeated or echoed throughout Scripture. In v. 7, the command to sanctify ourselves and to be holy is an oft repeated one, not only in the law, but also in the New Testament (Rom. 12:1-2; 1 Cor. 10:31; 2 Cor. 7:1; Eph. 1:4; Phil. 2:12-13; Heb. 12:14; 1 Peter 1:15-16). The God-centered emphasis is clearly stated by Paul: “Whether therefore ye eat or drink, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31). The first half of v. 8, “And ye shall keep my statutes, and do them,” is clearly echoed by our Lord:

19. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.
20. For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven. (*Matthew 5:19-20*)

Our Lord also refers to this in *Matthew 7:24-25* and *12:50*.

The latter half of v. 8, “I am the LORD which sanctify you,” echoes *Exodus 31:13*; it is in mind in *Deuteronomy 14:2*; *Ezekiel 37:28*; *1 Corinthians 1:30*; *1 Thessalonians 5:23*; *2 Thessalonians 2:13*; and *Titus 2:14*; the common thread in all is that God sanctifies His covenant people, He sets them apart and hallows them for His holy purpose.

The law of v. 9 first appears in *Exodus 21:17*; it is restated in *Proverbs 20:20* and *Proverbs 30:11, 17*, and our Lord cites it in *Matthew 15:4*.

It is hard for modern man to take seriously the death penalty for cursing one’s parents. It should be noted that the law does not require love of one’s parents, but rather honor. Parents can be evil; they can abuse children, and can be guilty of many offenses. The law does not ask us to overlook such things. What we are told is that offenses against the family are equivalent to manslaughter and murder; hence, here and in vv. 11-13, 16, and 27, we are told that certain forms of sexual offense, and this offense against parents, which is an offense against God, must be punished by death because they *destroy* society. As Wenham has pointed out, *to curse* is more than the utterance of angry words. “It is the very antithesis of ‘honoring.’ In Hebrew, *to honor* is literally to make heavy, important, glorious, and *to curse* is to make light of and despicable.”²⁹² The

family is basic to godly society, and thus the authority of the family is important. *To curse* one's parents is not the same as disagreeing with them; it is rather the rejection of the family as the God-given order, and it is the open contempt for the family as essential to man. It is the denial of the past and an insistence on another kind of order as the life of society.

Until recently, parricide, the murder of one's parent, was regarded in many if not most cultures as the most fearful offense. All lesser offenses against parents were also viewed with horror as indicative of a radically evil person. In some cultures, as in early Rome, parricides were sewn into leather sacks, along with some deadly animals at times (including a viper), and cast into the sea. Even in its degeneracy, classical Greece saw offenses against the family as devastating in their social effects. Only in periods of social decay and degeneracy do we find that the family is not zealously guarded in its integrity by law and custom. Pfeiffer was right in his analysis of the meaning of this offense of Leviticus 20:9: "The cursing of father or mother is both a grievous violation of the law and a denial of the very existence of the family which God ordained for man's good."²⁹³

Goldberg called attention to the other aspects of this law. *To curse* is to invoke the power and the law of some god to accomplish something. Since our covenant God requires that the family be honored, and makes it basic to His Kingdom, to curse one's parents means invoking another god. Given the fact that other religions normally respect the family, to invoke another supernatural power in cursing one's parents means to invoke demonic, destructive forces. The curse is preceded, and also accompanied by, the denial of the covenant God. It is thus a religious act whereby the offender transfers his hope from God to Satan.²⁹⁴

Noordtzij has further pointed out that such cursing is a denial of the meaning, "content," or significance which God gives to the family. It is thus an attack on God and on God's fundamental order.²⁹⁵

A culture which perpetuates and fosters this kind of attack is similarly under judgment, God's judgment. The family today is less and less protected in its life and property by the state, and it is increasingly regulated. Inheritance taxes rob widows and orphans, a clear means whereby the state curses fathers and mothers. Property laws now are also destructive of the family. In God's law, property is family *community* property, untaxed and belonging to the family throughout its generations. The relics of property law in the United States provide for community ownership for husband and wife, with minor variations, and the property is taxed annually and at death. This constitutes a curse against the family. Statist education promotes disrespect for the family and its authority, and so-called "family education" courses teach that sexuality is a morally neutral area, and that each person is free to work out his or her own sexual tastes and preferences. The media in its entertainment furthers this disrespect for the family. All this invokes the curse of God upon a culture. "His blood shall be upon him" can be rendered into contemporary English as, "he has none to blame for his death except himself."

Turning again to vv. 7-8, we see that they tell us two things. *First*, we are to be holy, because God is holy. Holiness is not an option to be exercised by the clergy and a few others; it is mandatory for us all. *Second*, the way of holiness, the means to sanctification, is God's law: "ye

shall keep my statutes, to do them.” The command to be holy is given with the law, because keeping the law is the way to holiness.

To imagine that man-made routines of spiritual devotions or exercises can give us holiness is foolishness. God says, “I am the LORD which sanctify you,” or, I am the Lord who sets you apart and makes you holy. No holiness is possible on man’s terms or in man’s way, only by means of God’s law-word. And the family is basic to holiness.

A final note: It is clear that the meaning of this law has been commonly missed. When meaning is gone in a society, not only do men become empty, but their words also. As a result, for twentieth century man, *to curse* is simply to utter words, or use bad language. For most men, its supernatural content and religious meaning no longer exist.

Chapter Forty-Eight

Good and Evil Relationships

(Leviticus 20:10-21)

10. And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.

11. And the man that lieth with his father's wife hath uncovered his father's nakedness: both of them shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them.

12. And if a man lie with his daughter in law, both of them shall surely be put to death: they have wrought confusion; their blood shall be upon them.

13. If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them.

14. And if a man take a wife and her mother, it is wickedness: they shall be burnt with fire, both he and they; that there be no wickedness among you.

15. And if a man lie with a beast, he shall surely be put to death: and ye shall slay the beast.

16. And if a woman approach unto any beast, and lie down thereto, thou shalt kill the woman, and the beast: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them.

17. And if a man shall take his sister, his father's daughter, or his mother's daughter, and see her nakedness, and she see his nakedness; it is a wicked thing; and they shall be cut off in the sight of their people: he hath uncovered his sister's nakedness; he shall bear his iniquity.

18. And if a man shall lie with a woman having her sickness, and shall uncover her nakedness; he hath discovered her fountain, and she hath uncovered the fountain of her blood: and both of them shall be cut off from among their people.

19. And thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy mother's sister, nor of thy father's sister: for he uncovereth his near kin: they shall bear their iniquity.

20. And if a man shall lie with his uncle's wife, he hath uncovered his uncle's nakedness: they shall bear their sin; they shall die childless.

21. And if a man shall take his brother's wife, it is an unclean thing: he hath uncovered his brother's nakedness; they shall be childless. (Leviticus 20:10-21)

As we have seen, Biblical culture is family based; there are no laws of treason against the state, because treason is seen as action against the peace and unity of the family. As a result, there is a penalty of death for treason against the family, whereas in modern culture treason is an offense against the state. Offenses against the family are seen as less and less important and, by many, are acts denied the status of an offense. For modern man, the Biblical law of treason is primitive and barbaric. From the perspective of Biblical law, to make treason an offense against the state is implicitly totalitarian and socially destructive. Sin in our era has been politicized. The law of

treason is indicative of this: the family has been replaced by the state, and offenses against the family are being dropped by the law as a multitude of new sins against the state are invented almost daily. God has been replaced by the state. According to 1 John 3:4, sin is the transgression of the law of God, but sin is now seen as the transgression of the law of the state. Politicizing sin tells us that the state is the new god whose laws must not be transgressed. With this in mind, let us turn to the text.

To see one's nakedness is a term used in these laws meaning to consummate a sexual union. Capital crimes here include 1) adultery (v. 10; Lev. 18:20; Deut. 22:22); 2) incest or sexual union with close kin (vv. 11-14; Lev. 18:7-8, 15, 17); 3) homosexuality (v. 13; Lev. 18:22); and 4) bestiality (vv. 15-16; Ex. 22:19; Lev. 18:23); in cases of bestiality, the animal was also killed. This latter was a common offense in antiquity, and often a religious act; in the 1970s, homosexual periodicals in San Francisco advertised a variety of trained animals for bestiality. The offenses cited in vv. 17-21 are punished by God's intervention. However, when God moves against an entire culture, the particular offenses are dealt with in the general judgment.

The term *abomination* means offensive to God and to man, filthy, repugnant, and detestable. *Wickedness* here is a Hebrew word, *zimmah*, meaning unchastity, adultery, incest, and, as a figure of speech, idolatry. The word *childless* in vv. 20-21 comes from a root meaning "stripped;" it may mean stripped of posterity, having no legal son, so that children of such a union were illegitimate.²⁹⁶

A curious fact in v. 17 is the word *wicked*, a translation of *hesed*. Normally, *hesed* means "loyal kindness" when it refers to human relationships. God's *hesed* is His covenantal relationship towards His people; it is a result of His covenant promise and oath. It is based on God's grace and represents His *loyalty* to His people. *Hesed* means loyalty, mutual aid, or reciprocal love. In cases involving people, the *hesed* relationship exists where God's law governs:

- A. Relatives by blood or marriage, related clans and related tribes
- B. Host and guest
- C. Allies and their relatives
- D. Friends
- E. Ruler and subject
- F. Those who have gained merit by rendering aid, and the parties thereby put under obligation.²⁹⁷

Thus, where loyalty and love exist in a godly relationship which is governed by God's law, *hesed* has a good meaning. Where the love or loyalty is evil, as in the cases of incest cited in v. 17, then love or *hesed* is evil. It is then translated as wicked, or as sin, e.g., "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people" (Prov. 14:34). Love thus can be good or evil, depending on its relationship to God's law. Loyalty and love outside of God's law are evil.

Sexual acts without the sanction of God's law, in particular with, for example, an uncle's wife, or a brother's wife, are called uncovering the nakedness of the uncle or brother. Because the sexual act makes man and wife one flesh (Gen. 2:23), a woman's nakedness is also her husband's, and a husband's nakedness is his wife's.

In some cultures, permission to use a wife or husband is regularly granted, as though marriage were no more than a personal contract between two parties. Because marriage is God's ordination for *His* creatures and for *His* purposes, no human agreement outside His law has any validity. Hence, all such unions have no legal status, nor do the children born of them. As Lange noted, "Obedience to God's law is required simply because it is His will."²⁹⁸

This fact points to an important distinction. In the modern era, particularly since John Locke, the primary purpose of secular, humanistic law has been *to protect life and property*. (In this task, the state has not been too successful and has very often been a threat to life and property.) In God's law, although life and property are protected, the primary purpose of His commandments is the Kingdom of God and our dominion under Him. God's law and man's law thus have sharply differing purposes.

It is noteworthy that antinomians are usually ready to admit that the offenses of Leviticus 20:10-21 are sins which are radically destructive of a society; what they object to in these laws, as in most, is *the penalty*. Just as they want "God without thunder," so they want sin without penalties, a morally indefensible position.

In v. 14, there is a reference to being burned with fire. This indicates cremation *after* execution, as in Joshua 7:25, in order to eliminate even the offender's body from the land.

In v. 12, we are told of the act of incest, "they have wrought confusion," which has been paraphrased by some as, "they have committed an unnatural act." This rendering, however, stresses a departure from nature, whereas the text stresses the transgression of God's order. This is the key. The law protects God's life-giving order, whereas the sins which are cited lead only to death for any society. These laws do not call for a personal evaluation and judgment, but for our *submission*. God sets forth for us the ways of life and death and leaves us without excuse.

Chapter Forty-Nine Covenant Faithfulness (*Leviticus 20:22-27*)

22. Ye shall therefore keep all my statutes, and all my judgments, and do them: that the land, whither I bring you to dwell therein, spue you not out.
23. And ye shall not walk in the manners of the nation, which I cast out before you: for they committed all these things, and therefore I abhorred them.
24. But I have said unto you, Ye shall inherit their land, and I will give it unto you to possess it, a land that floweth with milk and honey: I am the LORD your God, which have separated you from other people.
25. Ye shall therefore put difference between clean beasts and unclean, and between unclean fowls and clean: and ye shall not make your souls abominable by beast, or by fowl, or by any manner of living thing that creepeth on the ground, which I have separated from you as unclean.
26. And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the LORD am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be mine.
27. A man also or woman that hath a familiar spirit, or that is a wizard, shall surely be put to death: they shall stone them with stones: their blood shall be upon them. (*Leviticus 20:22-27*)

These verses are addressed to all the people directly. They are both a parenthetical statement and also a summary of God's commands. We are told that God is giving His people a rich and fertile land as their inheritance in the covenant of God's grace. The people of Canaan are being dispossessed because of their sins, because God holds all men accountable to Him in terms of His law.

As the heirs of Canaan, they must keep *all* of God's statutes, or else the land will spue them out as a consequence of God's abhorrence for them. God stresses "*all* my statutes, and *all* my judgments." He stresses, as Christ does, every jot and tittle of the law (Matt. 5:18).

Keeping God's law is the way in which "ye shall be holy unto me." God has severed His covenant people from all others for His purposes.

Having stressed the necessity for keeping the law, God now demands strict obedience in two areas, the dietary laws, and the death penalty for necromancers and their kind.

We would have expected some major stress of the law to be cited here, but instead we see an emphasis on two matters most would regard as minor. This is not an unusual note in Scripture. The Council of Jerusalem, centuries later, in its decision for Gentile Christians, listed for obedience "these necessary things:"

1. abstinence from meats offered to idols;

2. abstinence from the eating of blood;
3. abstinence from the eating of things strangled; and
4. abstinence from fornication (Acts 15:28-29).

Modern church councils would have a more imposing list!

There is here a seeming triviality at a point of high seriousness. There is good reason for it. Man has a tendency to redefine loyalty in terms of his priorities. Thus, a man in Nevada, some years ago, who gambled away the family savings and an excellent business, was indignant that his wife objected. He said angrily, “She has no right to complain. I’ve never cheated on her.” Men do the same with God’s law. Whatever they may have done, they feel that God should be satisfied with them if they have kept six of the Ten Commandments. At critical points in covenant history, God raises questions through His prophets about the jot and tittle of His law.

As Wenham notes, in these verses, “Israel is reminded of the basis of her whole existence.” Because they are a separated people, they must be separate in all their being, including their diet.²⁹⁹

The purpose of all the law is set forth in v. 26, “*that ye should be mine.*” We are to be God’s possession and property by our faithfulness to His law-word. We are not to live or “walk in the manners of the nations,” or the *customs* of the nations (v. 23), because we are the Lord’s. Too many people reduce holiness to moral purity; the dietary laws make it clear that holiness is both physical and spiritual. We are not ghosts or spirits; holiness for us involves our total way of life. Paul says, “whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31).

To break God’s law in any area, including those cited in these verses and regarded as trivial or nonessential by modern man, is to deny God’s total right over us. As Pfeiffer noted, God’s right to His people must not be challenged.³⁰⁰

In these verses, God reminds His covenant people that they are redeemed by His grace, and therefore they are under a total obligation of faithfulness and obedience. They were lost because they preferred their own will and way; they must now live by God’s will and way as set forth in His covenant law. Necromancy is a trust in man’s way and a belief that the spirits of the dead can give us a better vision for living than the God who created heaven and earth. God sees this as blasphemy and as an insult of the highest order, and as a form of treason. According to Scripture, there are two Adams, the first Adam, and then the second or last Adam, Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:45-50). There are thus two humanities, the humanity of the first Adam, and the new humanity of Jesus Christ. The old humanity is in total war against the new, and it is blindness to ignore this fact.

The literal reading of v. 27, according to Robert Young’s *Literal Translation of the Holy Bible*, is, “And a man or woman — when there is in them a familiar spirit, or who are wizards — are certainly put to death.” The reference is to spirit possession. We have an instance of this in Acts 16:16, which tells of a young woman who confronted Paul and was exorcized by him. In her case, she was a member of the old humanity and an object of conversion. In Leviticus 20:27, the

law has reference to someone within the covenant who is in reality a member of the old humanity and is seeking to subvert the covenant and is guilty of treason to it. Maimonides stated that this law specifically includes women because men are prone to be less harsh in judging women; in this instance, the sin is the same for women as well as men, and no less evil.³⁰¹

The purposes of these laws of holiness is *covenant faithfulness*. This means a thoroughly practical application of God's law to the practices of everyday life. In Byzantium, the main throne in the palace was occupied only by a Gospel, to indicate the kingship of Christ.³⁰² In a truly faithful covenant nation, the whole word of God on the "throne" would best express the meaning of the Kingdom of God.

Chapter Fifty

The Representatives of Life (Leviticus 21:1-9)

1. And the LORD said unto Moses, Speak unto the priests the sons of Aaron, and say unto them, There shall none be defiled for the dead among his people:
2. But for his kin, that is near unto him, that is, for his mother, and for his father, and for his son, and for his daughter, and for his brother,
3. And for his sister a virgin, that is nigh unto him, which hath had no husband; for her may he be defiled.
4. But he shall not defile himself, being a chief man among his people, to profane himself.
5. They shall not make baldness upon their head, neither shall they shave off the corner of their beard, nor make any cuttings in their flesh.
6. They shall be holy unto their God, and not profane the name of their God: for the offerings of the LORD made by fire, and the bread of their God, they do offer: therefore they shall be holy.
7. They shall not take a wife that is a whore, or profane; neither shall they take a woman put away from her husband: for he is holy unto his God.
8. Thou shalt sanctify him therefore; for he offereth the bread of thy God: he shall be holy unto thee: for I the LORD, which sanctify you, am holy.
9. And the daughter of any priest, if she profane herself by playing the whore, she profaneth her father: she shall be burnt with fire. (Leviticus 21:1-9)

At the conclusion of his commentary on Leviticus 20, Wenham discusses the premises of law and punishment in Biblical law with his usual ability. Because his comments are pertinent not merely to the preceding laws but also to those of Leviticus 21, let us survey them at this point. Whereas Babylonian law, and many others such as eighteenth century English law, required the death penalty for many offenses against property, Biblical law, while protecting property, reserves capital punishment for certain offenses against man, the family, and God. Wenham cited the premises and purpose of the punishment in God's law: *first*, the offender must receive the just penalty for his offense, and the penalty must correspond with the criminal act. *Second*, punishment has as its purpose to "purge the evil from the midst of you." If justice is not done, guilt rests on both the land and the people. *Third*, punishment must also function as a deterrent (Deut. 19:16-21). *Fourth*, punishment is a form of civil atonement to effect justice and to reconcile the offender to society. *Fifth*, there must be a recompense also, or restitution. Babylonian law, like modern law, imposed *finer*; restitution is very different, because the victim, not the state, is recompensed.³⁰³

Wenham also cites the three main types of punishment. *First*, the death penalty is required. Wenham holds that in some instances, such as blasphemy and Sabbath-breaking, the law cites the extreme penalty while allowing for lesser ones, depending on the case at hand (Ex. 31:13-17; Num. 15:32-36; Lev. 24:11-12). *Second*, there was "cutting off," which, according to Wenham,

could mean excommunication or direct intervention and judgment by God. *Third*, there was restitution. Imprisonment as punishment did not exist, although men guilty of involuntary manslaughter were restricted to the cities of refuge until the death of the high priest (Num. 35:26ff.).

All this is clearly related to Leviticus 21:1-9. The preceding laws are the laws of life. We are told, in both Proverbs 14:12 and 16:25, “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.” The law warns us against the ways of death. Death entered the world because of man’s sin, and death is an ultimate insult to man’s flesh and a sentence against all his pretensions. The believers are the people of life, not of death, and the priest in particular must represent life. Lange noted:

But the laws which regulated the priesthood of the chosen people had a deeper basis.... They had to administer a law of life.... St. Cyril truly observes that the Hebrew priests were the instruments of the divine will for averting death, that all their sacrifices were a type of the death of Christ, which swallowed up death in victory, and that it would have been unsuitable that they should have the same freedom as other people to become mourners.³⁰⁴

Thus, mourning for the dead, except for the immediate family, was forbidden to priests, and, even then, they were to be restrained in their mourning, since they were representatives of the Lord of life. It is ironic and sad that at times the clergy, rabbis, priests, and pastors have been associated more with mourning and somberness than with the joy of life. Very early in the life of the church, Greek ascetic views led to a disapproval of the clergy’s participation in wedding celebrations.

It is very important for us to realize the meaning of *priests* here. In v. 1, we see that it is “the sons of Aaron” who are addressed. However, in Ezekiel 44:15-25, we see that it is inclusive of the Levites. Levites are spoken of as priests in such texts as Deuteronomy 18:1. The term *Levite* was inclusive of teachers and scholars (Deut. 33:10), and in our times must be seen as describing ministers, teachers, writers, and scholars of the faith. They are to be a priestly class, representing life.

Our Lord echoes these verses and their premise in His summary statement, “Let the dead bury their dead” (Matt. 8:22). As Knight noted, these words of our Lord “call for an attitude to *life*; they are not negative, as if to say, that man should *not* bury his dead.”³⁰⁵

The life orientation must be in every area, and marriage is a central one. As v. 7 makes clear, the priestly man cannot marry an ungodly woman, nor the guilty partner in a divorce. The marriage must not be a *profane* one. For Calvin, it is worthy to note, an impure or profane marriage could include marrying a girl very much younger than oneself:

If a decrepit old man falls in love with a young girl, it is a base and shameful lust; besides he will defraud her if he marries her. Hence, too, will jealousy and wretched anxiety arise; or, by foolishly and dotingly seeking to preserve his wife’s love, he will cast away all regard for gravity. When God forbade the high

priest to marry any but a virgin, He did not wish to violate this rule, which is dictated by nature and reason; but, regard being had to age, He desired that modesty and propriety should be maintained in the marriage, so that, if the priest were of advanced years, he should marry a virgin not too far from his own age; but, if he were failing and now but little fitted for marriage on account of his old age, the law that he should marry a virgin was rather an exhortation to celibacy, than that he should expose himself to many troubles and to general ridicule.³⁰⁶

In v. 9, we have a law citing the penalty of death for any priest's daughter who, in Moffatt's rendering, "degrades herself by playing the harlot," and thereby "she degrades her father." The Bible is emphatic on this connection. The girl who degrades herself is degrading her father: this is a public and a psychological offense.

At the same time, while prostitution is spoken of repeatedly in Scripture as evil, it is not the subject of legislation. The other law related to the subject is Deuteronomy 22:13-21, which some believe has reference to prostitutes who married and passed themselves as virgins to their husbands.³⁰⁷

In this instance, the penalty is a severe one because the act of prostitution is seen as an offense against authority. The greater the responsibility God gives us, the greater our culpability. In our Lord's words, "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more" (Luke 12:48).

It is essential to remember the broad meaning of priest, and also that this is case law. What is said here applies to all of the family of an authority and leader in the faith: the wife, daughter, son, and grandchildren of such a person have a greater culpability before God and man for their sins. Those who are associated with the priesthood can thus more readily incur the penalty of death by harming the calling.

Chapter Fifty-One

The High Priest and His Calling

(*Leviticus 21:10-15*)

10. And he that is the high priest among his brethren, upon whose head the anointing oil was poured, and that is consecrated to put on the garments, shall not uncover his head, nor rend his clothes;
11. Neither shall he go in to any dead body, nor defile himself for his father, or for his mother;
12. Neither shall he go out of the sanctuary, nor profane the sanctuary of his God: for the crown of the anointing oil of his God is upon him: I am the LORD.
13. And he shall take a wife in her virginity.
14. A widow, or a divorced woman, or profane, or an harlot, these shall he not take: but he shall take a virgin of his own people to wife.
15. Neither shall he profane his seed among his people: for I the LORD do sanctify him. (*Leviticus 21:10-15*)

We come now to rules governing the high priest, a type of Christ and one who above all others in Israel was the representative of God and of life in God. In John 14:6, Jesus Christ declares Himself to be *the way, the truth, and the life*. Moreover, “no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” There is neither life, nor truth, nor salvation apart from Him, nor outside of Him.

Hence, the high priest, as His forerunner and as the representative of one office of Christ, must be separated unto life. He could not take part in a funeral, because the representative of life does not recognize the power of death. Jesus Christ revealed Himself as the Great High Priest by refusing to go to Lazarus when Lazarus was deathly ill, nor did he go when the funeral was held. He went later to raise Lazarus from the dead (John 11). He also ended the funeral service of Jairus’ daughter by raising her from the dead (Matt. 9:18-26). “In him was life; and the life was the light of men” (John 1:4).

In v. 10, we have three things which define a high priest. *First*, he is from among his brethren, or chief of them. To represent men to God, the high priest must be one of them. Hence, Christ, as our High Priest, is indeed truly man as well as truly God. Only so can He represent us, and also be totally efficacious. *Second*, the high priest must be called to his task and have the anointing oil poured over his head (Lev. 8:2). While he indeed must represent men, he must be called of God. Again, Christ is the perfect high priest. *Third*, the High Priest must then be consecrated and must make atonement for his people (Lev. 8:3-9, 24). Christ alone can and did make an efficacious atonement for His people.

Having noted these things, we must remember that the office of high priest points beyond itself to God. Jesus made this clear concerning Himself in His incarnation: “The Son can do nothing of himself, but what He seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the

Son likewise” (John 5:19). Determination is from eternity, not time. This applies in every sphere, the priestly, prophetic, and kingly. Oehler rightly observed:

The *administration of justice* is, in virtue of the principles of theocracy, *only an office of the divine judgment*. “The judgment is God’s,” Deut. i. 17; to seek justice is to inquire of God, Ex. xviii. 15; he who appears in judgment comes before Jehovah, Deut. xix. 17; and thus also... Ex. xxi. 6, and...xxii. 8, are to be explained, whether it be that these expressions point to the God who rules in the administration of justice....³⁰⁸

What is important thus is not the office nor the officer, but the divine function under God to which men are called. To cite Oehler again:

In virtue of the principles of the theocracy, *all the powers of the state are united in Jehovah*; even when the congregation acts, it is in His name. He is first the *Lawgiver* (Isa. xxxiii. 22). His legislative power He exercised *through Moses*. The fundamental law given through him is inviolably valid for all time. As God’s covenant with His people is eternal, so also are the covenant ordinances; they are, as the expression frequently runs, everlasting laws and statutes for Israel and the future generations (see Ex. xii. 14, 17, xxvii. 21, xxviii. 43, and many passages). The Pentateuch knows nothing of a future change in the law, nor of an abrogation of it even in part; only the *attitude of the people toward the law* was to be different in the last times.³⁰⁹

In vv. 11-12 we have a very telling aspect of this law. The high priest, on receiving word of the death of his father, usually the relative he is closest to, must not stop his work or leave the sanctuary. In brief, life must go on. Even more, the emphasis is on the necessity of his calling as against personal grief. To allow personal grief to deflect him from his task is thus lawless. God’s calling must take precedence over human feelings. While the case of a high priest is an extreme but necessary instance of this fact, it has a requirement for all of us. The priority of God’s calling in our lives is required of us as a royal priesthood (Rev. 1:6). Our Lord declares:

37. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

38. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me is not worthy of me.

39. He that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.

40. He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.

41. He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet’s reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man’s reward.

42. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward. (Matthew 10:37-42)

In v. 10, the phrase with respect to the high priest's hair is translated by some, including the Berkeley Version, as, he "shall not let his hair hang loose." We would say, this bars a "hippy style." In Israel, it meant the "style" of a leper.³¹⁰

In vv. 13-14, marriage is strictly governed. The high priest must be married to a virgin. His wife can have no alien loyalties, nor can she compare him to any other man. Lange summarized the matter very clearly and ably:

The families of the priests were so intimately associated with their own proper personality, that something of the requirements for the priests themselves must also be demanded of them. This rests upon a fundamental principle of fitness, and is again repeated in the New Testament in regard to the Christian minister. See I Tim. iii. 11, 12: Tit. i. 6.³¹¹

Julius Caesar, a notable Roman degenerate, held, "Caesar's wife ought to be above suspicion." What God's law here requires of the high priest is different. The stress is not upon being beyond reproach; that is taken for granted. Rather, it is upon being a helpmeet, one who brings no alien experiences to her calling to work with God's high priest. Some have held that "he shall take a virgin of his own people to wife" means wedding a girl of the tribe of Levi, someone reared in the culture of a holy calling.

The point is a very important one. The more important a man's calling in terms of the Kingdom of God, the more essential is his wife's compatibility to that calling and to the strains, duties, and responsibilities it imposes. The importance of a wife in a marriage is determined by her husband's work *and* her relevance to it. Similarly, the more important a man's calling, the more deleterious a wife can become by importing alien standards and demands.

Closely related to this, as has been recognized, is v. 15. A man's seed, his progeny, is profaned and grows up outside a man's calling if the woman who rears his children is at odds with or indifferent to his calling. This is serious for all men, but supremely so for a high priest.

Because it is the Lord who sanctifies us (v. 15), we dare not profane our seed by unsuitable marriages. The covenant man is warned against all such unions:

2. A good man obtaineth favour of the LORD: but a man of wicked devices will he condemn.

4. A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband: but she that maketh ashamed is as rottenness in his bones. (Proverbs 12:2, 4)

It is better to dwell in a corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman in a wide house. (Proverbs 21:9; cf. 25:24)

These verses give us an interesting perspective. The "man of wicked devices" is *condemned* by God, and the word has a legal framework: God passes judgment against such a man. This is not the case with a bad wife, i.e., God does not bring judgment on her. This is why she is so

dangerous, and why God warns us against bad unions, because such a woman can profane a man's seed.

Chapter Fifty-Two

Discrimination

(Leviticus 21:16-24)

16. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,
17. Speak unto Aaron, saying, Whosoever he be of thy seed in their generations that hath any blemish, let him not approach to offer the bread of his God.
18. For whatsoever man he be that hath a blemish, he shall not approach: a blind man, or a lame, or he that hath a flat nose, or any thing superfluous,
19. Or a man that is brokenfooted, or brokenhanded,
20. Or crookbackt, or a dwarf, or that hath a blemish in his eye, or be scurvy or scabbed, or hath his stones broken:
21. No man that hath a blemish of the seed of Aaron the priest shall come nigh to offer the offerings of the LORD made by fire: he hath a blemish; he shall not come nigh to offer the bread of his God.
22. He shall eat the bread of his God, both of the most holy, and of the holy.
23. Only he shall not go in unto the vail, nor come nigh unto the altar, because he hath a blemish; that he profane not my sanctuaries: for I the LORD do sanctify them.
24. And Moses told it unto Aaron, and to his sons, and unto all the children of Israel. (Leviticus 21:16-24)

In very recent years, these regulations have angered many people, and some cite them as instances of the “primitivism” of the Old Testament. Just as many peoples, including some of the Greeks, exposed or killed their defective children, so, too, the “primitive” Hebrews discriminated against the handicapped. This is strange criticism coming from a generation which has a policy of aborting an unborn child if its tests declare it to be of the unwanted sex, as well as when it is defective.

The fact is that Biblical law legislates against all mistreatment of helpless or handicapped peoples, as we have seen.

The difference between the modern view and that of God’s law is this: the modern view is both sentimental and cruel. As Proverbs 12:10 tells us, “the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.” God’s law is not sentimental, but it is loving and caring of the weak, of the disabled, and of widows and orphans.

What happens when this law is disregarded? The religious vocation becomes a dumping ground for the unwanted and handicapped persons. It is not surprising that in more than a few religions, a religious vocation is barred to all such people. In some denominations, the same policy once prevailed in other spheres. The cast-off mistress of local lords and noblemen were in some countries given to the clergy of the established church to marry, and the clergy could not marry without permission. In the United States, the pastor’s family clothed itself with cast-off clothing

given by members, and the house was furnished with cast-off furniture. All this is insulting to God. Hence these laws.

The “flat nose” refers to a slit or a broken nose. “A blemish in the eye” covers a variety of *serious* eye defects. The disabled member of the priestly line, however, is entitled to live off the receipts of the sanctuary (v. 22). There is thus no unkindness to such people.

Only the perfect specimen belongs to God, either as priest, or as a sacrifice. Thus, as we have seen, no blemished offering could be given (Ex. 12:5, etc.; Lev. 1:3, etc.; Deut. 17:1, etc.). Christ is the unblemished Lamb of God (1 Peter 1:19). Both the sacrifice which typified Him as well as the priest who represented Him had to be without blemish. He works also to make His church blemish free (Eph. 5:27).

There is here an important distinction which must be made. There is a difference between blemish and infirmities on the one hand, and sin on the other. Men now are irrational about physical defects: they demand special privileges for them, but want them kept out of sight. Sin they can tolerate; physical defects upset them badly.

Sin excludes men from God; infirmities do not. This is the Biblical perspective.

Castrated men were also barred from membership in the congregation (Deut. 23:1). This did not bar them from worship, nor from salvation. Membership was in terms of families, and the heads of households, men, were members and potential captains or elders over ten families, fifty, one hundred, or one thousand (Deut. 1:9-18). Membership was in terms of *married* men.

The clergy were to command respect for God, for the faith, and for the sanctuary. Thus, they had to be whole men. The wholeness had to be physical and religious, because anything else would bring dishonor to God.

This law has had a grim history. Within the Roman Empire, in times of persecution, the clergy were at times castrated. The Romans were aware of Biblical law at this point and, in fact, required wholeness of their priests. Canon I of the First Council of Nicea held that any clergy member castrated by the barbarians could not be distinguished; he had entered the ministry a whole man. Canon XXI of the Apostolical Canons said that such a mutilation at the hands of the enemies of Christ did not debar a man from being made a bishop.³¹²

In this century, such mutilations of the clergy have taken place on a greater scale than ever before, by Turks and by Marxists. The Russian and Spanish Revolutions were especially savage in this respect.

Calvin, in discussing this text, said, “the analogy must be kept in view between the external figures and the spiritual perfection which existed only in Christ.”³¹³ The perfect holiness of Christ is to become our holiness in heaven. Just as we conform ourselves to Him, so we must work to bring about a conformity of physical and spiritual wholeness. This calls for medical study and work towards the physical aspects of that wholeness.

In some cults, most notably in the worship of the Phrygian Cybele, physical mutilations, especially castration, were aspects of the highest holiness. In modern medicine, too often a contempt is shown for God's handiwork, the body of man. As against this, we are required by God to seek the holiness of our total being as our necessary task.

It is worthy of note that, in ancient Israel, all the priests had to undergo physical examinations and tests to prove their wholeness. To a limited degree, this is still a requirement by *some* churches.

The law of Leviticus 21:16-24 is, as has been noted, now resented as *discriminatory*. This should not surprise us. We have seen in the 1980s a refusal to quarantine or in any way discriminate against carriers of AIDS, a deadly disease. Together with that, there have been laws passed to prevent any discrimination against homosexuality. At the same time, the Bible and prayer are banned from state schools, while various evils are protected.

Discrimination is inescapable. Life is a process of discrimination, of choosing, accepting, and rejecting. If our premises of discrimination are not from God, they will be evil.

Chapter Fifty-Three

Reverence and God's Order

(Leviticus 22:1-16)

1. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,
2. Speak unto Aaron and to his sons, that they separate themselves from the holy things of the children of Israel, and that they profane not my holy name in those things which they hallow unto me: I am the LORD.
3. Say unto them, Whosoever he be of all your seed, among your generations, that goeth unto the holy things, which the children of Israel hallow unto the LORD, having his uncleanness upon him, that soul shall be cut off from my presence: I am the LORD.
4. What man soever of the seed of Aaron is a leper, or hath a running issue, he shall not eat of the holy things until he be clean. And whoso toucheth any thing that is unclean by the dead, or a man whose seed goeth from him;
5. Or whosoever toucheth any creeping thing, whereby he may be made unclean, or a man of whom he may take uncleanness, whatsoever uncleanness he hath;
6. The soul which hath touched any such shall be unclean until even, and shall not eat of the holy things, unless he wash his flesh with water.
7. And when the sun is down he shall be clean, and shall afterward eat of the holy things, because it is his food.
8. That which dieth of itself, or is torn with beasts, he shall not eat to defile himself therewith: I am the LORD.
9. They shall therefore keep my ordinance, lest they bear sin for it, and die therefore, if they profane it: I the LORD do sanctify them.
10. There shall no stranger eat of the holy thing: a sojourner of the priest, or an hired servant, shall not eat of the holy thing.
11. But if the priest buy any soul with his money, he shall eat of it, and he that is born in his house: they shall eat of his meat.
12. If the priest's daughter also be married unto a stranger, she may not eat of an offering of the holy things.
13. But if the priest's daughter is a widow, or divorced, and have no child, and is returned unto her father's house, as in her youth, she shall eat of her father's meat: but there shall no stranger eat thereof.
14. And if a man eat of the holy thing unwittingly, then he shall put the fifth part thereof unto it, and shall give it unto the priest with the holy thing.
15. And they shall not profane the holy things of the children of Israel, which they offer unto the LORD;
16. Or suffer them to bear the iniquity of trespass, when they eat their holy things: for I the LORD do sanctify them. (Leviticus 22:1-16)

Keil and Delitzsch aptly titled this section "Reverence for Things Sanctified." The law, basically, is that 1) no priest who had become unclean was to eat or touch things sanctified, vv. 2-9; and 2)

that no one could eat of things sanctified unless he or she were a member of a priestly family, vv. 10-16.³¹⁴

Any violation of these rules by a priest had a penalty: “that soul shall be cut off from my presence: I am the LORD,” v. 3. Men demand that their own will and way be taken seriously, but God’s law is taken casually. Where God’s law coincides with man’s wishes, as for example, “Thou shalt not steal” (Ex. 20:15; Deut. 5:19), men are ready to agree that the law is sensible, but, where the honor of God is concerned, men dismiss the law as trivial and unnecessary.

Moreover, these rules militate against ecclesiastical pride. The priests are told that they too can be defiled, and that the purity of their office does not ensure their personal purity. It is God who sanctifies, not the clergy. Giovanni Boccaccio, in *The Decameron*, repeatedly ridiculed the pretensions of evil priests that their office gave them virtually an inherent sanctity, an attitude also to be found in our time among some of the Protestant clergy as well. The law here protects the holiness of God from the presumptions of the clergy. To be in a holy cause does not in and of itself make a man holy. One of the horrors of war is that often the soldiers, assuming the justice of their cause, assume the justice of their own actions, and hence these actions are often lawless.

The penalty for irreverence is cited in v. 9, death; this does not mean by sentence of a court, but death in the sight of God and by His judgment. How it is acted out, God reserves to Himself.

In Leviticus 21:16-24, the involuntary, physical impediments to the priesthood are cited; there is no moral blame in them. The moral impediments do bring judgment.

In vv. 15-16, we are told that the priests or clergy, by profaning the sanctuary and worship, have an impact on the people: they “suffer them to bear the iniquity of trespass.” This means that a people who will not defend the purity of the sanctuary will suffer from the tolerated sins of their clergy. By implication, God’s death sentence against the clergy then becomes a death sentence against the people. Judgment begins with the clergy, then spreads to a complacent people, and then to the ungodly. Peter echoes this, declaring,

For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? (1 Peter 4:17)

To be careless where God’s honor is involved is a sin. Although it may involve the details of ritual, behind that carelessness is a contempt for the honor of God. It is important to note that here also we see the inseparable union of the physical and the spiritual. What we do with things physical, including things spiritual, is revelatory of our moral perspective. Vos commented on this, saying,

This incipient spiritualizing of the ritual vocabulary is further carried out by the prophets and Psalmists. Isaiah speaks of “unclean” lips in an ethical sense (6:5). The earth is “defiled” by transgression of the fundamental laws of God (Isa. 24:5); blood (i.e. murder) “defiles” the hands (Isa. 1:15; 59:3); the temple is “defiled” by idolatry (Jer. 32:34; Ezek. 5:11; 28:18); the people *pollute* themselves by their

sins (Ezek. 20:7, 8, 43; 22:3, 39, 24). Ethical purity is symbolized by “clean hands” and “a pure heart” (Psa. 24:4). The ethical cleansing is described in terms of ritual purification (Ezek. 36:25; Zec. 13:1; Psa. 51:7).³¹⁵

Thus, the terminology of ritual and morality is interchangeable.

In vv. 10-16, we have the particulars of participation in the priestly allowance, and the penalty for an unwitting transgression. Such a man should pay the equivalent amount for the food, plus a fifth more, i.e., a double tithe.

There is a very important emphasis in these verses which must now be cited. Lange stated it with telling clarity:

The centre... of the whole Levitical system is rather the sacrifice than the priest, and the priest for the sake of the sacrifice, as is distinctly brought out in this chapter, rather than the reverse.³¹⁶

However, in vv. 10-16, we see an important stress of the human side of the matter. Those who can partake of the priest's portions of the sacrifices are carefully defined in relation to the priest. There is a reason for this. Again citing Lange, here “the house appears in its full theocratic significance.”³¹⁷ For better or worse, the man defines the household. For this reason, just as judgment in a society begins at the church (1 Peter 4:17), so judgment in a family begins with the man. As our Lord tells us,

For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more. (Luke 12:48)

It is God who commits authority to the man in the house, and it is God who holds the man accountable. It should be noted that the qualified members of a priest's house have a right to the priest's portion; by analogy, the members of any man's house must be supported by him. The reference in v. 10 to the “stranger” does not mean a foreigner here, but any non-member of the family (cf. Ex. 29:33).

Thus, this text, which requires respect and reverence for those things pertaining to God, at the same time defines the necessary privileges of family members. God, in requiring respect and reverence for Himself, does not thereby diminish the integrity and authority of the family, nor of any other order of life which He establishes. The service of God cannot be used to undermine God's order. Our Lord condemns such false piety:

9. And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition.

10. For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death:

11. But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; he shall be free.

12. And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother;

13. Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye. (Mark 7:9-13)

Chapter Fifty-Four

The Unblemished Offering

(*Leviticus 22:17-25*)

17. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,
18. Speak unto Aaron, and his sons, and unto all the children of Israel, and say unto them, whatsoever he be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers in Israel, that will offer his oblation for all his vows, and for all his freewill offerings, which they will offer unto the LORD for a burnt offering;
19. Ye shall offer at your own will a male without blemish, of the beeves, of the sheep, or of the goats.
20. But whatsoever hath a blemish, that shall ye not offer: for it shall not be acceptable for you.
21. And whosoever offereth sacrifices of peace offerings unto the LORD to accomplish his vow, or a freewill offering in beeves or sheep, and it shall be perfect to be accepted; there shall be no blemish therein.
22. Blind, or broken, or maimed, or having a wen, or scurvy, or scabbed, ye shall not offer these unto the LORD, nor make an offering by fire of them upon the altar unto the LORD.
23. Either a bullock or a lamb that hath any thing superfluous or lacking in his parts, that mayest thou offer for a free will offering; but for a vow it shall not be accepted.
24. Ye shall not offer unto the LORD that which is bruised, or crushed, or broken, or cut; neither shall ye make any offering thereof in your land.
25. Neither from a stranger's hand shall ye offer the bread of your God or any of these; because their corruption is in them, and blemishes be in them: they shall not be accepted for you. (*Leviticus 22:17-25*)

In v. 22, the sacrifices prohibited are of clean animals which are blind, disabled, mutilated, with a running sore, scab, or eruption, but in v. 23 the permission given applies to animals "overgrown or stunted." These latter may be used only for a freewill offering.³¹⁸

Unblemished offerings are required, *first* and foremost. *Second*, in terms of Exodus 22:30, no animal younger than eight days could be offered in sacrifice. *Third*, in terms of Deuteronomy 22:6-7 and Exodus 22:30, no bird and her young, a cow and its calf, a ewe and its lamb, or a goat and its kid could be offered together.

The requirement of an unblemished offering is repeated in the New Testament with respect to the believer as a living sacrifice:

14. Do all things without murmurings and disputings:

15. That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world. (Philippians 2:14-15)

14. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless. (2 Peter 3:14; the things looked for, v. 13, are new heavens and a new earth)

(Concerning the unjust, the blemished)

12. But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption;

13. And shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the day time. Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you. (2 Peter 2:12-13; the reference is to the ungodly within the church)

It is especially important to make note of this fact. It is very routinely noted that unblemished sacrifice represents the sinless Christ. This is very true, but we cannot stop there. It also represents, *first*, what our gifts and service to the Lord must be: we cannot offer a blemished gift to God. We cannot give Him our leftovers, the leftovers of our lives and substance. The blemished offering is an insult to God and thus highly offensive to Him. However, nothing is more common than blemished offerings; yet Christians expect God to bless them for their offerings: this, Paul says, is our *reasonable* service, not an unreasonable one:

1. I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

2. And not be conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. (Romans 12:1-2)

With v. 24, we have an uncertainty. Robert Young's *Literal Translation of the Holy Bible* renders it, "As to a bruised, or beaten, or enlarged, or cut thing — ye do not bring it near to Jehovah: even in your land ye do not do it." Some commentators, and the ancient rabbis, have seen this as a prohibition of all emasculation of animals. Rabbi Hertz commented:

The Heb. can bear the interpretations. It can mean, 'Ye shall not offer such mutilated animals'; or it may be taken, according to the Rabbis, as a general prohibition of emasculation in men and animals.³¹⁹

The context does not seem to indicate a general prohibition. It is very true that the law does not permit those men who have been castrated to have entrance or membership "in the congregation of the LORD" (Deut. 23:1). Since membership meant eldership, headship over a family, and the possibility of being a ruler over families of tens, hundreds, and thousands, only whole men could qualify. Castration was not a bar to worship or to salvation. Wenham, who sees the verse as a bar

to all castration of men or animals, comments that it is because “castration damages God’s good creation,” and “Holiness is symbolized in wholeness.” Moreover, God’s blessing for all living creatures was to “be fruitful and multiply” (Gen. 1:22, 28; 8:17).³²⁰ This is an appealing and logical interpretation, and one to be receptive to. However, despite its logical impact, we still cannot see as a mandate what is not clear in the text.

Calvin noted, with respect to unblemished offerings,

We perceive, then, that all defective sacrifices were rejected, that the Israelites might learn sincerely and seriously to consecrate themselves entirely to God, and not to play childishly with Him, as it is often the case. Elsewhere we have seen indeed that things are required for legitimate worship; *first*, that he who approaches God should be purged from every stain, and *secondly*, that he should offer nothing except what is pure and free from all imperfection. What Solomon says, that “the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord,” (Prov. 15:8) is true, although it be fat and splendid. But in order that the things which are offered by the good should be pleasing to God, another point must also be attended to, viz., that the offering should not be poor, and stingy, and deficient; and again, by this symbol, as I have already said, they were directed to Christ, besides whom no integrity will anywhere be found which will satisfy God.³²¹

Calvin is correct in saying that this requirement had to do with worship, and with what the worshipper brings to worship. It is a fallacy to abstract worship from the routines of life; worship is their culmination. We bring to worship that character of our everyday lives, blemished or unblemished, not ourselves abstracted from our work, family, and character. When worship is abstracted from everyday life, both in what we bring to worship and in what we take from worship into the routines of life, worship becomes sterile and offensive to God. It is blemished worship.

An important aspect of this law is the preface. God says, “Speak unto Aaron, and to his sons” (v. 18). The guardians of the purity of worship are the clergy. There is to be a vigilance against blemished offerings, and a necessary part of this is the teaching of the whole of God’s law, and an insistence on God-centered living.

We have a reference to David’s concern for this law in 2 Samuel 24:24: for him, a costless offering to God was a blemished one. In Malachi, however, we see God’s indictment of all who show contempt for Him with their blemished offerings:

6. A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the LORD of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name?
7. Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the LORD is contemptible.

8. And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the LORD of hosts...

13. Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness is it! and ye have snuffed at it, saith the LORD of hosts; and ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering: should I accept this of your hand? saith the LORD.

14. But cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth, and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing: I am a great King, saith the LORD of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen. (Malachi 1:6-8, 13-14)

The point is clear. We are unwilling to offend a human authority by giving him a defective or damaged gift, and yet we expect God to be grateful for what men would find insulting. The Lord's work and Kingdom require only our best from us; nothing second-best or second-rate is acceptable to Him.

One final point. St. Paul makes it clear that an unblemished gift or service to God means that it is given without complaint, and, even though required of us, is given in thanksgiving, not because of necessity:

Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. (2 Corinthians 9:7)

Chapter Fifty-Five The Bread of God (*Leviticus 22:26-33*)

26. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,
27. When a bullock, or a sheep, or a goat, is brought forth, then it shall be seven days under the dam; and from the eighth day, and thenceforth, it shall be accepted for an offering made by fire unto the Lord.
28. And whether it be cow or ewe, ye shall not kill it and her young both in one day.
29. And when ye will offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving unto the LORD, offer it at your own will.
30. On the same day it shall be eaten up; ye shall leave none of it until the morrow: I am the LORD.
31. Therefore shall ye keep my commandments, and do them: I am the LORD.
32. Neither shall ye profane my holy name; but I will be hallowed among the children of Israel: I am the LORD which hallow you,
33. That brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God: I am the LORD.
(*Leviticus 22:26-33*)

These laws are all a repetition of laws given previously: v. 27 repeats Exodus 22:30; v. 28 has a later appearance in Deuteronomy 22:6; v. 29 repeats Leviticus 7:12, 15; v. 31 repeats Leviticus 19:37 and is repeated again in Numbers 15:40 and expanded in Deuteronomy 4:40 with a promise of prosperity and long life; v. 32 refers to Leviticus 18:21 and 10:3 and appears in Matthew 6:9; v. 33 is a frequent reminder, as in Leviticus 11:45. The phrase “I am the LORD,” which appears here four times, in vv. 30-33, is a common refrain in the law.

Because these laws are repetition, commentators tend to pass over them with brief references to their previous citations, a curious fact. When we repeat ourselves, we do so for emphasis; we want then to be particularly well heeded, not ignored. Thus, we must recognize that this repetition is not repetitious and tiresome but purposive. The emphasis given to these particular laws is important. Modern man finds what God has to say boring, unless it offers him some benefit. As a result, obvious facts are bypassed.

Consider what these laws require of us. They are, as Wenham noted, related to other laws which are not sentimental but theological. A calf or lamb must not be sacrificed on the same day as its mother (v. 28). The law in Deuteronomy 22:6-7 forbids taking the life of a bird when its eggs are being taken, or its young (apparently to be reared domestically). A kid could not be seethed or cooked in its mother’s milk (Ex. 23:19; 34:26; Deut. 14:21). Trees could not be wantonly destroyed, even in war-time (Deut. 20:19-20). Noah was required to preserve animal life from the Flood of Genesis (Genesis 6:19-20; 7:2-3), and so on.³²²

Porter’s comment, while reflecting a modernist view, is on the right track:

Domestic animals were part of the community and so their birth was surrounded by the same taboos as with humans (cp. 12:2-3).³²³

To understand the full implications of this, let us remember what Paul says in Romans 8:19-22:

19. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.
20. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope.
21. Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.
22. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth until now.

Most commentators have avoided the full meaning of Paul's words. Calvin, however, was insistent on two things: *first*, "beasts, as well as plants and metals," will all share in the great restoration of all things; *second*, Calvin, while holding fast to this meaning, made it clear that we have no license for speculations about the details of this fact, declaring:

But he means not that all creatures shall be partakers of the same glory with the sons of God; but that they, according to their nature, shall be participators of a better condition; for God will restore to a perfect state the world, now fallen, together with mankind. But what that perfection will be, as to beasts as well as plants and metals, it is not meet nor right in us to inquire more curiously; for the chief effect of corruption is decay. Some subtle men, but hardly soberminded, inquire whether all kinds of animals will be immortal; but if reins be given to speculations where will they at length lead us? Let us then be content with this simple doctrine, — that such will be the constitution and the complete order of things, that nothing will be deformed or fading.³²⁴

The law of circumcision required that the rite be performed on the eighth day (Gen. 17:12); the law of sacrifice prohibited the sacrifice of animals before the eighth day (Ex. 22:30; Lev. 22:27). The parallel is an obvious one. While man is created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-28), he is still a creature.

There is another important aspect to these laws. In Leviticus 22:25, all the sacrifices are called "the bread of your God," a very telling phrase. *Bread* is used figuratively to mean sustenance: what then is sustained? It is not God, who does not grow weak from lack of sacrifice, but rather strong in judgment. It is the covenant relationship which is sustained by sacrifice. The sacrificial system, i.e., *atonement*, is basic to the law, and it is the redeemed of God who are faithful and obedient. Hence, the reality of the covenant relationship, of atonement, is demonstrated by obedience, the bread of God. Note what Micah says:

6. Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old?

7. Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

8. He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? (Micah 6:6-8)

Offerings in general are called *the bread of God* in Leviticus 21:6, 8, and 17; in Numbers 28:2; and possibly Ezekiel 44:7 and Malachi 1:7. Leviticus 3:11 and 16 uses the term for the thank-offering, and Leviticus 22:25 applies it to the burnt-offering and thank-offering together. The term “the bread of God” appears again in the New Testament (John 6:32-35). Jesus Christ declares Himself to be the bread of God come down from heaven. The *bread* is the sacrifice which marks atonement and communion, communion with God. Bread is sustenance of our covenant relationship with God. It is Christ in His atonement and His care for us as His members, and it is our sacrifice of obedience. Paul therefore summons us to be “a living sacrifice” (Rom. 12:1) in our holiness and service to God and His covenant community.

It is an interesting fact that, while a very young animal cannot be used as a sacrifice, there is no age limit on the acceptable sacrifice, only the requirement of health, i.e., an unblemished animal.

In v. 32, God declares, “I will be hallowed among the children of Israel: I am the LORD which hallow you.” *Hallow* appears in the older versions, in such verses as Leviticus 27:16, as “sanctify.” Its main usage now is in the Lord’s Prayer (Matt. 6:9; Luke 11:2): “hallowed be thy name.” It means to sanctify, consecrate, dedicate, and more.

Jewish authorities at the time of Christ held that the highest form of hallowing God’s Name is martyrdom. Later, in Hadrian’s day, so many Jews were ready to be martyred that for a time it imperiled the existence of the Jews. The rabbis then decreed that only with respect to idolatry, incest, and murder should death be preferred to transgression.³²⁵ Historians who have remarked on the readiness of many of the early Christians to be martyred seem ignorant of the Jewish background of this stance. They died to hallow God’s Name by their faithfulness. To hallow God’s Name by refusing to compromise with evil still goes on today. It is, however, but one aspect of what hallowing means. Micah’s declaration about faithfulness and obedience gives us the broader meaning.

Chapter Fifty-Six

The Sabbath Rest

(*Leviticus 23:1-8*)

1. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,
2. Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, Concerning the feasts of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, even these are my feasts.
3. Six days shall work be done: but the seventh day is the sabbath of rest, an holy convocation; ye shall do no work therein: it is the sabbath of the LORD in all your dwellings.
4. These are the feasts of the LORD, even holy convocations, which ye shall proclaim in their seasons.
5. In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is the LORD'S passover.
6. And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread unto the LORD: seven days ye must eat unleavened bread.
7. In the first day ye shall have an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein.
8. But ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD seven days: in the seventh day is an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein. (*Leviticus 23:1-8*)

God's law deals not only with our actions, but also with our use of all things, our bodies, the world around us, one another, and, very emphatically, our use of time. The laws concerning the Sabbath give us the laws of time, even as do also the laws of work, worship, and more. In every area, we live in time and are responsible for its use to God.

The Hebrew word *Shabbat* is related to *shavat*, a verb meaning to cease, or rest. In ancient paganism, there were periodic days of observances for the gods or for kings, but these laws had a very different focus: they honored the gods or sacred kings, whereas in God's law they honor not a tax-collecting king or gods, but rather celebrate the providence of God the Lord. Before the giving of the law in Exodus 20, we have an event which set forth the meaning of God's Sabbath. In Exodus 16, we have the giving of manna in the wilderness. On every sixth day, God gave enough manna for the Sabbath, in part to teach Israel that "man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD," as God declares it:

1. All the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do, that ye may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the LORD sware unto your fathers.
2. And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no.

3. And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man does not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live. (Deuteronomy 8:1-3)

The purpose of the law is not to inhibit us, but to bless us.

The *rest* ordered by the Sabbath includes all men, even slaves, and work animals as well (Ex. 23:12; 34:21). Because man's life is temporal, lived in time, it is a temptation for men to attempt to command time for *their* purposes. God, however, orders us to rest in time and to use all time for *His* purposes. When our Lord declares that the Sabbath was made for man, He has Himself as the last Adam, and the redeemed humanity in Him, in mind (Mark 2:25-28; Luke 6:1-12). The purpose of the Sabbath is to bless man in God's service and to restore the world to God and His Kingdom. The Sabbath tells us that it is not our work that saves us but God's work. The Sabbath is tied to manna: God's provision is given to His covenant people as they live in faithfulness to Him and His law, His justice.

In these verses, we are told, *first*, of the weekly Sabbaths, (v. 3), *second*, of the Passover Sabbath (v. 5), and, *third*, of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (v. 6). Wenham has pointed out that there are seven festivals in the year: 1) passover, 2) the feast of unleavened bread, 3) the feast of weeks, 4) the day of atonement, 5) the feast of booths, 6) the day after booths, and 7) the feast of weeks. Most occur in the seventh month of the year, and the seventh year is a sabbatical year (Ex. 21:2ff; Lev. 25:2ff; Deut. 15:1ff). After seven sevens of years, or forty-nine years, there is a jubilee (Lev. 25:8ff). These are all forms of the Sabbath and develop the meaning of the weekly Sabbath.³²⁶

In Leviticus 23:28, *all* work is forbidden on the day of atonement, and we have the same general statement in v. 3. However, in verse 8, the Authorized Version reads, "no servile work," which Snaith rendered, "no laborious work,"³²⁷ and Bernard J. Bamberger rendered as, "You shall not work at your occupation," a paraphrase with which he was not altogether happy.³²⁸ This limited labor to works of necessity, including the preparation of food within certain limits (Ex. 20:10; 31:14; 35:2-3; Lev. 16:29; 23:30-32; Num. 29:7; Deut. 5:14).

The Sabbath celebrates the gift, providence, mercy, and redemption of God. In return, we must manifest gratitude: "And some shall appear before me empty" (Ex. 34:20). The Sabbath is a celebration of rest, rest from our sin and guilt in the fact of redemption, rest from our work in the fact of His work and victory, and rest from man's government in the fact of God's government. The Sabbath is a covenant celebration of God's provision for us, for the whole earth, and for all our todays and tomorrows. The Passover celebrates the birth of Israel as a covenant people, even as Christ's Passover, the atonement on the cross and His resurrection, celebrates the birth of the church.

The Passover began on the fourteenth day of Nisan, at sunset, and it was followed by the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which lasted seven days. Only unleavened bread was permitted during the Passover. When Israel left Egypt, the bread prepared was unleavened, both because of the haste

of its preparation, and because the bread had to last for a time without becoming moldy. It also signified the absence of corruptibility in the offering of atonement.

The first Passover occurred on the night before Israel, believing Egyptians, and others left Egypt. It was thus during the Feast of Unleavened Bread that the waters of the Red Sea parted for Moses and the people. This feast thus celebrated that great victory while it also commemorated the hasty departure and deliverance. The army of Egypt perished in the waters of the Red Sea.

There is a plain and telling incisiveness in God's law. We are told of Scripture,

12. For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

13. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do. (Hebrews 4:12-13)

The tendency and temptation of man has been to blunt and to sentimentalize the plain words of Scripture. This goes back to Israel. According to the Midrash, the angels wanted to sing the praise of God when the Egyptians were drowned, but God refused, saying, "The work of My hands is drowning in the sea, and you want to chant a victory song before Me!" Klein has added, "How can one be fully happy when others are suffering, even deservedly?"³²⁹ Such a statement is an indictment of Moses and of Israel for celebrating the defeat of Egypt. Moses' joyful song (Ex. 15:1-22) is clouded by such a perspective. Apparently, modern humanism would have us apologetic for victory and contented only with defeat!

It is noteworthy that Klein's perspective with respect to the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread is plainly *not* God-centered. For him, "above all, Passover is a festival of national freedom."³³⁰ In the modern era, God is put to the service of nationalism or internationalism; both are forms of idolatry. God and His covenant Kingdom are alone the focus of Scripture and of history.

The Sabbath not only means rest, but it means *rest as an act of faith*. Our era, in the West, has lost contact with reality, as have statist everywhere. *Work means survival*. In much of history, the relationship has been immediate and hence well known. We have lost that awareness. Nothing revealed this blindness more tellingly than a university student at Berkeley, California, in the 1960s. She was a "revolutionist," demanding an end to work as oppression because technology has supposedly made work obsolete, so that work existed now as a tool of capitalist oppression. "But what about food?," asked a reporter. Her haughty and disdainful answer was this: "Food is."

In previous eras, men knew that no work means no life. To *rest* fifty-two days each year on the Sabbath, plus many other holy days, and one year in seven, was on the face of it suicidal. It was *an act of faith* to rest in the confidence of God's provision.

We can add that thinking wisely also means survival, in some eras in an immediate sense, now less immediate *but no less real*. To forget such things is to forsake reality and life.

Chapter Fifty-Seven

The Meaning of the Firstfruits

(*Leviticus 23:9-14*)

9. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,
10. Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest:
11. And he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it.
12. And ye shall offer that day when ye wave the sheaf an he lamb without blemish of the first year for a burnt offering unto the LORD.
13. And the meat offering thereof shall be two tenth deals of the fine flour mingled with oil, an offering made by fire unto the LORD for a sweet savour: and the drink offering thereof shall be of wine, the fourth part of an hin.
14. And ye shall eat neither bread, nor parched corn, nor green ears, unto the selfsame day that ye have brought an offering unto your God: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. (*Leviticus 23:9-14*)

These verses refer to the waving of the *omer* or sheaf, held on the sixteenth day of Nisan. The word *omer*, in Exodus 16:36, is defined as the tenth of an *ephah*. An *omer*, a dry measure, was about six and a quarter pints, and an *ephah* about seven and a half gallons, English measures. The sheaf was usually barley, the first grain to ripen. It was waved before the altar, from side to side and up and down. Then a portion was burned on the altar and the rest given to the priests to eat. In v. 13, the “two tenth deals of fine flour” is fourteen pints, and “the fourth part of an hin” is two and a half pints. The prohibition of v. 14 is with regard to the new grain; old grain or flour could be eaten, as we see in Joshua 5:11.

Scripture distinguishes between three kinds of offerings: firstfruits, tithes, and gifts. The tithe is God’s tax for the government of His Kingdom. Gifts were offerings beyond the tithe, which cannot be seen as a gift.

The three great annual feasts were Passover, Weeks, and Tabernacles. All three were thus harvest festivals in a sense, not merely because they were celebrated at harvest time, but also because they were signs representing God’s ingathering of His people.

This waving of the *omer* is also known as the Feast of Unleavened Bread. It was a part of the sacred calendar, and an aspect of the Biblical presentation of all time as having a God-centered focus. Time is no more man’s property than is the earth: we are stewards of both, and the purpose of holy days is to remind us of this fact. A harvest makes life possible. While man must not live by bread alone (Matt. 4:4), he cannot live without bread: he is a creature. Hence, the harvest must be consecrated to God to set forth our resolve to live for Him.

Moreover, the presentation of the sheaf to God recognized Him as the Creator and sustainer of all things. The earth and the fullness thereof are God's creation, and man cannot take his life or the earth and its bounty for granted. When we eat and drink, we live off God's provisions, and we are guilty of trespass if we do not acknowledge His bounty and government. Hence this festival.

Beginning with the New Testament, the church has seen these verses as very important in their implications. St. Paul, in 1 Corinthians 15:20, tells us that Jesus Christ is the firstfruits of them that slept, that by His resurrection, His victory over sin and death, He sets forth the goal of God's harvest. We are God's new humanity in Christ, and His harvest is to culminate in a new creation for His new humanity.

Because Christ is holy, His new humanity shall also be holy (Rom. 11:16). We, as His members, have "the firstfruits of the Spirit" (Rom. 8:23), so that we are a privileged people.

This is not all. James tells us, "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures" (James 1:18). The reference here to rebirth is an obvious one. God, by His sovereign will, begets us, makes us a new creation, with the "word of truth." The reference to Genesis 1:26-28, the creation of man, is a clear one. But there is also a reference to Genesis 3:5; the tempter offers to man an esoteric knowledge of good and evil, one attainable only by rebellion against God. Satan presents God as a liar ("Yea, hath God said?," Gen. 3:1), and himself as the bearer of suppressed truth. Men can be their own gods, their own source of law and morality, of good and evil, *if* they declare their independence from God.

As against this, James tells us, God, "Of his own will begat us with the word of truth." We now have a different definition of truth. Truth is not the construct of the autonomous mind of man, but rather "every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4).

This means that man is now under God's law. This law which now governs the redeemed man is the expression of the nature and being of the triune God, and of us as we grow in grace and knowledge. It is now for us "the perfect law of liberty" (James 1:25; 2:12). We are now in harmony with life,

23. Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.
24. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away:
25. But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you. (1 Peter 1:23-25)

For both Paul and James, Christians are the firstfruits whom all creation will follow (Rom. 8:18-23). God, who created all things, ordained that Christ and His people, the new humanity, should lead the way to the rebirth and renewal of all things.

This is not a mystical vision of the future. It is God's work of renewing grace and our response of faithfulness to His every word that leads to this great cosmic renewal.³³¹

When James 1:18 tells us that we are to be “the firstfruits of his creatures,” the word *creatures* has reference to all of God’s created things apart from man. God’s purpose is cosmic, not man-centered, but, created man in His image is the starting point in Christ of this new creation.

In all these and other references, the New Testament tells us that the offering of the sheaves represents the necessity of seeing God as the Lord and provider. It tells us also that in Christ we ourselves become the firstfruits, the required offering to the triune God. It makes it clear that our redemption is the beginning of the regeneration of all things.

In Revelation 14:4, the redeemed are again called “the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.” In Revelation 21:1-22, we have the conclusion in the regeneration of the entire cosmos into conformity to God and the word of truth.

The firstfruits festival thus looks ahead. As we have seen previously, modern man has blurred the link between work and survival. Similarly, he has lost the meaning of time. Time means progression, development, and growth. Harvest festivals witness to this meaning. A generation which believes that “Food Is” is ignorant of the meaning of time and work.

The goal of fallen man is a man-created timeless world, a Tower of Babel. Statism seeks to arrest time. Marxism looks towards a beehive or ant-hill state, one in which time is arrested. This was the dream of the Incas, the Mazdakites, and others. All such goals are death-oriented. Man’s life means time and work, and to despise either is to court death.

In v. 11, the waving of the sheaf from side to side and up and down was in effect to make the sign of the cross.

Chapter Fifty-Eight Pentecost and Rest (*Leviticus 23:15-21*)

15. And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven sabbaths shall be complete:

16. Even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer a new meat offering unto the LORD.

17. Ye shall bring out of your habitations two wave loaves of two tenth deals: they shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven; they are the firstfruits unto the LORD.

18. And ye shall offer with the bread seven lambs without blemish of the first year, and one young bullock, and two rams: they shall be for a burnt offering unto the LORD, with their meat offering, and their drink offerings, even an offering made by fire, of sweet savor unto the LORD.

19. Then ye shall sacrifice one kid of the goats for a sin offering, and two lambs of the first year for a sacrifice of peace offerings.

20. And the priest shall wave them with the bread of the firstfruits for a wave offering before the LORD, with the two lambs: they shall be holy to the LORD for the priest.

21. And ye shall proclaim on the selfsame day, that it may be a holy convocation unto you: ye shall do no servile work therein: it shall be a statute for ever in all your dwellings throughout your generations. (*Leviticus 23:15-21*)

These verses are about the Festival of Weeks or Pentecost; *pentecost* means fiftieth, and it gains this name because it falls on the fiftieth day after the Passover. It was a one-day celebration (*Deut. 16:9-12*) and thanksgiving for God's gracious provision. Coming at the end of the harvest season, pentecost meant thanksgiving for God's providence, and was marked by an offering to God of sacrificial animals, cereal gifts, and drink offerings.

In v. 22, gleaning is cited as one aspect of giving thanks to God. Our Lord declares, "freely ye have received, freely give" (*Matt. 10:8*). In the law, we are warned against forgetting God and believing in our self-sufficiency so that we say in our heart,

17. ... My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth.

18. But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day. (*Deuteronomy 8:17-18*)

God ratifies His covenant with us by prospering us so that we can better serve Him and establish His Kingdom. If we use that prosperity for our own purposes and without reference to God's Kingdom, prosperity is taken from us. God's blessing is a purposive prosperity, given to us to further His Kingdom.

It was on Pentecost that the disciples received the gifts of the Spirit (Acts 2:1-4) in order to prosper and further God's Kingdom.

The day was to be free of "servile work" (v. 21). G. J. Wenham renders it "heavy work;" N. H. Snaith, "laborious work;" James Moffatt, "field work;" and so on. The meaning is that normal work and activity ceases. The day is for thanksgiving.

This festival, like other holy days, tells us that time must be made holy by God's covenant people. The harvest represents the results of Godly dominion, and all time must be used in God's service. Pentecost means a rejoicing in present blessings and the expectation of more in the Lord in future time. Quite logically, Israel made Pentecost a time for the confirmation of children after their public catechism. The rabbis confirmed the children by the laying on of hands.³³² Godly children were seen as a present blessing and a future prosperity.

In v. 17, the offering of the firstfruits includes two loaves "out of your habitations," out of your daily fare. Thus these were not unleavened loaves. They signified the dedication of the normal life of the family to the Lord. During the era of the Second Temple, this clause was reinterpreted to mean something else. It was seen as elliptical and meaning, "ye shall *bring out of*, or, *from*, the land of your *habitations*, that is, from Palestine (Num. xv. 2)."³³³ This seriously alters the meaning and depersonalizes it. The depersonalization of religion into a national fact leads to the destruction of meaning. No national offering can have any moral character apart from the faith and life of the people. It was this kind of emphasis which led to the Pharisees and Sadducees and their reduction of the covenant to a civil property.

At the conclusion of the sacrifices of Pentecost, the thank offerings of the families were eaten together with their guests, the Levites, the poor, foreigners, and others in need.

The New Testament has much to say about the Feast of Weeks, or Pentecost, which it declares to be made into a great and triumphant prophecy fulfilled in the life of Christ and the church. Kellogg's account of this is so telling that it requires citation in full:

This festival, as one of the sabbatic series, celebrated the rest after the labours of the grain harvest, a symbol of the great sabbatism to follow that harvest which is "the end of the age" (Matt. xiii. 39). As a consecration, it dedicated unto God the daily food of the nation for the coming year. As passover reminded them that God was the Creator of Israel, so herein, receiving their daily bread from Him, they were reminded that He was also the Sustainer of Israel; while the full accompaniment of burnt-offerings and peace-offerings expressed their full consecration and happy state of friendship with Jehovah, secured through the expiation of the sin-offering.

Was this feast also, like passover, prophetic? The New Testament is scarcely less clear than in the former case. For after that Christ, first having been slain as "our Passover," had then risen from the dead as the "Firstfruits," fulfilling the type of the wave-sheaf on the morning of the Sabbath, fifty days passed; "and when the

day of Pentecost was fully come,” came that great outpouring of the Holy Ghost, the conversion of three thousand out of many lands (Acts ii.), and therewith the formation of that Church of the New Testament whose members the Apostle James declares (i. 18) to be “a kind of firstfruits of God’s creatures.” Thus, as the sheaf had typified Christ as “the Firstborn from the dead,” the presentation on the day of Pentecost of the two wave loaves, the product of the sheaf of grain, no less evidently typified the presentation unto God of the Church of the first-born, the firstfruits of Christ’s death and resurrection, as constituted on that sacred day. This then was the complete fulfillment of the feast of weeks regarded as a redemptive type, showing how, not only rest, but also redemption was comprehended in the significance of the sabbatic idea. And yet, that complete redemption was not therewith attained by that Church of the first-born on Pentecost was presignified in that the two waveloaves were to be baked with leaven. The feast of unleavened bread had exhibited the ideal of the Christian life; that of firstfruits, the imperfection of the earthly attainment. On earth the leaven of sin still abides.³³⁴

It should be added that the feast is also a sign of the total victory which is to come. This is celebrated by every Sabbath. We rest from our labors, knowing that the future comes not from our work but from God’s ordination. We rest in His victory over sin and death and in the confidence of His total victory which is to come.

As Kellogg noted, the festival “dedicated unto God the daily food of the nation for the coming year.” It was a confidence in God’s providential care of His *covenant* people. While the Sabbath means *rest*, it can be seriously misinterpreted if we view it in terms of modern concepts of rest. The Biblical doctrine of rest involves *trust*. This is very clearly set forth in Psalm 37:1-11:

1. Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity.
2. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb.
3. Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.
4. Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.
5. Commit thy way unto the LORD: trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.
6. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday.
7. Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass.
8. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil.
9. For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth.
10. For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be.

11. But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.

Chapter Fifty-Nine

Service as Power

(Leviticus 23:22)

22. And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not make clean riddance of the corners of thy field when thou reapest, neither shalt thou gather any gleaning of thy harvest: thou shalt leave them unto the poor, and to the stranger: I am the LORD your God. (Leviticus 23:22)

We have, as in Leviticus 19:9-10, a reference to gleaning, and the law is restated in Deuteronomy 24:19-22. The law is repeated to stress the concern that God requires us to show for the poor, for widows and orphans, and for aliens. In Ruth 2, we have an example of the application of this law. Man's harvest or pay time must be a time of active help for the needy. In Leviticus, this is associated with Pentecost; in Acts 2:1-4, we see God's gift of the Spirit to the apostles, so that at Pentecost, God gave, so that man might give in turn.

The fact that gleaning is cited together with the Feast of Pentecost tells us that ritual and worship must have results in charity and action. The worship God requires is not a separation from life but unto God, and, in Him, action in the world in obedience to God our King. In a sense, the culmination of the harvest festivals is the joyful fact that we have a harvest which will prosper God's Kingdom, ourselves, and the needy. Because God has blessed us, we are to bless others.

Calvin has wisely noted:

God here inculcates liberality upon the possessors of the land, when their fruits are gathered: for, when His bounty is exercised before our eyes, it invites us to imitate Him; and it is a sign of ingratitude, unkindly and maliciously, to withhold what we derive from His blessing. God does not indeed require that those who have abundance should so profusely give away their produce, as to despoil themselves by enriching others; and, in fact, Paul prescribes this as the measure of our alms, that their relief should not bring into distress the rich themselves, who kindly distribute. (2 Cor. viii. 13). God, therefore, permits every one to reap his corn, to gather his vintage, and to enjoy his abundance; provided the rich, content with their own vintage and harvest, do not grudge the poor the gleaning of the grapes and corn. Not that He absolutely assigns to the poor whatever remains, so that they may seize it as their own; but that some small portion may flow gratuitously to them from the munificence of the rich. He mentions indeed by name the orphans, and widows, and strangers, yet undoubtedly He designates all to the poor and needy, who have no fields of their own to sow or reap; for it will sometimes occur that orphans are by no means in want, but rather that they have the means of being liberal themselves; nor are widows and strangers always hungry.³³⁵

Calvin's summary calls attention to certain key facts of this law. *First*, it is God who requires charity of us. It is a law, not an option. *Second*, the law of gleaning gives no title to the poor for our goods or wealth. It is not their right: it is rather God's mercy expressed through His people. Thus, the law of gleaning denies an option to the rich, or a right to the poor. *Third*, its purpose is community, and charity is the means of establishing it.

The goal is a covenantal tie between men. This is summed up in Leviticus 25:14-17, 35: "Ye shall not therefore oppress one another: but thou shalt fear thy God: for I am the LORD your God" (Lev. 25:17). Instead of oppression, there must be help. Failure to help means a violation of the communion with God as well as man.

Gill noted:

Aben Ezra observes, the feast of weeks being the feast of the firstfruits of the wheat harvest, it is repeated here that they might not forget what God had commanded them to do at that time, namely to leave somewhat for the poor; and the Jewish writers observe, that this law, being put among the solemn feast of the passover, pentecost, and tabernacles, and the beginning of the year, and the day of atonement, teaches, that he observes it, and leaves the corner of the field and the gleanings to the poor, it is as if he built the sanctuary, and offered his sacrifices in the midst of it; but a much better reason may be given for it, which was, to teach them that when they expressed their thankfulness to God, they should exercise charity and liberality to the poor.³³⁶

The laws of charity have had a long history of both remarkable observance and serious neglect, both in Judaism and in Christianity.

Very early, the church began to create institutions to govern covenantal life. In 1 Corinthians 6:1-4, St. Paul gives the requirement for Christian courts of justice. These were quickly established, became a powerful force for centuries, and attracted even the ungodly. To provide justice is a merciful act.

Various "hospitable institutions," to use Riquet's phrase, were also established by the early church. There was, *first*, *xenodochium*, which provided lodging for passing strangers, pilgrims, refugees, exiles, and others. Rich and poor were alike helped, and the hospitality was good enough to please the rich. Because the inns of the Greco-Roman world were also houses of prostitution, the girl being a part of the provision for the travelers, the *xenodochium* served a very important function in providing a godly inn.

Second, the *mosocomium* was a hospital for the sick, and it provided doctors, stretcher-bearers, and attendants, and also a priest.

Third, the *orphanotrophium*, or orphanage, provided food, clothing, shelter, and an education to the many orphans of that era.

Fourth, there was a *gerontocomium* or *gerocomium* to provide care for the aged in the forms of shelter, food, clothing, and general care.

Fifth, later, in the medieval era, when the Crusades brought back leprosy into Europe, special hospitals were built for the care of lepers.

Sixth, the ransoming of captives became a part of the Christian ministry also. St. Epiphanius (A.D. 439-497), bishop of Pavia, ransomed more than 6,000 prisoners.

These were the major forms of charitable activities in that era.³³⁷ These were ministries carried out by the church or by Christians who felt called to these specific services. St. John Chrysostom made it clear, however, that giving away money to charitable causes did not dissolve our personal responsibility to be charitable as occasion required it:

Perhaps someone of you says: Aye, if it were given me to entertain Paul as a guest, I readily and with much eagerness would do this. Lo! it is in thy power to entertain Paul's Master for thy guest, and thou wilt not: for "he that receiveth one of these least," he saith, "receiveth Me" (Matt. 18:5, Luke 9:48). By how much the brother may be least, so much the more does Christ come to thee through him. For he that receives the great, often does it from vainglory also; but he that receives the small, does it purely for Christ's sake. It is in thy power to entertain even the Father of Christ as thy guest, and thou wilt not: for, "I was a stranger," He says, "and ye took me in" (Matt. 25:35); and again, "Unto one of the least of these the brethren that believe on Me, ye have done it unto me" (ib. 40). Though it be not Paul, yet if it be a believer and a brother, although the least, Christ cometh to thee through him.³³⁸

It is very important, in this connection, to note that Scripture tells us that such charitable service is both our duty, to further community, *and* the only true means to dominion and authority. Our Lord declares:

25. But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them.
26. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister;
27. And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.
28. Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many. (Matthew 20:25-28)

Christians have forgotten how they became great, and as a result they have lost strength. Our Lord is very clear: *service is power*, and it is the foundation of true authority and dominion. The modern state is aware of this, in a Machiavellian sense. Hence, the state has taken over the church's diaconal service: it is now the dispenser of charity or welfare, and its power is largely based on this service. No resentment against the state's power can alter its power. Only as the church restores the ministry of service, the diaconal ministry, to its ordained intention, will it

regain its freedom. To surrender the diaconate to the state leads to disaster, no less now than in ancient Rome.

As Otto Scott has noted, other areas have also been taken over by the enemies of Christ. Psychiatry and psychology in the West have replaced the confessional. In Marxist countries, forced public confessions give us a more grim example of this.

Chapter Sixty

The New Year

(*Leviticus 23:23-25*)

23. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,
24. Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, In the seventh month, in the first day of the month, shall ye have a sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, and holy convocation.
25. Ye shall do no servile work therein: but ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD. (*Leviticus 23:23-25*)

In the Old Testament calendar, the seventh day is the day of rest, and the seventh month was also a kind of sabbath. These great festivals were celebrated in the seventh month: the feast of trumpets, the day of atonement, and the feast of tabernacles. In v. 24, reference is made to the “blowing of trumpets,” which is literally a “shouting of trumpets,” a joyful acclamation. Psalm 81 has been used by the synagogue on this day, the feast of trumpets. The rabbis held that the day also commemorated the creation of the world, when “all the sons of God shouted for joy” (Job 38:7). The trumpets were blown all day during this feast.

Keil and Delitzsch noted:

For the whole month was sanctified in the first day, as the beginning or head of the month; and by the sabbatical observance of the commencement, the whole course of the month was raised to a Sabbath. This was enjoined, not merely because it was the seventh month, but because the seventh month was to secure to the congregation the complete atonement for all its sins, and the wiping away of all the uncleannesses which separated it from its God, viz. on the day of atonement, which fell within this month, and to bring it a foretaste of the blessedness of life in fellowship with the Lord, viz. in the feast of Tabernacles, which commenced five days afterwards. This significant character of the seventh month was indicated by the trumpet-blast, by which the congregation presented the memorial of itself loudly and strongly before Jehovah on the first day of the month, that He might bestow upon them the promised blessings of His grace, for the realization of His covenant. The trumpet-blast on this day was a prelude of the trumpet-blast with which the commencement of the year of jubilee was proclaimed to the whole nation, on the day of atonement of every seventh sabbatical year, that great year of grace under the old covenant (chap. 25.9); just as the seventh month in general formed the link between the weekly Sabbath and the sabbatical and jubilee years, and corresponded as a Sabbath month to the year of jubilee rather than the sabbatical year, which had its prelude in the weekly Sabbath-day.³³⁹

In Nehemiah 7:73-8:12, we have an account of the celebration of this feast. Since the people then were newly returned from the captivity in Babylon to a ruined city, and because the reading of the law by Ezra made them aware of their sins, the people wept. Nehemiah, however, told the people to look not to their evil past but rather to God's grace, and to rejoice:

9. And Nehemiah, which is the Tirshatha (or, the governor), and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day is holy unto the LORD your God; mourn not, nor weep. For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law.

10. Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our LORD: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength.

11. So the Levites stilled all the people, saying, Hold your peace, for the day is holy; neither be ye grieved.

12. And all the people went their way to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them. (Nehemiah 8:9-12)

These verses are important, not only because they give us an account of a New Year sabbath, but also the meaning of all sabbaths. *First*, the sabbath is to be a day of joy, of "great mirth," of eating and drinking. *Second*, the sabbath is a day in which to remember the poor "and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared." *Third*, it is to be a joyful day because it is a celebration of God's victory in time for us and in us. Therefore, "the joy of the LORD is your strength."

This festival of the new year is now called by Jews *Rosh Hashanah*, "the beginning of the year," a term found in Ezekiel 40:1. It became, especially with Maimonides, a day of repentance for past sins. Many saw it as the day of judgment for all men. The Biblical emphasis, however, is on joy. Judaism sees the ten days between the New Year and the Day of Atonement as days of repentance and even fasting. Paul apparently referred to this in Ephesians 5:8, 14.³⁴⁰

A complimentary fact is that Judaism in time came to observe four separate days of the year as a New Year. *First*, this day, the first of Tisri, was the start of the civil calendar and the first day of the Sabbath year and of the Jubilee. *Second*, the first of Nisan was the New Year for Jewish kings and for the religious calendar. *Third*, the first of Ebel was the New Year for the tithing of cattle. *Fourth*, the first of Shevat was the New Year for trees.³⁴¹

Again, in this festival, we have an important emphasis on time. Goldberg is right in stating that, here as elsewhere, "we see in the calendar its prophetic implications."³⁴² On New Year's Day, "servile work" was banned, and offerings required. But this was not all. Even more than the weekly sabbaths, but like all sabbaths, it was to be a day of "great mirth," and of sharing with the needy.

We have noted that work means survival, and, in antiquity and in much of the world today, the connection is very close and immediate. It is less immediate for some societies but equally real. The command to be charitable (Lev. 23:22, Neh. 8:9-12) consequently appears to be a law to

destroy a man's hope of survival. Thus, the sabbath has a double thrust against man's hopes for self-sufficiency. *First*, it requires regular cessation from work, which seems to militate against survival. *Second*, it requires that this rest from labor be accompanied by charity.

All this seems dangerous to humanistic man over the centuries. God's law, however, is prophetic and predictive. In both Deuteronomy 28 and Leviticus 25, God declares that when His law is obeyed, the result is prosperity. This is summed up in Leviticus 25:18-19:

18. Wherefore ye shall do my statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them; and ye shall dwell in the land in safety.

19. And the land shall yield her fruit, and ye shall eat your fill, and dwell therein in safety.

Because time and the world are God's creation and not man's, prosperity depends not on man's planning, but on God's law obeyed by man. For men to attempt survival and prosperity on their fiat terms is thus a will to death.

New Year observances are common to many cultures, and their character is usually oriented to pleasure and to chance. The New Year celebration of Scripture requires joy and community, and charity as essential to that community. It is, when Biblical, prophetic, because it celebrates the redeemed man's growing dominion over all things in the name of Christ.

It is a Sabbath, and it celebrates the harvests to come, the assured victories in our God. In Ecclesiastes 11:1, we are told, "Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days." The reference is to rice growing: the rice is the farmer's bread or food, and he must throw it upon the rice paddies in order to have a harvest. The Sabbath is such a trust in our future in the Lord. Faith is not easy where our sustenance is concerned, but, as Psalm 126:6 declares, "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

Chapter Sixty-One

The Day of Atonement

(*Leviticus 23:26-32*)

26. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,
27. Also on the tenth day of this seventh month there shall be day of atonement: it shall be an holy convocation unto you: and ye shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD.
28. And ye shall do no work in that same day: for it is a day of atonement, to make an atonement for you before the LORD your God.
29. For whatsoever soul it be that shall not be afflicted in that same day, he shall be cut off from among his people.
30. And whatsoever soul it be that doeth any work in that same day, the same soul will I destroy from among his people.
31. Ye shall do no manner of work: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.
32. It shall be unto you a sabbath of rest, and ye shall afflict your souls: in the ninth day of the month at even, from even unto even, shall ye celebrate your sabbath. (*Leviticus 23:26-32*)

Here again, as in *Leviticus 16*, we have laws concerning the day of atonement, *Yom Kippur*. Three times in these seven verses there is the command, “Ye shall *afflict* your souls.” The Berkeley Version gives us “humble yourself,” and “humble your souls,” and Robert Young’s *Literal Translation of the Holy Bible* also uses the word “humble.” Goldberg called attention to the fact that “sorrow in itself does not take away sin.” What God requires is not sorrow on our part but rather a redirection of our lives that is grounded on the fact of atonement.³⁴³ The Hebrew word *anah* means to depress, and we are to recognize our pride and sin and to trust, not in ourselves, but in God. Since man’s sin is to be his own god (*Gen. 3:5*), to afflict our souls is not merely a negative introspective attitude but rather a trust in the grace and power of God. To trust in God means to depress our trust in ourselves and our righteousness. In *Leviticus 16*, the priests were instructed concerning this day; here it is the laymen who are addressed. The Good Friday observances of Christians are a continuation of *Yom Kippur*.

On the day of atonement, there was to be no work, and the appointed sacrifices were to be made. Most important, as Grant noted, “Atonement brings the glory back, but man must be made to know his need, and to receive it humbly.”³⁴⁴

The practices of this day had a characteristic of which *Hebrews* has much to say. In Israel, only the high priest could enter the Holy of Holies: “sin is a separating power.”³⁴⁵ With Christ, the veil of separation is gone, and man has in Him direct access to the Father (*Heb. 6:19; 9:3ff.; 10:20*).

In Judaism, the emphasis of Yom Kippur is on the collective confession of sins rather than on the objective fact of God's provided atonement. Pietism has tended to a like error.

Those who failed to observe the day were, according to this law, to be excommunicated (v. 29), and God would bring destruction in His own way on violators (v. 30). The atonement gives life; to reject the atonement is to choose death.

It is noteworthy that the Hebrew day was from evening to evening. In some churches, the liturgical calendar requires observances in terms of this fact, so that various holy days begin on the evening preceding the modern date.

We have again a holy day which stresses the meaning of time. Modern Judaism, in commenting on Yom Kippur, sees it in terms of man's self-atonement. Since the sacrificial system was not continued after the destruction of the Temple in the Jewish-Roman War (A.D. 66-70), a humanistic view of salvation openly took over. Thus, one writer has said of Yom Kippur, that it "adds a new dimension: however low man has fallen he can pull himself up again."³⁴⁶ Since perhaps the eighth century, the *Kol Nidrei* has become a part of the service, and it has led to anti-Jewish charges that all oaths are annulled on Yom Kippur. In actual fact, *Kol Nidrei* applies only to personal religious vows which neither affect nor involve others.³⁴⁷

In modernist churches, atonement has given way also to man's self-salvation, and the social gospel holds to salvation by the state.

All such interpretations see the meaning of time as derived *from* time, from man. As in the fall (Gen. 3:1-5), man becomes his own savior. Time, however, when separated from God, loses its meaning and becomes merely an empty succession of moments. Existentialism is a logical consequence; it exalts the meaningless moment and sees salvation in an existence which is uninfluenced by anything outside or beyond itself. No atonement is then either desired or seen as necessary. The exaltation of time leads to the destruction of its meaning.

Since God is the creator of all things, the world, time, and history, the atonement and redemption of man, time, and history is impossible apart from Him. Because the atonement alone gives life, to reject it is to choose death.

The atonement also tells us that progress is possible in history. Humanistic doctrines of progress have foundered and are being abandoned. Many aphorisms call attention to this: history repeats itself, we are told, meaning that it does not advance. Sir Robert Walpole said, "Anything but history, for history must be false." Others have seen history as a lie, because it posits a meaning and direction. The Bible is clear that the universe is one of total meaning, God-created and God-ordained meaning, so that the very hairs of our head are all numbered (Matt. 10:30; Luke 12:7).

Without the atonement, the world is meaningless. It is caught in the cycle of sin and death, whereas for us there is atonement and resurrection. Grant is right: "atonement brings the glory back," the glory of God's creation of all things as "very good" (Gen. 1:31).

Chapter Sixty-Two

The Feast of the Lord

(*Leviticus 23:33-44*)

33. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,
 34. Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, the fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be for the feast of tabernacles for seven days unto the LORD.
 35. On the first day shall be an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein.
 36. Seven days ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD: on the eighth day shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD: it is a solemn assembly; and ye shall do no servile work therein.
 37. These are the feasts of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, to offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD, a burnt offering and a meat offering, a sacrifice, and drink offering, every thing upon this day:
 38. Beside the sabbaths of the LORD, and beside your gifts, and beside all your vows, and beside all your freewill offerings, which ye give unto the LORD.
 39. Also in the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto the LORD seven days: on the first day shall be a sabbath, and on the eighth day shall be a sabbath.
 40. And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days.
 41. And ye shall keep it a feast unto the LORD seven days in the year. It shall be a statute for ever in your generations: ye shall celebrate it in the seventh month.
 42. Ye shall dwell in booths seven days; all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths:
 43. That your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.
 44. And Moses declared unto the children of Israel the feasts of the LORD.
- (*Leviticus 23:33-44*)

The Feast of Tabernacles, also known as the Festival of Booths, is the last of the three great festivals of Israel. It is known in the Jewish religious calendar as *Sukkot*. Both in ancient Israel and later, this was the major festival. The booths referred to were shade-shelters made of branches and erected in front of tents to provide protection against the sun and a place to eat and to rest. The commandment to return to a week of such living was intended to remind the Israelites of their wilderness journey and all its difficulties. In spite of the problems, the covenant people were provided for in the desert and had a promised land ahead. The festival is a reminder to us that, whatever our present problems may be, God is leading us to our promised land. In 1 Kings 8:2, 65, we have a reference to the celebration of this festival in Solomon's day; Ezekiel 45:23 also refers to it. In Exodus 23:16, it is called "the feast of ingathering," and also in Exodus

34:22. This term best expresses the fact of an agricultural harvest as well as the great ingathering of the nations.

The observance of this festival meant an annual dislocation of the routines of everyday life for tent living, for camping together. The contrast between the tents and their homes would bring to mind God's prospering hand and His purpose. It was in Israel a time of community known simply as "the Feast." This reference appears in John's Gospel.

Many commentators insist on seeing this festival as simply a Canaanite harvest feast. That harvest celebrations marked many societies is clear, but such a view overlooks the key aspect of this feast. The people celebrated in tents to remind them of their wilderness journey, a backward look with thanksgiving. It was also a forward look towards God's great ingathering. People had minds before we scholars were born. Some scholars connect the incarnation and the resurrection with pagan winter and spring festivals. Such a view is a studious refusal to accept the historical facts.

In Nehemiah 8:13-18, we have an account of the revival of this festival after the Babylonian Captivity. Because they were in a city, they were told to build their tents on their flat roof-tops, in the courtyard, and in certain urban locations. Subsequently, all kinds of regulations were issued by rabbinic leaders to govern the size and materials of the booths.

The needy and poor were to be helped at this festival also. Since in antiquity living in tents reduced the apparent differences between peoples, it also furthered community. The tent or tabernacle looked back to the wilderness journey and also ahead to the great ingathering by the Messiah. Israel saw Amos 9:11 as a reference to this fact.³⁴⁸ The sacrifices of this festival were early seen as looking ahead to the atonement and redemption of all the nations.

However soon a heresy became a part of the festival, namely, pleading "the merits of the fathers," of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as the ground for God's blessing. This was also done in the prayers for forgiveness and atonement on Yom Kippur.³⁴⁹ The shift was thus from God's grace to ancestral merits, and the results warped the religious life of the people. But, as the Talmud noted, the festival also looked ahead to the redemption of all nations.³⁵⁰

Another aspect of this festival, as Israel developed its meaning, is well described by Edersheim:

When the choir came to these words (Psa. cxviii. 1), 'O give thanks to the Lord,' and again when they sang (Psa. cxviii. 29), 'O work then now salvation, Jehovah;' and once more at the close (Psa. cxviii. 29), 'O give thanks unto the Lord,' all the worshippers shook their lulavs towards the altar. When, therefore, the multitudes from Jerusalem, on meeting Jesus, 'cut down branches from the trees, and strewed them in the way, and...cried, saying, O then work now salvation to the Son of David!' (Matt. xxi. 8, 9; John xii. 12, 13), they applied, in reference to Christ, what was regarded as one of the chief ceremonies of the Feast of Tabernacles, praying that God would now draw from 'the highest' heavens manifest and send them salvation in connection with the Son of David, which was symbolized by the pouring out of water. For though that ceremony was considered by the Rabbis as

bearing a subordinate reference to the dispensation of the rain, the annual fall of which they imagined was determined by God at that feast, its main and real application was to the future outpouring of the Holy Spirit, as predicted — probably an allusion to this very rite — by Isaiah the prophet. Thus the Talmud says distinctly: ‘Why is the name of it called, The drawing out of water?’ Because of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, according to what is said: “With joy ye shall draw water out of the wells of salvation.” Hence, also, the feast and the peculiar joyousness of it are alike designed as those of the ‘drawing out of water;’ for, according to the same Rabbinic authorities, the Holy Spirit dwells in man only through joy.³⁵¹

Our Lord made use of this rite of the drawing out of water when at the feast, and with reference to Isaiah 12:3 and 44:3 (cf. John 4:14):

37. In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.
38. He that believeth on me, as the scripture has said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.
39. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.) (John 7:37-39)

Just as we have lost the connection between work and survival, so too we have lost the connection between water and life. A healthy man can survive a few weeks without food, but not more than three days without water. Jesus is the necessary water of life without whom men and cultures perish.

Two important aspects of the Feast of the Tabernacles were not of Mosaic origin. These were, *first*, the pouring out of water, and, *second*, the illumination of the Temple. Both represented insights into the meaning of the festival. All lights were put out in Jerusalem, and then relit from the Temple altar. With this in mind, our Lord declares, “I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 8:12). John 1:4-9 stresses this same fact.

Other festivals and days were added to the religious calendar which were not required by Scripture: the feast of candles for the dedication of the Temple, later the fast for the siege of Jerusalem, the fast of Esther, and Purim. The new moons, of course, were observed monthly. The last Biblical festival was Tabernacles or Sukkot.

The sacred calendar was to govern the people. This was true in much of church history also. Now the calendar is largely secularized, as is *time*. There is no experience of time by the dead: they have dropped out of the calendar and time; growth, change, and movement are beyond the dead.

Our Lord declares, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6). Men and nations who abandon Christ abandon time and life. This, the last

festival, is so prophetic of Christ's work and Kingdom, that it can be called the Feast of the Lord. It is the foundation of missions and more.

It tells us that the sacred calendar alone does justice to time and eternity. The humanistic conception of time is in terms of Genesis 3:5, the desire to be one's own god; it finds its fulfillment in George Orwell's concept of man's triumph, a boot stamping on a human face forever. Both time and meaning are thereby lost. What "Czar" Tom Reed said a century ago about most congressmen applies to others as well: "They never open their mouths without subtracting from the sum of human knowledge."³⁵²

The remarkable inferences made from the meaning of this feast point to Christ as the water of life, and as the light of the world. He in turn declares this to be our calling, to be the world's light and the water of life.

Edersheim's reference to the rabbinic authorities is also telling: "the Holy Spirit dwells in man only through joy." In Nehemiah's words, "the joy of the LORD is your strength" (Neh. 8:10).

Chapter Sixty-Three

Sacred Objects

(*Leviticus 24:1-9*)

1. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,
2. Command the children of Israel, that they bring unto thee pure oil olive beaten for the light, to cause the lamps to burn continually.
3. Without the vail of the testimony, in the tabernacle of the congregation, shall Aaron order it from the evening unto the morning before the LORD continually: it shall be a statute for ever in your generations.
4. He shall order the lamps upon the pure candlestick before the LORD continually.
5. And thou shalt take fine flour, and bake twelve cakes thereof: two tenth deals shall be in one cake.
6. And thou shalt set them in two rows, six on a row, upon the pure table before the LORD.
7. And thou shalt put pure frankincense upon each row, that it may be on the bread for a memorial, even an offering made by fire unto the LORD.
8. Every sabbath he shall set it in order before the LORD continually, being taken from the children of Israel by an everlasting covenant.
9. And it shall be Aaron's and his sons'; and they shall eat it in the holy place: for it is most holy unto him of the offerings of the LORD made by fire by a perpetual statute. (*Leviticus 24:1-9*)

We come to a section titled by R. K. Harrison, "Sacred Objects." The regulations concerning the golden lampstand (or *menorah*) are given in vv. 1-4, and those concerning the shewbread or bread of the Presence in vv. 5-9.

Before considering the details of either, let us examine the fact of sacred objects. To the modern mentality, the concept seems remote and simply a relic of more primitive ways in religion. The Bible not only has much to say about sacred objects, but also declares that the goal of history is to make all persons, things, and objects sacred. In our first chapter, on Zechariah 14:20-21, we saw that God's purpose is that, by means of His law, His covenant people will in due time make all things sacred.

Anti-Christianity seeks either to desacralize the world, to strip it of all association with God, or to sacralize it on anti-Christian terms. The Beatnik movement began such a systematic attempt. Thus, Michael McClure, in his "Peyote Poem," describes drugs as a means of realizing divinity. Allen Ginsberg, in "Footnote to Howl," declares that all things are holy as they are, including the homosexuals.³⁵³ In this anti-Christian perspective, Christianity is the enemy of fallen man's natural holiness.

In Scripture, not only are we called to be holy, (“Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy: for I am the LORD your God,” Lev. 20:7), but times, objects, and places are also declared to be holy. This concept has now been transferred to the modern state: state holidays have replaced holy days, and we speak of national treasures and shrines. It is an act of perversity to deny that Christianity should have sacred times, objects, and places.

The golden lampstand (Ex. 25:31-40; 27:20-21) was to be kept burning continually in the holy place, which otherwise would have been dark. It was the duty of the high priest each day to care for the lamps, and, at the beginning, he lit them (Num. 8:3). The golden lampstand was thus an artificial, man-provided light in the holy place. God provides the salvation, but it is the new man who provides the light to blot out the darkness. Of Jesus Christ, we are told, “That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world” (John 1:9). All who are in Christ are now the light of the world. According to our Lord,

14. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.

15. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

16. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. (Matthew 5:14-16)

God is able to provide light in all places, but He has made it our duty to carry Christ’s light into all the world. If we fail to do so, even the holy place becomes dark.

In v. 3, we are told that the lamps were to burn “continually,” or, better, *regularly*, from evening until morning, even when the holy place was not in use.

In Revelation 1:20, we are told that the lampstand means the church.

The lampstand, according to Exodus 25:31, was to be of “pure gold.” At this point, we come to another controversy. The disciples themselves were indignant when a woman with an alabaster cruse of very precious oil poured it on Jesus’ head. They demanded, “To what purpose is this waste? For the ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor” (Matt. 26:8; Mark 14:4-5). Our Lord rebuked them for this, but, ever since, men have echoed the disciples’ complaint. The church, it is held, should not have beautiful buildings, nor costly furnishings. Such complaints come from the rich and poor alike. Clearly, anything costly or beautiful is in their eyes too good for God! Scripture tells us, however, that even the robes of the high priest were to be “for glory and for beauty” (Ex. 28:2, 40). While beauty in itself is nothing, and it must be linked to holiness, it is still God’s requirement. We are commanded to “worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness” (1 Chron. 16:29), *not* in the ugliness of holiness.

In vv. 5-9, we have reference to the shewbread, or bread of the Presence. Ginsburg’s comment on this is very good:

Each cake, therefore, was made of two omers of wheat, or, as it is here said, of two tenth-parts of an ephah, which is the same thing. As an omer is the quantity which, according to the Divine ordinance (Exod. 16:16-19), supplies the daily

wants of a human being, each of these cakes represents the food of a man and his neighbour, whilst the twelve cakes answered to the twelve tribes of Israel.³⁵⁴

The bread was unleavened and thus did not mold during the course of the week. According to Dummelow, the bread “was an acknowledgment that man owes his ‘daily bread’ to God. It was a kind of perpetual grace over meat.”³⁵⁵

The term, “bread of His Presence,” is rendered by Calvin as “the bread of faces.” He wrote,

... this is no ordinary symbol of God’s favour, when He descended familiarly to them, as if He were their messmate. They (the loaves) were called “the bread of faces,” because they were placed before the eyes of God; and thus He made known His special favour, as if coming to banquet with them.³⁵⁶

Wenham is right in stating that, like circumcision and the Sabbath, the bread of the Presence set forth the fact of the covenant between God and His people.³⁵⁷

We have God’s covenant presence where His law-word is obeyed, and where all that belongs to God is treated with reverence as sacred. This applies to all things connected with worship, all sacred objects; it covers us and our resources and money, all the earth, which is the LORD’s (Ps. 24:1). Instead of desacralizing all things, we work to bring all things, and every thought, captive to Christ (2 Cor. 10:5).

We work to reverse the fall, and to reverse the retreat of faith. Under the influence of pietism, Christianity has withdrawn to the inner life of man and left the world to the state. The world is seen as under the jurisdiction, not of Christ, but of the state. Freud, recognizing this situation, held that to destroy Christianity, the best means would be to reduce guilt and the problems of man’s mind to scientific problems with scientific solutions. There is no further ground left for retreat. Either Christians recapture every area of life and thought, or face the judgment of God.

Chapter Sixty-Four

Blasphemy

(Leviticus 24:10-16)

10. And the son of an Israelitish woman, whose father was an Egyptian, went out among the children of Israel: and this son of the Israelitish woman and a man of Israel strove together in the camp;

11. And the Israelitish woman's son blasphemed the name of the LORD, and cursed. And they brought him unto Moses: (and his mother's name was Shelomith, the daughter of Dibri, of the tribe of Dan:)

12. And they put him in ward, that the mind of the LORD might be shewed them.

13. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

14. Bring forth him that hath cursed without the camp; and let all that heard him lay their hands upon his head, and let all the congregation stone him.

15. And thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel, saying, Whosoever curseth his God shall bear his sin.

16. And he that blasphemeth the name of the LORD, he shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him: as well the stranger, as he that is born in the land, when he blasphemeth the name of the LORD, shall he be put to death. (Leviticus 24:10-16)

This is a very popular text with the ungodly, who regularly cite it as an example of the "primitivism" of the Bible, an odd charge from smug members of the world's most bloody century.

The question at stake is *authority*. Blasphemy is forbidden in Exodus 22:28, "Thou shalt not revile (or, blaspheme) the gods (or, judges), nor curse the ruler of thy people." There is no penalty *stated* in Exodus, and *perhaps* this meant that the penalty was determined by the situation and case. In this instance, the man was held in custody so "that the mind of the LORD might be shewed them" (v. 12). J.R. Porter held that the case was further complicated by the fact that the man was half Egyptian. Did the law apply to him? The man's descendants would in the third generation be eligible for full entry into covenant life (Deut. 23:7-8).³⁵⁸ *Nothing* is said about the father of this man, although we are given the name and family of the mother. It would appear that perhaps the father was not with Israel. Rabbinical scholars have given us an account of the father:

They say that the father of the young man was the Egyptian slain by Moses (Ex. 2:2), that he was the taskmaster under whom the husband of Shelomith worked, and that Moses found him smiting the man whom he had injured and put to shame. It is added that the quarrel in which the young man was engaged arose out of a claim set up by him to have his abode in the camp of the Danites (see Num. 2:2), not being content to remain in the quarters appropriated to foreigners.³⁵⁹

This story is discounted by most Christian scholars, and it has no confirmation. However, much in history is without confirmation, and the rabbis were the best historians of antiquity. There was something unusual about this episode, and perhaps the rabbinic report gives us the background.

In v. 14, we have the laying on of hands by the witnesses prior to the execution. The laying on of hands has varied meanings: it could mean ordination to God's service (Acts 6:6); a blessing (Gen. 48:14); a transfer of guilt (Lev. 1:4; 4:3-4); healing (Mark 5:23); and more. Here it apparently means that the witnesses testify to the man's sin, that his blood is upon his own head, and that there is no guilt on those who stone him to death (v. 15).³⁶⁰

Some rabbinic commentators have claimed that the guilty man's mother was the only woman in the camp with an illegitimate child. They see her character indicated in her name. "She said 'hello' (*shalom*) to all men and she was a chatterbox (*dabranit*, punning on *Dibri*)."³⁶¹

Calvin, quite realistically, assumed that many young Israelite women married into the Egyptian nation in order to gain some protection for themselves and their families through their husbands.³⁶² Moreover, the rabbis to the contrary, *Shalomith's* name means "woman of peace."

We are not given any specific data about the nature of the blasphemy, because it is not necessary for us to know them. It was, clearly, a flagrant offense, and one that struck at the authority and majesty of the covenant Lord. Knight holds that it was a denial of God and His covenant, a declaration that belief in God, His covenant with Israel, and His providential care is nonsense.³⁶³ In some form, it was a contemptuous challenge and a denial of the authority of the covenant God. It is an incident which makes it clear that "if for any reason a stranger take up his abode within the circle of the divine government, he is amenable to the laws thereof."³⁶⁴ In some way, the blasphemer had denied that God had jurisdiction over him, and this may be the reason why Moses consulted God.

The word blasphemy in the Hebrew is *naqab*, to curse, revile, puncture, or pierce. It means to seek to destroy. It is warfare against God and His covenant law. This tells us something of this man's offense. This incident is set in the midst of laws; it tells us that, even as the law was being given, this man was expressing his contempt for God and His law. The summons of the law is to holiness; the offense of this man was in some form a contempt for and an attack on the idea of holiness. Peake saw the blasphemy as a complete renunciation of any allegiance to or regard for the covenant Lord.³⁶⁵

The subject of blasphemy is a difficult one for modern man to understand. In antiquity, it was commonly punished by death in various cultures. In its most elemental and basic meaning, blasphemy is "properly any species of calumny and detraction," but in Scripture is limited to God and to things sacred.³⁶⁶ It is a denial of the fundamental authority in all creation. Modern man sees himself as his own god and law, having developed the implications of the fall to their limits. Contempt for authority is more congenial to him than respect.

Where respect for the authority of God and His word is gone, then soon all authority is eroded. Scripture declares blasphemy to be a very serious offense because any society which begins by profaning God and His authority will soon profane all things. The alternative to authority is total

terror by the power state. Where there is no authority, there is soon no justice, because men no longer speak the same moral language of law and authority. The respect for God's authority establishes communication and healthy dissent. The kind of dissent which thrives in an anarchic situation is the dissent of increasing evil, violence, and destruction. Godly dissent is constructive, not destructive, and its goal is justice and holiness.

Otto Scott has called my attention to the fact that there is a strong, humanistic doctrine of blasphemy in effect in our time. In several countries, it is illegal to make any reference to minority groups which can be construed as derogatory, *even if the comments are accurate*. Thus, to cite the high rate of crime and violence among certain groups, even if the data be police statistics, is severely punished. Criticism of certain minorities is viewed as blasphemy.

Chapter Sixty-Five

Blasphemy and Social Order

(*Leviticus 24:17-23*)

17. And he that killeth any man shall surely be put to death.
18. And he that killeth a beast shall make it good; beast for beast.
19. And if a man cause a blemish in his neighbor; as he hath done, so shall it be done to him;
20. Breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth: as he hath caused a blemish in man, so shall it be done to him again.
21. And he that killeth a beast, he shall restore it: and he that killeth a man, he shall be put to death.
22. Ye shall have one manner of law, as well for the stranger, as for one of your own country: for I am the LORD your God.
23. And Moses spake to the children of Israel, that they should bring forth him that had cursed out of the camp, and stone him with stones. And the children of Israel did as the LORD commanded Moses. (*Leviticus 24:17-23*)

These verses are a continuation of the subject of blasphemy, of vv. 10-16. Their purpose is to make clear why the death sentence was pronounced against the man guilty of blasphemy. We are told that the law of God is binding on all peoples, both in its penalties and its protection.

Since God is the source of all law, it follows that offenses against God are a denial of all law in a society. We cannot see blasphemy simply as words spoken against God. To think so is to isolate God from the realm of meaning and law, and to make Him an irrelevant outsider to the universe. No court of law takes kindly to anyone who denies the legitimate jurisdiction of that court. It is much more serious to deny the validity of all law. Such a man then affirms the validity of Genesis 3:5, i.e., of himself as his own god and law. He may use the Bible as a façade, but he has given it his own innovative meaning against God's meaning.

It is an interesting fact that in the Slavic languages, the word *provoke* means law, truth, and justice, and *zakon* means law, religion; these words are ancient in their meaning and use.³⁶⁷ Law is inseparable from religion, from truth and justice.

Men, however, are prone to take seriously offenses against themselves, but not offenses against God. An ancient cynical proverb declares, "I can defend mine honor; let God defend His." The answer is that those who do not uphold God's honor become a part of the realm under His judgment.

These verses affirm "the law of retribution." In Porter's words, "The idea is not to make the punishment fit the crime but to restore to the victim what he has lost."³⁶⁸ This can be by an equivalent compensation for damages. Retribution has many presuppositions. *First* of all, it assumes the responsibility of all persons. They are responsible for what they do, for the behavior

of their animals, and the safety of their buildings (Ex. 21:29, 33-36; 22:6; Deut. 22:8; etc.). *Second*, restitution is necessary to restore as much as possible the order which existed. In cases of murder, the death of the killer is an aspect of this. *Third*, restitution seeks to restore justice to the human scene and thereby affirm God's moral order. *Fourth*, retribution is known as *lex talionis*, and for some generations it has been regarded as a form of primitivism which psychology and sociology are replacing. Without this fact of retribution, however, justice is denied and is replaced by psychotherapy.

Some of the related passages are Genesis 9:6; Exodus 21:12-14, 18-25, 35-36; and Deuteronomy 19:21. Oswald T. Allis called attention to three aspects of this *lex talionis*: *first*, it means exact justice, not revenge. *Second*, it is public justice, not private revenge. *Third*, just compensation for all injuries other than murder is required; there can be no ransom for murder (Num. 35:31f).³⁶⁹

The fact that the protection of God's law extends to forgiveness is very important. God extends that protection to all races and peoples because all are required to live by that law and will be judged and punished by that law. The source of the law is also the source of judgment. *Where state law, made by the state's fiat, governs us, we are then also judged by the state's fiat.* Arbitrary laws then prevail, and the security of our persons, freedom, and property are lost to the same fiat will. The assertion by the state that its fiat will can replace God's law is blasphemy.

Bush commented:

It is moreover to be remembered that blasphemy is not confined to the mere profane use of the name of titles of the Most High. Any kind of disparaging or contemptuous reflections thrown out against the power or grace of God comes into the same category in the estimation of the Scriptures. Thus Rabshakeh is charged with blasphemy for asserting that the God of Israel had no more power than the gods of the heathen. And thus the Psalmist pleads, 'O God, how long shall the adversary reproach, shall the many *blaspheme* thy name for ever?' Thus, moreover, Paul says of himself that he was before his conversion a *blasphemer*, because he had spoken against and opposed the grace of Christ; and doubtless it is for the same reason that James says of the rich men of his day, 'Do they not *blaspheme* that worthy name by which ye are called?'³⁷⁰

The incident of Rabshakeh's blasphemy is very interesting. This commander of the Assyrian armed forces ridiculed Hezekiah's trust in God's ability to deliver Judah. Rabshakeh found such a faith ridiculous and made fun of it (2 Kings 18:19-25), even stating, as though he were himself a prophet, that God had sent him to destroy the land. For Rabshakeh, an historical power could not be touched by God: history has priority over eternity.

Blasphemy is thus more than taking the name of the Lord in vain: it is a denial of the power and relevance of God and His law-word; it is the contempt for His word as empty and impotent. It is the misuse of God's word to serve man's purposes, as though God is nothing and cannot see to avenge Himself. Blasphemy treats God as a non-entity.

Scott observed long ago,

Blasphemy against God, yea, contempt of him, expressed in words or actions, is in its own nature not only more heinous than theft or robbery of any kind, but even than murder; and though it frequently escapes unpunished by man, yet it shall by no means escape the righteous vengeance of God.³⁷¹

More than a few scholars believe that the law of retribution was set aside by our Lord in Matthew 5:38ff.³⁷² Such men also often feel that their more modern wisdom enables them to correct or supplement both Moses and Christ. Kellogg's comment is pertinent:

...Much cavil have these laws occasioned, the more so that Christ Himself is cited as having condemned them in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:38-42). But how little difficulty really exists here will appear from the following considerations. The Jews from of old have maintained that the law of an "eye for eye," as here given, was not intended to authorise private and irresponsible retaliation in kind, but only after due trial and legal process.³⁷³

Kellogg pointed out that the plain evidence of Hebrew history makes it clear that the meaning of the law was *never* that an eye was gouged out in restitution, but that the penalty had to be equal to the crime. Modernists are very prone to attempts to reduce such language to primitivism: any era without their wisdom is held to be barbaric.

To deny the validity and importance of blasphemy is to undermine justice. Because blasphemy is no longer regarded as anything but a dead concept, we see justice being replaced by class and race laws, and by psychotherapy. Such systems, Marxist, Nazi, or democratic, see the source of social order in the ideas of an elite class, race, or profession. God's law and justice are mandatory for all peoples, and they judge and protect all peoples.

The law against blasphemy tells us that the fundamental law, authority, and law-Giver of all creation must be revered in every sphere. No building can stand if the foundation and the first floor are suddenly removed. Similarly, no society can stand if it blasphemously denies the foundation of all justice.

David asks, "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" (Ps. 11:3). The Hebrew word for *foundations* is *shathah*, a basis, figuratively, a political or moral support, foundation, or purpose. The righteous or just dare not be indifferent to the destruction of the foundation of society.

Chapter Sixty-Six The Land's Sabbath (*Leviticus 25:1-7*)

1. And the LORD spake unto Moses in mount Sinai, saying,
2. Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye come into the land which I give you, then shall the land keep a sabbath unto the LORD.
3. Six years thou shalt sow thy field, and six years thou shalt prune thy vineyard, and gather in the fruit thereof;
4. But in the seventh year shall be a sabbath of rest unto the land, a sabbath for the LORD: thou shalt neither sow thy field, nor prune thy vineyard.
5. That which groweth of its own accord of thy harvest thou shalt not reap, neither gather the grapes of thy vine undressed: for it is a year of rest unto the land.
6. And the sabbath of the land shall be meat for you; for thee, and for thy servant, and for thy maid, and for thy hired servant, and for thy stranger that sojourneth with thee.
7. And for thy cattle, and for the beast that are in thy land, shall all the increase thereof be meat. (*Leviticus 25:1-7*)

We come now to one of the Bible's most important chapters. The Sabbath year has many aspects. In Deuteronomy 15:1-6, the cancellation of debts among the covenant people is cited. In this text, we have a Sabbath for the land and from the normal routines of work. There can be no harvest for sale; as vv. 6-7 make clear, only that which grows of itself can be used for food. There is to be no sowing or pruning.

In Leviticus 25, the jubilee chapter, we see the sharp difference between the good society as Scripture sets it forth, and the good society of humanists. The Bible sees society in terms of atonement, restitution, and forgiveness. These are the means whereby sin is dealt with. Men receive a new status before God by Christ's atonement; they become a new creature by His regenerating power. They apply restitution, and with restitution, forgiveness, to all of their relations. As against this, we have a variety of conceptions which either seek to discount sin, or see only its endless burden. Those who seek to discount sin cannot escape the fact of guilt; it governs and haunts a sinful society: the burden of sin is a sociological fact. But men want simplistic answers. Jones has written of the common expectation of Confederate troops from Louisiana: "Every Louisiana soldier was obsessed with the same goal in 1861 — to meet the Yankee invaders in combat and end the war swiftly in one glorious, textbook battle."³⁷⁴ The Romantics, whether they call themselves social scientists, reformers, or statesmen, believe in such simplistic solutions to the problems of sin. Freud, in writing on "Dostoyevsky and Parricide," saw that men turn the burden of guilt into a burden of debt. As Wiseman pointed out, "the mental economy" of the guilty leads them into self-degradation and humiliation as means of atonement. "Without such self-imposed retribution, the unexpiated guilt becomes unbearable."³⁷⁵ This is clear in the case of Gelles de Raiz, Satanist, sadist, sodomite, and a man who sacrificed countless small boys in his evil rites. The more he plunged into evil, the more he also plunged

into debt.³⁷⁶ He sinned, and he “punished” himself by incurring impossible debts. It is ironic that debt today has its defenders as the way of progress.³⁷⁷ It would be more accurate to say that our international debts and loans are today the means of pseudo-atonement to bring judgment upon the nations.

Believers in karma take sin more seriously, but for them there is no atonement, no grace, and no forgiveness. Life becomes a painful cycle of continuing punishment and hopelessness. Life becomes a living death: the many evils of ostensibly previous incarnations add to present ones to produce a life of inescapable guilt and misery.

The *premise* of the Sabbath year is the atonement. Men can rest in the Lord. By His atonement, they are free. By His law, we find continuing renewal for the earth and ourselves in the Sabbath.

This fact of the Sabbath remission of debts means that foresight, providence, and work govern men for six years and make possible a rest on the seventh. Consider the amount of interest paid by most men yearly; add to this the interest cost in all goods we buy, since businesses operate on debt and pay interest. Add also the interest paid in taxes on the national debt. The direct and indirect interest we pay out annually would in itself also keep us for the seventh year.

The Sabbath year laws are basic to the laws of holiness. They required the cancellation of debts, freedom for “slaves” (really bondservants), and a rest for the land. What the trees or vines bore in the Sabbath year were to be food for all, so that the poor would, as in gleaning, be allowed to harvest the fields. According to Exodus 23:9-12,

9. Also thou shalt not oppress a stranger: for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.
10. And six years thou shalt sow thy land, and shalt gather the fruits thereof:
11. But the seventh year thou shalt let it rest and lie still; that the poor of thy people may eat: and what they leave the beasts of the field shall eat. In like manner thou shalt deal with thy vineyard, and with thy oliveyard.
12. Six days thou shalt do thy work, and on the seventh day thou shalt rest: that thine ox and thine ass may rest, and the son of thy handmaid, and the stranger, may be refreshed.

It is clear from this text that the Sabbath rest must be used to bring the covenant people together in a concern for one another, as well as in a trust in the Lord. Notice that in v. 1 we are told that these laws are a part of God’s revelation to Moses on Mount Sinai. This is not a later addition to the law but an essential part of it. As Moses set forth the revelation, it came to its culmination in this chapter.

Meyrick set forth the meaning of this law thus:

The principle is, as before, that as the land is God’s land, not man’s, so the Israelites were the slaves of God, not of men, and that if the position in which God placed them was allowed to be interfered with for a time, it was to be recovered every seventh, or at furthest every fiftieth, year.³⁷⁸

As Riley said of God, “He not only rules the realm; He owns it.” Therefore His law must govern it, and His ordained rest. Moreover, “In this Sabbatical year God also emphasized dependence upon His Providences.”³⁷⁹ A central aspect of the Sabbath year was education in the meaning of God’s law (Deut. 31:9-13).

According to 2 Chronicles 36:21, the Babylonian captivity was necessary so that the land might enjoy the Sabbaths denied to it by Israel’s apostasy. Seventy years of Sabbaths were kept during that captivity, a year for every skipped year. God’s law is not to be trifled with: *rest* for the land means its renewal.

Chapter Sixty-Seven

The Jubilee, Part I

(*Leviticus 25:8-17*)

8. And thou shalt number seven sabbaths of years unto thee, seven times seven years; and the space of the seven sabbaths of years shall be unto thee forty and nine years.
9. Then shalt thou cause the trumpet of the jubilee to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month, in the day of atonement shall ye make the trumpet sound throughout all your land.
10. And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubilee unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family.
11. A jubilee shall that fiftieth year be unto you: ye shall not sow, neither reap that which groweth of itself in it, nor gather the grapes in it of thy vine undressed.
12. For it is the jubilee; it shall be holy unto you: ye shall eat the increase thereof out of the field.
13. In the year of this jubilee ye shall return every man unto his possession.
14. And if thou sell ought unto thy neighbour, or buyest ought of thy neighbour's hand, ye shall not oppress one another:
15. According to the number of years after the jubilee thou shalt buy of thy neighbour, and according unto the number of years of the fruits he shall sell unto thee:
16. According to the multitude of years thou shalt increase the price thereof, and according to the fewness of years thou shalt diminish the price of it: for according to the number of the years of the fruits doth he sell unto thee.
17. Ye shall not therefore oppress one another; but thou shalt fear thy God: for I am the LORD your God. (*Leviticus 25:8-17*)

The jubilee makes it very plain that the economics of God's law is sharply different from all other economic systems. After seven sevens of years, and seven sabbatical years, the jubilee, another sabbath year, is celebrated. This means two sabbath years in a row, a fact referred to in 2 Kings 19:29 and Isaiah 37:30. The jubilee is also cited in Deuteronomy 15:1-18 and 31:9-13. It is present even more, perhaps, in the New Testament: our Lord cites the jubilee proclamation of Isaiah 61:1-6, i.e., v. 1 and part of v. 2 thereof, and then declares, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4:16-21). His coming marks the beginning of God's greater jubilee. In the Sermon on the Mount, the Beatitudes echo the jubilee law and Isaiah 61:1ff. The Lord's Prayer is a jubilee prayer, and the petition, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors" (Matt. 6:12), is an aspect of the jubilee law.

The jubilee law has some key provisions. *First*, all rural property was to be returned to the original owner or his family. "Sales" were thus leases for the number of years to the next jubilee.

Urban properties could be sold permanently, but not rural properties. Because God is the owner of the earth (Ps. 24:1, etc.), God dictates the terms of men's possession thereof.

Second, Hebrew "slaves" or bondservants could not be held for more than six years. The seventh year was the year of release. The jubilee not only celebrates their freedom but also their return to their original home. God, as the *go'el*, or next of kin, is the redeemer of these covenant peoples from their financial bondage.

Third, all debts were cancelled in the sabbath years and also by the jubilee. By combining this cancellation with the return to the land *and* to one's family, the meaning of the release is intensified.

Fourth, the land is allowed to lie fallow, and its volunteer crops are for the use of all. It is now known that fallowed land increases its productivity thereafter: it is renewed.

Fifth, the jubilee year began on the Day of Atonement, the tenth day of the seventh month (Tishri, which is September-October), and was thus inaugurated by atonement.³⁸⁰

Sixth, the great emphasis of the jubilee was on liberation: "proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof" (v. 10). This verse has had a long history in Western civilization as a hope and faith. The Hebrew word for liberty is *d'ror*, running free, finding oneself in a happy flow of freedom.

The doctrine of land ownership set forth was firmly established among the people, as the case of Naboth made clear (1 Kings 21:8ff.). The indictment of Micah 2:2 is concerned with violations of the land law.

Grant said, of this land law,

In the yielding up the right of property every seventh year, the Israelite owned from whom he held it. For that year he was not proprietor, the harvest belonged to any one as much as to him, and it was expressly as a Sabbath to Jehovah that this was appointed. That year Jehovah entertained all freely with that which sprang up under His hand apart from human cultivation. It was upon this recognition of the divine lordship Israel's tenure of it all depended. For the violation of this command the land was to enjoy its Sabbaths that had been wrested from it, lying vacant while the people were cast forth (chap. 25:35). And this clearly gives meaning to the jubilee-restoration. Moreover in His parable of the husbandmen, the Lord expressly connects their rejection of Himself with the rejection of Jehovah's rights over the vineyard which He let out to them. Here the idea conveyed in the Sabbatical year is extended and developed (Matt. 21:33-41). The prophets had been His servants sent to receive His fruits: "Afterward He sent unto them His Son, saying, They will reverence My Son. But when the husbandmen saw the Son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill Him, and let us seize on His inheritance." Hence comes the righteous sentence upon them.³⁸¹

The Great Jubilee of God comes with the new creation: it is called by Peter, “the times of the restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began” (Acts 3:21). The doctrine of restitution is basic to the jubilee, and to the Biblical doctrine of liberty.

No study has been made of the application and use of this law in Christendom. It is worthy of note, at any rate, that

An Armenian code of the twelfth century put some bits of the jubilee law into practice: the rule that urban property could be redeemed only within one year after it was sold, while property outside city walls was subject to redemption for seven years — a very considerable modification.³⁸²

One aspect of the jubilee which must be noted is the requirement of family reunions, i.e., of covenant members. It is an error to stress simply the economic aspects of this law. For God’s law, economics and the family are essentially tied. The purpose of economic activity is to further the life of the family.

Knight is thoroughly right in seeing this law as a strong correction to the view that Scripture’s message is the redemption of individual men, who are called to be born again; it is that and much more. *First*, the covenant family rests and comes together to be renewed in their love and their faith. *Second*, the land by its jubilee rest is also renewed or born again.³⁸³

The jubilee law also makes it clear that inheritance is not a personal and individualistic fact: it is religious, and it looks to the transmission of land and other forms of wealth to generations yet to come. No man can view himself as anything but a trustee under God of whatever he possesses.

The law of the jubilee thus makes it clear that economics is an aspect of family life, and, together with the family, is a part of our life in the Lord in terms of His law. Henry George was greatly influenced by the jubilee law, although his use of it was a humanistic revision. In Ruth 4, we see an aspect of the family duties required by this law.

Modern man has created false divisions in his life by needlessly isolating its spheres. The unity of things is imposed from above by the state’s controls which intervene in the family, economics, inheritance, education, and all things else. This is a false unity and a destructive one. In the Biblical faith and law, the unity is under God, and the locale on earth is the family. Humanism leads to false and totalitarian emphases. Those to whom economics is the key insist on an economic or free market perspective on everything, and some Randians give prostitution, as a free market activity, equal status with the family. Others, by seeing the state as the unifying agent, give us various forms of socialism. The jubilee most certainly deals with economic facts, but its perspective is theological, as economics must be. The declaration, “Ye shall not therefore oppress one another; but thou shalt fear thy God: for I am the LORD your God” (v. 17), is a religious statement governing an economic fact.

Christ's coming is a jubilee fact, because it declares that *both* restitution and liberty are basic to His Kingdom, together with a victorious rest. Romans 8:19ff. celebrates the Great Jubilee at the end of history, and our Lord speaks of it in Matthew 19:27-30 and 25:34, as does 1 Peter 1:4. The law of the jubilee tells us that both time and eternity result in victory.

Chapter Sixty-Eight

The Jubilee, Part II

(*Leviticus 25:18-24*)

18. Wherefore ye shall do my statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them; and ye shall dwell in the land in safety.

19. And the land shall yield her fruit, and ye shall eat your fill and dwell therein in safety.

20. And if ye shall say, What shall we eat the seventh year? behold, we shall not sow, nor gather in our increase:

21. Then I will command my blessing upon you in the sixth year, and it shall bring forth fruit for three years.

22. And ye shall sow the eighth year, and eat yet of old fruit until the ninth year; until her fruits come in ye shall eat of the old store.

23. The land shall not be sold for ever: for the land is mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners with me.

24. And in all the land of your possession ye shall grant a redemption for the land. (*Leviticus 25:18-24*)

The laws of jubilee are also called *the laws of release* or the laws of liberty: “proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof “ (v. 10). In Honeycutt’s words,

All of creation is the Lord’s, and to set creation free is to acknowledge that sanctity. So God’s continuing call is: Free the land, free the poor, free all who are encumbered. Freedom acknowledges that all creation is sacred, belonging not to persons but to the Lord.³⁸⁴

In the Biblical perspective, rural land is not a commodity to be sold for a profit but a trust from God to the family. *The family* here means also the generations yet to come, so that the trustee possessor of the land holds it under God for future generations. A future-oriented tenure was thus a result. At the same time, the past trustees and their work to build up the family’s land was a very present fact. Biblical faith is land-oriented. The earth was cursed for man’s sake at the Fall (Gen. 3:17), and it is to be blessed at the new creation of all things (Rom. 8:18-25).

It is noteworthy that both vv. 18 and 19 stress the fact of our *safety* when we are faithful to the Lord. Bush said, concerning the Hebrew word *labeta’h*, “in confident-safety,”

The Heb. word expresses both the *boldness* and *confidence* with which men that fear and obey God trust in him, and the *safety* and *security* which they feel in his protection in times of doubt or danger.³⁸⁵

In vv. 18-22, there are two major promises. The *first*, as already noted, is *safety*. The land and people will live in security and peace *if* they obey God and observe this law. The sabbath and

jubilee years quite obviously required faith and obedience. To go without planting for one year in Sabbath years, and two in the Jubilee, meant living two and three years on old stored food on faith, because another season would pass before a harvest. However, *second*, God promises a blessing of very great plenty for all who are obedient. He *commands* His blessing on all who are commanded, on all who obey Him in faith. This is a special and providential blessing.

Let us turn again to the fact that these are *laws of release*. The Jubilee is the great Sabbath, and the sabbaths are all a rest and release. John Newton's hymn, "Safely through another week God has brought us on our way" (1774), says,

From all worldly cares set free,
May we rest this day in Thee.

We need to recognize the kinds of meaning set forth concerning the sabbath doctrine, days, years, and jubilee: safety, release, plenty, rest, and more, all in faithfulness to the Lord. The land, too, has a release. *First*, the land has a release from man. We are not to prune or cultivate the land and its vines and trees in the sabbatical years. Because "the earth is the LORD's" (Ps. 24:1), we must obey God's law and give the land its periodic release. This release applies to every person and sphere. In the Ten Commandments, we are told the rest applies to our families, workers, and animals (Ex. 20:8-11). In no sphere, including our own lives, do we have unrestricted power or jurisdiction. The law concerning menstruation gives a like immunity to women (Lev. 18:19, 20:18, etc.). "The earth is the Lord's," and so are we.

Second, not only are we the Lord's property, as is the land, but the harvests too are His possession. "The earth is the LORD's, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein" (Ps. 24:1). The tithe, the offering of the firstfruits, the sabbaths, gleaning, and more, witness to God's ownership of the products of the earth, whether agricultural, mineral, or manufactured.

Third, God's ownership must be acknowledged by more than verbal statements, such as merely theological affirmation. God's ownership must be confessed not only by the observances of the land's release, but also by our obedience to the whole law of God. One of the evils of the modern church is the substitution of a verbal affirmation for a life of faithfulness. This is strongly condemned in Scripture:

13. Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men:

14. Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvelous work among this people, even a marvelous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid. (Isaiah 29:13-14)

7. Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying,

8. This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.

9. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. (Matthew 15:7-9)

Symptomatic of this waywardness is the fact that today the sabbath is a *church* observance, not the life of release in the Lord for the land and the people.

Fourth, God's requirement for the land and His people is *holiness*. God's blunt demand is, "ye shall not pollute the land.... Defile not therefore the land" (Num. 35:33-34). In many laws, as in Leviticus 18:24-30 and 20:22-26, God declares plainly that the land itself will vomit out a disobedient and faithless people. What happened to the Canaanites, the Israelites, and many other peoples will happen to us and to all who defile the land. The earth is under a curse because of man's sin (Gen. 3:17), and the earth itself takes vengeance upon men and nations who continue the defilement of God's holy creation. We are plainly told in Leviticus 25:23, "The land shall not be sold for ever (or, in perpetuity): for the land is mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners with me." This is why, as Davies pointed out, "it is impossible to discover any Israelite idea of the State."³⁸⁶ The state means government by man, whereas in God's law, all areas of government are under Him and His law.

History is the story of God's dispossession of false tenants, and His insistence on the holiness of the land, which must have a holy people. Because "the earth is the LORD'S," man must believe and obey God's terms of tenancy, His law, or else be dispossessed, or at the very least, cursed. The premise of the Great Commission is that all nations must be discipled because it is God's earth they dwell in (Matt. 28:20).

Commentators are usually skeptical about the jubilee laws and question whether they were ever observed. Honeycutt correctly states, "Leviticus speaks to so few today because so few believe that God can come to them through and yet beyond the words of another culture and time."³⁸⁷ To limit the validity of Leviticus to ancient Israel is to sin; it means positing an evolving God who adapts Himself to an evolving people. Such questions about the validity of God's law for today require no small arrogance on the part of men. A better approach is found in Dummelow:

The Year of Jubilee was thus, as it were, the 'new birth' of the whole nation, when property was redistributed, and the inequalities arising in the previous period were removed. It was a remarkable social law, putting checks upon ambition and covetousness, preventing the acquisition of huge estates, and adjusting the distribution of wealth in the various classes of the community. The incidents of Ruth (c. 4) and of Naboth (1 K 21) show that the law against the alienation of land was in force in early times: cp. Jer. 32:6f. That it was not unnecessary in later times appears from such passages as Isa. 5:8, Mic. 2:2.³⁸⁸

All the same, the basic emphasis is not economic but theonomic. The concern is *holiness*, not society's goals. We must minister to men because God requires it for His Kingdom, not because men see it as a humanistic cause. The purpose is a holy community, not the kingdom of man. Hence we are told by Paul and the apostolic fellowship,

12. Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees;

13. And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

14. Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. (Hebrews 12:12-14)

Chapter Sixty-Nine

The Jubilee, Part III

(*Leviticus 25:25-34*)

25. If thy brother be waxen poor, and hath sold away some of his possession, and if any of his kin come to redeem it, then shall he redeem that which his brother sold.
26. And if the men have none to redeem it, and himself be able to redeem it;
27. Then let him count the years of the sale thereof, and restore the overplus unto the man to whom he sold it; that he may return unto his possession.
28. But if he be not able to restore it to him, then that which is sold shall remain in the hand of him that hath bought it until the year of the jubilee: and in the jubilee it shall go out, and he shall return unto his possession.
29. And if a man sell a dwelling house in a walled city, then he may redeem it within a whole year after it is sold; within a full year may he redeem it.
30. And if it be not redeemed within the space of a full year, then that house that is in the walled city shall be established for ever to him that bought it throughout his generations: it shall not go out in the jubilee.
31. But the houses of the villages which have no wall round about them shall be counted as the fields of the country: they may be redeemed, and they shall go out in the jubilee.
32. Notwithstanding the cities of the Levites, and the houses of the cities of their possession, may the Levites redeem at any time.
33. And if a man purchase of the Levites, then the house that was sold, and the city of his possession, shall go out in the year of the jubilee: for the houses of the cities of the Levites are their possession among the children of Israel.
34. But the fields of the suburbs of their cities may not be sold; for it is their perpetual possession. (*Leviticus 25:25-34*)

A brief survey of the specific meaning of these rules is necessary before going further. Land was “sold” or leased at a price for the years remaining to the next time of release, so that the value was calculated in terms of the time remaining. If because of poverty a man was compelled to “sell” his land, his closest kinsman *had* to redeem the land for him. This meant that members of a family had an *obligation* to relieve distress within the family, to prevent the loss of land and also various forms of need. If no relative could redeem the land, and a little later the man himself was able to do so, the price of redemption was calculated in terms of the years remaining until the release or jubilee.

A house within a walled town, i.e., in a city, could only be redeemed within the first year. Urban properties were not subject to jubilee. Houses in open, unwallled villages were properly a part of the rural areas and could be redeemed and did revert to the original family in the jubilee.

The urban exception was the house, and cities, of the Levites. These were their permanent heritage from the Lord for His purposes. This law includes the pasture of Levitical cities: they could never be sold (Num. 35:2ff.).

Let us consider first the possession of the Levites. The Levites included the priests or clergy, but they also included a variety of other functions, *all religious and tied to God*. They were the instructors of Israel, the scribes, the experts on law who interpreted the law for the courts, and so on. They were the teachers and scholars of Israel. Their cities were throughout the land, strategically located to give every area a center of learning and a radiating influence. The tribe of Levi was given no farm land, but it was given cities, and it was the normal channel through which tithes were distributed, of which one-tenth, or one-hundredth of a man's income, went to the priests for worship (Num. 18:26-32).

The meaning is thus clear: God's law protects godly scholarship. More than theologians are indicated here. Christian schools and their staffs, men in various fields of learning who have a Biblical faith and perspective, and so on, all form a clerisy whom God's law requires us to protect and support. The medieval era was right in seeing the support of scholarship as a religious necessity, but wrong in requiring it to be a part of the church and its clergy.

The reference to the kinsman-redeemer is an important one. It is a major strand of Biblical faith. Jesus Christ is by His incarnation one of us, and our Kinsman-Redeemer. The kinsman-redeemer redeems the land, frees his kin from slavery, and, on occasion, as with Boaz and Ruth, marries a widow to redeem her and her property for his people and posterity.

The distinction made between urban and rural properties is important. Both must observe the jubilee as well as the sabbath years, but the city is exempt from the restoration of properties. The countryside is thus made an area of stability, and the city an area of change. Knight cites a proverb, "Banks and churches never sell."³⁸⁹ While this is no longer true as it once was, it still reminds us that once upon a time certain constants remained! God's law stipulates His constants, while man posits himself as the constant, with all else variable in terms of his will. Hence, the meaning of the sabbath year and jubilee, however valuable to man and the land, must be sought in God's purpose.

Oehler said of this:

The year of jubilee, by which the sabbatic cycle is completed, while involving the idea of the sabbath year, has, moreover, its own specific import in the idea of *release*, and of the reinstatement of the theocracy in its original and divinely appointed order, in which all were, as the servants of God, to be free, and each was to be assured of his earthly maintenance, by being restored to the enjoyment of the inheritance allotted to his family for this purpose. The God who once redeemed the people from Egypt, and acquired them as His possession, here appears again as a redeemer, to restore the bondman his personal freedom, and to re-endow the poor with the share allotted him in the inheritance of his people. For among the covenant people no poor should properly have been found (Deut. 15:4); and the fruit of a consistent carrying out of the law of the year of jubilee

would at least have been that a proletariat could not have been found in Israel. Before such a year of grace, however, could appear, transgressions must have been pardoned; hence the year of jubilee was to be proclaimed on the *Day of Atonement*.³⁹⁰

After the Babylonian captivity, with Nehemiah, the sabbath years were restored, but we have no information on the jubilee. It does seem that, by the time of our Lord at least, there was no jubilee. However, before the fall of Jerusalem, rulers like Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar freed the Jews from taxes in sabbatical years. A strange and fallacious attempt at compliance with the sabbatical and jubilee laws exists among some in Israel today, namely, to lease the land to Moslems (and Moslems only) for two years.³⁹¹

We do not know whether or not the jubilee was observed by the early church or during the very early medieval era. It was, we know, later spiritualized and observed in an ecclesiastical form at least as early as 1300, when Pope Boniface VIII proclaimed a jubilee as a time of pilgrimage and grace, and of indulgences. In time, this jubilee was held every twenty-five years.

We should not rule out the possibility of jubilee celebrations in terms of God's law in Christendom's past. After all, the very prevalent practice of gleaning in America has had no scholarly notice, and much important on it is being lost. The interest of historians has not been in God's law.

In another sphere, indirect attention is being given to the jubilee. Nicholai Kondratieff, a Russian economist of the early years of the twentieth century, set out to prove the fallacy of capitalistic economies. He discovered a fifty to sixty year cycle of prosperity and depression, the average cycle being fifty-four years. The Kondratieff Wave Theory held that human action could not affect this cycle, which is a natural phenomenon. The gains made during periods of prosperity are wiped out by inevitable collapse.

Kondratieff's theory has had no small opposition. His data is sound; historically, the cycles have occurred. The problem is the explanation. Are they natural phenomena, inescapable for man? Such a conclusion militates against man's humanism, and Stalin found Kondratieff's opinions traitorous. Many have held that, while the cycles have been true of the past, now the state's "fine-tuning" of the economy will prevent their recurrence. Such men view Kondratieff's work as an historical account of things past rather than as a binding law for the present. Current economic events are confirming Kondratieff's theory.

The issue is very well stated on naturalistic terms by Kirkland:

The primary reason the Kondratieff Wave Theory is so difficult for academics to accept is that its premises are counter to accepted economic logic. Even in their most basic courses, economists are taught to solve scientific questions by sequential reasoning, i.e., by manipulating known economic and financial variables in a logical manner until desired results are determined. The Kondratieff Wave Theory takes an entirely opposite tack, stating that the end result is already

known, and that the economic and financial variables interacting to achieve that final result are largely irrelevant in determining the outcome.³⁹²

At its heart, the issue is a religious one. Kondratieff held to a naturalistic economic determinism, and his data seemed to confirm his belief. Other economists hold to a humanistic determinism, i.e., either man or the state determines the economy, for better or for worse.

It is noteworthy that Kirkland finds one instance in past history of an awareness of this cycle, the Levitical law of jubilee. This places a brake on accumulated debt, on inflation, and on the continuing expansion of credit. By this means, the cycle was controlled and disaster prevented.³⁹³

We can go further and say that the sabbath years *and* the jubilee worked together to prevent the boom and bust cycle from occurring; they blocked long-term debt, and they militated against inflation and credit expansion. With the observance of sabbaths and jubilees, the economy then moves, not in terms of man's will, but in terms of God's law. Modern economics, whether conservative, liberal, or radical, insists that human action can determine economics. The law of God tells us that, no less than the light of the sun He created dominates the physical life of man, so, too, His laws govern man's economic life and all things else. In every sphere, without exception, it is always true that "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). Sin, moreover, is very plainly defined for us: it is the transgression of the law of God (1 John 3:4).

Chapter Seventy

The Jubilee, Part IV

(*Leviticus 25:35-38*)

35. And if thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen in decay with thee; then thou shalt relieve him: yea, though he be a stranger, or a sojourner; that he may live with thee.

36. Take no usury of him, or increase: but fear thy God; that thy brother may live with thee.

37. Thou shalt not give him thy money upon usury, nor lend him thy victuals for increase.

38. I am the LORD your God, which brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, to give you the land of Canaan, and to be your God. (*Leviticus 25:35-38*)

This is not a popular text with the modern evangelical church. It smacks too much of the “social gospel.” One reason for the rise of the social gospel in the nineteenth century was the development of pietism, with its unconcern for worldly matters like charity. Among many Catholics and Protestants, devotional exercises were supplanting the Christian concern for the needy. The modernists, with their social gospel, did not meet this need. Their solution to it has been statism, i.e., state charity or welfarism as the substitute for Christian action.

Thus, both evangelicals and modernists contributed very substantially to the rise of the modern state. The evangelicals steadily retreated from Christian action in the areas of health, education, and welfare, and the state moved in. Social financing must be provided, if not by Christians, then by the state. For the modernists, the state was and is the answer to problems. For differing reasons, both evangelicals and modernists have surrendered most of the world to the state. They should not be surprised or angry at the results; they share in some of the guilt for it.

At the same time, in some cultures where Christianity is new, many groups have readily accepted the responsibility for their fellow Christians and for others. Knight reports that in the islands of the South Pacific, members of a family help one another, finance the overseas university education of a student, and assist one who is in trouble of any kind.³⁹⁴

We thus have a duty to help those “fallen in decay,” i.e., weak in the hands, unable to help themselves because of some adversity. The goal is “that thy brother may live with thee.”

Bush noted:

“Life” in the Scriptures is often used in opposition to sickness, distress, calamity, as Isai. 38.9, “the writing of Hezekiah king of Judah, when he had been sick, and was *recovered*, (Heb. was made *alive*) of his sickness.” Neh. 4.2, “Will they *revive* (Heb. make *alive*) the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned?” 1 Chron. 11.8, “And Joab *repaired* (Heb. made *alive*) the rest of the

city.” Gen. 45:27, “And the spirit of Jacob their father *revived* (Heb. was made *alive*).”³⁹⁵

The Bible associates life with health, freedom, and salvation.

A number of versions give a different reading of v. 35 than does the Authorized Version:

35. If your brother, being in straits, comes under your authority, and you hold him as though a resident alien, so that he remains under you,

36. do not exact from him advance or accrued interest, but fear your God. Let him stay under you as your brother.³⁹⁶

35. If your brother becomes poor and cannot support himself, you must maintain him as if he were a resident alien or settler and let him live with you.³⁹⁷

In this form, we see that brotherly love is to be extended to resident aliens as potential brothers.

In v. 36, interest is forbidden on all charitable loans. It is noteworthy that the word *interest* in Hebrew is usually *neshech*, from the root “to bite.” The law in Deuteronomy 23:19-20 reads:

19. Thou shalt not lend upon usury to thy brother; usury of money, usury of victuals, usury of anything that is lent upon usury.

20. Unto a stranger thou mayest lend upon usury: but unto thy brother thou shalt not lend upon usury: that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all that thou settest thine hand to in the land whither thou goest to possess it.

The alternate reading of Leviticus 25:35 suggests that in cases of *need* among resident aliens, i.e., non-covenant peoples, the same rule should apply as to covenant members. This law is not concerned with business loans. The alien was not governed by the jubilee release, but the law of charity is broader.

Calvin’s comments on usury, in connection with the law of Exodus 22:25, are of interest here. He concludes, “usury is not now unlawful, except in so far as it contravenes equity and brotherly union.”³⁹⁸

Interest, or usury, translates, as we have noted, a word meaning *bite*; other Hebrew words translated as *usury* include *nasha*, to exact; *mashaha*, an exaction; and, in the New Testament, *tokos*, offspring.

In any case, the laws of this section, as others, are intended to give us the practical rules for applying the law of Leviticus 19:18:

Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD.

It is immoral to affirm this law, the law of our neighbor, while denying all the laws whereby God *requires* us to manifest our love. Making money off the poor is strictly forbidden. The various federal programs for relief to the poor provide more money to the bureaucracy than to the poor. Snaith's analysis of the words used with respect to *interest* or *increase* in v. 36, and *increase* and *profit* in v. 37, is very important, despite the modernist reference to "later legislation":

36. *interest...increase*: these are two types of interest. The first (*neseq*) means interest paid regularly, and in the end the original loan is repaid in one payment. The second (*tarbit*) involves no interim payment of interest, but an increased sum being repaid in the end. Exod. 22:25 (Heb. 24); Dt. 23:19f. deal only with the first type. Probably this later legislation is to block a loophole which the money-lenders had discovered.

37. *profit*: the Hebrew is *marbit* and the meaning is the same as that of *tarbit* in the previous verses.³⁹⁹

Marbit, profit or increase, can also mean nourishment. We are not to be fed on our neighbor's poverty.

This ministry to the poor was at once assumed by the New Testament church because they saw themselves as the true Israel of God, continuing the life and work of the old Israel. The diaconate was established to make this ministry more effective (Acts 6:1-4). It should be noted that one writer, who has a modern view of the law as obsolete, still adds, "Can believers today do less than what was commanded then?" Christ does not open the door to a lesser obedience but to more faithfulness and power in our obedience. This requirement of non-profit help to the poor is referred to in various places, most notably perhaps Ezekiel 18:17. Rabbi Hertz commented on this law:

This is in strongest contrast to the treatment of the impoverished debtor in ancient Rome. The creditor could imprison him in his own private dungeon, chain him to a block, sell him into slavery, or even put him to death. If the debtor had several creditors, the Roman Law of the Twelve Tables ordained that they could hew him in pieces; and although one of them took a part of his body larger in proportion to his claim, the other creditors had no redress!⁴⁰⁰

Many subterfuges have been invented to evade the force of this law. In one way or another, God's law is declared null and void because we are now on a higher spiritual plane and need not personally concern ourselves with the poor. One of the strangest excuses comes from Morentz and Alleman: "It (the law of Lev. 25:35-38) could be applied only in a society in which blood was a guarantee of character, which means that it was a religious ideal."⁴⁰¹ Two things stand out in this strange statement. *First*, there is the assertion that in Israel "blood was a guarantee of character." Everything in the Old Testament is against such an idea. The test of character is obedience to the Lord, not blood. For that matter, Israel and its people were *not* united by blood but by God's covenant. In Abraham's household, we see 318 fighting men (Gen. 14:14), which means that there were perhaps as many aged non-fighting men, and as many children, about 1,000; another 1,000 women were also of the house of Abraham. Out of 2,000, thus, only *one* young man of Abraham's line *remained* in the covenant line, Isaac. Israel left Egypt a *mixed*

multitude (Ex. 12:38), so that more foreign blood was added. The foreign admixtures were continual, so that the unity of blood is nonsense. *Second*, this law is denied status as a law because it is supposedly “a religious ideal.” Is a religious ideal something to be revered but not obeyed? If something is “a religious ideal,” it should be all the more mandatory.

To believe that vague affirmations can replace law and bring in a brave new world is nonsense, even if it be very popular nonsense and also ecclesiastically respectable.

Chapter Seventy-One

The Jubilee, Part V

(Leviticus 25:39-46)

39. And if thy brother that dwelleth by thee be waxen poor, and be sold unto thee; thou shalt not compel him to serve as a bondservant:
40. But as an hired servant, and as a sojourner, he shall be with thee, and shall serve thee unto the year of jubilee:
41. And then shall he depart from thee, both he and his children with him, and shall return unto his own family, and unto the possession of his fathers shall he return.
42. For they are my servants, which I brought forth out of the land of Egypt: they shall not be sold as bondsmen.
43. Thou shalt not rule over him with rigour; but shalt fear thy God.
44. Both thy bondsmen, and thy bondmaids, which thou shalt have, shall be of the heathen that are round about you; of them shall ye buy bondsmen and bondmaids.
45. Moreover of the children of the strangers that do sojourn among you, of them shall ye buy and of their families that are with you, which they begat in your land: and they shall be your possession.
46. And ye shall take them as an inheritance for your children after you, to inherit them for a possession; they shall be your bondsmen for ever: but over your brethren the children of Israel, ye shall not rule one over another with rigour. (Leviticus 25:39-46)

The law requires loans without interest to help the poor. It does not, however, allow the poor to exploit this fact. Bond-service to repay debt, or as a refuge from an inability to be provident, was the law. More specific details are to be found in Exodus 21:1-6 and Deuteronomy 15:12-18. There is recognition that some people will prefer a state of dependency. The freedom of all such was possible during the Sabbath years and in the Jubilee. In any case, such people could not be treated as slaves, but simply as lesser members of the household. It is important to note that the law, in Deuteronomy 23:15-16, *forbids* the return of a run-away bondservant to his master, whether he be an Israelite or a foreigner. This made it necessary for the master to give justice and fair pay and treatment to all bondservants. In v. 38, God declares that He is the Lord, and we must obey because He requires it. It is also noteworthy that, if an angry master injured a bondservant, he had to free him at once (Ex. 21:26-27). C. D. Ginsburg noted:

The authorities during the second Temple enacted that the master's right, even with regard to this kind of bondmen [for life, RJR], is restricted to their labour, but that he has no right to barter with them, to misuse them, or to put them to shame.⁴⁰²

The tasks assigned to a covenant member who is a bondservant cannot be degrading; v. 39f. makes it clear that they must be comparable to work assigned to competent free labor.

God declares that we are all His servants, in bond-service all our lives to Him (v. 42), and hence we can never treat another man as our property because we are all together God's property. As has been noted by one commentator, "You may hold them to service, but only to service, nothing more."⁴⁰³

There was much abuse of this law in Israel. Thus, in 2 Kings 4:1, we see creditors seeking to seize the two sons of a widow, and her appeal to Elisha; this was a pagan pattern, as witness Nehemiah 5:4-5. Israel, Isaiah says, had sold herself into slavery by her sins (Isa. 50:1); the Messiah's task is the release of captives and of the exploited (Isa. 58:7). For failure to obey the law of release, Judah herself would go into captivity (Jer. 34:8-11). Amos 2:6 and 8:4-6 give us a telling account of Israel's apostasy in her disregard for these laws. The same was true in New Testament times (Matt. 18:25).

Even if an Israelite *chose* to be a bondservant, he went free in the jubilee year: freedom and responsibility were his inescapable duties. The unbeliever, being a slave to sin by nature, could walk away if conditions were unjust, or convert and become eligible for Sabbath year release. During the early medieval era, Jewish traders took in countless numbers of European slaves in trade for goods; these slaves usually adopted Judaism to gain their freedom, and their descendants make up the major and overwhelming proportion of those who call themselves Jews. In the United States, in the early colonial era, blacks who converted thereby gained freedom. It became necessary to pass legislation against the Biblical law, which was common law, to establish slavery in America.

Bush summarized the operation of this law in Israel thus:

Persons were sometimes sold among the Jews by judicial process when they had been guilty of theft, and were not able to make satisfaction, Ex. 21.2. Some were sold by their parents; i.e. they disposed of their *right of service* for a stipulated sum, and for a number of years. Others, again, when reduced to extreme want, sold themselves, as we have explained more at large, Ex. 21.2. The Jewish writers inform us that this was not considered lawful except in extreme cases. 'A man might not sell himself to lay up the money which was given for him; nor to buy goods; nor to pay his debts, but merely that he might get bread to eat. Neither was it lawful for him to sell himself as long as he had so much as a garment left.' — Maimonides.⁴⁰⁴

Such practice, while not literally in terms of the law, had a logic to it, namely, as long as the man retained his freedom, he would be able to regain the means to redeem his children from bondservice.

Throughout the law, we see regulations governing the treatment of all kinds of servants. God's law requires man to be always mindful that all men are God's creatures and His servants. Samuel Clark gives us a good summary of these laws:

Kidnapping was punished with death (Ex. 11.16). The slave was encouraged to become a proselyte (Ex. 12.44). He might be set free (Ex. 11.26, 27). Special rules were laid down for the security of his life and limbs (Ex. 11.20, 21, 26). The Law would not suffer it to be forgotten that the slave is a man, and protected him in every way that was possible at the time against the injustice or cruelty of his master.⁴⁰⁵

Bamberger has called attention to an interesting aspect of this law in later Judaism. It became a requirement that the owner of a non-Jewish slave must seek to convert him and have him circumcised. If, after a year, the slave refused to become a Jew, he was to be sold.⁴⁰⁶ In early Europe after the fall of Rome, such slaves were commonly sold in the Mediterranean world.

Basic to this law is God's statement, in v. 42, "they are my servants, which I brought forth out of the land of Egypt: they shall not be sold as bondsmen." Calvin commented:

God here declares that His own right is invaded when those, whom He claims as His property, are taken into subjection by another; for He says that He acquired the people as His own when He redeemed them from Egypt. Whence He infers that His right is violated if any should usurp perpetual dominion over a Hebrew. If any object that this is of equal force, when they only serve for a time, I reply, that though God might have justly asserted His sole ownership, yet He was satisfied with this symbol of it; and therefore that He suffered by indulgence that they should be enslaved for a fixed period, provided some trace of His deliverance of them should remain. In a word, He simply chose to apply this preventative lest slavery should altogether extinguish the recollection of His grace, although He allowed it to be thus smothered as it were. Lest, however, cruel masters should trust that their tyranny would be exercised with impunity, Moses reminds them that they had to do with God, who will at length appear as its avenger. Although the political laws of Moses are not now in operation, still the analogy is to be preserved, lest the condition of those who have been redeemed by Christ's blood should be worse amongst us, than that of old of His ancient people. To whom Paul's exhortation refers: "Ye masters, forbear threatening your slaves, knowing that both your and their Master is in heaven." (Eph. 6.9)⁴⁰⁷

Calvin was right in seeing the application of this law today, though wrong in seeing "the political laws of Moses... not now in operation." This is especially curious because he insisted on the present validity of this law! His rendering of Ephesians 6:9 is also questionable. The word in Greek which appears in Ephesians 6:5-6, and is referred to in v. 9, is *douloi* (doulos), and it is also the verb form in "eyeservice" (v. 6), and as "service" in v. 7. It can mean "slave," but more generally means servant and implies bondage, i.e., in the form of some kind of subjection. Calvin's usage is thus not correct. What is valid in Calvin's statement is that God's property rights are invaded and usurped if we enslave men or in any way exercise ungodly powers over them. This is especially true of fellow believers, but it is also true of all men. The law denies us the freedom to hold a purely individualistic relationship to God. We are members of a

community of humanity, and we have an obligation both to God and, in Him, to our neighbor. Our Lord declares:

37. ... Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

38. This is the first and great commandment.

39. And the second is like unto it. Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

40. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. (Matthew 22:37-40)

Chapter Seventy-Two

The Jubilee, Part VI

(*Leviticus 25:47-55*)

47. And if a sojourner or stranger wax rich by thee, and thy brother that dwelleth by him wax poor, and sell himself unto the stranger or sojourner by thee, or to the stock of the stranger's family:

48. After that he is sold he may be redeemed again; one of his brethren may redeem him:

49. Either his uncle, or his uncle's son, may redeem him, or any that is nigh of kin unto him of his family may redeem him; or if he be able, he may redeem himself.

50. And he shall reckon with him that bought him from the year that he was sold to him unto the year of the jubilee: and the price of his sale shall be according unto the number of years, according to the time of an hired servant shall it be with him.

51. If there be yet many years behind, according to them he shall give again the price of his redemption out of the money that he was bought for.

52. And if there remain but few years unto the year of the jubilee, then he shall count with him, and according unto his years shall he give him again the price of his redemption.

53. And as a yearly hired servant shall he be with him: and the other shall not rule with rigour over him in thy sight.

54. And if he be not redeemed in these years, then he shall go out in the year of the jubilee, both he, and his children with him.

55. For unto me the children of Israel are servants; they are my servants whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God. (*Leviticus 25:47-55*)

A book published in August 1987 (written in 1986), *Jubilee on Wall Street: An Optimistic Look at the Coming Financial Crash*, by David Knox Barker, gives a Biblical perspective on the work of Nikolai D. Kondratieff.

He points to the overall teaching of scripture about human nature and to specific passages about God's provision of the jubilee every 50 years in Old Testament times to correct economic imbalances. In contrast, the author of the new book notes, the free market has no such "safety valve," so it experiences a crash about every 50 years.⁴⁰⁸

These economic perspectives are excellent and necessary, but we must remember that the doctrine of the jubilee is essentially theological: it sets forth the governing fact of God and His law as dominant in every sphere, economics included. Thus, the understanding of the jubilee as well as of economics is theological. Briefly stated, there is more to any economic transaction than men and man's economic planning: there is always God and His law under and over all.

Next, the jubilee law is family oriented. On the human level, the family is the basic social and economic fact.

In Leviticus 25:47-55, we have the case of a poor Israelite who goes into servitude to a foreigner. The law governs the alien who is living within the borders of Israel; he must be governed by the same law of God as are all others. His bondservants thus are subject to redemption and/ or the jubilee, whatever the laws of his home country may have been.

The laws of slavery over the centuries have varied from country to country. At times, the “right” to own slaves has been the privilege of the ruling peoples, as in Islam over the centuries. Bush noted, early in the last century,

At present no Christian or Jew in a Mohammedan country is allowed to have as a slave, we will not say any native, but any Mohammedan of any country — nor, indeed any other than Mohammedans, except Negroes — who are the only description of slaves they may possess.⁴⁰⁹

In Leviticus 25:23, God declares: “The land shall not be sold for ever (or, in perpetuity): for the land is Mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners with Me.” The Hebrew word translated as *sold* means a sale into slavery. God’s earth cannot become enslaved by men, nor can the covenant men to whom He gives the land as stewards thereof be enslaved in perpetuity. Thus, freedom, rest, and release are basic to God’s plan for man and the earth. It is noteworthy that, while in Exodus 23:11, the Sabbatical year is called “the seventh year,” in Deuteronomy 31:10, it is termed “the year of release” (cf. Deut. 15:1). The jubilee is called simply that in Numbers 36:4; there is a reference to land redemption in Ruth 4:3ff; it is presupposed in Isaiah 61:1ff. and Isaiah 5:7-10, where it is the basis for judgment. We find it clearly in Ezekiel 46:17. In Jeremiah, instead of a year of release, sinners find “a year of visitation” or judgment (Jer. 11:23; 23:12; 48:44). After the captivity, Nehemiah 5:1-13 recounts efforts to restore the jubilee laws.

In v. 55, it is clearly stated that the covenant people are God’s servants. They are therefore not permanently to be the servants of men and must redeem themselves or be redeemed as soon as possible. Paul refers to this in 1 Corinthians 7:23, “Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men.”

This places an obligation on us, *first*, to live debt-free as far as is possible, and providentially. As God’s people, we are to be dominion men, not under dominion through debt or any other means. *Second*, we have an obligation to our family and kin. Paul tells us,

But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his house (or, kindred), he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel. (1 Tim. 5:8)

This means that, among believers, there is a responsibility to care for one another and to relieve distress and debt. This has led to family associations with treasuries to meet needs and provide opportunities within the family.

Third, Paul's reference to our "own" means fellow Christians. Agencies must be created to alleviate need and to make Christians free people.

Parker's comments on v. 55 are especially good. He said, in part:

"For unto me the children of Israel are servants," Levit. 25.55.

This is a remarkable expression as connected with the fact of which God is always reminding the children of Israel, namely, that he brought them out of the house of bondage and out of the land of Egypt. He appears to acquire his hold upon their confidence by continually reminding them that at one period of their history they were bondmen. — Now he insists that the men whom he has brought into liberty, have been brought only into another kind of service. — This is the necessity of finite life. Every liberty is in some sense a bondage. — Christians are the slaves of Christ; they are burden-bearers and yoke-carriers, specially under the supervision and sovereignty of the Son of God.⁴¹⁰

Freedom means responsibility; the ugliest fact about slavery is that it diminishes responsibility even as it diminishes freedom.

As Noordtziij points out, God declares that a covenant man is "His inalienable possession (v. 55)"⁴¹¹ We have here an indication of the doctrine of eternal security.

Justice required that the redemption of a bondservant be made with full compensation to the master for the years of service remaining. The law in no way permits either the defrauding of the master or the abuse of the bondservant. As C. D. Ginsburg noted:

The authorities during the second Temple rightly pointed out that this passage enjoins the Hebrew to treat the heathen master fairly by duly compensating and compounding for the number of years he has still to serve till jubilee, and to take no advantage of the idolater.⁴¹²

Leviticus 25:47-55 is an aspect of the law of the kinsman-redeemer, which finds its full expression in Jesus Christ. As very man of very man, He is our Kinsman-Redeemer, and, as very God of very God, He is totally and permanently efficacious in all His works.

The jubilee law gave *hope* to society when observed. The relentless concentration of land which marks decadent societies is prevented. The family basis of society is maintained, and the central responsibility for social order, government, and relief is plainly delegated to the family. Rather tardily now, we have begun to understand the importance of the family. Karl Zinmeister has reported:

Within the past several years it has become generally accepted that family breakdown is now the primary force causing poverty in the U.S.

It took 20 years of furious and bitter debate, however, for the nation to reach that common realization — the process may be said to have begun upon publication of the so-called Moynihan report in March 1965, and to have ended in January 1986 with the airing of Bill Moyers' CBS broadcast "The Vanishing Family." Unfortunately, the pace of domestic decay accelerated breathtakingly during that period, especially so during the last seven years. As a result, easy solutions to our poverty and welfare problems lie far beyond reach.

The major factor creating poverty in recent years has been the decline of the two-parent family.⁴¹³

The whole of Biblical law, and especially the jubilee, requires a familistic society. The failure of Christians to take God's law seriously is a guarantee of impotence.

Kellogg wrote,

No one will pretend that the law of the sabbatic year or the jubilee is binding on communities now. But it is a question for our times as to whether the basal principle regarding the relation of God to land, and by necessary consequence the right of man regarding land, which is fundamental to these laws, is not in its very nature of perpetual force. Surely, there is nothing in Scripture to suggest that God's ownership of the land was limited to the land of Palestine, or to that land only during Israel's occupancy of it. Instead of this, Jehovah everywhere represents Himself as having given the land to Israel, and therefore by necessary implication as having a like right over it while the Canaanites were dwelling in it. Again, the purpose of God's dealing with Egypt is said to be that Pharaoh might know the same truth: that the earth (or land) was the Lord's (Exod. 9.29); and in Psalm 24.1 it is stated, as a broad truth, without qualification or restriction, that the earth is the Lord's, as well as that which fills it. It is true that there is no suggestion in any of these passages that the relation of God to the earth or to the land is different from His relation to other property; but it is intended to emphasise the fact that in the use of land, as of all else, we are to regard ourselves as God's servants, and hold and use it as in trust from Him.⁴¹⁴

Such statements have a curious character. It is seen as out of the question that anyone should take God's law seriously. Yet these laws have a "perpetual force"! What does this mean? That man has a right through the state to formulate laws governing property to express that perpetual force? When men replace God's "primitive" laws with their own "wisdom," we had better be fearful!

Earlier, reference was made to Barker's *Jubilee on Wall Street*. Barker shows how anti-inflationary the jubilee system is. In modern humanistic economics, prices inflate until a collapse sets in because of the debt pyramid, and a slow, painful recovery through depression ensues. Because in the jubilee economics, the basic wealth, land, is most valuable in the first year *after* the jubilee, this inflationary spiral is negated. Land was worth more in year one than in year forty-eight, when a sale was valid only for a brief time. As Barker notes, "In a Jubilee system all

prices in the economy would have been controlled by having the price for the land constantly falling.⁴¹⁵ Then Barker adds that this means that those elements in modern economics which lead to collapse, debt, prices, and expansion, are all controlled by the jubilee system.

All this means that the world of economics is not a man-made world but a God-created, ordained, and governed realm. The only thing that will work therein is the Jubilee.

It should be added that, welcome as Barker's book is, he sees Kondratieff as more valid than the jubilee law! He uses the jubilee to confirm his vision of free market economics rather than starting his economic thinking with Scripture. Such an approach does not honor God, nor can it be pleasing to Him.

Chapter Seventy-Three

Jubilee and Covenant, Part I

(*Leviticus 26:1-2*)

1. Ye shall make you no idols nor graven image, neither rear you up a standing image, neither shall ye set up any image of stone in your land, to bow down unto it: for I am the LORD your God.

2. Ye shall keep my Sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary: I am the LORD. (*Leviticus 26:1-2*)

Many modern scholars view the Pentateuch as a collection of documents brought together rather haphazardly. As a result, they miss the necessary relationship between the laws and see nothing of the total interdependence. Wenham very tellingly cites the meaning of *Leviticus 26:1-2*, which stands between the jubilee laws of *Leviticus 25* and the laws of *Leviticus 26:3-46*, with their declaration of the necessary consequences of obedience and disobedience. He titles these two verses, “The Fundamentals of the Law.”⁴¹⁶

In v. 1, idolatry is forbidden. *Idols, eleelim*, are “things of nought.” The “standing image” could be a statue, pillar, or obelisk. This is *not* a prohibition of sculpture, but of idolatry: there can be no manufacture or erection of any such image in order “to bow down unto it,” i.e., to offer it any religious devotion.

In v. 2, Sabbath-keeping is required. The reference is to far more than one day in seven; it refers to sabbath years and to the jubilee as well. This is the pre-condition of reverence for God’s sanctuary.

These two verses are the preface to the blessings, judgments, and promises in the rest of this chapter and are an essential part of what precedes them and what follows. Lange observed:

That the bearing of God towards Israel was an impartial bearing, which could only be obscured through the idea of a national God, is proved even by our section with its threatenings in presence of the development of the history of Israel itself: they have been brought out of Egypt, and Canaan must become their land; but when they apostasize, they must lose Canaan and must be scattered among the heathen. Not only the impartiality, indeed, but the jealousy of Jehovah must be made manifest in this. The idea or key of the whole history and destiny of Israel is: vengeance of the covenant. The people could fall so low because they stood so high, because they were the first-fruits, the first-born son, the favorite of God. But for this reason especially the promise of their restoration is bound up with the prophecy of their curse.⁴¹⁷

It is worthy of note that the Jewish year which ended in the fall of 1987 was observed in Israel as a Sabbath of the land. While in many respects it fell short of the Biblical requirements, most

notably because the farmers who observed it received aid from American Jews to do so, it was at least a step in the right direction.⁴¹⁸

The law says, v. 2, “ye shall ... reverence my sanctuary.” The Hebrew word is *yare* (*yawray*), to fear, i.e., fear my sanctuary. This brings into focus a meaning neglected by modern man, who sees a church as a man-made building established and built by a congregation of men. This is a man-centered and humanistic view. God’s sanctuaries are witnesses to His presence on His earth among His covenant people. To build a church is thus to establish the visible evidence that God will bless or curse a people in terms of their obedience or disobedience. It is an invocation of blessings or curses as the case may be. Hence, this law says, *first*, “ye shall keep my sabbaths,” which means to acknowledge God’s government, ownership, and law. It means recognizing that the conditions of our existence and prosperity are God-ordained, and that we cannot prosper apart from Him. We worship then no other God, and His law governs us, for to set up other laws is a form of idolatry. Men make ideals of their own minds, wills, and laws, and they ask other men to bow down to them.

Second, we are *commanded* to fear God’s sanctuary, i.e., the fact of His presence therein by His word and Spirit. Modern man often fears the state, and with good reason, given its tyrannical sway. The power of God far outweighs the power of the state, and His sway is a universal and eternal one.

It is not without reason that Keil and Delitzsch call these two verses “the essence of the whole law.”⁴¹⁹ *Because* vv. 1-2 require far more than modern sabbatarianism, they are hostile to formalism. For a man to allow his land to rest during the seventh year, and himself to rest, means that his trust in God is a very active one. When Noth writes that these two verses have “no special relationship to what has gone before,” he shows no understanding of the text and reveals the lack of any desire to comprehend it.⁴²⁰

As more than a few commentators have pointed out, Leviticus 26 is a part of chapter 25. Morgan noted, “The great promises show how conditions of well-being are ever entirely dependent on obedience to the government of God.”⁴²¹ In the synagogue lectionary, Leviticus 26:1-2 is read together with Leviticus 25.

These verses were once very important to the faith and had a hold on believers which is now lacking. The reason is not hard to discover. Basic to the life of the faith now is the unity of believers, and often of all men, believers and unbelievers. Basic to the faith of all such is peace and unity among men, whereas for Scripture it is peace and community with God, and only in Him and according to His law-word, with men. For Biblical faith, idolatry is thus any effort to give preeminence to any doctrine of community, person, institution, or law which supplants the triune God and His covenant law.

For Scripture, all society or community is a *covenant*, and inescapably so. It is either a covenant with God in terms of His grace and law, or it is an anti-God covenant, an idolatrous one. The modern age began with the social contract theory, a form of the covenant doctrine. Its significant variation is that the social contract is between men, *not* between God and man. Contemporary political theorists deny the validity of the social contract as an historical fact among primitive

men. They do accept it as a belief that men create their political orders in terms of their needs and hopes.

Another major non-Christian political theory is derived from Aristotle, namely, that man is a political animal. This means that society and civil government are *not* products of a contract among men, i.e., of man's application of his mind and will to the organization of society, but rather that society and the state are expressions of nature as surely as the animal pack is an expression of the lives of wolves, for example. This view denies the consent of the governed. John Locke (1632-1704) held that "all power given with trust for the attaining of an end being limited by that end, whenever that end is manifestly neglected or opposed, the trust must necessarily be forfeited, and the power devolve into the hands of those who gave it." This view echoed the covenant idea but made it humanistic.

In more recent years, these two views, Aristotle's and Locke's, have merged. The force of the *natural*, i.e., Aristotle's concept, has been used to provide for doctrines of historical inevitability. At the same time, after Rousseau, the elite rulers express the general will of the social contract, i.e., the democratic consensus, and therefore manifest the historical inevitability of their rule.

Only in the doctrine of the covenant is there freedom for man. Man cannot be the source of the law: God alone is the Lord or Sovereign.

Chapter Seventy-Four Jubilee and Covenant, Part II (Leviticus 26:3-13)

3. If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them;
4. Then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit.
5. And your threshing shall reach unto the vintage, and the vintage shall reach unto the sowing time: and ye shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely.
6. And I will give you peace in the land, and ye shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid: and I will rid evil beasts out of the land, neither shall the sword go through your land.
7. And ye shall chase your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword.
8. And five of you shall chase an hundred, and an hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight: and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword.
9. For I will have respect unto you, and make you fruitful, and multiply you, and establish my covenant with you.
10. And ye shall eat old store, and bring forth the old because of the new.
11. And I will set my tabernacle among you: and my soul shall not abhor you.
12. And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people.
13. I am the LORD your God, which brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, that ye should not be their bondmen; and I have broken the bands of your yoke, and made you go upright. (Leviticus 26:3-13)

This passage is very much neglected in the modern church. The neglect comes in part from the influence of pietism. *All* the blessings promised here are temporal ones; they have to do with time, not eternity, with history, not the soul of man. These verses clearly and plainly declare God's concern with time and history. For those only interested in heaven, these verses and the law as a whole are distasteful and somehow no longer valid.

The neglect of time and history is not Biblical. It is amazing how far some will go to separate God from mundane affairs. A few prominent evangelicals have gone so far as to deny that AIDS is a curse from God. As John Lofton has said, "Shall we call it a blessing then?"

Notice the promise of v. 6: "I will give peace in the land, and ye shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid." These are magnificent words, especially wonderful because they come from our God, who cannot lie (Titus 1:2). In these days of massive insecurities, this promise and its preconditions should be preached and made familiar to all Christians. It is a sad fact that they are not.

There are a series of promises here. *First*, there is a promise of rain so that the land will be fertile. *Second*, fertility is promised, an abundance of crops, and prosperity. *Third*, safety and

security in their persons and possessions will ensue from obedience. *Fourth*, evil beasts will be eliminated from the land. *Fifth*, invasions will be eliminated, and they shall easily overthrow their enemies, no matter how much out-numbered. *Sixth*, they will be blessed with a population increase. *Seventh*, their prosperity will be so great that the “old store” will be plentiful even as the new harvests come in. *Eighth*, there shall be peace in the land. *Ninth*, God will be with them because of His covenant to be their God, and will bless them. These are God’s promises to covenant Israel. They are His promises also to the church, Christ’s new covenant Israel. By Christ’s atonement, we are His covenant people, and the recipients of His peace and mercy as the new Israel of God (Gal. 6:16). To deny these promises is to deny Christ’s covenant with us.

The promises are pointed ones, e.g., “I will give you rain in due season” (v. 4), not haphazardly or dangerously. This is a statement of the doctrine of Providence. Not only are God’s promises temporal, but they are also timely.

I recall a seminary professor, a liberal or modernist, who ridiculed the “crass materialism” of so much of the Old Testament and its promises such as these. He believed in more intelligent motivations for man! However, man needs food to survive, a crass bit of materialism, of course, and to ignore the day-by-day “crass materialism” of our lives is insanity.

Oswald T. Allis rightly called attention to v. 12, “And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people,” as an echo of Genesis 3:8. With faithfulness, covenant man will see the earth become a greater Garden of Eden, because the God of Eden so ordains it.⁴²²

What Eden was, the whole earth shall become, with a far greater glory in Christ. We have, therefore, a dominion mandate (Gen. 1:26-28; Joshua 1:1-9; Matt. 28:18-20, etc.), and we have here the terms thereof and the blessings for obedience.

One of the promises, in v. 11, is God’s tabernacling presence. This we have fulfilled or put into force for us in the person of God the Son. In John 1:14, we read literally, “The word was made flesh and *tabernacled* among us.” *Tabernacled* in the Greek is *eskenomen*. Can we take this promise and neglect the others?

If we are obedient, God says, “I will have respect to you,” or, literally, “I will turn toward you.” This has reference to a king who turns from His duties to reward a faithful servant.⁴²³

While Calvin’s comment on this text has serious flaws, he was still correct in noting that,

Because now-a-days God does not openly take vengeance on sins as of old, fanatics infer that He has almost changed His nature; nay, on this pretence, the Manicheans imagined that the God of Israel was different from ours. But this error springs from gross and disgraceful ignorance; for, by not distinguishing His different modes of dealing, they do not hesitate impiously to cut God Himself in two.⁴²⁴

It should be noted that Leviticus 25 is the necessary aspect of a covenant. All covenants in antiquity included various promises for faithfulness to the covenant, as well as penalties for

faithlessness. Because covenants are treaties, ancient treaty-making always had clear advantages and penalties for both parties. Modern treaties lack this aspect. As a result, they are easily broken and are for the most part exercises in futility. God's covenant with man sets forth maximum blessings and curses, so that it has the requirement of total commitment.

The promises given for obedience are often cited by the prophets, as witness Amos 9:13:

Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt.

God makes it clear that He is no absentee God, that He is a very present help, as well as judge, and we cannot escape either His blessings or His judgments. It is God's purpose that in due time His covenant blessings become permanent, for hence His plan for His tabernacling Presence, and hence also the gift of the Holy Spirit.

In. v. 13, God reminds Israel that in Egypt they were slaves; like animals, they were in effect yoked and unable to stand upright. By His covenant, He had made them free. His covenant purpose for them and for us is freedom to do His will and to be His covenant dominion people. As Parker wrote:

God will have no slavery of a social kind. He is against all bonds and restrictions that keep down the true aspirations of the human soul. God has always proceeded upon the principle of the enlargement and the inheritance of liberty. We know how much God has done for a man by the degree of that man's uprightness. That is an excellent and undeniable standard of judgment. God has no crouching slaves cringing around his altar and afraid to look up to the Cross which has given them forgiveness. In proportion as we are carrying bands and yokes, have we not known the Spirit of the living God. This relates to all conduct and religious observances, to the keeping of times and seasons, and the offering of all manner of sacrifices. Whatever is done through a sense of servility and humiliation is wrongly done, and is in no sense done in obedience to the command of Christ. When all is right within us we run the way of God's commandments, we sing at our work, we turn the very statutes of God into songs in the house of our pilgrimage. What God has been doing for man in the first instance has been the breaking of yokes.⁴²⁵

God's covenant with man is a covenant of grace and law. A covenant between equals is a covenant of law. God, however, is our Lord and Sovereign. When He enters into a covenant with man, it is an act of grace wherein He gives us His law. It is Arminianism to place God on equal terms with man by seeing His law as anything other than a gift of grace. To see God's law in terms of a works-based salvation is a theological denial of God's sovereignty.

Chapter Seventy-Five
Jubilee and Covenant, Part III
(*Leviticus 26:14-39*)

14. But if ye will not hearken unto me, and will not do all these commandments;
15. And if ye shall despise my statutes, or if your soul abhor my judgments, so that ye will not do all my commandments, but that ye break my covenant:
16. I also will do this unto you; I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague, that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart: and ye shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it.
17. And I will set my face against you, and ye shall be slain before your enemies: they that hate you shall reign over you; and ye shall flee when none pursueth you.
18. And if ye will not yet for all this hearken unto me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins.
19. And I will break the pride of your power; and I will make your heaven as iron, and your earth as brass:
20. And your strength shall be spent in vain: for your land shall not yield her increase, neither shall the trees of the land yield their fruits.
21. And if ye walk contrary unto me, and will not hearken unto me; I will bring seven times more plagues upon you according to your sins.
22. I will also send wild beasts among you, which shall rob you of your children, and destroy your cattle, and make you few in number; and your high ways shall be desolate.
23. And if ye will not be reformed by me by these things, but will walk contrary unto me;
24. Then will I also walk contrary unto you, and will punish you yet seven times for your sins.
25. And I will bring a sword upon you, that shall avenge the quarrel of my covenant: and when ye are gathered together within your cities, I will send the pestilence among you; and ye shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy.
26. And when I have broken the staff of your bread, ten women shall bake your bread in one oven, and they shall deliver you your bread again by weight: and ye shall eat, and not be satisfied.
27. And if ye will not for all this hearken unto me, but walk contrary unto me;
28. Then I will walk contrary unto you also in fury; and I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins.
29. And ye shall eat the flesh of your sons, and the flesh of your daughters shall ye eat.
30. And I will destroy your high places, and cut down your images, and cast your carcasses upon the carcasses of your idols, and my soul shall abhor you.
31. And I will make your cities waste, and bring your sanctuaries unto desolation, and I will not smell the savour of your sweet odours.

32. And I will bring the land into desolation: and your enemies which dwell therein shall be astonished at it.
33. And I will scatter you among the heathen, and will draw out a sword after you: and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste.
34. Then shall the land enjoy her sabbaths, as long as it lieth desolate, and ye be in your enemies' land; even then shall the land rest, and enjoy her sabbaths.
35. As long as it lieth desolate it shall rest; because it did not rest in your sabbaths, when ye dwelt upon it.
36. And upon them that are left alive of you I will send a faintness into their hearts in the lands of their enemies; and the sound of a shaken leaf shall chase them; and they shall flee, as fleeing from a sword; and they shall fall when none pursueth.
37. And they shall fall one upon another, as it were before a sword, when none pursueth: and ye shall have no power to stand before your enemies.
38. And ye shall perish among the heathen, and the land of your enemies shall eat you up.
39. And they that are left of you shall pine away in their iniquity in your enemies' lands; and also in the iniquities of their fathers shall they pine away with them. (Leviticus 26:14-39)

A key word in this text is translated as *contrary* in vv. 21, 23-24, 27-28, 40-41; it describes the attitude of the people towards God, and God's attitude towards them. Wenham translates it as *defy*, "If you defy me," and notes that it is literally "walk obstinately with me."⁴²⁶ Bush's comment was very telling:

If ye walk contrary unto me. Heb ... *keri*, a term of doubtful import, as appears from the marginal reading of our version, 'at all adventures with me;' i.e. heedlessly, indifferently, reckless of consequences. This sense is adopted by the Hebrew writers, though the Gr. and the Chal. give that of 'contrariety,' and Gesenius and other lexicographers define it by 'hostile encounter,' or 'going counter' to any one.⁴²⁷

Both meanings seem well attested, and they do not necessarily conflict. Our Lord, in the Parable of the Two Sons, tells us of a son who says that he will do his father's bidding, but does not; the Pharisees are here described (Matt. 21:28-32). Their attitude shows both contrariety and indifference. At any rate, in Leviticus God makes it clear that a people who go *their* way in defiance or indifference to *God's* law will find God indifferent to them and deliberately contrary to their hopes.

Knight calls attention to the character of the judgments sent by God. They are all "natural" ones. Man lives in a created realm, the natural order, and, when he lives in obedience to God, that physical order is at peace with him. This is also the vision of Isaiah 11:1-9, and other texts. When, however, man is indifferent to God's law, he is in effect in rebellion against God. The physical world is then at war with man. Harmony is replaced with conflict and disaster.⁴²⁸

Wenham and others point out that we have in these verses a series of curses for disobedience (vv. 14-39). The *first curse*, vv. 14-17, is a general warning:

14. But if ye will not hearken unto me, and will not do all these commandments:
15. And if ye shall despise my statutes, or if your soul abhor my judgments, so that ye will not do all my commandments, but that ye break my covenant:
16. I also will do this unto you; I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague, that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of the heart; and ye shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it.
17. And I will set my face against you, and ye shall be slain before your enemies: they that hate you shall reign over you; and ye shall flee when none pursueth you.

Similar statements can be found in Deuteronomy 28 and elsewhere. The requirement here is that we “do *all* these commandments.” We are not given the option of selective obedience to God. Failure to obey will have consequences in every realm, including the loss of courage and the will to resist tyranny. We are here *compelled* to recognize that every area of our world, including our own inner life, is open to God, under His total control, and *always* subject either to His judgments or blessings. We may imagine an indifference to God’s laws only at various points, but God sees it as contrariety and hostility. Behind the heedlessness is contempt.

In brief, life apart from God is terror and judgment. Life’s alternatives for us are clearly curses or blessings. There is no other choice. God says, “I will even appoint over you *terror*,” or, literally, *trembling*. Life becomes fear and anxiety.

In v. 9, the promise to the faithful is, “I will have respect unto you,” or, literally, “I will turn toward you.” In v. 17, we have the reverse: “I will set my face against you, and ye shall be slain before your enemies: they that hate you shall reign over you; and ye shall flee when none pursueth you.” When the King’s favor and grace are withdrawn, we are helpless before our enemies. To flee when none pursue means utter demoralization.

The curses here include failed harvests and physical ailments. In Micah 6:13-15, we have a like prediction:

13. Therefore also will I make thee sick in smiting thee, in making thee desolate because of thy sins.
14. Thou shalt eat, but not be satisfied; and thy casting down shall be in the midst of thee; and thou shalt take hold, but shalt not deliver: and that which thou deliverest will I give up to the sword.
15. Thou shalt sow, but thou shalt not reap; thou shalt tread the olives, but thou shalt not anoint thee with oil; and sweet wine, but shalt not drink wine.

The *second curse* is drought and poor harvest (vv. 18-20):

18. And if ye will not yet for all this hearken unto me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins.

19. And I will break the pride of your power; and I will make your heaven as iron, and your earth as brass:

20. And your strength shall be spent in vain: for your land shall not yield her increase, neither shall the trees of the land yield their fruits.

The word translated as *punish* in v. 18 is rendered by Wenham as, “I shall *disciple* you.”⁴²⁹ Since the Hebrew *yacar* can mean teach as well as reprove or punish, this is an aspect of its meaning. God’s judgments are both privative and reformatory. Such judgments bring the godly back to their covenant Lord, whereas the ungodly become more insistently faithless (Amos 4:6, 8-11). God promises drought and crop failures, and the breaking of man’s pride for persistence in rebellion.

God’s law here makes it clear that, in Morgan’s words, “conditions of well-being are ever entirely dependent on obedience to the government of God.” Again, “In like manner the warnings show that disobedience will always be followed with calamity.”⁴³⁰

C. D. Ginsburg had a telling comment on v. 19:

And I will break the pride of your power. That is, the strength which is the cause of your pride, the wealth which they derive from the abundant harvests mentioned in verses 4 and 5, as is evident from what follows immediately, where the punishment is threatened against the resources of this power or wealth. (Comp. Ezek. 30:6, 33:28). The authorities during the second Temple, however, took the phrase “the pride of your power” to denote the sanctuary, which is called “the pride of your power,” in Ezek. 24:21, the expression used here, but the identity of which is obliterated in the Authorised Version by rendering the phrase “the excellency of your strength.” Hence the Chaldee versions paraphrase it, “And I will break down the glory of the strength of your sanctuary.”⁴³¹

The *third curse*, in vv. 21-22, is wild animals:

21. And if ye walk contrary unto me, and will not hearken unto me; I will bring seven times more plagues upon you according to your sins.

22. I will also send wild beasts among you, which shall rob you of your children, and destroy your cattle, and make you few in number; and your high ways shall be desolate.

Because of modern man’s sentimental view of wild animals, it is hard for him to see the proliferation of wild animals as a curse. However, many farmers of average income can testify that birds and animals protected by the state cost them five to ten thousand dollars a year, a margin which sometimes prevents prosperity. Sheep are at times wiped out by protected coyotes and bears. God promises an even grimmer judgment: the destruction of cattle, and even of children. The roads will become unsafe for solitary men.

The early Samaritans suffered from wild beasts (2 Kings 17:25f.), and Ezekiel warns against this judgment (Ezek. 5:17; 14:15, 21).

Rabbi J. H. Hertz had an interesting comment on the use of the word *contrary* in v. 21. He pointed out that the Hebrew word also means *accident*, and noted, “In defiant opposition to God, they would despise God’s laws, and act as if *accident* ruled the moral and spiritual universe.”⁴³²

The *fourth curse* is war (vv. 23-26):

23. And if ye will not be reformed by me by these things, but will walk contrary to me;
24. Then I will also walk contrary to you, and will punish you yet seven times for your sins.
25. And I will bring a sword upon you, that shall avenge the quarrel of my covenant: and when ye are gathered together within your cities, I will send the pestilence among you: and ye shall be delivered unto the hand of the enemy.
26. And when I have broken the staff of your bread, ten women shall bake your bread in one oven, and they shall deliver you your bread again by weight: and ye shall eat, and not be satisfied.

The judgment here is of war, siege, plague, and famine. For ten women to bake the bread of ten families in one oven means dramatic shortages, so that the combined resources of all amount to a trifle. In such circumstances, survival is a problem. All this is a part of the vengeance of God’s covenant, for contempt of His grace and law. The Chaldee versions of v. 25 read, I ... “shall avenge on you the vengeance for that ye have transgressed against the words of the law.”⁴³³

The *fifth curse* describes the collapse of ordered and moral life (vv. 27-31):

27. And if ye will not for all this hearken unto me, but walk contrary unto me;
28. Then I will walk contrary unto you also in fury; and I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins.
29. And ye shall eat the flesh of your sons, and the flesh of your daughters shall ye eat.
30. And I will destroy your high places, and cut down your images, and cast your carcasses upon the carcasses of your idols, and my soul shall abhor you.
31. And I will make your cities waste, and bring your sanctuaries unto desolation, and I will not smell the savour of your sweet odours.

God reduces apostate man to the moral level of his life. Our moral level is revealed by crisis. In this century, many such horrors have occurred, although largely suppressed or ignored. We descend into barbarism while our elitist rulers imagine an ascent into heaven on earth. It is a grim and ironic fact that, given man’s history from antiquity to the present, one commentator could refer to v. 29 and cannibalism as a “literary cliché.”⁴³⁴

The climax of this curse is that God refuses to associate Himself with the religious worship of an apostate people. They may invoke His name, but His response is to smash their cities and their sanctuaries, their false cults and their supposedly true houses of worship.

The *sixth* and culminating *curse* is dispersion and exile (vv. 32-39). Their organized life as a people is shattered, step by step, and then the relics of their existence as a people are broken. If they will not live on God's law terms, they shall not live at all.

32. And I will bring the land into desolation: and your enemies which dwell therein shall be astonished at it.

33. And I will scatter you among the heathen, and will draw out a sword after you: and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste.

34. Then shall the land enjoy her sabbaths, as long as it lieth desolate, and ye be in your enemies' land; even then shall the land rest, and enjoy her sabbaths.

35. As long as it lieth desolate it shall rest; because it did not rest in your sabbaths, when ye dwelt upon it.

36. And upon them that are left alive of you I will send a faintness into their hearts in the lands of their enemies; and the sound of a shaken leaf shall chase them; and they shall flee, as fleeing from a sword; and they shall fall when none pursueth.

37. And they shall fall one upon another, as it were before a sword, when none pursueth: and ye shall have no power to stand before your enemies.

38. And ye shall perish among the heathen, and the land of your enemies shall eat you up.

39. And they that are left of you shall pine away in their iniquity in your enemies' lands; and also in the iniquities of their fathers shall they pine away with them.

Many peoples over the centuries have lost their homelands and have been dispersed only to be blessed in their new homelands. God's curse here gives a different prospect: exile will only compound the judgment upon the apostate. Their inner guilt will render them cowards and victims, and God's avenging sword will pursue them.

Meanwhile, the land will enjoy its sabbaths; it will remain idle. All the neglected sabbaths will be kept. God's will is done; if men will not do it, God will execute it to their confounding. Joseph Bryant Rotherham's translation of v. 34 in *The Emphasized Bible* is a telling one:

Then shall the land be paid her sabbaths. All the days she lieth desolate, while (ye) are in the land of your foes, (then) shall the land keep sabbath, and pay off her sabbaths.

Rabbi Hertz made a similar translation,⁴³⁵ while the 1962 Jewish Publication Society of America translation reads, "Then shall the land *make up* for its sabbath years," the same idea.

Wenham is very right and wise in seeing all this, as it applies to Israel, as a reversal of the promise to Abraham that his descendants would become a great nation (Genesis 15, 17).⁴³⁶ We must add that those peoples today who have become the heirs of Abraham in Christ will be similarly cut off, cast away, and cursed if they persist in their contempt for God's covenant grace and law.

Chapter Seventy-Six
Jubilee and Covenant, Part IV
(*Leviticus 26:40-46*)

40. If they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers, with their trespass which they trespassed against me, and that also they have walked contrary unto me;

41. And that I also have walked contrary unto them, and have brought them into the land of their enemies; if then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity:

42. Then I will remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land.

43. The land also shall be left of them, and shall enjoy her sabbaths, while she lieth desolate without them: and they shall accept of the punishment of their iniquity: because, even because they despised my judgments, and because their soul abhorred my statutes.

44. And yet for all that, when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenant with them: for I am the LORD their God.

45. But I will for their sakes remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the heathen, that I might be their God: I am the LORD.

46. These are the statutes and judgments and laws, which the LORD made between him and the children of Israel in mount Sinai by the hand of Moses.
(*Leviticus 26:40-46*)

The subtle nuances of Scripture are many and marvelous, and they deserve very careful attention. This text has reference to repentance and restoration into the covenant. The essential requirement is a confession of sins. There are, however, certain necessary aspects to this confession.

First, there must be a confession of their own iniquity (v. 40). There can be no blaming of the past. To confess primarily and essentially the sins of one's ancestors, parents, or forbears is no confession at all. As a result of Freudianism and virtually all modern psychologies, psychotherapy means recounting the sins of one's parents. Such confessions are exercises in hypocrisy, pharisaism, and the evasion of personal responsibility and guilt. In the twentieth century, however, it is a common practice, both personally and collectively, to place primary guilt on our forebears. The "problem" is seen as the guilt of our colonial forefathers for creating national problems, or slave-owning ancestors, or factory-operators in the family's past, and so on. Nationally and personally, the peoples of the twentieth century see the moral stance as one easily attained: lay all the sins on our past, on our forefathers. This is not confession: it is sin. Thus, God makes it clear that there can be no restoration by such false confession. The primary

and essential confession of each generation or person must be of his own sins. Anything else is sin compounded.

Second, only when we have confessed our own personal sins can we confess the sins of our fathers. Moreover, we can confess the sins of our forebears if we recognize them to be our present sins also, however altered their form. James Moffatt rendered this sin common to the Israelites before their time, and the presently standing generation, i.e., our sins and those of our forefathers, as “their life of defiance against me,” for “they have walked contrary unto me” (v. 40). In other words, our confession of the sins of our forbears requires that we identify ourselves with them. We have been indifferent to or in defiance of God. All particular varieties of sin are summed up in this fact: they mean indifference to or defiance of God, and He never allows this to be forgotten.

Third, there is no real break between this confession and v. 44, which is a continuation of the confession, namely, the recognition that God has walked contrary to or in defiance of the faithless people, and His judgment has led to their captivity. It is His purpose to humble them and to have them accept the judgment overtaking them (v. 41). The fact that the people might call themselves believers means nothing if they are disobedient. In fact, “judgment must begin at the house of God” (1 Peter 4:17). The greater the blessing, the greater the curse; the greater the responsibility, the greater the culpability (Luke 12:48). To confess the sins of our forbears is thus no easy confession. It is preceded by our own confession, and it requires that we recognize that we ourselves have lived in indifference to or defiance of God’s law.

Fourth, only then will God remember His covenant, and also the land (v. 43). This is a very important statement, because God irrevocably links His covenant with both the people and their land, with man and the earth. The world around us cannot be separated from God, His covenant and law, and our faith and life. To reduce God’s purpose solely to the salvation of man’s soul is to deform the faith and to make it resemble more a pagan mystery cult than the faith set forth in Scripture.

Fifth, we come now to something very much opposed to so much of the “churchianity” of our time with its cheap forgiveness. What we are told in v. 43 is that even though men repent, and God “remembers” His covenant with them, the consequences of their sin must run their course, i.e., their captivity and the necessary sabbaths of the land. God does *not* say, Because all is forgiven, all is forgotten. Rather, He declares, Because all is forgiven, after judgment there shall be mercy. In this instance, the land shall have its rest. In any case, while God’s atoning grace wipes away the guilt of sin, it does not remove the consequences of our sin. If we destroy our sight by our sin, forgiveness will place us in God’s grace, but it will not restore our eyes. In this instance, the land must have its Sabbaths; our repentance will not remove that necessity, but it will give us God’s mercy and grace. Antinomianism not only sets aside God’s law, but it also disregards the necessary penalties of the law for lawlessness.

Sixth, God, “for all that,” is mindful of His repentant people even as they are under judgment (v. 44). They may be in the hands and land of their enemies, but, even while the penalties continue, so too does His covenant mercy. He does not annihilate or destroy them completely, however

much they deserve it. Jeremiah, in Lamentations 3:22-27, as he describes the horrors of the fall of Jerusalem, the fire, pillaging, rape, and death, echoes this verse:

22. It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.
23. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.
24. The LORD is my portion, saith my soul: therefore will I hope in him.
25. The LORD is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him.
26. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD.
27. It is good for a man that he bear the yoke of his youth.

There is here a grim and inevitable logic. When a people profane God's covenant, His earth, and themselves, God treats them as profane: they are cast out and trodden under foot of men (Matt. 5:13). The profane are profaned. Both the people *and* the land must be re-sanctified. They must become holy, and this requires time and faithfulness. This is an aspect of God's discipline which He imposes upon men.

Thus, the promise of a continuing penalty is very clear, but with it also is the promise that He will remember His covenant with their ancestors in the faith (v. 45).

In the concluding v. 46, we have a reference to God's revelation on Mount Sinai to Moses, and it is described as "statutes and judgments and laws." In a sense, all three words describe the same thing with a differing stress. The word *statutes* refers in Hebrew to something which is an enactment and an appointment, or an ordained way. *Judgments* has reference to statutes as government, to their function as the governing power in a society. *Law* is the familiar word *torah*, meaning a precept or law. The three together carry the meaning of an empire of law, covenant law, given as a blessing to man.

Chapter Seventy-Seven

The Meaning of Vows, Part I

(*Leviticus 27:1-13*)

1. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,
2. Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When a man shall make a singular vow, the persons shall be for the LORD by thy estimation.
3. And the estimation shall be of the male from twenty years old even unto sixty years old, even thy estimation shall be fifty shekels of silver, after the shekel of the sanctuary.
4. And if it be a female, then thy estimation shall be thirty shekels.
5. And if it be from five years old even unto twenty years old, then thy estimation shall be of the male of twenty shekels, and for the female ten shekels.
6. And if it be from a month old even unto five years old, then thy estimation shall be of the male five shekels of silver, and for the female thy estimation shall be three shekels of silver.
7. And if it be from sixty years old and above; if it be a male, then thy estimation shall be fifteen shekels, and for the female ten shekels.
8. But if he be poorer than thy estimation, then he shall present himself before the priest, and the priest shall value him; according to his ability that vowed shall the priest value him.
9. And if it be a beast whereof men bring an offering unto the LORD, all that any man giveth of such unto the LORD shall be holy.
10. He shall not alter it, or change it, a good for a bad, or a bad for a good: and if he shall at all exchange beast for beast, then it and the exchange thereof shall be holy.
11. And if it be any unclean beast, of which they do not offer a sacrifice unto the LORD, then he shall present the beast before the priest:
12. And the priest shall value it, whether it be good or bad: as thou valuest it, who are the priest, so shall it be.
13. But if he will at all redeem it, then he shall add a fifth part thereof unto thy estimation. (*Leviticus 27:1-13*)

Leviticus 27 concerns vows made to God. The doctrines of the covenant and the jubilee make clear God's total government over all things. We live in God's empire of His law and the Holy Spirit, and we are thus in a totally God-created environment and realm. We owe everything to the Lord, and we must never forget this fact. The meaning of the vow is simply this: covenant man, mindful of his debt of gratitude to God, will from time to time seek to demonstrate it in a practical way. He will promise or vow to God to do certain things, or to make certain gifts. This might be done in a moment's flush of gratitude, and then forgotten, but it is *not* forgotten by God. The vow is voluntary, but it is a commitment, and it must be kept. We are told, concerning vows,

21. When thou shalt vow a vow unto the LORD thy God, thou shalt not slack to pay it: for the LORD thy God will surely require it of thee; and it would be sin to thee.

22. But if thou shalt forbear to vow, it shall be no sin in thee.

23. That which is gone out of thy lips thou shalt keep and perform; even a freewill offering, according as thou hast vowed unto the LORD thy God, which thou hast promised with thy mouth. (Deuteronomy 23:21-23)

It is a snare to the man who devoureth that which is holy, and after vows to make inquiry. (Proverbs 20:25)

4. When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed.

5. Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay. (Ecclesiastes 5:4-5)

The meaning of Proverbs 20:25 is that it is wrong for a man hastily or rashly to make a vow, and only later consider the implications thereof. God holds us accountable for what we say.

Three kinds of vows are cited in vv. 1-13: 1) there are vows of persons, whereby a man dedicates himself to God's service; 2) there are vows wherein certain clean animals are promised to God; and 3) in other vows unclean animals which are useful are promised. The law here says that the only way out of such vows is by the payment of an equivalent value.

In the first kind of vow, the man or person seeks to extricate himself from the service promised to God. This service may involve a single act, or short-term labor. In any and every case, the price of redemption is a telling one. A person can only redeem himself at the price he or she would have commanded in any pagan slave-market. As Wenham has pointed out, the price of an adult male slave was fifty shekels (v. 3; cf. 2 Kings 15:20); a boy commanded twenty shekels (v. 5; cf. Gen. 37:2, 28); a woman brought thirty shekels (v. 4).⁴³⁷

According to 2 Kings 12:4ff., such funds as came into the sanctuary from the redemption of vows went into a fund for the repairs and maintenance of the Temple.⁴³⁸

The child up to five years old required less redemption, and the same was true of men and women over sixty. The vow could be a minor matter, or a negative vow, i.e., a promise to abstain from certain activities or pleasures for a given time. All the same, the redemption cost was the price of their life, since the promise to God is so serious. There was no merit gained by a vow; it did not obligate God in any way. Rather, a man in gratitude obligated himself to God, and, if he did not render the promised service, he had to render a penalty.

It should be noted (v. 8) that the priest had the discretionary power to lower the redemption rate for a poor man, but he could not waive it. Poverty is no excuse for a failed vow to God.

In the second section, the redemption of clean animals, we see that when a man who has vowed to give an animal to God attempts to substitute a lesser animal, he is penalized. Both animals

must then be surrendered (vv. 9-10). If a man wanted to keep a vowed animal, he had to redeem it at the price set by the priest. The redemption price, for clean and unclean beasts alike, was the full value plus twenty percent. Moreover, no substitution could be made, even if a better animal were offered; the precise nature of the vow had to be kept, and redemption had to be in terms of the original animal vowed.

In the third section (vv. 11-13) unclean animals are cited. A man could vow to give a donkey, or a work horse, to God, and, later, regretting the possibility of losing a well-trained animal, seek to redeem it. This could be done at the assessed value plus twenty percent. The term “unclean” animal could include a clean animal which was unfit for sacrifice because of some defect.⁴³⁹

All of these are vows *to* God; some vows are made *before* God to abide by certain obligations and duties. Still other vows are *both to God and to man*. In this last category we have the *baptismal vow*, made either by us, or for us by our parents. While this is essentially a vow to God, it is also a vow in the context of the family and church and involves both. The *marriage vow* is before God and man, and it is both to God and to one’s spouse. The *ordination vow* is before God and man, and it is to God and the church. The vow or oath in a courtroom is before God and man, and it is to God and man; we then swear to bear witness honestly so that justice may prevail. Other forms of vows can be cited. The comment of F. Meyrick on such vows is of interest:

There are conditions under which vows and oaths are not, or cease to be, obligatory. Jeremiah writes (4:2), “And thou shalt swear, The Lord liveth, in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness.” Isaiah speaks of those “which swear by the Name of the Lord, and make mention of the God of Israel, but not in truth, nor in righteousness” (Isa. xlvi. 1). Accordingly, any oath or vow is void which was an unrighteous oath or vow when taken; and the sin of breaking it, though a sin, is less than that of keeping it. Therefore Herod ought not to have kept his oath to the daughter of Herodias (Matt. xiv.9); and the observance of their oath by the forty conspirators who had bound themselves to kill Paul, would have been a sin on their part (Acts xxiii. 12-41). Further, a vow, as distinct from an oath or contract, ceases to be obligatory if the person concerned comes to regard it as unrighteous and wrong for him to fulfill with his changed mind or under changed circumstances. Thus, the vow taken at ordination to administer the sacraments in the form received by a special Church, is not binding if a man ceases on conscientious grounds to be a member of that Church, and the vow of celibacy taken by Luther and others, who have become reformers, no longer binds them when they have come to the conviction that the vow was unrighteous, and when they have rejected the discipline of their Church. The marriage vow, however, stands upon a different basis, but also a promise to man, by the non-fulfillment of which wrong could be done.⁴⁴⁰

If a minister or priest takes an ordination vow and then finds himself no longer able to adhere to that vow, he has a duty to leave that church. If he feels that his vow, insofar as God is involved, is still valid, he must still recognize that he is no longer faithful to that particular church, and departure is his moral duty.

This chapter is dismissed by some as too mercenary, too much oriented to a bookkeeper's mentality. This criticism tells us much about those who make it. Do we consider it an honorable relationship if we have \$3,000 due to us but receive only \$10, or \$1,000, or anything other than that which is our due? If we resent injustice towards ourselves, can we expect God to feel happy with us if we yield him a penny, when we have vowed to give Him far more? God is not a Uriah Heep, fawning over us with gratitude for a kindly word. "Our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:29).

God has blessed man with speech: it is not to be used casually. Our Lord declares: "But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment" (Matt. 12:36). If every idle word is important in God's sight, how much more so are vows offered to Him? An article in *The Catholic Digest* tells of an interesting penance imposed on a woman by her priest: "For your penance, keep your mouth shut." The woman reports on the blessings which followed!⁴⁴¹

Language is used too casually by fallen man, and certainly this is especially true in the modern era.

Chapter Seventy-Eight

The Meaning of Vows, Part II

(*Leviticus 27:14-25*)

14. And when a man shall sanctify his house to be holy unto the LORD, then the priest shall estimate it, whether it be good or bad: as the priest shall estimate it, so shall it stand.

15. And if he that sanctified it will redeem his house, then he shall add the fifth part of the money of thy estimation unto it, and it shall be his.

16. And if a man shall sanctify unto the LORD some part of a field of his possession, then thy estimation shall be according to the seed thereof: an homer of barley seed shall be valued at fifty shekels of silver.

17. If he sanctify his field from the year of jubilee, according to thy estimation it shall stand.

18. But if he sanctify his field after the jubilee, then the priest shall reckon unto him the money according to the years that remain, even unto the year of the jubilee, and it shall be abated from thy estimation.

19. And if he that sanctified the field will in any wise redeem it, then he shall add the fifth part of the money of thy estimation unto it, and it shall be assured to him.

20. And if he will not redeem the field, or if he have sold the field to another man, it shall not be redeemed any more.

21. But the field, when it goeth out in the jubilee, shall be holy unto the LORD, as a field devoted; the possession thereof shall be the priest's.

22. And if a man sanctify unto the LORD a field which he hath bought, which is not of the fields of his possession;

23. Then the priest shall reckon unto him the worth of thy estimation, even unto the year of the jubilee: and he shall give thine estimation in that day, as a holy thing unto the LORD.

24. In the year of the jubilee the field shall return unto him of whom it was bought, even to him to whom the possession of the land did belong.

25. And all thy estimations shall be according to the shekel of the sanctuary: twenty gerahs shall be the shekel. (*Leviticus 27:14-25*)

In Numbers 30:1-16, we are told, concerning vows, that they are often conditional upon our duties to others; we cannot use a vow to God as a means of evading a godly responsibility to others. We are thus told that a daughter's vow can be disallowed by her father, since it is conditional upon his approval, and the same is true of a wife's vow; her husband can disallow it. This does *not* mean that the husband can make an unconditional vow. An example of this is given by St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 7:3-5:

3. Let the husband render unto his wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband.

4. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife.
5. Defraud ye not one the other except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.

An even more telling example is given by our Lord: our duties to parents cannot be dissolved by a vow to God.

9. And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition.
10. For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death;
11. But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me: he shall be free.
12. And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother;
13. Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye. (Mark 7:9-13)

Corban means “that which is brought near,” i.e., to the altar, to be given to God. God rejects gifts which represent an evasion of a duty commanded by His law. Any vow pledging such a gift is disallowed as false.

In Leviticus 27:14-25, there are two kinds of gifts pledged by vows to God: 1) houses (vv. 14-15), and 2) land (vv. 16-24).

In the *first* group, the houses are probably town houses, which could be sold permanently. As with unclean animals, these could be bought back at the assessed value plus twenty percent. If the house were not redeemed, it was sold, with the proceeds going to the sanctuary.

The ancient meaning of “his house” has had two facets. *First*, the house pledged had to be *his* house, i.e., free and clear, without encumbrances of any kind. *Second*, “house” could refer to the building, part or all of its contents, or everything, depending upon the specific nature of the vow. There is another factor. When a man vowed his house, we are told that he “sanctified” it, i.e., *dedicated* it as a gift to God. This did not make the house itself entitled to any special status. As C. D. Ginsburg noted, “It is not the gift, but its money value which had to be devoted to the holy cause.”⁴⁴² According to Old Testament practice, the son or wife could also redeem the property.

According to John Gill, the Pharisees and others permitted *Corban* to function in violation of a man’s duties, as, for example,

... his wife cannot demand her dowry out of that which is sanctified, nor a creditor his debt; but if he will redeem he may redeem, on condition that he gives the dowry to the wife, and the debt to the creditor.⁴⁴³

The *second* kind of vow cited in these verses (16-24) concerns the redemption of land, or of the harvest from the land. Because farm land depreciated as the jubilee approached, the cost of redemption was assessed in terms of the numbers of years remaining until the jubilee. If the land had been sold to another man, on the year of the jubilee it went to the sanctuary; the payment of the vow was simply deferred until the lease-holders' tenure ended. The vow could not undermine a man's obligation to another person. If a lease-holder dedicated the land to God in a vow, the dedication was for the years remaining until the jubilee (vv. 22-24).

If a man refused to redeem the land before the jubilee year, or if he fraudulently sold it to another, then he forfeited all right to redeem it, and it became permanently the property of the sanctuary or priests (vv. 20-21). This means that vowing the land meant vowing the value of the land. The comment of Samuel Clark on vv. 22-24 is helpful:

If a man vowed the worth of his interest in a field which he had purchased, the transaction was a simple one. He had to pay down at once ("in that day," v. 23) the calculated value to the next Jubilee. In this case, the field reverted at the Jubilee to the original owner, who, it is likely, had the same right of redeeming it from the priests during the interval, as he had previously had of redeeming it from the man to whom he had sold it, in accordance with 25:23-28. The regulation for the payment of the exact sum to be made in this case in ready money is supposed to furnish ground for inference that, in redeeming an inherited field, the money was paid to the priests year by year, and hence the fairness of the addition of the one-fifth to the total sum as interest (v. 19).⁴⁴⁴

The word used in v. 21, *devoted, herein*, means an absolute irrevocable dedication. In terms of v. 20, this inability to redeem the land applied in two cases: *first*, if the land was a gift to God permanently and without any time-limit, then it could not be redeemed. *Second*, if, after vowing the land, a man tried to evade the vow by leasing the land to another, he then permanently lost any right to the land at the time of the jubilee. The innocent buyer retained possession until then.

These laws concerning vows had an extensive influence in the medieval era. More than a few men dedicated their lands, or certain harvests or uses thereof, to the church and to monasteries.

In v. 25, we have an important qualification to protect all concerned, the priests and the people. Redemptions and monetary estimates thereof had to be in terms of a fixed and unchanging standard, the *weight* of gold or silver as established by the sanctuary.

Thomas Aquinas gave an excellent short definition of a vow: "A promise made to God." J. Kostlin wrote of the vow:

The idea of a gift to God which the pious soul feels compelled to consecrate to God is of the very essence of Christianity. But this gift is nothing less than that of the whole person, will, and life (cf. e.g. Rom. 6:11, 13; 7:4; Gal. 2:20; 2 Cor. 5:16). This self-dedication to God takes place at baptism, together with the conception of divine grace and the entry upon a new life. The promise made then (and at confirmation) may fairly be called a vow in the usual meaning of the

word; but nothing is promised which is not already obligatory. It is justified as the formal expression of the internal impulse called forth by the appeal of redemption (1 John 4:19; Rom. 8:14ff.).⁴⁴⁵

What Kostlin describes here is *the obligatory vow*; this passage of Leviticus deals with voluntary and *non-obligatory vows*. The early church and the medieval era give us a long history of such non-obligatory (but still binding) vows. Their disappearance is one of the marks of a humanistic era. Even the obligatory vows are now casually regarded. They have been replaced by obligatory duties to the modern state, duties and claims which are constantly increasing in number. At one time, all obligatory duties came from God's law-word to govern our relationship to Him, to one another in Him, and to church and state. Now our obligatory duties come directly and essentially from the modern humanistic state and are held to supersede all other duties. The modern state has indeed become a god walking on earth, and we are the losers.

Chapter Seventy-Nine

The Meaning of Vows, Part III

(*Leviticus 27:26-34*)

26. Only the firstling of the beasts, which should be the LORD's firstling, no man shall sanctify it; whether it be ox, or sheep: it is the LORD's.
27. And if it be of unclean beast, then he shall redeem it according to thine estimation, and shall add a fifth part of it thereto: or if it be not redeemed, then it shall be sold according to thy estimation.
28. Notwithstanding no devoted thing, that a man shall devote unto the LORD all that he hath, both of man and beast, and of the field of his possession, shall be sold or redeemed: every devoted thing is most holy unto the LORD.
29. None devoted, which shall be devoted of men, shall be redeemed; but shall surely be put to death.
30. And all the tithes of the land, whether of the seed or of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the LORD's; it is holy unto the LORD.
31. And if man will at all redeem ought of his tithes, he shall add thereto the fifth part thereof.
32. And concerning the tithes of the herd, or of the flock, even of whatsoever passeth under the rod, the tenth shall be holy unto the LORD.
33. He shall not search whether it be good or bad, neither shall he change it: and if he change it at all, then both it and the change thereof shall be holy; it shall not be redeemed.
34. These are the commandments, which the LORD commanded Moses for the children of Israel on Mount Sinai. (*Leviticus 27:26- 34*)

All speech is in the presence of God and under His law. The doctrine of vows sets forth God's government of speech and of language. In Biblical faith, God is *the speaking God*. Revelation is a Biblical fact; it exists in no other religions save those influenced by or imitative of the Bible. *Words* are very important to Scripture; in three of the Ten Commandments, language is important: "Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain" (Deut. 5:11), "Neither shalt thou bear false witness against thy neighbour" (Deut. 5:20), and "Honour thy father and thy mother" (Deut. 5:16). Honoring parents involves more than speech, but it also involves speech, as Exodus 21:17 makes clear: "And he that curseth his father, or his mother, shall surely be put to death." Our Lord, in the Sermon on the Mount, ties the commandment, "Thou shalt not kill" (Deut. 5:17), to speech also:

21. Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill: and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment:
22. But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of hell fire.

23. Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee,

24. Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first, be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. (Matthew 5:21-24)

Our Lord thus adds a fourth one of the Ten Commandments, to the list of those related to language.

Just as God as Creator declares His ownership of all creation, so, too, by His law, He sets forth His ownership and sovereignty over language. Language must be defined in terms of God and His word; it is the instrument for communication in terms of God's image in us, righteousness or justice, holiness, knowledge and dominion (Gen. 1:27-28; Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10). Language is a religious fact.

Humanistic doctrines of language define it as man's means of self-expression. Thus, for Darwin, speech began as the mating cry of primates, as sexual expression. Because for humanism language is an aspect of the accidental or chance development of the human species, language has no holiness, nor is it *essentially* related to knowledge. Marxism is more honest than other forms of humanism in regarding language as a weapon of war, and not as a means of communicating truth. By separating language from the God of Scripture, we separate language from knowledge and truth. Christianity requires literacy and language, and its decline imperils both. The modern state uses language for its own goals, and it makes itself god in order to define meaning. Statist laws redefine life and freedom to mean slavery and death, and they interpose the state between God and man. Language and words, created to set man apart for God's calling, are used to subvert man and create a new focus for man and life, the state.

Leviticus 27:26-34 has four brief sections: *first*, concerning the firstborn, vv. 26-27; *second*, things devoted, vv. 28-29; *third*, tithes, vv. 30-33; and then, *fourth*, the conclusion, v. 34.

First, all the firstborn of clean and unclean animals belong to God, according to Exodus 13:2 and 34:19. The unclean animals had to be redeemed or sold. Because all such animals already belonged to God, they could not be vowed to God. We cannot vow what is not ours, nor can we promise to God as a new gift that which already belongs to Him.

Previously, in vv. 2-25, four kinds of things are specified which can be vowed to God: persons (vv. 2-8); animals (vv. 9-13); houses (vv. 14-15); and lands (vv. 16-25). Now we are told of things we cannot vow to God, and these specified animals are the first of this forbidden category.

Second, things devoted to God cannot be redeemed but must be executed. The devoted things could be men or animals. It was devoted or banned because God's law required it. To illustrate this in modern terms, a dog which has without provocation attacked and injured (or killed) anyone cannot be redeemed; it must be killed. The same is true of anyone legally sentenced to death in faithfulness to God's law: they cannot be redeemed from death. However, we cannot by vow devote to God what His law forbids, i.e., the shedding of innocent blood; hence, Jephthah's sacrifice of his daughter was murder (Judges 11:30-40). No vow can supercede or contravene

God's law. Thus, the thing banned had to be what God required to be destroyed, not what man decided. The *devoted thing* (v. 28) means the *cut-off* or the *excluded* thing.

There were three kinds of bans: *first*, the war ban; *second*, the justice ban, required by God's law. These first two forms had to be in conformity to God's law or an express special revelation. In this case, *third*, we have the private ban, one coming from the head of a household. This too had to be in terms of God's law. Because in much of history men have lived in isolation from courts, justice had to be local and in that sense "private." An isolated community would have necessary legal decisions to make, as would an isolated rancher. These had to be in terms of God's law, and no evasion was permitted. Precisely because in such cases the inclination would be to overlook justice, this law is given.

This law applied to fields which for one reason or another were banned or devoted. There have been occasions when a piece of land has been the reason for a murderous quarrel between relatives and has then been devoted to God.

Third, vv. 30-31, we have laws relative to tithes. No man, of course, can vow a tithe to God, because the tithe is already the Lord's. The law deals with the redemption of tithes in kind. If a man vows a tithe of his sheep, he shall give every tenth sheep to the Lord. As the sheep were herded past him, every tenth sheep animal was marked by a staff tipped with paint. These marked animals then belonged to God, irrespective of their condition. If the owner then decided to keep the sheep, he had to redeem them at their full value plus twenty percent.

If a man switched animals in separating the tenth animals for his tithe, then both the original animal and its replacement belonged to God and could not be redeemed. The tithes were normally given to the Levites, who then tithed the tithe to the priests for worship (Num. 18:20-32).

Fourth, v. 34, we have the conclusion. We are reminded that this is God's word, His commandments, *spoken* to Moses on Mount Sinai. In the years prior to World War II, a word popular with the clergy was *ineffable*, i.e., incapable of being expressed by words. The word was especially in favor among modernist preachers and theologically fuzzy evangelicals. They spoke of the ineffable Christ, our ineffable faith, and so on, and they popularized the notion that words cannot describe Christ or our faith. Of course, what is beyond our world and experience words cannot convey to us, and thus the Bible does not describe heaven for us. However, the whole point of revelation, of the Bible, is that God gives us His enscriptured word, and Jesus Christ, His incarnate Word.

He who rules eternally and universally over a universe which is totally His creation, has given us language, not as a vague cloud of connotation, but as a means of exact communication. The fact of vows makes clear the precision God requires in our speech.

The modern state insists, through its Hegelian doctrine of developing and changing meaning, that both language and law are human products and necessarily imprecise and changing. It is therefore hostile to propositional truth and to a Biblical doctrine of language. For us, however,

language is God's instrument of revelation and is given to us to hear Him, and to exercise dominion in terms of the revealed and heard word.

Appendix

1) One of the interesting developments within Western Christianity was the jubilee of the Roman Church. Its origins are unknown. It is possible that sabbath years and the jubilee were observed somewhere to some degree, but we do not know. What we do know is that the jubilee in some form was seen as important.

A curious development took place. The premise of the sabbath years is the forgiveness of debt, or, no long-term debt, and, of the jubilee, a restoration to the family land. The Roman jubilee transposed this doctrine to the realm of *sin*, i.e., the forgiveness of sins. The ceremonies of the papal celebration of the jubilee made this very clear, as witness the medieval prayer by the pope:

O Lord, who by Thy servant Moses didst institute among the children of Israel the Jubilee and year of remission, grant through Thy goodness to us, who have the honour to be called Thy servants, to commence happily this present Jubilee, ordained by Thy authority; and in which it has been Thy will to set open to Thy people in a most solemn manner this door through which to enter Thy temple, to offer their prayers in the presence of Thy Divine Majesty; that thereby having obtained plenary and absolute remission of all our sins, we may, at the day of our departure out of this world, be conducted through Thy mercy to the enjoyment of the heavenly glory, through Jesus Christ. Amen.⁴⁴⁶

The law is here spiritualized to give it a new meaning. This process of spiritualization is common to Catholicism and to Protestant antinomianism.

The jubilee observance for Rome did require true repentance, confession and communion, visits to the appointed basilicas, prayer for the pope's intention, and more. It was also accompanied by acts of charity.⁴⁴⁷ It is clearly wrong to neglect this aspect of the Roman Jubilee and its indulgences.

However, it is equally wrong to overlook the fact that the indulgence system of the Roman Jubilee became the serious evil that Luther declared it to be. John, or Johann, Tetzel did preach with full authority:

As soon as the coin in the coffer rings
The soul from purgatory springs.⁴⁴⁸

Tetzel, a Dominican monk, was caught in adultery and was sentenced to death, but freed by the church. His sale of indulgences was highly profitable, and the indulgences were for past and future sins. One knight bought an indulgence and then robbed Tetzel of his sales' money. When the knight was tried, he produced his certificate of indulgence and went free, to Tetzel's disgust. Tetzel boasted that his indulgences had saved more souls than St. Peter.⁴⁴⁹

When men try to improve on God's law-word, they open the door to monstrous evils. The spiritualizing of God's law, and antinomianism, supplants God's word with man's "wisdom," and the result is evil.

2) The Biblical law against sexual intercourse with a menstruating woman has a curious reference in the memoirs of a doctor, as related to Alan Wykes. The doctor, a specialist in venereal diseases, referred to the matter thus:

Occasionally there's some confusion between gonorrhoea and a non-venereal, but sexual, disease that's popularly known as "husband's clap," which has somewhat similar symptoms and is caused by having intercourse when one of the partners is below par in health or when the woman's period is imminent.⁴⁵⁰

The same doctor reported that, in 1910, Adolf Hitler contracted syphilis from a Jewish prostitute. At the time, he was living with two Jewish friends and the girl. His condition, untreated, led to his mental condition and instability.⁴⁵¹

3) A writer favorable to homosexual "liberation," Michael Goodrich, reports that medieval antinomians dismissed homosexuality as a sin for those "in the Spirit." He notes also, as have others, that homosexuality was seen as a royal prerogative, and that the Joachimites *may* have justified it.

In contrast, Paul of Hungary (d. 1242) saw four sins as crying out to God for retribution: sodomy, a crime against nature; murder, another crime against nature and life; the oppression of widows, an unnatural and offensive practice; and the withholding of wages from laborers, a violation of justice.⁴⁵²

The Author

Rousas John Rushdoony (1916-2001) was a well-known American scholar, writer, and author of over thirty books. He held B.A. and M.A. degrees from the University of California and received his theological training at the Pacific School of Religion. An ordained minister, he worked as a missionary among Paiute and Shoshone Indians as well as a pastor to two California churches. He founded the Chalcedon Foundation, an educational organization devoted to research, publishing, and cogent communication of a distinctively Christian scholarship to the world at large. His writing in the *Chalcedon Report* and his numerous books spawned a generation of believers active in reconstructing the world to the glory of Jesus Christ. Until his death, he resided in Vallecito, California, where he engaged in research, lecturing, and assisting others in developing programs to put the Christian Faith into action.

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