

Youth Spiritual Competition 2023

The Book of Leviticus

College Edition



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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Old Testament

The Old Testament tells the story of God's dealings with ancient Israel from approximately 2000 B.C. until the time of our Lord Jesus Christ. Its central message is God's promise to save mankind and the world through the "anointed one" (Messiah, Christ) of Israel. The New Testament proclaims that Jesus of Nazareth is the promised Christ, Who has, through His life and deeds, fulfilled the divine plan of salvation and made it possible for man to be reconciled to God. Christ is the Mediator of the New Covenant (He. 8:6, 9:15), meaning He unites the two through His Incarnation, fulfilling the Old in the New. Christ frequently referred to the Old Testament, as St. Luke recounted, "Beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself" (Lk. 24:27). The Lord provided the Apostles with instructions to search for Him throughout the Old Testament.

Then He said to them, "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me" (Lk. 24:44).

The Hebrew Old Testament

The Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms were understood to mean the Old Testament, the sacred text of the God-fearing Jews. The Jews recognized twenty-four books as Scripture, which they called the Tanakh. The name "Tanakh" is formed by combining the Jewish names for the three divisions of the Scripture: the Torah, the Nebim, and the Ketubim.

This first division was called the Law, also referred to as the *Torah* or *Pentateuch*. It included the five books of Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

The second division was the Prophets (*Nebim*). This was comprised of the four former prophets: Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings, as well as the four latter prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the book of the twelve prophets.

The third division was called the Writings (*Ketubim*). These were the Psalms, Proverbs, Job, the Scrolls, which contained Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and Esther, as well as Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, and Chronicles.

The Jews accepted Scripture as they received it since it was given to them as directly from God with authority. These were taught orally and were eventually written down as sacred texts, later copied by scribes. These different copies are called manuscripts. At times, the manuscripts had variations, whereas, at other times, parts of the manuscripts went missing or were incomplete. Manuscripts have been collected, studied, and compared to find the most accurate readings of the texts and develop the best insight into the original writing.

The Septuagint

Between the third and first centuries BC, there was a need to translate the Hebrew manuscripts into Greek since many of the Jews outside of Israel spoke Greek. King Ptolemy II commissioned seventy or seventy-two elders¹ to translate from the collection of Hebrew manuscripts into what is now known as the Septuagint. Septuagint means “seventy,” is oftentimes abbreviated with the letters LXX, the Roman numerals for the number 70. The Septuagint was celebrated for its accuracy and faithfulness to the original writings.

In many respects, the Septuagint is superior to the modern Jewish Bible, which relies on the Masoretic Texts. The Masoretic Jews made their own translation from the ancient Hebrew texts between the seventh and tenth centuries AD, editing the translation to remove images and references to prophecies of Christ. Therefore the Orthodox Church continues to use the Septuagint, which is the oldest translation from the ancient Hebrew manuscripts.

Canonization of Scripture

Although the books of the Old Testament were almost immediately recognized as authoritative Scripture, the Church nevertheless had a system for canonization.² Canonization is the standard by which the Church determines whether a book is authoritative and inspired.

The Church foremost relied on Apostolic authority. This applied more to New Testament books, but further provided evidence that our Lord and His Apostles used the Old Testament throughout the Gospels and Epistles. The Church also looked at antiquity or the age of the book. The Church felt that, if a book was too recent, it was not recognized as Scripture.³ The Church searched for Orthodox doctrine, meaning the books within the canon needed to be consistent with the Apostolic teaching regarding the person and work of Christ.

The Church also had other factors, such as whether the book was recognized among many people or circulated, whether it was traditionally used, such by the Fathers or in worship or liturgy, and whether the words were inspired by God.

The Books of the Old Testament

The books of the Old Testament can be divided into four divisions: *The Laws of Moses (the Pentateuch)*, *The Books of History*, *The Prophets*, and *The Wisdom Writings*.

The **Books of the Law** are Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. St. Athanasius wrote that these books of the Law tell us about “the beginning of the world, the deeds of the patriarchs, the exodus of Israel from Egypt, the giving of the Law, and the establishment of the tabernacle and the priesthood.”⁴

¹ Traditions differ on this number since different accounts point to either seventy or seventy-two.

² The Fathers do debate whether certain books are as authoritative as others. See St. Athanasius’ *Letter 39*.

³ This was the case with the *Shepherd of Hermas*, which was written “only the day before yesterday.”

⁴ St. Athanasius, *Letter to Marcellinus on the Psalms*, §1

The **History** books are Joshua, Judges, Ruth, First and Second Samuel, First and Second Kings, First and Second Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther. The first three books “describe the division of the inheritance, the acts of the judges, and the ancestry of David.”⁵ The books of “Kings and Chronicles record the stories of rulers. Ezra relates the deliverance of the people from exile, the return, and the building of the temple and the city.”⁶

The **Poetry** books are Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs (or Song of Solomon). In these we learn the blessing of enduring suffering, the way to praise God, the love of wisdom, the true purpose of life beyond vanities, and the courtship between God and man.

The **Major Prophets** are Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Daniel. The **Minor Prophets** are Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habbakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. “These foretell the coming of the Savior, [and] make us mindful of the commandments, reprove transgressors, and provide a special word for the Gentiles.”⁷

The Church also recognizes seven **Deuterocanonical** books, which are found in the Septuagint. Tobit, Judith, and First and Second Maccabees are part of the history books. The Wisdom of Solomon and the Wisdom of Sirach are included with the books of poetry. Baruch is listed after Jeremiah since he is Jeremiah’s secretary. There are also additions to Daniel, additions to Esther, and Psalm 151.

Reading the Old Testament

After the Lord commanded the apostles to search the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Him, the Church searched the Old Testament for what is called the Mystery of Christ. The Mystery of Christ means that types of Him are hidden throughout the Old Testament. These types were not clear at the time of their writing, but became clear after the events of the New Testament. We can think of this like a picture in a dark cave that was difficult to see until the light made them clearly visible. Christ is that light Whose incarnation made clear the images hidden throughout the cave of the Old Testament. These images are types and shadows of the true things in Christ.

The Church teaches us that Scripture is to be read at different levels. The first level is literal. This refers to the events described in the texts. Next, we are to consider the spiritual meaning, which often refers to searching for types of Christ or other New Testament images. Afterwards, we are to consider the moral sense. Since we place Scripture above us, we are to compare our lives to the text, recognizing that the Word of God before us is Christ. Therefore we should consider how we can conform to the examples, commandments, and teachings provided in the text. The next level of reading Scripture refers to “eschatology,” or the afterlife. This means considering eternity, the kingdom of God, and heaven.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

Chapter 2: Introduction to Leviticus

Introduction

This chapter will introduce our study of Leviticus. As one author puts it, the primary theme and theology of Leviticus is God opening a way for humanity to dwell in the divine presence.⁸ Preparation for the divine presence was necessary. As God declared to Moses, “I am the Lord your God, Who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage” (Ex. 20:2). The book of Leviticus presents to us God’s holiness, and charges us, as God’s people, to be holy as He is holy: “And you shall be holy to Me, for I the Lord am holy, and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be Mine” (Lv. 20:26). God declared that these were His people, and He was their God.

In order to maintain this relationship, the children of Israel needed to learn how to properly worship their God. God prepared His people to learn worship prior to entering the promised land since in Canaan, there would be many forms of pagan worship. He did not want the Israelites to be influenced by this paganism. In many ways, since worship is at the heart of every Orthodox Christian, so was the book of Leviticus—a book of worship and holiness—the center of the Pentateuch.

Books of the Pentateuch

In the book of Genesis, man lost his relationship with God and thereby the secret of life. This book, which means “in the beginning,” was given in order to prepare humanity to realize God’s love for man, providing him with the whole work to enjoy, possess, and have dominion. God presented man with love, yet man responded with rebellion. This resulted in isolation from God, the source of life. God did not forsake man to die, but presented him with the exalted plan of salvation.⁹

The book of Exodus proclaims the salvation of man. He has called His chosen people from Egypt. They are the “leaven” by which the whole of humanity is sanctified.¹⁰ They are freed from the bondage of Pharaoh, a type of Satan; mankind passes towards the eternal Canaan through the wilderness of this world,¹¹ into the land that is the realization of the divine promises.¹²

The book of Leviticus proclaims the intimacy of God and His people through the holy life, which is enjoyed through the Lord Christ, Who is both the sacrifice and the priest. This can be called the “Book of Holiness.” Through holiness, we behold God and unite with Him. Holiness is a gift from God, granted through the propitiation of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is symbolized by the blood sacrifices and offerings of animals. The Lord, Who is the Lawgiver, introduces to mankind the Levitical priesthood, which is earthly, as a symbol for us to understand

⁸ Morales, L. Michael. *Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of the Lord? A Biblical Theology of the Book of Leviticus*. InterVarsity Press, 2015, 29.

⁹ Malaty, Fr. Tadros, Y. *The Book of Deuteronomy*. Coptic Orthodox Christian Center, 2005, 15.

¹⁰ Malaty, Fr. Tadros Y. *A Commentary on the Book of Leviticus*, 2.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Malaty, Fr. Tadros, Y. *The Book of Deuteronomy*. Coptic Orthodox Christian Center, 2005, 16.

His priesthood, which is heavenly.¹³ He presents the divine Law pertaining to worship to reveal the sanctification by blood and the enjoyment of redemption as God desires that mankind may be sanctified according to His image.¹⁴

The book of Numbers is the conclusion of the three books preceding it. It tells the story of the wandering of the children of Israel in the wilderness of Sinai as well as their arrival to the land of Moab, which is near the promised land.¹⁵ This book demonstrates how the people were trained and taught by God wherein He has appeared as their Leader, Who cares for humanity in a personal way.¹⁶

The book of Deuteronomy is the “fountain of theological, Biblical, and historical thought for both the Old and New Testaments.”¹⁷ God reveals Himself to be both personal and communal, a God who is philanthropic, righteous, who cannot stand sin, iniquity, or oppression. God reveals His care and love for man, desiring to confide in man His secrets, that He is One and only God. This book presents those who are at the gates of Canaan, a group that through sin has been prevented from the promised land, and yet He presents mankind with a covenant to lead them to glory. This covenant allows them to enjoy the glory if they proclaim their love for God and have fellowship with Him through obedience.¹⁸

It isn’t a coincidence that the book of Leviticus is placed in the middle of the five books of the Pentateuch. Looking from the outside in, both Genesis and Deuteronomy end with a patriarch, namely Jacob and Moses, respectively, blessing the twelve tribes before dying outside of the promised land.¹⁹ Genesis provides us with a prologue while Deuteronomy is an epilogue.²⁰

Meanwhile, Exodus and Numbers share many parallel events. Exodus is about leaving Egypt while Numbers is about entering Canaan; the Tabernacle is built in Exodus and is dedicated in Numbers. While wickedness and evil are seen in Exodus through Pharaoh and the magicians, wickedness is again paralleled in Numbers through Balak and Balaam. Apostasy and plagues are realized in Exodus through the ten plagues and the rebellion of the children of Israel; this is seen in Numbers through the grumbling of the people and the episode of the snakes and the bronze serpent.

The Name of the Book

The name for this book comes from the Latin title in the Vulgate, “Liber Leviticus” (*Līber Lēvīticus*), which is derived from the Greek name in the Septuagint, “*Leueitikon*” (*Λευιτικόν*). Both may be translated as “the Levitical book” or “the book pertaining to the Levites.” This title is ambiguous since Levites may refer to (1) members of Levi’s tribe, like the

¹³ Malaty, Fr. Tadros Y. *A Commentary on the Book of Leviticus*, 2.

¹⁴ Malaty, Fr. Tadros, Y. *The Book of Deuteronomy*. Coptic Orthodox Christian Center, 2005, 16.

¹⁵ Malaty, Fr. Tadros Y. *The Book of Numbers*, 5.

¹⁶ Malaty, Fr. Tadros, Y. *The Book of Deuteronomy*. Coptic Orthodox Christian Center, 2005, 16.

¹⁷ *Id.* at 14.

¹⁸ *Id.* at 16.

¹⁹ Morales, L. Michael. *Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of the Lord? A Biblical Theology of the Book of Leviticus*. InterVarsity Press, 2015, 30.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

house of Aaron whose priestly offspring play a major role in the book; or (2) the lesser officials whose role was to serve the priests.²¹ Nevertheless, this book reveals the role of the priests and Levites in the rites of the sacrifice, the statutes of purification, the celebrations of feasts, and the order for vows.²² The name of this book in Hebrew is taken from the first word “wayyiqra” (וַיִּקְרָא) which means “[and the Lord] called.” This name highlights God’s authority and initiative in issuing the form for acceptable worship.²³

Authorship and Writing of Leviticus

In the Holy Tradition of the Church, the author of this book, like the other books of the Pentateuch, is Moses. God addresses him 38 times in this book. There is only one instance, Leviticus 10:8, in which the Lord spoke solely to Aaron. As we will see, these expressions that God spoke or called to Moses (*wayyiqra*) indicate not only that Moses is the author, but also the place and relative time in which the commandments and statutes comprising this book were given to Moses by God.

Leviticus, as with the rest of the books of the Pentateuch, was passed from generation to generation orally in a process known as “oral transmission” before it was codified or written down. Moses received the statutes contained within the book of Leviticus while on Mount Sinai, but it wasn’t until after the Babylonian exile that this book, along with the other books of the law, were written down.

First, Moses received from God the statutes and commandments comprising the book of Leviticus while on Mount Sinai. At the end of Chapter 7, which concludes the law governing sacrifices, Moses summarizes what God commanded him on Mount Sinai during the sojourn of Israel in the wilderness. Chapter 25, which focuses on the sabbatical year and the Year of Jubilee, begins with the expression that the Lord spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai. The section on blessings and curses (Lv. 26:1-46) is also concluded by “these are the statutes and judgments and laws which the Lord made between Himself and the children of Israel on Mount Sinai by the hand of Moses” (Lv. 26:46). Lastly, the book concludes, “These are the commandments which the Lord commanded Moses for the children of Israel on Mount Sinai” (Lv. 27:34).

Second, the form of Leviticus we have today was written down after the Babylonian exile and the reconstruction of the temple at Jerusalem in 515 BC. Remember, Moses never wrote the Torah down. He spoke and taught the people, who memorized its books, including Leviticus. For them, it was a living oral tradition that was recited and retold throughout their history, and was not written down until the period between 450 to 350 BC.

Although Moses is traditionally recognized as the author of Leviticus and the rest of the Pentateuch in the sense that he spoke these books to the children of Israel and taught them to memorize and understand them, there are many verses indicating he couldn’t have been the one

²¹ Sanford, La Sor William, et al. *Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form and Background of The Old Testament*. 2nd ed., W.B. Eerdmans, 1996, 81.

²² Malaty, Fr. Tadros Y. *A Commentary on the Book of Leviticus*, 3.

²³ Sanford, La Sor William, et al. *Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form and Background of The Old Testament*. 2nd ed., W.B. Eerdmans, 1996, 81.

to write them down. For example, in Numbers, we come across a passage, “Moses was very humble, more than all men who were on the face of the earth” (Nu. 12:3). Why would the most humble man write that he was more humble than all men on the face of the earth? Moreover, Moses would not have been able to document his own death, and, even if we could imagine this was possible for the Archprophet, then how would he not know the location of this body? “So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. And He buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth Peor; but no one knows his grave to this day” (Dt. 34:5-6). These are clearly comments that made their way into the oral tradition, perhaps to clarify or further develop the narrative with further details. Nevertheless, scholars continue to debate whether Moses is actually the author, claiming that differences in grammar and style indicate that there must be some other author.²⁴

The reason we needed to discuss this before jumping into Leviticus is because many of the practices and rites we see, especially those reflecting the feast, either didn’t make much sense in the wilderness or were rites that developed following the exile. For example, there are feasts regarding the first harvest. This would have been impossible to celebrate in the wilderness since there was no agriculture. Clearly these feasts were meant to be celebrated upon entering the Promised Land. Moreover, certain feasts, like the Feast of Tabernacles, which was a memorial of the time the Jews lived in tents, wouldn’t make much sense in the wilderness since they still lived in tents. Thus, Leviticus was not a book written just for life in the wilderness, but would concern all matters of life as the children of Israel, and now the Christians, prosper in the presence of the Holy God.

The Divisions of Leviticus

The book of Leviticus is broken into five divisions, with a sixth serving as an appendix:

- I. Regulations regarding sacrifices (Lv. 1:1-7:38);
- II. Descriptions of the ordination of Aaron and his sons and the first sacrifices offered at the Tent of Meeting (Lv. 8:1-10:20);
- III. Laws regulating ritual purity (Lv. 11:1-15:32)
- IV. Liturgy and calendar for the Day of Atonement (Lv. 16:1-34)
- V. Laws with exhortations to holy living (Lv. 17:1-26:46)
- VI. Laws on vows and offerings (Lv. 27:1-34) (Appendix)

Purpose

As Leviticus served as the liturgical handbook for the levitical priesthood, at the same time it taught the Israelites the necessity of an untainted holiness in every aspect of their lives.²⁵ Leviticus is a part of a large section of instructions and regulations that runs from Ex. 25:1 to Nu. 10:10.²⁶ The instructions begin with Israel affirming its covenant with the Lord, worshiping from

²⁴ For more on this topic, including the modern scholarly criticisms, see Brown, Raymond E., et al. *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*. Prentice Hall, 1990, 4-5.

²⁵ Brown, Raymond E., et al. *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*. Prentice Hall, 1990, 61.

²⁶ Sanford, La Sor William, et al. *Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form and Background of The Old Testament*. 2nd ed., W.B. Eerdmans, 1996, 81.

afar, proclaiming “all that the Lord has said we will do, and be obedient” (cf. Ex. 24:7) and are concluded by God’s promise, “I am the Lord your God” (cf. Nu. 10:10).

God declared to Moses on Mount Sinai that “if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Ex. 19:6). He proclaimed furthermore “I am the Lord who sanctifies you” (cf. Lv. 22:32) and “I will walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people” (Lv. 26:12). If Genesis shows God's promise to the Patriarchs that He would be their God and they would be His people, and Exodus and Numbers are the story of that relationship, then Leviticus is the *how* of this relationship.

The goal and purpose of this book, then, is to proclaim that holiness is the line that distinguishes the people of God from the rest of the world. Holiness is demonstrated in the worship and behavior of God’s chosen people. The goal of worship, in all its form, and the goal of the divine commandment, is for all to enjoy holiness in the Lord. This goal is plainly seen when the Lord says, “For I am the Lord your God. You shall therefore consecrate yourselves, and you shall be holy; for I am holy” (Lv. 11:44).

How is holiness presented? It is not a list of commandments to keep or practices that are required to be followed. Rather, behind all these, is the acceptance of the Holy God. Holiness is a proclamation to “stand before the Lord.” The concept of “before the Lord” is mentioned 61 times in the book of Leviticus, emphasizing holiness as being present with God. While considering holiness in the negative sense is to refrain from sin and uncleanness and to be separated from the world, holiness in the positive sense is the encounter and union with God, the Holy One.

We come to learn that although the Laws are good and show God’s wisdom, they expose Israel’s and all humanity’s inability to be God’s faithful people. The Law is a revelation from God, but not an end in itself. The purpose of the Mosaic Laws is:

- (1) to reveal the difference between good and evil;
- (2) to make the world accountable to God (Rm. 3:19);
- (3) to explain that no one will be declared righteous by observing the law, rather through the law we become conscious of our sin (Rm. 3:20); and
- (4) to show that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Rm. 3:23).

Under the Law or Under Grace?

Before finally diving into Leviticus, it may be necessary to discuss why we as Christians need to study this book, and why we need to study the law. Are we under the law? John was very clear: “For the law was given through Moses, *but* grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (Jn. 1:17). That should be clear enough to demonstrate that what we had received before was inferior, and what we now receive in Christ is superior. While this may be true, this verse has a context: “And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace” (Jn. 1:16). There is a fullness to understanding and knowing Christ. While we cannot fully understand God, for, as St. Gregory the Theologian said, if we could understand God then He wouldn’t be God, our hearts and minds may be prepared for Him, and we may be instructed in what He has revealed to us. With this in mind, we read “No one has seen God at any time. The Only-Begotten Son, Who in the bosom of

the Father, He has declared Him” (Jn. 1:18). St. John the Evangelist begins his Gospel stating that the Son has declared God while immediately describing St. John the Baptist. In a chapter all about preparation for the coming of Christ through baptism, we see this description of the law and grace and realize that the law has prepared us for Christ. Even the Lord pointed this out to His apostles, saying, “These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and *the Prophet* and *the Psalms concerning Me*” (Lk. 24:44).

So although St. Paul declares that “we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not *in* the oldness of the letter” (Rm. 7:6), “I thought the law died to the law that I might live to God” (Ga. 2:19), “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death” (Rm. 8:2), and “Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes” (Rm. 10:4), the same Lord declared that He did not come to abolish the law but fulfill it.

Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven (Mt. 5:17-20)

St. John Chrysostom explains that our Lord in this passage is actually commending the law, not putting it down. He does this by comparing it with the New Covenant, implying that each comes from the same family. According to St. John Chrysostom, the Lord does not find fault with the old law, but in fact makes it more strict, explaining that, had it been evil, our Lord would have discarded it.

If the law is so commendable, how is it not adequate to bring us into the Kingdom? After the coming of Christ we are favored with a greater strength than law as such. Those who are adopted as children are bound to strive for greater things.²⁷

Although St. Paul describes that those under the law are under the curse, and although he declares that no one is justified by the law, he declares that the law has preserved us so we may be kept for the faith to be revealed in Jesus. In this way he describes the law as a tutor:

What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator does not mediate for one only, but God

²⁷ St. John Chrysostom, *Commentary on Matthew*, Homily 16.4 (PG 57:244; NPNF 1 10:107).

is one. Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law. But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor (Ga. 3:19-25).

The law taught humanity many important lessons. Sin leads to death. Death reigns over man. God calls man to be holy. While some things are holy, other things are not. Those things that are not holy separate us from God. When we are separated from God, there must be an offering so we may return. When we return, we are washed and made new. When living in the newness of life, we abide in His presence till we sin. What the law couldn't do, however, was save us or provide forgiveness of sin. It was only a tutor to point us towards grace in Christ:

Now if the law was a custodian and we were confined under its direction, it was not opposed to grace but cooperated with it. But if it continues to bind us after grace has come, then it is opposed to grace. Those who maintain their custody at this point are the ones who bring the child into the greatest disrepute. The custodian makes the child ridiculous when he keeps him close at hand even after the time has come for his departure.²⁸

As we study Leviticus and study the law, we will not only consider the basic letter, but rather consider the fullness and fulfillment of the law in Christ, searching much deeper into what God expects from us. We continue to read the law and to read Leviticus, because the law teaches us many indispensable concepts about God in a simple way. Sacrifices teach us the offering of Christ upon the Cross for the forgiveness of sins. Priesthood teaches us about the priesthood of Christ. Laws about cleanliness teach us to distinguish good from evil and to present both our body and soul pure to Christ. Atonement teaches us regarding Christ's sacrifice by which mankind is rescued from death, sin, and corruption. The Holiness Code (Lv. 17-26) teaches us that God desires a broken and humble heart (cf. Ps. 50:17, LXX), mercy and not sacrifice and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings (cf. Ho. 6:6), and that He desires the circumcision of the heart (cf. Dt. 30:6). Finally, the law teaches us to give gifts to God, but also to give Him what is His, namely the tithe.

²⁸ St. John Chrysostom, *Homily on Galatians*. 3.25-26. *IOEP* 4:64.

Chapter 3: Offerings (Lv. 1-7)

Introduction to Division I (Lv. 1-7)

Division I (Lv. 1-7), which contains the regulations for offering the various kinds of sacrifices, is further divided into two sections: (1) the basic teachings regarding the sacrifices (Lv. 1-5) and (2) the administration of such sacrifices (Lv. 6-7).²⁹ Again, these sacrifices and this pattern was given to Moses by God not only for Aaron and his sons, but for the entire congregation of the children of Israel:

Therefore, in the beginning of Leviticus it says, "The Lord called Moses and spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting" that he should publicly announce to the sons of Israel the laws of sacrifices and offerings.³⁰

In other words, these commands do not only concern priests, but concern every person since these offerings are intrinsically connected with mankind's relationship with God, namely forgiveness, repentance, and returning to His presence, as Origen wrote elsewhere:

"If the high priest sins, he will offer this and that" (Lv. 4:3). Or, "if the entire synagogue sins" or "if the prince sins" or "if a single soul sins" (Lv. 4:13, 22, 27), it is commanded to each and everyone what they will offer. Why, therefore? Do we think this distinction of persons to be unimportant so that indeed one is commanded to offer under the name of "a person," another under that of "a soul," another under that of "a high priest," but another under that of "synagogue," even another under that of "a prince," or under the surname of "a single soul"? I myself, meanwhile, in my humble understanding, think that, whom he called "a person" in this place and placed first among all for the making of a sacrifice to God, is to be understood as the whole human race and that that one is called "a person" who offers "a calf without blemish from the herd as a whole burnt offering" (Lv. 1:3-5).³¹

We must bear in mind, however, that the law is a shadow of what is to be completed and accomplished in our Lord Jesus Christ. It is our tutor (cf. Gal. 3:24). Our study will require us to look at what God prescribed and required of the people and how these regulations pointed to Christ who not only completed, but exceeded through the reality of salvation that can only be found in Him.

²⁹ Sanford, La Sor William, et al. *Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form and Background of The Old Testament*. 2nd ed., W.B. Eerdmans, 1996, 82.

³⁰ Barkley, Gary Wayne, translator. *Origen: Homilies on Leviticus: 1-16*. Edited by Thomas P. Halton, Catholic Univ. of America Pr., 1990, 31.

³¹ Origen the Scholar and Gary Wayne Barkley, translator. *Origen: Homilies on Leviticus: 1-16*. Edited by Thomas P. Halton, Catholic Univ. of America Pr., 1990, 32.

Two Groups of Sacrifices (Lv. 1-7)

The first section of the sacrifices is also divided into two groups: (1) sacrifices that offer a sweet-smelling aroma to God, namely the whole burnt offering (Lv. 1), the grain offering (Lv. 2), and the peace offering (Lv. 3); and (2) sacrifices that provide propitiation³² and forgiveness, namely the sin offering and guilt offering (Lv. 4-5).³³

The first group of offerings in the first section of offerings present an image of a liturgical offering. It is essentially labor between the one bringing the offering and the priest, as *liturgia* is work of the people. The one bringing the offering presents his offering to the priest, and together they offer it on behalf of that individual. This concept is seen clearly in Lv. 1:3-9.

The Whole Burnt Offering (Lv. 1:1-17)

A whole burnt-offering, also known as a "holocaust" (*olocauston*), was so-called because the whole victim was consumed with fire and offered to God completely with no part of it remaining for the use of man. The English term is derived from the Vulgate and Septuagint translation of the Hebrew *‘ôlâ*, signifying that something ascends or rises.³⁴ The Greek *holokautōma*, meaning something wholly destroyed by fire, aptly expresses the essential characteristic of the sacrifice—the victim's being placed on the altar and its complete consummation.³⁵

A whole burnt offering was to be given for general sins (Lv. 1:3-17) and served as a confession of general sinfulness. Poor worshippers brought two birds (1:14-17), while those who could afford would offer a male sheep or goat from their herd/flock (Lv. 1:14-17).³⁶

The one bringing the offering would either present his bull (Lv. 1:3), which was to be of superior quality, a male without blame or blemish, and the best of the firstfruits. The one bringing the offering would lay his hand on the head of the animal, identifying the animal as his own (Lv. 1:4), which was then followed by the slaughtering of the animal by that person offering (Lv. 1:5). The priest would dash the blood against the altar (Lv. 1:5), and the one who brought the offering would skin and cut the offering (Lv. 1:6). The animal would be arranged by the priest, who would prepare a fire (Lv. 1:7-8). The one who brought the offering would wash the innards and legs (Lv. 1:9), and the priest would burn the fat of the offering (Lv. 1:9).

The Problem of Sin

Before we continue with our discussion on sacrifices in this first division of Leviticus, we will discuss sin and everyone's need for Christ's sacrifice, which is prefigured in this law.

³² Propitiation refers to an offering that results in atonement, redemption, and reconciliation. Christ offered Himself on the Cross as a propitiation for our sins, to liberate humanity from sin and death. (Jack Norman Sparks, *The Orthodox Study Bible: Notes* (Thomas Nelson, 2008), 1785).

³³ Sanford, La Sor William, et al. *Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form and Background of The Old Testament*. 2nd ed., W.B. Eerdmans, 1996, 82.

³⁴ Brown, Raymond E., et al. *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*. Prentice Hall, 1990, 62.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ House, Paul R. and Eric Mitchell. *Old Testament Survey*. Second Edition. B&H Publishing Group, 2007, 64-65.

The word most often used for *sin* in Scripture is the Greek word *hamartia*. This means “failing to hit the mark.” It occurs by omission or commission, in thought and feeling or in speech and action. Adam and Eve, whose target was to build a relationship with God and become like Him, missed the mark of their goal, falling away both from Him and their true calling.

Adam and Eve may have been the first to sin, but all men have contributed to the further corruption and brokenness of the fallen world we live in because of their own personal sin. As St. Paul wrote, “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned” (Rm. 5:12).

The Reason for Sacrifice

Why did God demand animal sacrifices? As St. Cyril of Alexandria contemplates, “The God of all did not in fact make death, nor does He delight in the destruction of living beings, but He created all things to exist and the generations of the world to be perpetuated.”³⁷ So if God created life for the purpose of existing in living, then why would He demand that the soul of the animal be offered?

It was not a matter of choice that death is required, but rather a consequence of sin. Moses recounted that God gave a command to Adam: “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (Ge. 2:16-17). As St. Paul explained, “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned” (Rm. 5:12). St. Athanasius explained that the Lord took flesh so that He may rescue mankind from sin leading to death.

And seeing the race of rational creatures in the way to perish, and death reigning over them by corruption; seeing, too, that the threat against transgression gave a firm hold to the corruption which was upon us, and that it was monstrous that before the law was fulfilled it should fall through: seeing, once more, the unseemliness of what had come to pass: that the things whereof He Himself was Artificer were passing away: seeing, further, the exceeding wickedness of men, and how little by little they had increased it to an intolerable pitch against themselves: and seeing, lastly, how all men were under penalty of death: He took pity on our race, and had mercy on our infirmity, and condescended to our corruption, and, unable to bear that death should have the mastery—lest the creature should perish, and His Father's handiwork in men be spent for nought—He takes unto Himself a body, and that of no different sort from ours.³⁸

³⁷ St. Cyril of Alexandria and Nicholas P. Lunn, translator. *St. Cyril of Alexandria: Glaphyra on the Pentateuch, Volume 2, Exodus through Deuteronomy*. Edited by David G. Hunter, (Catholic Univ. of America Press, 2019), 128.

³⁸ St. Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, §8.2.

St. Cyril of Alexandria articulates this point, saying, “It could be said that although we were afflicted with the disease of sin in Adam with respect to the world, in Christ we have now become a spiritual sacrifice that is fragrant to God the Father, good and acceptable, exceedingly better than the shadow relating to the law.”³⁹ St. Paul further clarifies the sentence of death upon mankind and the free gift of salvation and forgiveness in Jesus Christ:

“Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man’s offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many” (Rm. 5:14-15).

St. Athanasius reasoned that since God is immortal and could not die, it was necessary that the Word take a mortal body like ours with a rational, human soul so that He may offer Himself to be offered to die on our behalf:

For the Word, perceiving that no otherwise could the corruption of men be undone save by death as a necessary condition, while it was impossible for the Word to suffer death, being immortal, and Son of the Father; to this end He takes to Himself a body capable of death, that it, by partaking of the Word Who is above all, might be worthy to die in the stead of all, and might, because of the Word which had come to dwell in it, remain incorruptible, and that thenceforth corruption might be stayed from all by the Grace of the Resurrection. Whence, by offering unto death the body He Himself had taken, as an offering and sacrifice free from any stain, straightway He put away death from all His peers by the offering of an equivalent.⁴⁰

St. Paul explained in the same passage in Romans that “until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law” (Rm. 5:13). St. Irenaeus commented that the Law of Moses took away death’s kingdom since it showed that “death was not a king but a robber” and moreover “revealed death as a murderer.”⁴¹ According to St. Cyril of Alexandria:

The law of Moses was the power constraining the weakness of sinners. It proved to be not the answer to sin but rather a provocation to wrath. For it was necessary for transgressors to undergo the punishments prescribed by the law, and wherever there was transgression, there was also sin. So if sin brought death in its wake, it may undoubtedly be said that death, having been born of sin, was strengthened by this very thing. But when sin was taken

³⁹ St. Cyril of Alexandria and Nicholas P. Lunn, translator. *St. Cyril of Alexandria: Glaphyra on the Pentateuch, Volume 2, Exodus through Deuteronomy*. Edited by David G. Hunter, Catholic Univ. of America Pr., 2019, 129.

⁴⁰ St. Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, §9.1.

⁴¹ St. Irenaeus. *Against Heresies*, 3.18.7.

away, death was also weakened, and it disappeared along with its parent. Therefore, there was death in the world until the coming of the law. For as long as the law was valid, the crime of transgression could be laid against those who had fallen, but once the law was removed, the accusation of transgression disappeared as well. Therefore when the guilt ceased, death also came to an end.⁴²

Put another way, the law existed to prevent sin, but it ended up piling on sin, because anyone who broke the law (i.e. transgressed) committed sin. Since death came through sin, the operation of the law strengthened death. But when sin was removed, death was also weakened. Therefore, death, both physical and spiritual, existed until the law. As long as the law was valid, people could sin by transgressing the law, but once the law was removed, there was no transgression in breaking the law and death came to an end. St. Ambrose put it this way:

Sin abounded by the law because through the law came knowledge of sin, and it became harmful for me to know what through my weakness I could not avoid. It is good to know beforehand what one is to avoid, but if I cannot avoid something, it is harmful to have known about it. Thus the law changed to its opposite, yet it became useful to me by the very increase of sin, for I was humbled.⁴³

Joining these verses and comments together, we can understand that, until the time of Moses and the coming of the law, sin was in the world, but could not be accounted to sinners since there was no knowledge of sin. Although from Adam till Moses, men continued to sin, but there was no law to define what sin was. Since there was no knowledge of sin, it could not be counted against them as it was against Adam who rebelled against God. That being said, sin continued to reign, and men continued to die. Since they had not committed Adam's sin, yet they received the same judgment as Adam, then they committed sin *in Adam*. The sentence of death did not arise out of their personal sins, but rather was mankind in solidarity with Adam. Just as Adam was the source of death, Christ became the source of life, as St. Cyril emphasized:

What has Adam's guilt got to do with us? Why are we held responsible for his sin when we were not even born when he committed it? Didn't God say: "The parents will not die for the children, nor the children for the parents, but the soul which has sinned, it shall die" (Dt. 24:16)? How then shall we defend this doctrine? The soul, I say, which has sinned, shall die. We have become sinners because of Adam's disobedience in the following manner... After he fell into sin and surrendered to corruption, impure lusts invaded the nature of his flesh, and at the same time the evil law of our members was born. For our nature contracted the disease of sin because of the disobedience of one man, that is,

⁴² St. Cyril of Alexandria. *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*.

⁴³ St. Ambrose of Milan, *Letters to Laymen*. 83.

Adam, and thus many became sinners. This was not because they sinned along with Adam, because they did not then exist, but because they had the same nature as Adam, which fell under the law of sin. Thus, just as human nature acquired the weakness of corruption in Adam because of disobedience, and evil desires invaded it, so the same nature was later set free by Christ, who was obedient to God the Father and did not commit sin.⁴⁴

But while the law of Moses in and of itself could do no more than define sin and transgression, nevertheless it provides types and shadows of Christ's sacrifice which is to come. So then the reason for the animal sacrifices is two-fold: (1) to demonstrate the problem of sin, that the wages of sin is death (cf. Rm. 6:23); (2) that the animal was sacrificed⁴⁵ on behalf of the person, for the person's life, but since the life of an animal is not equal to that of a human, it must be repeated; and (3) to provide a type for Christ's death to come.

St. John the Evangelist declares in his Gospel account, "For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (Jn 1:17). Moses received the moral law, which guided Israel towards holiness and purity, but the law of itself could not save people from sin and the consequence of sin, which is death. As St. Paul wrote, "Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Ro 3:20), which he followed by teaching that we are "justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Ro 3:24). Thus, the law provided guidance and the knowledge of sin, but the life-giving work of our Lord Jesus Christ provides forgiveness for sin and salvation.

The Bull is Christ

Origen recognizes the bull offered in Lv. 1 points to Christ. The bull is a male without blemish, a typical description of Jesus, "Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth" (1 Pt. 2:22). While the bull is offered for various people, such as "a soul," "a high priest," "a synagogue," or "a prince," Christ is offered for the entire human race.

Origen connects these points together, clarifying that one who offers the whole burnt offering from the bulls, offering it at the door of the tabernacle of testimony, puts his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him. The

⁴⁴St. Cyril of Alexandria. *Explanation of the Letter to the Romans*.

⁴⁵As Orthodox Christians, we must be aware of the various theological terms used today to describe our Lord Jesus Christ's sacrifice on the Holy Cross for the salvation of mankind. Words and phrases such as "[penal] substitution," "atonement," "ransom," "divinization," and "theosis" are widely used by Christians to describe how our Lord accomplished our salvation and what humanity received through His sacrifice. **While the words are important, what is most important is what is meant by those words**, because different writers in different ages oftentimes used these words interchangeably. Orthodox Christians today need to understand what they believe and intend to say when using such words.

For example, Orthodox Christians do not believe that Christ's death was for the purpose of satisfying the wrath of God. Rather, Christ's death served two main purposes. First, Jesus Christ united Himself with humanity in all of its sufferings, sorrows, and pains. He took upon Himself the natural consequence of man's sin—while He Himself remained without sin—rather than the wrath of God the Father. Second, through His death, Christ annihilated the bonds of death, as we sing, "Christ is risen from the dead, trampling death by death, and upon those in the tombs bestowing life."

person who offers and whose offering is accepted is humanity. Christ became man, “being the firstborn among many brethren” (cf. Rm. 8:29), that He may offer Himself upon the Cross. He is offering and offeror, and yet He is without sin. He does so not because He has need of an offering, but that He may offer the acceptable sacrifice on our behalf that our sins may be forgiven and that we may be reconciled unto the Father.

Moreover, the manner by which the bull is killed provides further images of the death of Christ upon the Cross. As the bull is offered at the door of the tabernacle and his blood is sprinkled on the altar by the doors of the tabernacle of testimony, so our Lord Jesus Christ was crucified outside of Jerusalem. This is a one-to-one image of what St. Paul describes in Hebrews, saying, “Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate” (He. 13:12). Origen continues with this same analogy, meditating on the slaughter of the bull before the priests as an image of Christ’s own sacrifice:

And yet it says, "And he will lay his hand upon the head of the offering and will kill the calf before the Lord, and the sons of Aaron the priest will offer the blood and pour it out while going around the altar which is at the door of the Tent of Meeting" (Lv. 1:4-5). Indeed, one can see because of this word that Annas and Caiaphas and all the others, "who having taken council against Jesus, pronounced him guilty of death" (Mt. 27:1; Jn. 18:13), and poured out his blood "around the base of the altar of the Tent of Meeting" (Lv. 4:7, 1:5), were from the sons of Aaron. For the blood is poured out there where the altar and its base were, as the Lord himself said, "It is not acceptable for a prophet to die outside Jerusalem" (Lk. 13:33). Therefore, "he placed his hand upon the head of the calf" (Lv. 1:4), that is, He placed the sins of the human race upon his own body, for He himself is the head of his body, the Church (Ep. 1:22-23).⁴⁶

Acceptable Sacrifice

How was Christ’s death acceptable to His Father, as St. Paul describes, “an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling aroma” (Ep. 2:2), whose body was presented as a “living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God” (Rm. 12:1)?

Christ is a burnt offering, that is, one which is wholly and entirely, and not just partially, dedicated to God the Father as a pleasing aroma. Therefore, He is truly “most holy.” For in Him we have been sanctified, and He is our whole justification, and He is moreover the sanctification of the spirits above.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Origen the Scholar and Gary Wayne Barkley, translator. *Origen: Homilies on Leviticus: 1-16*. Edited by Thomas P. Halton, Catholic Univ. of America Pr., 1990, 33.

⁴⁷ St. Cyril of Alexandria and Nicholas P. Lunn, translator. *St. Cyril of Alexandria: Glaphyra on the Pentateuch, Volume 2, Exodus through Deuteronomy*. Edited by David G. Hunter, Catholic Univ. of America Pr., 2019, 136.

The sacrifice of Christ is acceptable because it is done in purity and righteousness. He is perfect and blameless, free from all stain and dishonor. The Lord has sanctified His Body and has prepared it to be offered upon the holy wood of the Cross. He washed it in the waters of the Jordan and overcame temptation in the wilderness. He refrained from filthy speech and evil conduct and instead gave life through His word and provided healing through His pure body. Being man in everything except sin, He took a human mind, body, and soul, which He sanctified in Himself. While man toiled and could not overcome the heavy yoke of the law, Christ accepted unto Himself the circumcision and was obedient where we failed. Having accomplished the works of the economy in His flesh, He offered that which He received from the Holy Theotokos Virgin Mary as a propitiation for our sins, and not just our sins, but for the sins of the whole world (cf. 1 Jn. 2:2). Ultimately, His offering is acceptable because, being God, He offered Himself in humility to die on our behalf:

[W]ho, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:6-11).

Since mankind could not offer a sacrifice like this on its own, Christ became man that He may offer Himself, the lamb of God Who takes away the sins of the world (Jn. 1:29), as an acceptable offering on our behalf. Not being isolated or alienated from this process, although we are called to “work out our own salvation” (Phil. 2:12), we, being “fellow workers with Him” (1 Co. 3:9), are made “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Pt. 2:4), whose faith is not without works (cf. Ja. 2:18, 26), but rather we crucify ourselves with Christ so that it “no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Ga. 2:20). Thus, “through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith...I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead” (Phil. 3:9-11).

Atonement

According to the instructions for slaughtering the bull, the one offering “shall put his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him” (Lv. 1:4). This is a type of Christ, Who “Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed” (1 Pt. 2:24). Just as the one presenting the sacrifice would place his hand on the head of the bull as a representation that the sin of the man was placed upon the animal that would die in His place, humanity rests his hands on Christ, Who dies in our place so we may die and have life in Him:

But since it was necessary also that the debt owing from all should be paid again...it was owing that all should die, for which special cause, indeed, He came among us...He next offered up His sacrifice also on behalf of all, yielding His Temple to death in the stead of all, in order firstly to make men quit and free of their old trespass, and further to show Himself more powerful even than death, displaying His own body incorruptible, as first-fruits of the resurrection of all... And so it was that two marvels came to pass at once, that the death of all was accomplished in the Lord's body, and that death and corruption were wholly done away by reason of the Word that was united with it. For there was need of death, and death must be suffered on behalf of all, that the debt owing from all might be paid. Whence, as I said before, the Word, since it was not possible for Him to die, as He was immortal, took to Himself a body such as could die, that He might offer it as His own in the stead of all, and as suffering, through His union with it, on behalf of all, bring to nought he who had the power of death, that is the devil; and might deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.⁴⁸

The Christological Understanding of the Burnt Offering

The offering of the bull continues to be an example of Christ's offering on the Cross since we see (1) fire, which is an image of the divinity and (2) wood, which is the Cross. Keeping in mind that the whole burnt offering is a shadow of the crucifixion, we can see an illustration of death being killed on the Cross.

Offering ourselves as Whole Burnt Offerings

As we previously discussed, the word holocaust is derived from *holou* meaning wholly and *causis* meaning burnt. St. Augustine recognizes that, as the offering is wholly burnt and wholly consumed, so too must we be wholly consumed by divine fire. St. John Chrysostom provides another example of the whole burnt offering, pointing to the martyrs as those who have entirely given themselves to God. However, he still provides an opportunity for those of us not called to martyrdom to make a whole burnt offering a different yet similar way:

There are other sacrifices, which are truly considered as burnt offerings: when the martyrs offer their souls and bodies as burnt offerings to the Lord, their sacrifices have a sweet fragrance to God. You, as well, if you cannot offer your body a burnt offering by the material fire, you may offer it, burnt by another fire, as. For example, by the optional poverty: instead of spending the rest of your life in luxuries and pleasure, you may choose the bitter and

⁴⁸ St. Athanasius. *On the Incarnation*. §20.2-6.

tough life, of bringing your body to death. Would that not be a burnt offering? Bring the lusts of your body to death. Crucify it to receive the crown of martyrdom, which the martyrs get through the sword. However, here, you receive it by the mind through the able will.⁴⁹

The reason the martyrdom of the body and mind are different yet similar is because the martyrs witnessed the resurrection of the Lord and fought against many bodily temptations to maintain their conviction and uphold their faith. Although the body of the saint may not be killed, there may continue to be a violent struggle that occurs in the mind and the heart. St. John Chrysostom has the boldness to say that if we cannot join the martyrs in sacrificing our bodies to the Lord, then we may join them in wholly offering our mind and our heart.

St. Gregory the Theologian applies this to all Christians, encouraging us to offer to God the members of our body here on earth (cf. Cl. 3:5), to dedicate them to God to be counted as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable, which is our reasonable service (cf. Rm. 12:1). This directs us to refrain from using our bodies for sin, like St. Paul's example of the one who stole now working with his hands to give to one in need (cf. Ep. 4:28-29), or the Ninevites who ceased sinning with their hands (cf. Jo. 3:8, 10).

Grain Offering (Lv. 2:1-16)

The second offering is the grain offering, also called the cereal offering. God provides instruction to Moses that the offering shall be of fine flour, oil shall be poured on it, and frankincense added on it. The entire offering is then burned, creating a sweet smelling aroma to the Lord (cf. Lv. 2:1-2). When offering the grain offering, one may offer (1) fine flour (Lv. 2:1-3), (2) grain baked in the oven (Lv. 2:4-6), or (3) grain baked in a covered pan (Lv. 2:7-10). Just as the whole burnt offering is a type of Christ, so also is the grain offering. As grain can be ground and bread be made, so too does the Lord announce that He is the Bread of Life (Jn. 6:15, 48).

So then, on the one hand, Christ is the firstfruits and a beautiful and fragrant offering to God, and, on the other, He gives a great deal of nourishment to us. For He is "the bread that came down from heaven and gives life to the world" (Jn. 6:33), as if He provided Himself as food for us, just like flour or grain.⁵⁰

This is an illustration of the Eucharist, in which our Lord Jesus Christ offers His Body and Blood upon the Cross, of which we partake for eternal life and reconciliation. As St. Paul instructed the church in Corinth, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the Blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the Body of Christ? For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread" (1 Co.

⁴⁹ St. John Chrysostom quote, without reference, taken from Malaty, Fr. Tadros Y. *A Commentary on the Book of Leviticus*, 15.

⁵⁰ St. Cyril of Alexandria and Nicholas P. Lunn, translator. *St. Cyril of Alexandria: Glaphyra on the Pentateuch, Volume 2, Exodus through Deuteronomy*. Edited by David G. Hunter, Catholic Univ. of America Pr., 2019, 130.

10:16-17). St. Irenaeus connects the grain of wheat to the Euchrist, by which we become partakers of immortality and heirs of eternal life.

A cutting from the vine planted in the ground bears fruit in its season, or a kernel of wheat falling into the earth and becoming decomposed rises and is multiplied by the Spirit of God, who contains all things. And then, through the wisdom of God, it serves for our use when, after receiving the Word of God, it becomes the Eucharist, which is the Body and Blood of Christ. In the same way our bodies, being nourished by it, and deposited in the earth and suffering decomposition there, shall rise at their appointed time. The Word of God grants them resurrection to the glory of God, even the Father who freely gives to this mortal immortality, and to this corruptible incorruption (1 Co. 15:53). This is so because the strength of God is made perfect in weakness in order that we may never become puffed up, as if we had life from ourselves, or become exalted against God with ungrateful minds.⁵¹

St. Cyril comments that the grain offering here illustrates our Lord's teaching regarding the grain of wheat, which St. Irenaeus also commented above. He explains:

Now when a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it grows up as numerous ears of wheat. For this is what Christ Himself told us, "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit" (Jn. 12:24). Moreover, He did die, not on His own account, but for us. And this is, in effect, a beautiful and fragrant offering without blemish which is presented to God the Father as though it were from us.⁵²

Just as God commanded that oil be poured on the grain offering (Lv. 2:1, 4, 7), so was Christ anointed by the Holy Spirit:

Wherefore it is also written that the Spirit soared down upon Christ and has abided on Him. Christ, therefore, is the Word of God, and, Who because of us and like us, is Man and in servant's form. He is both anointed as man after the flesh, and anointing divinely with His own Spirit those who believe in Him.⁵³

We too, being called Christians, are anointed in the Chrismation with the Holy Myron, receiving the Holy Spirit who St. Paul describes as the seal of our salvation and guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession (cf. Ep. 1:13-14). However, our anointing is not the same as Christ since we are not anointed divinely with our own spirit.

⁵¹ St. Irenaeus. *Against Heresies*. 5.2.3.

⁵² St. Cyril of Alexandria and Nicholas P. Lunn, translator. *St. Cyril of Alexandria: Glaphyra on the Pentateuch, Volume 2, Exodus through Deuteronomy*. Edited by David G. Hunter, Catholic Univ. of America Pr., 2019, 129.

⁵³ St. Cyril of Alexandria and P.E. Pusey, translator. *Scholia on the Incarnation*. §1.

So then, the element of oil clearly points to the gift of the Holy Spirit. This element cannot be separated from the sacrifice. Since we cannot separate the offering of oil from the offering of the grain, then we cannot separate the crucifixion of Christ from the gift of the Holy Spirit. As Christ offered Himself as a burnt offering, the Lord granted us to receive the Holy Spirit. The after the Lord died, rose from the dead, and ascended into the heavens, He sent the Holy Spirit, as He spoke, “When the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me” (Jn. 15:26).

The Lord granted us the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, the Comforter, to aid us in our sojourn on earth, to continue to work the works of salvation within us, sanctifying and transforming us, that we may continue to be renewed in the likeness of God through Christ. In comforting us and providing truth, the Holy Spirit is the healer, who works in the mysteries of the Church to renew Christians.

The Holy Spirit calls and prepares us to participate in sacrifice. As Luke recounts in Acts, the Holy Spirit said, “Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them” (Ac. 13:2). The Holy Spirit calls and separates. When we live according to the spirit, we are dead in the flesh, as St. Paul said, “For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live” (Rm. 8:13).

The Holy Spirit comforts us in our suffering, as the Lord said, “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you” (Jn. 14:26). The present sufferings, then, are not considered a time of defeat, but rather a circumstance of sanctification leading to holiness, as St. Paul said, “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be *compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Rm. 8:18) and “not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit” (Rm. 8:23). So then, just as in the crucifixion and resurrection we find elements of suffering leading to joy, so too does “the oil symbolize prosperity and happiness, while the frankincense suitably signifies to us that which is sacred and fragrant,”⁵⁴ which is an acceptable offering on our behalf, as we discussed above.

Firstfruit

Christ is the firstborn over all creation (cf. Col. 1:15). As St. Paul declared, “But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Co. 15:20). As St. Cyril of Alexandria said, “For Christ is the firstfruits, as I said, of a nature which is restored to newness of life, and in Him all things have become new.”⁵⁵ So it is that anyone in Christ is a new creation (cf. 2 Co. 5:17), as St. Cyril also said, “He Himself is the offering made for us, the spiritual firstfruits, that is, the firstfruits of humanity, the firstborn from the dead, the first to enter incorruption, the firstfruits, as it were, of those that slept.”⁵⁶

⁵⁴ St. Cyril of Alexandria and Nicholas P. Lunn, translator. *St. Cyril of Alexandria: Glaphyra on the Pentateuch, Volume 2, Exodus through Deuteronomy*. Edited by David G. Hunter, Catholic Univ. of America Pr., 2019, 130.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Id.* at 129.

Sweet Smelling Aroma

The offering gives a sweet smelling aroma, which the Church contemplates to describe the worthiness and acceptance of Christ's sacrifice on our behalf. In her hymn *Fai Etafenf*, the Church expresses the worthiness of Christ's offering upon the cross, "This is He who offered Himself up, as an acceptable sacrifice, on the Cross for the salvation of our race. His good Father smelled Him at the evening watch on Golgotha."

He "became a beautiful and fragrant offering for us"⁵⁷ and "was presented as an offering so that He might do away with sin and with the death that came through it and because of it."⁵⁸ We too are called to participate in such offering, as St. Paul said, "Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma" (Ep. 5:1-2). St. Paul even comments regarding this aroma and fragrance as it relates to his own ministry, saying "For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life. And who is sufficient for these things" (2 Co. 2:15-16).

The Peace Offering (Lv. 3:1-17)

Along with the whole burnt offering and the grain offering is the peace offering. The peace offering was offered as "an act of thanksgiving (Lv. 7:12; 22:29-30), to fulfill a special vow (Lv. 7:16; 22:21), or as a freewill offering (Lv. 7:16; 22:18, 21, 23)."⁵⁹ No birds or grains may be offered. The only animals that may be offered are bulls, lambs, and goats. Since it expresses the inner joy and life of thanksgiving, it is also called "perfect sacrifice," which was optionally offered by the whole congregation or by any of its members on certain joyful occasions as a sacrifice of thanksgiving to God for His care and love.

Jesus Christ is the True Peace Offering

The source of peace is the Lord Jesus Christ, who reconciled and brought to us peace with the Father through His blood.⁶⁰ He is true peace, who puts to death the enmity and provides us access by one Spirit to the Father (cf. Ep. 2:14-18), as St. Cyril of Alexandria comments:

For Emmanuel died, opening up for us, as it were, the entrance to the Holy of Holies, opening also the doors of the Church in heaven for those who believe in Him. By the death of Christ, then, we reap the benefit of being able to move into the holy tabernacle itself, which the Lord and not man set up, the Heavenly Jerusalem, the

⁵⁷ *Id.* at 131.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Ibrahim, Dr. Medhat. *Commentary on the Holy Book of Leviticus*. Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States, 2003, 10.

⁶⁰ Malaty, Fr. Tadros Y. *A Commentary on the Book of Leviticus*, 43.

beautiful city above, the mother of the saints and the home⁶¹ of angels.⁶²

The true peace offering is the Eucharist, derived from the Greek *Eucharistia*, meaning thanksgiving. The reality of the state of thanksgiving is the condition of thanksgiving humanity enters into when united through the participation in the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The peace offering involves the innards of the offering since it reflects the depth of affection of the Lord who offers Himself according to His tender mercy and the thanksgiving in the heart of the offeror. This love of God and the Church results in sanctification, as St. Paul describes, that Christ loved and gave Himself for the Church, that He might “sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish” (Ep. 5:25-27). St. Cyril contemplates:

He laid down His life for the Church. For the altar is a figure of the Church, and the blood a figure of life. And the offering, or consecration, of the innards, namely, of the fat, the liver, and the kidneys, further indicates that all things in Christ are holy, sacred, and fragrant. For the liver, the learned say, the desires, or the appetites, of every sort arise. The kidney is a part of the body which has dividing as its function, for it separates what is superfluous from what is necessary. This is the function that is carried out within us by the mind. For, since it is wise, the mind forbids that which would give rise to wrongdoing, but gladly permits the performance of that which is beneficial. So the blessed David, as through speaking in the person of Christ, sang in the Psalm, “All my desire is before you” (Ps. 37:10 LXX), and, “For You, O Lord, possess my inward parts” (Ps. 138:13).⁶³

Second Group: Sin and Trespass Offerings (Lv. 4:1-5:19)

The second group of sacrifices, those providing propitiation and forgiveness, concern (1) the “sin offering,” also called the “purification offering,” and (2) the guilt offering, also called the “reparation offering”⁶⁴ or “trespass offering.” These offerings were required for those who sinned in order to remain in fellowship with God as members of His holy community. Either one was required for the purpose of remaining in fellowship with God. The sins here were *unintentional* and *ignorant* failures to keep the commandments.⁶⁵

⁶¹ The translator commented that the Greek here, *trophos*, literally means “nurse,” “nourisher,” and “sustainer.”

⁶² St. Cyril of Alexandria and Nicholas P. Lunn, translator. *St. Cyril of Alexandria: Glaphyra on the Pentateuch, Volume 2, Exodus through Deuteronomy*. Edited by David G. Hunter, Catholic Univ. of America Pr., 2019, 133.

⁶³ *Id.* at 134.

⁶⁴ Sanford, La Sor William, et al. *Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form and Background of The Old Testament*. 2nd ed., W.B. Eerdmans, 1996, 85.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

Fr. Tadros Malaty presents different theories used to distinguish the sin offering from the trespass offering. First, according to some scholars, the sin offering represents an atonement for the one who offers it, rather than a sacrifice for a particular sin—even if it is offered for this purpose. The trespass offering, on the other hand, represents an atonement for a particular sin committed by the one who offers it. That is why we find the sin offering, and not the trespass offering, presented during feasts on behalf of the whole congregation, as a general and a collective atonement for the whole congregation.⁶⁶

Second, the sin offering is presented by someone who commits a sin that does not warrant paying a material restitution for damage done to someone else. Whereas the trespass offering, on the other hand, is presented by someone who commits a sin that warrants paying a material restitution for damage done—whether against the temple, or man.⁶⁷

The Sin Offering (Lv. 4:1 to 5:13)

Whereas the first group of offerings demonstrated to us the joy of the sacrifice of Christ as the sweet smelling aroma pleasing to His Father, the second group of sacrifices focus more on the Lord Jesus Christ becoming a curse according to the law and carrying our sins.⁶⁸ Whereas the previous offerings were divided according to the kinds of offerings, these offerings are identified according to the position and social status of the sinner offering the sacrifice.

The sin offering, or *hatta*’t, which centered on the idea of propitiation, could be offered for the high priest (Lv. 4:1-12), the entire community (Lv. 4:13-21), the prince (Lv. 4:22-26), and private persons (Lv. 4:27-5:13), but only in those instances where the failure was inadvertent.⁶⁹ The Hebrew *hattā*’t signifies both sin and its consequences (Nu. 32:23) as well as the offering for sin; the sacrifice looked to a reestablishment of the covenant relationship between God and humanity destroyed by sin.⁷⁰

According to Fr. Tadros, this offering is not optionally presented by the sinner or sinners, but by commitment for the sake of their sanctification. At the same time, it does not give pleasure to the Lord, but reveals the bitterness tasted by the Savior, who “bore our sins in His own body on the tree on our behalf” (1 Pt. 2: 24). It is a symbol referring to the divine Lamb, who knew no sin, yet came to be a sin for our sake, who cried out: “My soul is extremely sorrowful, even to death” (Mt. 26:38; Mk. 14:34).⁷¹

The commandment begins, “If a person sins unintentionally against any of the commandments of the Lord in anything which ought not to be done, and does any of them” (Lv. 4:2). From this we understand that the sacrifice is to be offered by those who *unintentionally* fall due to weakness. The Fathers of the Church question who this person is here who sins unintentionally. Origen posits that such truly is a person, not a man or spirit, supposing that if a man walks according to the spirit, then he is truly a man created according to the image and

⁶⁶ Malaty, Fr. Tadros Y. *A Commentary on the Book of Leviticus*, 49.

⁶⁷ *Id.* at 49-50.

⁶⁸ Malaty, Fr. Tadros Y. *A Commentary on the Book of Leviticus*, 48.

⁶⁹ Brown, Raymond E., et al. *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*. Prentice Hall, 1990, 63.

⁷⁰ *Id.* at 64.

⁷¹ Malaty, Fr. Tadros Y. *A Commentary on the Book of Leviticus*, 50.

likeness of God; but one who does not live according to the spirit is simply a person, walking like a natural being without regarding for God and His law.⁷² As Origen says:

I think indeed that "a person" refers to that one who, made "according to the image and likeness" (cf. Gn. 1:26) of God, lives rationally. Therefore, this one presents "a calf" as an offering to God when he overcomes the arrogance of the flesh; he brings "a sheep" when he corrects his irrational and foolish impulses; "a goat" when he overcomes his lewdness. He likewise offers "a pair of turtledoves" when he is not alone but has joined his mind to the word of God as his true spouse; just as this is called one species of bird, and is said to keep the marriage pure. Also, he offers "two young doves" (cf. Lv. 1:5, 10, 14) when he himself understands the mystery by which "the eyes of the bride" are said to be "like doves to the fullness of water, and his neck as a turtledove" (Cf. So. 5:12). These things, therefore, are the offerings of a person as we explained above.⁷³

On Behalf of the Priests (Lv. 4:3-12)

The chapter continues, "If the anointed priest sins, bringing guilt on the people, then let him offer to the Lord for his sin which he has sinned a young bull without blemish as a sin offering" (Lv. 4:3). The offering on behalf of a priest is not an honor, but rather an opportunity to perceive and understand his own weakness to recognize his personal need for salvation. The priest therefore has compassion upon the brethren, recognizing that he is the chief among sinners, as St. Paul wrote, "this is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief" (1 Tm. 1:15). St. Paul distinguished the high priests from Christ for this very purpose, since these high priests needed to offer sacrifices on behalf of their own sins, while Christ had no need since He was without sin (cf. He. 7:27). St. John Chrysostom describes the necessity for holiness of the priest, saying that "as far as the priest is concerned, his spirit has to be more pure than the sun itself, being more prone to temptations that could defile him, if he does not deny himself and persevering in struggle."⁷⁴

The priest who sins brings the young bull without blemish as a sin offering, lays his hand on the bull's head, and kills the bull before the Lord (Lv. 4:3-4). The priest then takes some of the bull's blood and brings it to the tabernacle of meeting (Lv. 4:5). He dips his finger in the blood and sprinkles some of the blood seven times before the Ark of the covenant—on the veil, the floor, and the horns of the golden altar of incense

⁷² *Id.* at 49.

⁷³ Origen the Scholar and Gary Wayne Barkley, translator. *Origen: Homilies on Leviticus: 1-16*. Edited by Thomas P. Halton, Catholic Univ. of America Pr., 1990, 41.

⁷⁴ This quote taken from Malaty, Fr. Tadros Y. *A Commentary on the Book of Leviticus*, 51.

Christ becomes Sin for our Sake

St. Cyril of Alexandria recognized that the male goat is a figure of Christ, explaining that He became sin for us, citing, “He was counted among the lawless, was crucified with thieves, and was also called a curse, since it is written that ‘cursed is everyone who is hanged upon a tree’” (Dt. 21:23; Ga. 3:13).⁷⁵ However, just because Christ became sin for our sake does not mean He was sinful. “Although He became sin, [He] remained that which He was, that is to say, He continued to be holy as He was by nature God.”⁷⁶ This is what St. Paul explained when he wrote, “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed *is* everyone who hangs on a tree”),...that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith” (Ga. 3:13-14).

The Guilt Offering (Lv. 5:14-6:7; 7:1-6)

These are different from the sin offerings because they have to do with offenses where the damage that has been done may be assessed. They are compensation payments and in most cases one-fifth is added to the assessment.⁷⁷ The guilt or trespass offerings are divided into two kinds: (1) sacrifices offered for sins which cause harm to the divine sanctuaries; and (2) sacrifices offered for sins that cause harm to the brethren.⁷⁸

An unintentional sin in regard to holy things of the Lord refers to slothfulness in offering the temple commitments. This includes the first fruit of the clean animals, man, fruits, and tithes as mentioned in Lv. 27. As such, the man who commits such sin will offer a ram along with restitution for the amount withheld due to his sloth, with an additional one-fifth added to it.

The second kind of guilt offering, those offered for sins that cause harm to the brethren, are described in Lv. 6:1-7. This section describes the sins of betraying one’s neighbor through lying or extortion. These are sins of deceiving and taking advantage of another person. For such a sin, the sinner is to return what was stolen or to restore its value plus one-fifth as a type of penalty or further punishment to deter the person from sinning in this way again. As with the other kind of guilt offerings against the sanctuary, the person offers a ram.

Does God Desire Sacrifice?

Does God desire sacrifice from His people? While the sacrifices we’ve just studied are shadows of the Lord’s sacrifice on the Cross, does He still require sacrifice from us? Even considering the time of the Old Testament, we find many instances in Scripture where God rejects the sacrifices of the children of Israel (see include 1 Sa. 15:14–22, Je. 7:21–23, Ho. 6:6, Mi. 6:6–8 and Ze. 7:4–7). Even consider Psalm 50 in which the Psalmist says, “If you desired sacrifice, I would have given it. You do not take pleasure in burnt offerings” (Ps. 50:18, LXX).

⁷⁵ St. Cyril of Alexandria and Nicholas P. Lunn, translator. *St. Cyril of Alexandria: Glaphyra on the Pentateuch, Volume 2, Exodus through Deuteronomy*. Edited by David G. Hunter, Catholic Univ. of America Pr., 2019, 136.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ Peake, Arthur S., et al. *Peake's Commentary on the Bible*. Thomas Nelson, 1964, 243.

⁷⁸ Malaty, Fr. Tadros Y. *A Commentary on the Book of Leviticus*, 65.

This does not mean that God contradicts His instruction in Leviticus, nor does He abolish the sacrifice. Rather, He rejects those empty sacrifices that are done for appears or piety's sake without a contrite and broken heart, as David says later in that Psalm, "The sacrifice of God is a broken spirit; a broken and humbled heart God shall not despise" (Ps. 50:19, LXX) followed by "Then You shall be pleased with sacrifices of righteousness, offering, and burnt sacrifices: then they shall offer calves upon Your altar" (Ps. 50:21, LXX).

But the one who understands the Law spiritually seeks to offer these things spiritually. But if anyone should sacrifice according to the outward appearance of the command of the flesh, this is "one soul from the people of the land who sinned involuntarily, because he did that one thing that should not be done from all the commands of the Lord, sinned" (Lv. 4:27). And for this reason, it adds in the following, "and when the sin which he committed was made known to him, he will present his offering to the Lord" (Lv. 4:28). For the soul ought to present an offering when "it becomes known to it" that God does not seek a carnal sacrifice because "a crushed spirit is a sacrifice to God" (Ps. 50:19). Therefore, "its sin becomes known to it" when it learns from the Lord who says, "I prefer mercy rather than sacrifice" (Ho. 6:6); and when it should know to offer "a sacrifice of praise" in the Church and to render "prayers to the Most High" (cf. Ps. 49:14).⁷⁹

So while Isaiah demanded that the people cease their sacrifices, convocations, and appointed feast days (Is. 1:11-15) which are established in the book of Leviticus, he says they must come to God with clean hands and a clean heart. If they approach God with a contrite heart desiring forgiveness, God will accept their sacrifices, just as he accepted David's sacrifices for his sin with Bathsheba after David repented. Rote religion can never substitute for purity of heart.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Origen the Scholar and Gary Wayne Barkley, translator. *Origen: Homilies on Leviticus: 1-16*. Edited by Thomas P. Halton, Catholic Univ. of America Pr., 1990, 50-1.

⁸⁰ Kaiser, Walter C., et al. *Hard Sayings of the Bible*. Intervarsity Press, 2010, 275.

Chapter 4: Ordination (Lv. 8-10)

Introduction to Division II

Division II of the book of Leviticus (Lv. 8-10) concerns the ordination of Aaron and his sons (Lv. 8) and the offering of the first sacrifices at the newly erected sanctuary (Lv. 9).⁸¹ Division II concludes with the deaths of Nadab and Abihu, who were devoured by fire that went out from the Lord since they offered “profane fire.”

Ordination of the Priest (Lv. 8)

The solemn rite of ordination prescribed for Aaron and his sons is carried out according to the directives in Ex. 28:1 to 29:35, 39:1-31, and 40:12-15.⁸² This Division follows the sacrifices since there is no priesthood without sacrifices, and there are no sacrifices without priesthood. While Aaron and his sons are ordained into the Levitical priesthood, they are a type of the priesthood of Christ, who is the Great Archpriest according to the order of Melchizedek. The ordination rites reveal aspects regarding Christ’s own priesthood and His ministry towards mankind.

The rite of consecration requires preparation (Lv. 8:1-5), washing with water (Lv. 8:6), putting on the tunic of priesthood (Lv. 8:7-9), anointing with oil (Lv. 8:10-13), the sanctification by the sacrifice (Lv. 8:14-32), and the consecration (Lv. 8:33-36). We can draw from the ordination of the priests an image of salvation as well as the sacramental life.

Regarding salvation, we see images of purification (washing with water) and putting on the new man, Christ (putting on the tunic). The anointing with oil indicates the gift of the Holy Spirit in the Chrismation. The beauty of sanctification by sacrifices is that, not only are we made holy when we are separated unto the Lord and united to His body, but we are separated from the world and all its desires. The priest, then, being consecrated, is set aside to administer the sacraments in holiness, himself living a life of sanctification and repentance as we mentioned during our discussion on the sin offering in Division I. The ordination of a priest calls for their whole lives, both inward and outward, to be consecrated unto God, as each will give an account to the Lord regarding their inner being and their outward behavior.

Distinguishing Priesthood of Christ from Levitical Priesthood

St. Paul points to Melchizedek, seen in Ge. 14:18-29, as a type of Christ, indicating that He was both a king and a priest. He distinguishes the Levitical priesthood from that of Melchizedek, demonstrating that since “Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant” (cf. He. 7:22), then “such a High Priest was fitting for us, *who is* holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens” (He. 7:26).

⁸¹ Sanford, La Sor William, et al. *Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form and Background of The Old Testament*. 2nd ed., W.B. Eerdmans, 1996, 86.

⁸² Brown, Raymond E., et al. *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*. Prentice Hall, 1990, 66.

The differences between the priesthood of Levi and that of Melchizedek may be summarized by the following table.⁸³

Priesthood of Levi	Priesthood of Melchizedek
<p>Genealogical Requirement. The Levitical priesthood is limited to one tribe. It cannot transform mortal and corrupt humanity because it consists of mere men.</p>	<p>As Melchizedek was without earthly genealogy, so is Christ by virtue of His virgin birth. He is God incarnate, immortal and sinless, and therefore His priesthood is able to transform humanity.</p>
<p>Ordination. The power given at ordination is incomplete. The Levitical priesthood is weak, its sacrifices have to be repeated, and it cannot perfect the worshipers. It cannot reconcile people to God nor give them the inner power to obey. The ordination is without direct confirmation from God.</p>	<p>The power given at ordination is strong and effective. The power of Christ’s priesthood is perfect and draws us near to God. His sacrifice is offered once for all. The Father Himself ordains the Son.</p>
<p>Term of Office. The Levitical priesthood is temporary. Since it is composed of mortal men, it requires many members.</p>	<p>Melchizedek’s priesthood is a type of the eternal priesthood of Jesus Christ, since he was both priest and king who offered bread and wine, and, in comparison with the Levitical priesthood, had no earthly genealogy, as St. Paul said, “For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all, first being translated ‘king of righteousness,’ and then also king of Salem, meaning ‘king of peace,’ without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually.” (Heb 7:1–3). Thus, the priesthood of Melchizedek anticipated the revelation of the eternal priesthood of our Lord Jesus Christ. According to the will of God, the Old Testament Levitical priesthood was to have a limited scope, validity, and duration, like the first Covenant made between God and Moses. In the second and final period of the history of salvation, Moses</p>

⁸³ This table is found in *The Orthodox Study Bible*. Thomas Nelson, 2008, 1661.

	<p>was replaced by the "one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Ti 2:5, cf. Heb 8:6. 9:15. 12:24), i.e. the incarnate eternal Son and Logos of God through Whom He established His new and "greater" covenant with the entire human race (Heb 7:22; 8:6, 8; 9:15; 13:20). This means that the superiority of the second covenant depends upon the superiority of its mediator, the divine and human person of Jesus Christ, in Whom was all divine power, authority, and offices united in order to effectively carry out His salvific work.</p>
<p>Moral and Spiritual Requirements. These must be less than perfection, for the Levitical priests are all created beings subject to sin.</p>	<p>The requirement of perfect holiness is met in Christ, the only sinless One. He is more than mere man since He is the Son of God.</p>

Profane Fire of Nadab and Abihu (Lv. 10:1-6)

Lv. 10 provides a narrative of the death of Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, at the hands of God for offering profane fire before the Lord:

Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them. So fire went out from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord. And Moses said to Aaron, "This is what the Lord spoke, saying: 'By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; And before all the people I must be glorified.'" So Aaron held his peace (Lv. 10:1-3).

What was this profane fire offered by Nadab and Abihu? St. Cyprian explains that Aaron's sons had offered something contrary to the commandment of the Lord, asserting a human teaching in place of the divine:

The sons of Aaron also, who set upon the altar a strange fire not commanded by the Lord, were at once blotted out in the sight of the avenging Lord. These examples, you will see, are being followed wherever the tradition which comes from God is despised by lovers of strange doctrine and replaced by teaching of merely human authority.⁸⁴

⁸⁴ St. Cyprian, *The Unity of the Catholic Church* NPNF 2 6:94).

Other commentators suggest that Aaron's sons were guilty of trivializing the sacred rites and holiness of God. While Scripture is not explicit regarding what "profane fire" meant, the discussion in Lv. 10:8-11 regarding prohibitions against alcohol in service may provide context.

Nadab and Abihu breached their duty and became lackadaisical towards this task that required the highest degree of alertness, caution, and sensitivity. In violation of God's command, they offered some "foreign/other incense" "which He did not command them" (Lv. 10:1). As ministers of God, they are doubly accountable and responsible. Moses used this incident as an opportunity to teach a powerful lesson on the holiness and worship of God (Lv. 10:3).⁸⁵

According to Fr. Tadros, God allowed for a firm lesson at the beginning of the priestly ministry to demonstrate its sanctity, seriousness, and responsibility. Given that the priest stands as the mediator and intercessor for himself and the people, offering a holy sacrifice, then he must practice the holy life. Otherwise, he would face firm and public chastisements more than the people. In contemplating the sin offering made by the priest regarding his sins, St. John Chrysostom says:

And before the time of the prophets, when He wanted to show that sins received a much heavier penalty when they were committed by the priests than when they were committed by ordinary people, He commanded as great a sacrifice to be offered for the priests as for all the people. This explicitly proves that the priest's wounds require great help, indeed as much as those of all the people together. They would not have required greater help if they had not been more serious, and their seriousness if not increased by their own nature but by the extra weight of dignity belonging to the priest who dares commit them.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Kaiser, Walter C., et al. *Hard Sayings of the Bible*. Intersity Press, 2010, 221.

⁸⁶ St. John Chrysostom, *On the Priesthood*, 6.16 (COP. 151).

Chapter 5: Uncleanness (Lv. 11-15)

Introduction to Division III

Division III of the book of Leviticus (Lv. 11-15) presents a series of laws regulating *ritual purity*: (1) clean and unclean foods and animals (Lv. 11); (2) giving birth (Lv. 12); (3) leprosy as it concerns people, garments, and homes (Lv. 13-14); and (4) human discharge.⁸⁷

Ritual impurity itself is neither sinful nor evil. It differs from moral and spiritual impurity, which is the result of our choices and actions leading to sin. On the contrary, ritual impurity refers to a temporary condition that results from the normal cycle of human life: birth, disease, sexual activity, and death. While all of these are natural processes that are not morally sinful or evil, they nonetheless come from major changes in the cycle of human life. These are clearly seen insofar that nocturnal emissions and menstrual cycles are followed by ceremonial washing whereas sin requires a sin offering. As such, ritual purity differentiates between the natural cycles of human life, which regularly undergo these changes, and the holiness and "otherness" of God Who does not undergo birth, change, sexual activity, or death.

As we've studied, the reason God gave such complex and harsh rules was to emphasize how critical it was that His people prepare themselves to enter into His presence.⁸⁸ The concern with purity, then, is not whether uncleanness by itself, but rather encountering God's holiness while unclean.

The law, as tutor (cf. Ga. 3:24), teaches wholeness and completeness of holiness. It provided numerous symbols or illustrations for the people about the wholeness, purity, perfection, and unity of God.⁸⁹ As we will study, our Lord Jesus Christ put an end to the laws of *ritual purity*, calling for purity of the heart (cf. Mk. 7:14-23; Mt. 15:17-20; Rm. 14:14; Ep. 2:22-21; Ti. 1:15). However, the concept of *ritual purity* is still preserved in the church today.

What is meant by Cleanliness? (Lv. 11)

Cleanliness is all about drawing a distinction. It is distinguishing what is good from what is bad, what is appropriate from what is inappropriate, what is edifying and what is destructive. Christ used clear illustrations to demonstrate that we must draw a line of demarcation to make distinctions between the natures of things: light and darkness, night and day, right and wrong, night and day. It is a lesson for God's people to know as they enter God's presence: what is holy and right? While sin has blinded and made it difficult for man to distinguish his left hand from his right, God provides means for the people to learn morality in a natural way by incorporating discernment in their daily routine and life. This is made abundantly clear at the end of Lv. 11:

This is the law of the animals and the birds and every living creature that moves in the waters, and of every creature that creeps

⁸⁷ Sanford, La Sor William, et al. *Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form and Background of The Old Testament*. 2nd ed., W.B. Eerdmans, 1996, 86-7.

⁸⁸ *Id.* at 87.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

on the earth, to distinguish between the unclean and the clean, and between the animal that may be eaten and the animal that may not be eaten (Lv. 11:46-47).

Ultimately, the purpose of the laws of cleanliness is to distinguish between what is holy and what is not. Holy is that which has to do with God, and everything that belongs to God is holy.⁹⁰ The Hebrews were taught that God is concerned with every aspect of life and with the whole of it.⁹¹ Thus Lv. 11 ends:

For I am the Lord your God. You shall therefore consecrate yourselves, and you shall be holy; for I am holy. Neither shall you defile yourselves with any creeping thing that creeps on the earth. For I am the Lord who brings you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy (Lv. 11:44-45).

While these dietary restrictions and regulations regarding food may seem quite foreign today, these were very common to ancient people.⁹² According to scholars, God commanded the Israelites to exclude those foods that were detrimental to hygiene as well as “natural abhorrence.”⁹³ Scholars moreover point out that the foods considered unclean were those also used in pagan worship for sacrifices, magic, and superstitious practices, such as the sacrifice of pigs to the Babylonian god Tammuz.⁹⁴ Nevertheless it is sufficient to know that God has called some animals clean and others unclean, so that the Jews may sanctify themselves in something so little as food. Therefore, they do not lose anything by refraining from certain foods since they gain holiness and enjoy the blessings of God.

The events in Ac. 10:11-13 in which St. Peter was commanded by God to kill and eat in a dream does not destroy these rites of purification and cleanliness, but rather completes them. “What God has cleansed you must not call common” (Ac. 10:15) for “not what goes into the mouth defiles a man, but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man” (Mt. 15:11). The context of this passage in Acts provides a complete understanding of the fulfillment of the cleanliness laws.

St. Peter had this dream while taking a nap on the housetop of Simon the tanner while a delegation sent by Cornelius came to summon the Apostle to his home. The Jewish rite regarding defilement did not only regard food, but with *whom* the food was eaten. Cornelius, a gentile, sought St. Peter. God prepared a demonstration that He called the Gentiles to Himself. While St. Peter is still wondering about this vision, learns that Cornelius was divinely instructed by an angel to invite the apostle to his home. While St. Peter was dining with Cornelius, he suddenly said “You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean.

⁹⁰ Peake, Arthur S., et al. *Peake's Commentary on the Bible*. Thomas Nelson, 1964, 246.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² Plaut, W. Gunther. *The Torah: A Modern Commentary*. Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1981, 818.

⁹³ Brown, Raymond E., et al. *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*. Prentice Hall, 1990, 68.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

Therefore I came without objection as soon as I was sent for” (Ac. 10:28-29). As their conversation continued, and as he preached, saying “whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins” (Ac. 10:43), the Holy Spirit fell upon those who heard the word, and they were baptized.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, when accused by the Pharisees for not washing hands, condemned the entire “oral tradition” of the law which originated from the Pharisees. Although washing of the hands was customary for priests (cf. Ex. 30:17-21), the Pharisees had extended it to all people. There was no relationship in the law between washing hands and eating, but the Pharisees imposed this upon all people. This is why the Lord said “For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men—the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do” (Mk. 7:8). These were not part of the Mosaic laws. These were innovations. Nevertheless our Lord Jesus Christ declared, “There is nothing that enters a man from outside which can defile him; but the things which come out of him, those are the things that defile a man” (Mk. 7:15).

When we read in Leviticus and Deuteronomy of the laws about food as clean and unclean, we are not to think that the scope of the Scripture is found in any superficial understanding of them. For “whatever goes into a person from the outside cannot defile him, since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and so passes on” (cf. Mt. 15:11, 17). According to Mark, the Savior “declared all food clean” (Mk. 7:19), so we are not defiled when we eat those things declared to be unclean by those who still desire to be in bondage to the letter of the law. But we are then defiled when our lips, which ought to be bound with good judgment as we search for correct balance and weight, speak recklessly and discuss matters we ought not.⁹⁵

Purity after Childbirth (Lv. 12:1-8)

Lv. 12 concerns itself with the birth of children and the ritual purity of the mother. According to this law, if a woman gives birth to a male child, she shall be unclean seven days, and on the eighth day he shall be circumcised. For thirty-three days she shall consider in the blood of her purification and shall not come into the sanctuary until the days of her purification are fulfilled (cf. Lv. 12:1-4). If the woman gives birth to a female child, the mother shall be unclean for two weeks, and shall continue in purification for sixty-six days.

Scholars posit varying theories to explain God’s commandment regarding purity of the mother following childbirth. It may be possible that the forty and eighty days of isolation may be prescribed by God for the mother’s protection. Although today’s hospitals and modern day medicine has removed much of the danger of childbirth, that may not have been the case in

⁹⁵ Origen the Scholar. *Commentary on Matthew*. 11.12. TLG 2042.029, 11.12.4-17; ANF 9:440.

earlier times. If impurity is read to mean “susceptible,” then the Levitical law seeks to protect the mother and shelter her infant from harm.⁹⁶

Examining this practice under a spiritual lens, we discover an image of healing in Christ, who is the physician of body and soul. It is not meant to judge the woman or punish her depending on the gender of her child. If sin is a spiritual sickness leading to a spiritual death, then the cure Jesus provides is not a physical medicine like herbs or antibiotics, but rather is a spiritual healing, namely the strong meaning of His words.

Mankind still requires purification and initiation into the body of Christ in a much more spiritual way. The Coptic church recognizes the woman’s need for purification and healing in order to be *ritually clean*. The child must still be baptized for the remission of sins and washing of regeneration. God’s grace is demonstrated in that a woman who bore a child according to the fallen nature is prepared and purified to be presented to be made blameless by the Lord’s sacrifice on the Cross. We see a complete image of redemption and restoration in the childbearing as the mother is an image of the salvation of mankind.

Leprosy (Lv. 13-14)

Leprosy is a serious skin disease that may result in the dissolution of the bodily extremities or otherwise cause distortion in the shape of the body. It is a swift and contagious disease.⁹⁷ Much of the priest’s duty and role in serving the leprous person is determining whether this person is actually inflicted with leprosy, which would result in removal from the camp. As we will study, the lack of bodily integrity necessary for worshiping God results in religious and social ostracism for the leper.⁹⁸ Rules are here given by which the priest must judge whether the man had the leprosy or not according to the symptom as it manifested: (1) swelling, a scab, or a bright spot (Lv. 13:1-17); (2) bile (Lv. 13:18-23); (3) inflammation (Lv. 13:24-28); (4) if it was in the head or in the beard (Lv. 13:29-37); (5) if it was a bright spot (Lv. 13:38-39); and (6) if it was in a bald head (Lv. 13:40-44).⁹⁹ The law also addresses how the leper must be disposed (Lv. 14:45-46) and what was to be done about his garments (Lv. 13:47-59).¹⁰⁰

Leprosy and running issues of the flesh are accurate symbols of the manifestation of sin in the heart of man.¹⁰¹ This section presents a thorough articulation of the sinful condition: filthiness, repulsiveness, hopelessness, and deadliness. The one who suffers this condition is acutely aware of shame of his situation, and is even more cognizant of the need of a savior. This shame and this condition cannot be cured by any human. It comes to a natural end. In a similar way, Christ brought an end to the power of death which is a consequence of sin:

⁹⁶ Hamilton, Victor P. *Handbook on the Pentateuch: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy*. Baker Academic, 2015, 264.

⁹⁷ Malaty, Fr. Tadros Y. *A Commentary on the Book of Leviticus*, 140.

⁹⁸ Brown, Raymond E., et al. *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*. Prentice Hall, 1990, 69.

⁹⁹ Henry, Matthew. *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Wherein Each Chapter Is Summed up in Its Contents, Each Paragraph Reduced to Its Proper Heads, the Sense given, and Largely Illustrated with Practical Remarks and Observations, Genesis to Revelation*. Hendrickson Publishers, 2002, 165.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ McGee, J. Vernon. *Thru the Bible with J. Vernon McGee*. Vol. One, T. Nelson, 1981, 377.

The leprosy, then, that occurs within the human body is a disease that cannot be cured by the skills of physicians, but it only relents, as with certain other diseases, when it is overcome by the great and almighty hand of God and His all-capable power.¹⁰²

What happens if a person is afflicted with leprosy? First, the priest must conduct an examination to determine whether the person has leprosy. If the leprous symptom is superficial, then there will be a seven-day period of isolation to see if the symptom has gone away. Those periods of isolation shall continue in seven day intervals until the symptom is gone. If the priest examines the man and confirms the man is a leper, the man is declared unclean and will be separated from the camp until the leprosy ceases.

The image of the leper being removed from the camp is the spiritual reality of the man who separates himself from the Body of Christ through sin. Transgressing against God causes us to isolate ourselves from Him and the Church. It is moreover understood by some as a period of reflection and repentance.

Those who have the superficial symptoms yet are not declared lepers are those wounded by sin, and are recovering from its blows. Christ was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed” (Is. 53:5). We wound and injure ourselves through sin spiritually, psychologically, and even at times physically by giving ourselves over to death. On the Cross, Christ accepted all these wounds on our behalf even though He is blameless and without sin.

While Lv. 13 describes the law regarding leprosy, including its evaluation and prescription, Lv. 14 provides the rite for cleansing a healed leper. These two examples present the image of repentance: Christ begins the action and completes it, as St. Paul said, “He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Pp. 1:6). This is an image of repentance: God puts it in our heart to repent, yet it is He who comes after us. There is no contradiction in the cleansing of the leper, but rather an incredible image of the sincerity of God’s love for us.

Once the priest goes out of the camp, he examines the leper to determine if he is healed. If he is healed, the priest shall call for two living and clean birds, cedar wood, scarlet, and hyssop. One bird he commands to be killed in an earthen vessel over running water (Lv. 14:5). He takes the living bird, the cedar wood and the scarlet and the hyssop, and dip all these along with the living bird in the blood of the dead bird (Lv. 14:6). The priest takes that blood, drips it seven times on the leper, declares him clean, then lets the living bird fly free (Lv. 14:7). The man who is now clean washes his clothes, shaves off all his hair, washes himself, and remains outside his tent for seven days (Lv. 14:8). On the seventh day she shaves off all his hair including his beard and eyebrows and wash his body and clothes (Lv. 14:9). On the eighth day, the man shall take two male lambs without blemish and fine flour mixed with oil and one log of oil (Lv. 14:10). He shall offer a trespass offering, a sin offering and burnt offering, and anoint the man seven

¹⁰² St. Cyril of Alexandria and Nicholas P. Lunn, translator. *St. Cyril of Alexandria: Glaphyra on the Pentateuch, Volume 2, Exodus through Deuteronomy*. Edited by David G. Hunter, Catholic Univ. of America Pr., 2019, 148.

times with oil (Lv. 14:11-17). The remainder of the oil shall be poured on the head of man. This is an atonement for him before the Lord (Lv. 14:18).

The two birds represent Christ. As one bird was killed, and its blood sanctified the leper, so Christ offered Himself on the Cross that through His blood we may be saved. As the living bird was washed in the slain bird's blood, our Lord took flesh through the incarnation and was baptized to purify mankind in the waters of the baptism and recreate our race according to the image and likeness of God. As we partake in this baptism, we also partake in the death of Christ, being washed in His blood, and yet we also partake in His resurrection, and thus have the same freedom as the bird that flies. However, although there are two birds, Christ our God is one, since the humanity and the divinity are united in Christs:

Now observe clearly how the whole mystery of our Savior and the cleansing that comes through holy baptism is present in these matters. For it prescribes that two living birds which are clean should be taken, so that through these birds you may understand both the heavenly man and God at the same time, these being in fact two natures, distinct with regard to the properties proper to each one. For when the Word shone forth from God the Father, He was from a woman in respect of His flesh, and yet He was not divided, For Christ is one coming from two. And that is why two birds are taken. Also it is to be understood that both birds, as they are one, are living and clean. For the Word is in Himself the source of all life and purity and the temple¹⁰³ obtained from the Virgin holds the Word Himself. For the body was His very own, and it was not borne by any other. Therefore, the Lord Jesus Christ is one.¹⁰⁴

The cedar wood is a type of the Cross and of Christ's Body. As to the Cross, we know that we are saved by the holy wood of the Cross. Those under the law were cursed, but our Lord became a curse for us, hanging on a tree, "that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith" (Ga. 3:14). Moreover, St. Cyril describes how this wood points to the Body of the Lord:

In addition to the birds it was also commanded that they should take cedar wood, so that by this you may understand the body of Christ to be incorruptible. For cedar wood is immune from decay, so Christ did not experience corruption. In understanding the holy Body of Christ to be incorruptible, the matter of His resurrection then appears extremely credible.¹⁰⁵

According to St. Cyril, the scarlet represents the confession of our Savior's death:

¹⁰³ The temple here is His body (cf. Jn. 2:21).

¹⁰⁴ St. Cyril of Alexandria and Nicholas P. Lunn, translator. *St. Cyril of Alexandria: Glaphyra on the Pentateuch, Volume 2, Exodus through Deuteronomy*. Edited by David G. Hunter, Catholic Univ. of America Pr., 2019, 156-57.

¹⁰⁵ *Id.* at 157.

The spun scarlet represents confession of our Savior's death. And so in the Song of Songs with regard to the Church it says, "Your lips are like a thread of scarlet, my sister, my bride" (So. 4:3). For as the lips of the Church always proclaim salvation through the blood of Christ and command that the one who draws near should make a confession of faith in Him, so its lips are suitably likened to a scarlet thread, and its participation in the mystical blessing also involves a proclamation of the death and resurrection of Christ. Moreover, things that we persuade those coming to faith to confess in the first instance, we then bring to holy baptism and to perfection through the blood of the everlasting covenant, as it is written (cf. He. 13:20). So by means of the scarlet is signified the confession of faith in the Blood of Christ.¹⁰⁶

God commanded that the hyssop, along with the living bird, the cedar wood, and the scarlet, be dipped in the blood of the slain bird (cf. Lv. 14:6). Hyssop in the Bible may refer to two items: (1) a shrub-like herb used to sprinkle blood, as used to sprinkle the doorposts during passover (cf. Ex. 12:22) or (2) an ointment made of herbs that was used for healing, as we mention in Ps. 50:7. Hyssop provides images of the crucifixion and baptism. The hyssop sprinkling the blood points to the Blood of Christ, the true passover lamb. The washing and purification points to baptism, it is the gift of the Holy Spirit given to us in the Chrismation that sanctified us. St. Cyril of Alexandria says, "Through the hyssop the heat of the Holy Spirit is signified. For this is a warm plant that works against the effects of the cold. Such is the operation and power of the Holy Spirit within us."¹⁰⁷

Combining all these images of sanctification in the rite for cleaning the healed leper, St. Cyril of Alexandria presents a complete picture of the work of our Lord Jesus Christ to present mankind as sinless before His Father:

Note how a complete picture of Christ is represented to us by what is spoken here, and how faith in Him and confession of Him are signified. For through the living bird, you are to understand the life-giving heavenly Word, which lives eternally, and through the bird that was slain, you are to understand the precious blood of the temple¹⁰⁸ that suffered, for we say that He suffered in the flesh, even as in His own Body. Through the wood that does not decay, it signified His incorruptible flesh; through the hyssop, the Spirit; through the scarlet, the confession of the blood of the covenant; and through the freshwater, the life-giving grace of baptism, which was clearly represented at the time of our Savior's suffering when His holy side issued forth water with the blood. It is with this water that it says the house was to be sprinkled so that it would be

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ Again, St. Cyril is referring to the Body of the Lord (cf. Jn. 2:21).

purified. This is in accordance with what was spoken by Ezekiel the prophet: “And I will take you out of the nations, and will gather you from the countries, and I will sprinkle pure water upon you and you will be cleansed” (Ez. 36:24-25). It also prescribes that the house should not be sprinkled just once, but seven times, for “where sin increased grace abounded all the more” (Rm. 5:20).¹⁰⁹

Why should the leper completely shave himself? Leprosy is a skin condition, which is the epidermal layer. From the epidermal layer comes hair. The leper’s hair becomes white. It has been corrupted by leprosy, and the leper, in his condition of leprosy, produces hair. According to one commentary, the flesh, “ceas[es] to receive its proper nourishment from the blood, which gave it its former vivid color [while] the hair, which has its root in the corrupted, impoverished glands, becomes likewise ill-nourished...grows whitish and slender, since the leprosy consumed both the skin and flesh.”¹¹⁰

While the leper must guard his leprous condition and cannot shave his leprosy (cf. Lv. 13:33, De. 21:5), once the person is declared clean, he shaves off these hairs since he is cured of the leprosy. The external sign cannot be prematurely removed as long as the internal condition remains. The white hair and skin was a sign that the person was sick, but after healing, the former signs of sickness are removed. This person is now restored to the camp and community.

Spiritually speaking, hair coming forth from the leper represents the sinful works coming forth from a sinner. When we are baptized, we renounce our previous life and all its sins. In fact, we continue to do this in our confession, which the church fathers consider like a return to our baptism. By shaving all their hair off the body, the lepers demonstrate that they have renounced the product of their leprosy. Likewise, when we are baptized and when we partake in the sacrament of confession, we cut off from our heart the love of sin and stop our hands from working iniquity.

Bodily Discharges (Lv. 15)

Lv. 15, the final chapter in Division III, concerns bodily discharges, specifically diseases affecting men (Lv. 15:1-15), the involuntary discharge of semen or what is commonly called a wet dream or nocturnal emission (Lv. 15:16-17), impurity caused by sexual intercourse (Lv. 15:18-19), the menstruation or period of a woman (Lv. 15:20-24), and abnormal bleeding beyond the usual length of the period (Lv. 15:25-30). Looking at the end of Lv. 15, we read:

Thus you shall separate the children of Israel from their uncleanness, lest they die in their uncleanness when they defile My tabernacle that is among them. This is the law for one who has a discharge, and for him who emits semen and is unclean thereby, and for her who is indisposed because of her customary impurity, and for one who has a discharge, either man or woman, and for him who lies with her who is unclean (Lv. 15:31-33).

¹⁰⁹ *Id.* at 158.

¹¹⁰ *Benson Commentary on the Old and New Testaments.* Lv. 13:3.

Chapter 6: Atonement (Lv. 16)

Introduction to Division IV

The fourth division of Leviticus (Lv. 16) regards the great day of atonement. As mentioned in the introduction to this text, this is the pinnacle and climax of the book of Leviticus, if not the entire Pentateuch. This day foreshadows both Great Friday and Theophany in which our Lord Jesus Christ is revealed to be the true High Priest of mankind who unites mankind and God in Him.

This single chapter comprises the entire Division IV of the book. It includes an elaborate description of the ritual for securing atonement for the whole nation. The Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), the most solemn day in Israel's calendar, even today, takes place on the tenth day (7 + 3) of the seventh month (late September) in keeping with the great significance of the number seven to ancient Israel.¹¹¹ It is called "The Day" (He. 7:27) and "The Fast" (Ac. 27:9). It has also been called the "scapegoat ritual."¹¹² It is called the "Sabbath of Sabbaths," the "Sabbath of Rest," and the "Feasts of Feasts." It is a day of reconciliation, in which the entire nation of Israel, from the priesthood to the holy place to its furniture and the entire camp are reconciled to God.¹¹³

Preparation for the Day

Preparation for the high priest is extremely important. The Lord spoke to Moses immediately after the death of Aaron's son as a result of offering profane fire before the Lord in chapter 10. Origen comments that these rites are necessary to instruct Aaron in heavenly doctrine, namely how one must ascend the altar and how to properly supplicate for atonement. Aaron must not fall into the same error as his sons. There must be great care in approaching God. Preparation of the high priest required the assistance of 500 priests. He would remain in seclusion seven days prior to the day of atonement in an inner chamber inside the temple. During the time of Solomon, seventy elders of the Sanhedrin would not allow him to sleep the entire night, lest he risk defiling his body. As the high priest ministered alone in the Most High Place, the elders made him swear not to alter or change any part of the prayer.¹¹⁴

This preparation to approach the altar of God is not exclusive to Aaron. God has called all of us to this degree of preparation to approach Him. As we saw in the previous section on cleanliness, God calls us to prepare both our bodies and spirits to approach Him. The Lord commands, "Watch and pray, let you enter into temptation" (Mt. 26:41). The Church provides for us evening offering or sacrifice of incense, namely the Vespers or *Asheya* service, as well as the midnight watches of the *Agpeya* and the service of the Midnight Psalmody (i.e., *Tasbeha*) for us to make vigil and pray, lest we fall into temptation.

¹¹¹ Sanford, La Sor William, et al. *Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form and Background of The Old Testament*. 2nd ed., W.B. Eerdmans, 1996, 88.

¹¹² Barton, John, and John Muddiman. *The Oxford Bible Commentary*. Oxford University Press, 2001, 101.

¹¹³ Kurtz, J.H. *Offerings, Sacrifices and Worship in the Old Testament*. Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1998, 387.

¹¹⁴ Malaty, Fr. Tadros Y. *A Commentary on the Book of Leviticus*, 175.

Aaron even prepares his clothing. He is to put on a holy linen tunic and linen trousers, girded with a linen sash, and with a linen turban (Lv. 16:3-4). These are declared to be “holy garments.” Many point to this verse, “Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart” (1 Sm. 16:7) to justify the idea that God doesn’t care what we wear at church. However, the context is Samuel anointing David, who was small compared to his brothers. Compare this to the vision of the high priest Joshua in Zechariah, whose clothing God commanded to be removed, and was clothed with rich robes (cf. Ze. 3:3-5). Looking at the heart, dirty garments, according to Origen, demonstrate the “uncleanness of the flesh, the vices of habits, and the stains of passion.”¹¹⁵ We prepare our inner and outer person to God, in anticipation of the fearful and awesome meeting with God.

Looking deeper at the spiritual interpretation of the high priest putting on holy garments, Origen sees an image of Christ putting on the flesh so that He may offer on our behalf as the high priest of mankind. Origen sees a certain beauty worthy of imitation, seeing that Christ has put on holy garments. “Everyone who lies in chastity also imitates Christ.”¹¹⁶ As the high priest places the turban upon his head, each of us ought to adorn our head with priestly ornaments, which Origen explains to mean making the head of every man Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 11:3). We are called, then, to adorn our minds with “disciplines of wisdom”¹¹⁷

The Rite of the Day of Atonement

The rites of the Day of Atonement require the high priest to present an offering on behalf of himself and his family. The expression “for himself” is used seven times, underscoring the “absolute necessity that the ranking clergyman first rectify his own efforts. That a high priest could be above this requirement would be unthinkable and heretical.”¹¹⁸ The high priest comes before the Lord with a young bull as a sin offering and a ram as a burnt for himself (Lv. 16:3, 6).

From the congregation of the children of Israel he takes two goats, along with a ram for a burnt offering, and presents them before the Lord at the door of the tabernacle of meeting (Lv. 16:6-7). Lots are cast for the two goats: one lot for the Lord and the other lot for the scapegoat (Lv. 16:8-9). “But the goat on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat shall be presented alive before the Lord, to make atonement upon it, and to let it go as the scapegoat into the wilderness” (Lv. 16:10). The high priest offers the bull as a sin offering for himself to make atonement for him and his house (Lv. 16:11), then offers incense before the Lord (Lv. 16:12) so that the cloud of smoke covers the mercy seat (Lv. 16:13). After sprinkling the blood with his finger seven times to “cleanse it and consecrate it from the uncleanness of the children of Israel” (Lv. 16:14).

After killing the bull as a sin offering on his own behalf and raising incense (Lv. 16:11-14), the high priest kills the goat of the sin offering, which is for the people, and brings its

¹¹⁵ Origen the Scholar and Gary Wayne Barkley, translator. *Origen: Homilies on Leviticus: 1-16*. Edited by Thomas P. Halton, Catholic Univ. of America Pr., 1990, 177.

¹¹⁶ *Id.* at 179.

¹¹⁷ Origen the Scholar and Gary Wayne Barkley, translator. *Origen: Homilies on Leviticus: 1-16*. Edited by Thomas P. Halton, Catholic Univ. of America Pr., 1990, 180.

¹¹⁸ Hamilton, Victor P. *Handbook on the Pentateuch: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy*. Baker Academic, 2015, 273.

blood inside the veil and sprinkle it seven times upon the altar (Lv. 16:15). At this time, he makes an atonement for the Holy Place itself, since it has been defiled by sin, doing such for the tabernacle of meeting (Lv. 16:16). It is at this point that the high priest, Aaron, goes into the tabernacle of meeting alone to make atonement in the Holy Place, until he comes out, that he may make an atonement for himself, for his household, and for all the assembly of Israel (Lv. 16:17). The high priest goes out and makes an atonement for the altar (Lv. 16:18) and sprinkle blood seven times upon it to consecrate it from the uncleanness of the children of Israel (Lv. 16:19).

Following the atonement of the place, the high priest brings a live goat (Lv. 16:20), places both hands on its head, confesses over it all the sins of the people of Israel and puts all the iniquities on its head. The goat is then sent away and lost in the wilderness (Lv. 16:21). There was a man waiting in order to follow the goat and see that it was successfully lost. This is referred to as the scapegoat.¹¹⁹ Afterwards the priest and the man who released the goat both wash (Lv. 16:24, 26), and the bull and goat offered for the sin offerings are carried outside the camp and burnt (Lv. 16:27).

Christ's Offering as High Priest on our Behalf

The high priest is an image foreshadowing the service of our Lord Jesus Christ, who took a human body and soul, becoming man in everything except sin alone, in order to make an atonement for our sins, “Whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed” (Rm. 3:25).

The Only-Begotten, although He was God by nature and was from God the Father, brought Himself down into our estate, and appeared on earth, as it is written, and lived among us humans. He did this for no other reason than, as the divine Paul says, “that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make atonement for the sins of the people” (He. 2:17).¹²⁰

Now, whereas the high priest of the Levitical priesthood was required to offer for himself, St. Paul declares that Christ has broken this pattern. Jesus Christ “entered once, not annually, into the holy place, and with His own blood, not that of an animal. Jesus had no sin to acknowledge and no need to make atonement for himself.”¹²¹

St. Cyril of Alexandria considers the two goats to both resemble Christ. Of course, whenever St. Cyril sees two things resembling Christ, like the two turtle doves, he always reinforces the hypostatic union of the divine and human in the incarnation of our Lord.¹²²

¹¹⁹ Peake, Arthur S., et al. *Peake's Commentary on the Bible*. Thomas Nelson, 1964, 248.

¹²⁰ St. Cyril of Alexandria and Nicholas P. Lunn, translator. *St. Cyril of Alexandria: Glaphyra on the Pentateuch, Volume 2, Exodus through Deuteronomy*. Edited by David G. Hunter, Catholic Univ. of America Pr., 2019, 159.

¹²¹ Hamilton, Victor P. *Handbook on the Pentateuch: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy*. Baker Academic, 2015, 273.

¹²² St. Cyril of Alexandria and Nicholas P. Lunn, translator. *St. Cyril of Alexandria: Glaphyra on the Pentateuch, Volume 2, Exodus through Deuteronomy*. Edited by David G. Hunter, Catholic Univ. of America Pr., 2019, 167.

Christ is signified by means of both goats, for while He died as a man, He was also sacrificed for us, as though in the form of a goat. For the goat was slain for the forgiveness of sins, and it consecrated the church, which is understood in the figure of the inner part of the tabernacle, as well as those under the law. For, as I said, the altar itself was also consecrated with the blood of the goat according to the law, and “without any dispute the lesser is blessed by the greater” (He. 7:7).¹²³

The goat that escapes is the ascension of the Lord Christ. No one could find that scapegoat, as Christ said about Himself, “Where I am going you cannot follow Me now, but you shall follow Me afterward” (Jn. 13:36), which points to His ascension into heaven.

Christ, then, was slain for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures. Yet He rose to life again and departed to the region inaccessible to men, that is to say, heaven, carrying away our sins, for in a certain place it says, “He bears our sins, and suffers for us” (Is. 53:4). He, I believe, is the one that was sent away. For He was sent away, as it were, from where we are to the city above, to appear now in the presence of God on our behalf (cf. He. 9:24). And this the blessed John affirms to us when he writes, “Little children, I am writing these things to you that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 Jn. 2:1-2). For we maintain that in Christ we have been cleansed, and by His wounds we have been healed (cf. Is. 53:5; 1 Pt. 2:24). And He is an advocate for us, and has gone back into the region where mankind cannot go, of which the wilderness was a figure. For He entered heaven to be a forerunner on our behalf, and He has restored the way for us, a new and living way (cf. He. 10:20), that enters inside the veil. It is Christ, then, who, in the figure of a goat bearing our sins, was the one sent away.¹²⁴

¹²³ *Id.* at 166.

¹²⁴ *Id.* at 166-67.

Chapter 7: Holiness (Lv. 17-26)

Introduction to Division V

Division V (Lv. 17-26) is known as the Holiness Code.¹²⁵ However, Lv. 17 does not formally introduce this section with such a name.¹²⁶ The reason Division V was given this name is because of the prominence given to the idea of holiness.¹²⁷ While some commentators choose to include Lv. 27 in the holiness code, many more refrain since Lv. 26 is considered the final chapter of Leviticus with Lv. 27 serving as an appendix to the book.

The book of Leviticus shows the seriousness of sin and its bitterness in man's life, namely the separation of his soul from God, who is the Source of its life. It presents to us the diverse sacrifices that reveal different aspects of the Cross, as a way by which man would return to God, the Source of his life and sanctification. And as the believers are committed to respond to the work of the sacrifice in their daily life, in all its aspects, God presented the practical statutes that touch upon their food, drink, clothes, houses, and health (Lv. 11-15). Now, He presents the practical statutes that concern their relationships, whether with God, with the brethren, with the irrational nature, or the behavior toward the divine sanctities. Those statutes deal with the sanctification of the people of God, of the priests, and that of the divine offerings.¹²⁸

Division V is broken into statutes concerning the sanctification of the people (Lv. 18-20), statutes concerning the sanctification of the priests (Lv. 21), statutes concerning the sanctification of the offerings (Lv. 22), the holy assemblies (Lv. 23), the inner joy (Lv. 24), the statutes concerning the inner freedom (Lv. 25), and the blessings and curses (Lv. 26). To understand the following commands, we must first contemplate the reason God provided these statutes and commands, as found in the text of Scripture:

Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'I am the Lord your God. According to the doings of the land of Egypt, where you dwelt, you shall not do; and according to the doings of the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you, you shall not do; nor shall you walk in their ordinances. You shall observe My judgments and keep My ordinances, to walk in them: I am the Lord your God. You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them: I am the Lord'" (Lv. 18:1-5).

Lv. 18 begins with a proclamation that those receiving these commandments to follow in Lv. 18-26 have the Lord as their God, meaning that these commandments are not for justification, but rather for sanctification. God commands that His people be separated for the world, which is the definition of holy, i.e., to be set apart. As John said:

¹²⁵ Sanford, La Sor William, et al. *Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form and Background of The Old Testament*. 2nd ed., W.B. Eerdmans, 1996, 89.

¹²⁶ Barton, John, and John Muddiman. *The Oxford Bible Commentary*. Oxford University Press, 2001, 102.

¹²⁷ Peake, Arthur S., et al. *Peake's Commentary on the Bible*. Thomas Nelson, 1964, 241.

¹²⁸ Malaty, Fr. Tadros Y. *A Commentary on the Book of Leviticus*, 186-87.

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever (1 Jn. 2:15-17).

The statutes found here are not a deprivation, but rather a path to holiness. We will not find satisfaction in sin, but rather may only experience true rest in the Resurrection, whereby we put to death sin in our members and put on love, which is the bond of perfection (cf. Cl. 3:5-14). As we will see in Lv. 26, it is only through obedience to God that we receive blessings, whereas if we are disobedient, we accept to ourselves the wages of sin and its natural consequence, which is death (cf. Ro 6:23).

Sanctity of Blood (Lv. 17:11)

God commanded Moses against the Israelites or any strangers in the land drinking blood. In such prohibition, He revealed “For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul” (Lv. 17:11). Fr. Tadros explains that the life of the flesh is in the blood of the animal. That is why it is presented to God alone in the sacrifice for the sake of reconciliation.

The reason for banning the drinking of blood is that it is dedicated to be offered to God alone in the sacrifice for the sake of reconciliation and probable also because that would make them gradually fall into the sin of shedding human blood.¹²⁹

Homosexuality (Lv. 18:22, 20:13)

Leviticus 18 to 20 focus on sexual purity. Many prohibitions are listed, but why? It would be wrong to conclude that these prohibitions are basically “reactions against practices of Israel’s geographical neighbors.”¹³⁰ Rather, what we see is that these prohibited activities lead to a worldview that is radically opposed to God. It presents an “outlook on sex and the world that is the denial of boundaries.”¹³¹ As the Lord reminds His disciples:

If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you (Jn. 15:18-19).

¹²⁹ *Id.* at 46.

¹³⁰ Hamilton, Victor P. *Handbook on the Pentateuch: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy*. Baker Academic, 2015, 287.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

In Leviticus, God declares His attitude regarding same-sex relationships just as He has declared His attitude regarding incest and bestiality. Homosexuality is a difficult issue to discuss in today's world since to speak negatively of it is considered to be evil. According to today's society, all opinions and options are good. No opinion is more moral or truthful than another. However, if all opinions are equal, then what happens if there is a God who has His own opinion and view that contradicts society's?¹³² Isaiah's words are fulfilled concerning those who call evil good and good evil (cf. Is. 5:20).

Many view sexual expression and gratification as a right, but it's not. There are many, such as impotent males, who cannot function sexually, yet live full and meaningful lives. Sex is not like food, water, and shelter. It is not a need or a right. Many people are deprived of sexual intimacy, such as heterosexuals who cannot find spouses. Although it is not a desirable situation, they are not being wronged.¹³³ In fact, when sex is sought simply for the purpose of gratification completely divided from love, this is lust and eroticism. As we mentioned, love between two men or two women is not love, but a distortion of the truth.

Feasts and Festivals (Lv. 23)

The term appointed feasts (Heb. *mōw'ādē*) is a general term to include all religious occasions: the Sabbath, the three "feasts (pilgrimages, unleavened bread, weeks, booths) and the other festivals, such as Passover, Trumpets, and the Day of Atonement."¹³⁴ The feasts in the book of Leviticus are the Passover (Lv 23:4-5), the Unleavened Bread (Lv. Lv. 23:6-8), the Firstfruits (Lv. 23:9-14), the Feast of Weeks/Pentecost (Lv. 23:15-22), the Feast of Trumpets (Lv. 23:23-25), the Day of Atonement (Lv. 23:26-32), and the feasts of booths (Lv. 23:33-43).

Moses is commanded by God to tell the children of Israel "The feasts of the Lord, which you shall proclaim *to be* holy convocations, these *are* My feasts" (Lv. 23:2). The word convocation here is the Hebrew *miqrā'ê*, which in this context means a sacred assembly for a sacred day. Its root *qara'* means to call out, proclaim, or read, which recognizes the core of the feast, which was a proclamation and declaration of the works God had performed for His people.

While within each of these feasts is a memorial of God's saving actions towards the Israelites, on a much deeper level there is a revelation of God's plan of salvation for mankind in Christ, "So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ" (Col. 2:16-17).

The Sabbath (Lv. 23:1-3)

The Sabbath was a joyful feast and divine gift to God's people. It was not meant to be a heavy yoke or burden for them to endure. The Sabbath was first seen when God rested, "Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made" (Ge. 2:3).

¹³² Kaiser, Walter C., et al. *Hard Sayings of the Bible*. Intervarsity Press, 2010, 543.

¹³³ *Id.* at 543-4.

¹³⁴ Peake, Arthur S., et al. *Peake's Commentary on the Bible*. Thomas Nelson, 1964, 250.

God consecrated the Sabbath as a day of rest for His people, to take an opportunity to reflect and enjoy God’s work in them. It is “not a chance for slothfulness and laziness, but a chance to worship the Holy God and for all to enjoy the fellowship of the divine life” (cf. Lv. 23:3, Nu. 28:9-10).¹³⁵

The Fathers recognize that God only ceased from His works of creation, which are works regarding the earth. Our Lord revealed that His Father continues working (cf. Jn. 5:17). Christ performed good works on the Sabbath, since He is Lord of Sabbath (cf. Mt. 12:8, Mk. 2:28, Lk. 6:5) and because His works are those that establish the Kingdom of God and glorify His Father.

This raises an important question: how can a day of rest be recognized as a joyful feast? The Church Fathers, looking at the Sabbath, point to eternal life and heavenly rest in the Lord. According to St. Augustine, “We rest and see. We see and love. We love and praise. That will be at the end without end.”¹³⁶ St. Basil said that this is the day on which we banish evil and give fear to God. We remove all evil from our minds.¹³⁷ From the writings of the Fathers, it’s clear that leisure time was not meant as an opportunity to sin or to forget God. On the contrary, when we rest, we are to take the time to remember God and look over our thoughts.

St. Clement of Alexandria points even at resting from sin, saying, “We shall abide to the spiritual Sabbath until the coming of the Savior, having rest from sin.”¹³⁸ Of course, this must be eternal rest from sin, since the remainder of the days cannot constitute time for sin in contrast with a day dedicated to rest from it. St. John Chrysostom also recognized that the Lord blessed this seventh day so that we wouldn’t consider it inferior to the other days on which He created.¹³⁹ As God blessed this day also, so we too ought to bless each day unto the Lord. That means every day is worthy of contemplating God and praying to Him. St. Jerome comments on the true work of the Sabbath:

There would be no Sabbath unless preceded by six days of work, to have rest on the seventh day. We cannot praise God except on the Sabbath day, being preoccupied with the works of the world; but rather to be committed to do what concerns the Sabbath. On the Sabbath the priest works in the temple of the Lord, while nobody else is allowed, even to gather sticks, for the one who was found gathering sticks in the wilderness was stoned to death (Nu. 15:32-36). On the Sabbath it is not allowed to kindle a fire, nor to do any work. It is befitting for us, therefore, to praise in the Sabbath, as we forsake the works of this world.¹⁴⁰

The Jews missed the point regarding the spirituality of the Sabbath and instead focused on debating and arguing, for example, what kind of works were allowed. They completely forgot that the Sabbath was called to be a holy feast of healing and freedom from sin. They were

¹³⁵ Malaty, Fr. Tadros Y. *A Commentary on the Book of Leviticus*, 240.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ St. Basil, *On the Human Condition*, On the Origin of Humanity, Discourse 2: On the Human Being, §11

¹³⁸ Malaty, Fr. Tadros Y. *A Commentary on the Book of Leviticus*, 240.

¹³⁹ St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis 1-17*, Homily X, 138-39

¹⁴⁰ Malaty, Fr. Tadros Y. *A Commentary on the Book of Leviticus*, 241.

shocked to see our Lord Jesus Christ revealing the honor of the Sabbath once more, performing works of healing. He declared Himself to be the Lord of Sabbath (Mt. 12:1-6). The Jews lost touch with the true purpose of the Sabbath and couldn't understand what the Lord presented. For this reason, our Lord Jesus Christ chose to be buried on the Sabbath to bury the old legalistic approach to the Sabbath, and to resurrect on Sunday, the true day of rest for the Christians.¹⁴¹ The Christians, who worship in spirit and truth (cf. Jn. 4:24) now worship on Sunday, the day of the resurrection, in which mankind finds true and eternal rest in our Lord Jesus Christ who conquered death by death and proclaimed victory on behalf of mankind (cf. 1 Co. 15:55-57).

St. Basil the Great says that there are many things descending from the tradition of the apostles beside the written teachings. Among these things is the sanctification of the first day of the week. The Lord was accustomed to meet His disciples after His resurrection on the first day of the week. He appeared to them on the Sunday of the Resurrection itself (Jn. 20:19). On the same day He accompanied His two disciples who were journeying to Emmaus, spoke with them, quoting from Moses and the Prophets, and broke the bread (Lk. 24:13-35). On the following Sunday He appeared to His disciples too (Jn. 20:26).¹⁴²

After the ascension, the Apostles assembled for worship on Sunday when the Holy Spirit descended on them. St. Paul invited the Corinthians to make a collection for the poor brethren of the faith in Jerusalem; this collection should take place "on the first day of the week" (1 Co. 16:2). The Acts tells us about his departure from Troas. It says, "And on the First day of the week, when we the disciples were assembled to break bread" (Ac. 20:7).¹⁴³

From these indications, we have to conclude that already in the fifties of the first century, at least in the Pauline communities, Sundays were observed, if not as the only day, then at least as the principal day, on which the Breaking of Bread that is the Christian worship took place. This day is then called in the language of the Jewish Miliaw "the first day of the week."¹⁴⁴

Some Christians of Jewish origin observed the Saturday besides Sunday celebration, but gradually the shadow passed away and reality replaced it. The same thing happened with the Temple, the apostles continued to go there and pray while the new Temple, which is the Christian community, was already in existence.¹⁴⁵ In the second century, the Apostolic Fathers wrote about observing the new Sabbath. St. Irenaeus spoke about the Sabbath as a true worship and not limited to the literal meaning, i.e. the seventh day. Barnabas declared that God does not accept the Jewish Sabbath, but the one, which God made, that is the eighth day on which the Lord rose again.¹⁴⁶ St. Ignatius says, "Those who live according to the old order of things have come to the new hope and observe no longer the Saturday but the Sunday."¹⁴⁷

The third and the fourth centuries are the golden age of the writings of the holy Fathers. Many Fathers spoke about the celebration of the Liturgy of the Eucharist on Sundays. Until 321

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² Malaty, Fr. Tadros Y. *Christ in the Eucharist*, 51.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ Jungman. *The Early Liturgy*. 19-20.

¹⁴⁵ Danielou. *The Bible and Liturgy*.

¹⁴⁶ *Epistle of Barnabas*.

¹⁴⁷ *Ep. Magne*. 9:1.

A.D. the Christians observed Sunday, but they were obliged to go to work. Then in 321 A.D. Constantine issued an edict declaring Sunday as a public holiday.¹⁴⁸

The Feasts of Passover and Unleavened Bread (Lv. 23:4-8)

The Passover was to be observed on the fourteenth day of the first month, Nisan, according to the post-exilic calendar. The lamb is to be slain between the two evenings. The Hebrews took this as an opportunity to speak about the tenth plague, the blood of the lamb, and the Exodus from Egypt. According to Fr. Tadros, the Passover is a turning point in the history of the ancient people by which they passed from the land of bondage to the wilderness towards the promised land.

The Passover lamb is not merely a memorial of a historic event that took place in the past. It represents a present and continuous work of God in the life of His people.¹⁴⁹ According to the rites of this feast, a male lamb without blemish (12:5) is to be taken on the tenth day of the month (Ex. 12:3) to be offered on the fourteenth day (Ex. 12:6). The whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight (Ex. 12:6). A bunch of hyssop (Ex. 12:22) is used to sprinkle the blood on the doorposts (Ex. 12:7). The lamb is to be roasted in fire and eaten entirely along with unleavened bread and bitter herbs (Ex. 12:8). None shall be leftover till morning (Ex. 12:9).

Bishop Melito of Sardis explained that the secret of Passover is realized in the body of the Lord. He was led like a lamb and was slain like a she-goat saving us from the bondage of the world, i.e. Egypt, and setting us free of the servitude of the devil, i.e. Pharaoh, putting his seal on our souls by His Spirit, and on our body members by His blood. He is the One who brought us from servitude to freedom, from darkness to light, from death to life and from oppression to eternal Kingdom. He is our Passover to salvation. He is the silent Lamb that was taken out of the flock, slain in the evening and buried by night. Therefore, that feast was bitter. As said in the Holy Book, “You shall eat unleavened bread with bitter weeds.” (Exod. 12:8). Bitter for you were the nails that were used. Bitter was the tongue that blasphemed. Bitter was the false testimony that you uttered against Him.¹⁵⁰

The feast of Unleavened Bread began on the fifteenth day of the first month, Nisan, immediately following Passover. It lasted for seven days, the normal sacred period. The first and seventh days were holy convocations, a day on which no regular work was to be done.¹⁵¹ The feast was called the “bread of grief,” as it symbolized the bitterness experienced by those in the bondage of Pharaoh; after refraining from eating the leaven referring to their haste of come out of Egypt, it became a sign of forsaking the old life, and the enjoyment of the new, that does not bond with the leaven of the past.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁸ Malaty, Fr. Tadros Y. *Christ in the Eucharist*, 52.

¹⁴⁹ Malaty, Fr. Tadros Y. *The Book of Exodus*, 66.

¹⁵⁰ *Id.* at 68.

¹⁵¹ Peake, Arthur S., et al. *Peake's Commentary on the Bible*. Thomas Nelson, 1964, 251.

¹⁵² Malaty, Fr. Tadros Y. *A Commentary on the Book of Leviticus*, 245.

The Feast of the Firstfruit (Lv. 23:9-14)

The Feast of the First Fruit, also called the waiving of the omer, is considered the first agricultural feast. It was practiced by the people after their entry into the promised land. It was celebrated with an extremely joyful rite with the goal of giving thanks to God, the Grantor of goods. Moreover, it was a feast where the people would offer a sheaf of the firstfruits, by which the whole harvest is blessed. In that feast, offering a sheaf of the firstfruits to sanctify the whole harvest, is a proclamation of the sanctification of the believing humanity through the only begotten Firstborn Jesus Christ, in whom we are justified by the Father, and counted as saints.¹⁵³

But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming (1 Cor. 15:20-23).

Just as the feast of the firstfruits could not be celebrated in the wilderness where there is no harvest, but in the Promised Land, so too can mankind only celebrate the firstfruits when our Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead, ascended into the heavens (cf. Jn. 3:13) by which mankind entered, for our citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 3:20-21), and we receive the firstfruits of the Spirit (cf. Rm. 8:23).

The Feast of Weeks/Pentecost (Lv. 23:15-22)

The feast of Pentecost, also known as the feast of Weeks, is the second of the three major Jewish pilgrimage feasts that was celebrated seven weeks after Unleavened Bread (Gk. *pentēkostos*, “fiftieth”).¹⁵⁴ Following the union of the feasts of Passover and Unleavened Bread, the timing of Pentecost's celebration was contingent upon the harvest. This resulted in no official fixed date since the time of the harvest would vary depending on the year. This was a one day feast with a religious assembly and presentation of offerings consisting of two loaves of bread from the harvester and from the community as a whole, first a holocaust of seven lambs, one bull, and two rams, with grain offerings and libation, and then a goat as a sin offering and two lambs as a peace offering.¹⁵⁵

The goal of the feast of Pentecost or Weeks is to give thanks to God on occasion of the feast of the harvest of wheat, through a collective joyful rite in which all proclaim their joy in God the beneficent.¹⁵⁶ Moreover it was recognized by the Jews as a memorial of receiving the law in Sinai since they believed Moses received the law on that day. The Jews prepared for this day by confessing their sins, cleansing themselves for purification, and spending the night of the feast in praise and worship.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ Brown, Raymond E., et al. *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*. Prentice Hall, 1990, 76.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ Malaty, Fr. Tadros Y. *A Commentary on the Book of Leviticus*, 248.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

The main offering on the day were two loaves, both made with leaven. One was eaten by the high priest while the other was divided among the remainder of the priests. We can derive many contemplations from this bread. Since leaven is considered sin, the bread may represent the Jewish people, who bear their sins and are in need of sacrifice to make atonement. We may also see the image of the heavenly and earthly bread, the church of the old and of the new covenant, and even the congregations of Gentiles and Jews.¹⁵⁸

Moreover, we cannot avoid the similarity of this bread and the bread we offer in our Coptic Church, which is also leavened. This is a type of Christ, who was born without sin and never guilty of sin, but nevertheless carried the sins of the world, and was offered upon the Cross. By the death, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ into heaven, we have received the gift of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. It is also through eating such bread offered and sanctified, namely the Eucharist, that we are united with God through the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. The sanctification to receive such a gift is by the Holy Spirit.

Fr. Tadros comments that, if the Jews accepted that the feasts of Passover and Unleavened Bread together as one integral feast, then they would also come to understand that the feast of Unleavened Bread extends as a period of joy until the end of Pentecost.¹⁵⁹ Considering the unity among the feasts of Passover, Unleavened Bread, Firstfruits, and Pentecost, the Jews recognized Passover as the liberation from Pharaoh's bondage, Unleavened bread as the removal of the leaven of Egypt, Firstfruits as the beginning of the new life through sanctification of the new sheaf, and Pentecost as the complete enjoyment of the goods of the promised land.¹⁶⁰ Looking at the fulfillment in Christ, Passover reveals the unique sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ to liberate us from Satan, the Unleavened Bread is the removing the old man (i.e. the corrupt leaven), the Firstfruits is the resurrection, and Pentecost is receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit. Through the feast of Pentecost, all other feasts are realized in us, so that the Passover of Christ would be fulfilled in our life by His Holy Spirit so we may enjoy the power of His resurrection, ascending with Him to heaven.¹⁶¹

The Feast of Trumpets (Lv. 23:23-25)

This began on the 15th day of the 7th month, and lasted for the customary seven days. Like all harvest festivals it was a pilgrimage. A harvest festival must be a pilgrimage, since its essence is the offering of first-fruits at the altar. The eighth day is an addition to the original seven. It is the feast of the sanctification of the months. The most prominent feature of this feast is that the Jews used to celebrate it by shouting and blowing the trumpets, hence its name, feast of Trumpets.¹⁶² The blasts of the silver trumpets (Nu. 10:1-10) served as a formal reminder that the day was marked by complete rest and a solemn convocation (Ne. 8:1-12).¹⁶³

¹⁵⁸ *Id.* at 248-9.

¹⁵⁹ *Id.* at 247.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ *Id.* at 247-8.

¹⁶² *Id.* at 250.

¹⁶³ Brown, Raymond E., et al. *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*. Prentice Hall, 1990, 76.

The goals of this feast were: (1) to mark the beginning of the new year; (2) to announce the sanctification of the world world, as the seventh month was recognized as the firstborn of the months; (3) to prepare the people to celebrate the feast of atonement in the middle of the month, with a full moon; and (4) to remember the giving of the law, accompanied with thunder and lightning.¹⁶⁴

The rite of this day starts by offering the daily burnt offering, then the offerings of the new month, and the offerings of the feast. When the priests blow the horn trumpets, the Levites play on musical instruments, and the people sing the psalms, including Psalm 80.¹⁶⁵

The Church embraces this feast within a new context presented by Christ. The shouting and blowing of trumpets represents to us (1) the destruction of the kingdom of evil; and (2) the establishment of the Kingdom of God. The walls of Jericho were destroyed (Js. 6:5-21) at the blasting of the trumpet. The ark of the covenant was honored through shouting and blowing of trumpets. The Psalms refer to the liturgical shouts that accompany the throne of God (Ps. 46:1-7; 80:2-4). This feast, then, is not just the announcement of the new year, but was a proclamation of the Kingdom of God and the confirmation of God's dominion over time.¹⁶⁶ The trumpets are blown, declaring that the walls of Jericho, the city of evil, are destroyed, and now we proclaim the kingdom of God, in which we begin a new year that will never end.

The Day of Atonement (Lv. 23:26-32)

This feast was covered earlier and was declared as a feast of the Lord.

The Feast of the Tabernacles or Booths (Lv. 23:33-43)

This feast, called Tabernacles, Tents, Booths, Ingathering, or *sukkôt* in Hebrew, was the last of the three major feasts of Israel. It was called "Feast of Tabernacles" since, at the time of celebrating the feast, the Israelites dwelt in booths made of the branches of trees, as God Himself reminded Moses, saying, "You shall dwell in *booths* for seven days. All who are naive Israelites shall dwell in booths, that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel dwell in *booths* when I bought them out of the land of Egypt" (Lv. 23:42-43).¹⁶⁷

This was a pilgrimage feast, like Unleavened Bread and Pentecost, which was made annually to central sanctuaries, but eventually was done exclusively in Jerusalem.¹⁶⁸ The Israelites would thankfully close the grape and olive harvest in the fall on the 15th day of the seventh month (Tishri), five days after the Day of Atonement.¹⁶⁹ Since it occurred at the conclusion of the reaping of the grapes and olives, it was also called the "Feast of the

¹⁶⁴ Malaty, Fr. Tadros Y. *A Commentary on the Book of Leviticus*, 250.

¹⁶⁵ *Id.* at 251.

¹⁶⁶ *Id.* at 250-1.

¹⁶⁷ *Id.* at 252.

¹⁶⁸ Brown, Raymond E., et al. *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*. Prentice Hall, 1990, 76.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

Harvest.”¹⁷⁰ It lasted one week with solemn assembly and abstention from work on the opening and concluding (eighth) days after the week-long observance.¹⁷¹

This feast was fulfilled in the Transfiguration. St. Peter, seeing the Lord transfigured, appearing with Moses and Elijah, proposed that they build three tabernacles. Immediately thereafter, the Lord brought forth a heavenly tabernacle, namely a bright cloud that covered them. The Lord did this to “draw the hearts of the disciples to the eschatological feast, when He will appear in the clouds, not to set for them earthly tabernacles, but to bring them forth into the bosom of the Father. The eternal life is the eternal tabernacle.”¹⁷²

There is a history in the rites of the feast concerning water. According to the *Talmud*, two great processions would go forth at dawn, one to gather branches of olive, palm, and other trees, and the second to the pool of Siloam with a priest carrying a golden pitcher to fill it with water from the pool.¹⁷³ The two groups, accompanied by singers, returned to the temple where the morning burnt offering was offered, and the bearers of the tree branches set a beautiful tabernacle over the altar while the priests received the priest bearing the golden pitcher by blowing trumpets three times. The priest bearing the golden pitcher would ascend the stairs of the altar, together with another priest carrying another golden pitcher of wine, and would both pour the water and wine onto two golden plates onto the altar, and would leak through holes into the altar. During the days of the feast, the people used to pitch water from the pool of Siloam with joy, as a memorial of the water that came out of the rock on the hand of the prophet Moses, from which their fathers drank.¹⁷⁴

The Pool of Siloam has a marvelous history and tremendous symbolism stemming from actions of King Hezekiah to protect his kingdom from the threat of the Assyrians. He reunited whatever was left of the ruined Kingdom of Israel and united it with his own Kingdom of Judah. Hezekiah accomplished a remarkable feat of technology by cutting an underground tunnel six feet high through solid rock so water could flow into Jerusalem from one of the springs into a place that we now know as the Pool of Siloam. This is why Siloam is called “Sent,” since the water is sent into Jerusalem. When the Assyrians came to attack, Hezekiah stopped all the wells so that the Assyrian invaders had no drink whereas the people inside Jerusalem enjoyed ample water from the Pool of Siloam.

The Pool of Siloam was a source of life to the inhabitants of Jerusalem as they were besieged from all sides. Whereas the invading Assyrians outside were deprived of water, those inside the city of Jerusalem enjoyed this life giving water from the Pool of Siloam. In this way, we see the Pool of Siloam as a type or symbol of Holy Baptism some 700 years before our Lord’s Incarnation. The waters of Holy Baptism for any Christian are lifegiving in the midst of the attacks we endure from Satan and his demons throughout our lives just as the Pool of Siloam was lifegiving for the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

¹⁷⁰ Malaty, Fr. Tadros Y. *A Commentary on the Book of Leviticus*, 252.

¹⁷¹ Brown, Raymond E., et al. *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*. Prentice Hall, 1990, 76.

¹⁷² Malaty, Fr. Tadros Y. *A Commentary on the Book of Leviticus*, 253.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

These rites were bound with another feast, namely that of the “lighting.” In this feast, the four high menorahs, each about 50 years high, were lit. The light was prominently visible from all sides of the city. The light was bound with joy, so that all the priests would sing and dance on the fifteenth step of the stairs of the temple.¹⁷⁵ The unity of water and light in this celebration brought to mind the day Moses descended from the mountain to proclaim the setting of the tabernacle of meeting. It also brought to mind the dedication of the temple of Solomon.

Our Lord Jesus Christ declared that He is the rite of the feast, being the true light and the living water from who all should drink. “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.” (Jn. 7:38). The image of the Holy Spirit which would be given to man after the ascension along with the washing of the man born blind at the pool of Siloam, mentioned two chapters later in John 9, read in the Coptic Church on Baptism Sunday, points to the fullness of this feast being found in Baptism. As God led His people out of Israel and sustained them during the time in which they lived in booths, satisfying their needs in the wilderness, our Lord Jesus Christ has come to deliver us from the bondage of sin through holy Baptism so we may receive the gift of the Holy Spirit through Chrismation, satisfying our need for intimacy and fullness in God.

It is no coincidence that the Jews whose feasts God rejected since their hearts were far from Him also rejected this man who enjoyed the fullness of the feast. The Lord said, “For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind” (Jn. 9:39). The Lord spoke to the pharisees with Him regarding their blindness, that if they were blind they would have no sin, but since they say they see, their sin remains (cf. Jn. 9:41). The Pharisees remained spiritually blind to the true purpose of the law, attempting to justify themselves instead of admitting their need for a savior. It should have been very clear to those Pharisees that this man was healed in Siloam, an image of God who preserved and cared for His people even since their fathers were in the wilderness.

The Sabbatical Year and the Jubilee (Lv. 25:1-55)

The seventh year is a “Sabbath of the Lord,” also called the Sabbatical Year. As men are to rest on the seventh day, the land is to rest in the seventh year. If the year's rest is not observed, the land will eventually have to “make up” the lost sabbaths by being laid waste (Lv. 26:34, 42).¹⁷⁶ This ancient rule, found in Ex. 23:10, speaks simply of the “seventh” year, but does not refer to it as a “sabbath.” Dt. 15:1-19 provides a law for the seventh year in which all outstanding debts are to be canceled.¹⁷⁷

During the Sabbatical year, the Israelites were not allowed to sow or harvest the land, not even the fruitful trees, except within the limits of paying the tax, and of what concerned the offerings such as the sheaf of waiving, the two brea offerings, and the showbread.¹⁷⁸ Three goals of the Sabbatical year are (1) to allow the land to become fertile since the Jews did not have the benefit of the Nile river to enrich the land as Egypt; (2) to focus on unity since anyone,

¹⁷⁵ *Id.* at 254.

¹⁷⁶ Plaut, W. Gunther. *The Torah: A Modern Commentary*. Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1981, 940.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ Malaty, Fr. Tadros Y. *A Commentary on the Book of Leviticus*, 262.

regardless of social status or class, could walk into a field to collect what was left over after the harvest, to pluck but not to store; and (3) to allow rest from physical work and its preoccupations to focus on each person's as well as the community's relationship with God.¹⁷⁹

At the end of seven sabbatical years came the Year of Jubilee,¹⁸⁰ a sacred year established in Lv. 25:8-17, 28-33, 50-54, and 27:16-24. The word "Jubilee" is generally interpreted to mean "ram" or "ram's horn" and to refer to the horn whose blasts proclaimed the beginning of the year on the tenth day of the seventh month, the Day of Atonement.¹⁸¹

The Greek translation rendered this expression to be "release." The Latin translation is *jubium*, "a wild shout," from which we get the word "jubilation." However, the Latin has no connection to the Greek. It is more likely associated with the modern usage of jubilee, which designates a festive commemoration, especially an important anniversary.¹⁸²

God commanded Moses that he shall "count seven sabbaths of years for yourself, seven times seven years; and the time of the seven sabbaths of years shall be to you forty-nine years" (Lv. 25:8). Later, He said, "That fiftieth year shall be a Jubilee to you" (cf. Lv. 25:11). God specified to Moses statutes during the Year of Jubilee in regards to selling land (Lv. 25:23-28), selling houses (Lv. 25:29-33), loans between brethren (Lv. 25:35-38), Hebrew slaves (Lv. 25:39-43), foreign slaves (Lv. 25:44-46), and Hebrews enslaved by foreigners (Lv. 25:44-46).

God instructed Moses, saying, "And you shall consecrate the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a Jubilee for you; and each of you shall return to his possession, and each of you shall return to his family" (Lv. 25:10). It is this concept of freedom that drives the commandments regarding the Jubilee. "As Moses and Joshua distributed the land to be possessed by the tribes, every tribe and family were committed, as far as possible, to keep its land, as a sign of their love."¹⁸³ If someone were to sell his land, either he or his kinsman-redeemer may "redeem" the land at any time by paying its price, which decreases with the passing years since it is used by the purchaser, and in the case that he or his kinsman-redeemer could not redeem the land, then at the Jubilee, the land will be restored to the original owner for free.¹⁸⁴ This demonstrates true freedom from sin.

We have lost our eternal inheritance because of sin for the sake of an earthly or carnal desire. The first kinsman-redeemer, the law, could not redeem it. We lost everything. However, at the Jubilee, the fiftieth year, the Lord sent His Holy Spirit on the Feast of Pentecost so we may receive once more our spiritual land, which the Lord has redeemed with His precious blood.¹⁸⁵

¹⁷⁹ *Id.* at 262-63.

¹⁸⁰ Sanford, La Sor William, et al. *Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form and Background of The Old Testament*. 2nd ed., W.B. Eerdmans, 1996, 90.

¹⁸¹ *The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*. Vol. Six, Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, 1948, 214.

¹⁸² Plaut, W. Gunther. *The Torah: A Modern Commentary*. Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1981, 941.

¹⁸³ Malaty, Fr. Tadros Y. *A Commentary on the Book of Leviticus*, 265.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁵ Malaty, Fr. Tadros Y. *A Commentary on the Book of Leviticus*, 266.

The legislation regarding slaves is motivated by the thought that Israelites are God's servants and therefore should not be enslaved to any other master. If one of them is forced by poverty to accept the slave status, he is not to be treated with the same severity normally suffered by slaves. He may be redeemed at any time by a relative, or himself, if he can find the means, through payment of a sum proportional to the time still to elapse before the next jubilee. If this does not happen, he goes free in the jubilee year.¹⁸⁶

Modern scholars criticize the Jubilee, saying that it was not likely practiced by the Israelites, but rather was an ideal to be reached in a utopian state. The main criticism is that the Jubilee follows the seventh Sabbatical year, meaning that for two years the Jews would not work the land or grow crops. Modern scholars cast doubt that the land could support the Jews for two years. Some even call to question whether the Jubilee was ever celebrated since there are no accounts in the Old Testament of this celebratory year.¹⁸⁷ However, Scripture is very clear that the Lord accounted for this two year period of no crops when He told Moses:

And if you say, "What shall we eat in the seventh year, since we shall not sow nor gather in our produce?" Then I will command My blessing on you in the sixth year, and it will bring forth produce enough for three years. And you shall sow in the eighth year, and eat old produce until the ninth year; until its produce comes in, you shall eat of the old harvest (Lv. 25:20-22).

How can the commentators accept that God gave the commandment to consecrate the Sabbatical Year and the Year of Jubilee to Him yet deny that He would give the grace necessary to sustain them for this time? If God gives a command, He will also give grace enough to fulfill that commandment. It is challenging to accept that God will allow the land to produce food sufficient for the needs of Israel, but that is essentially what God desires from us: to trust that He will provide. Those who are secular or consumed by doubt cannot rationalize how God can provide or bless what is perhaps beyond the natural measure of the land.

Blessings and Curses (Lv. 26)

Lv. 26 concludes with a fervent appeal for obedience to the laws, promising bliss for the nation if they are observed and threatening terrible punishment if they are violated.¹⁸⁸ The book concludes with this call to holiness, revealing the blessings that dwell upon those who receive God's word in obedience to His commands, as well as curses that dwell upon those who reject the divine commandment and do not receive eternal life as a natural fruit of sin and disobedience.¹⁸⁹ Bible scholars view Lv. 26 as the end of Leviticus and Lv. 27 as an appendix that was later included, perhaps when it was written down following the Babylonian captivity.

This chapter, which concludes the Code of Holiness, addresses worshiping the Holy God (Lv. 26:1-2), (2) the blessings of obedience to the Holy God (Lv. 26:3-17), (3) the curses of

¹⁸⁶ Plaut, W. Gunther. *The Torah: A Modern Commentary*. Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1981, 942.

¹⁸⁷ See Brown, Raymond E., et al. *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*. Prentice Hall, 1990, 78.

¹⁸⁸ Plaut, W. Gunther. *The Torah: A Modern Commentary*. Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1981, 953.

¹⁸⁹ Malaty, Fr. Tadros Y. *A Commentary on the Book of Leviticus*, 271.

disobedience to the Holy God, and (4) receiving the repentant sinners (Lv. 26:40-46). One commentator observes the relationship between obedience and the depth of one's relationship with God:

Obedience reflects respect for who and what God is personally and historically (Lv 26:1-3, 13-15, 39-45), includes acceptance of the lordship of God in one's life in time and space (cf. Lv. 26:2, 34-35, 43), and produces participation in covenant blessings (Lv. 26:9). Precepts reveal the will of God for Israel, since the will of man must yield to the will of God in covenant loyalty (cf. Lv. 26:41).

Disobedience is the denial of the identity of Yahweh in history, covenant, and law. It is a breach of covenant faith (Lv. 26:15), thus acting unfaithfully, disloyally, and treasonously (Lv. 26:40) in blatant opposition to God (Lv. 26:21, 23, 27). It may involve nonperformance of His commands (Lv. 26:14) while rejecting His statutes and despising His ordinances (Lv. 26:15). Disobedience relates to the inner man (Lv. 26:15, 41, 43; note "soul" and "heart") and has frightful consequences. Even cannibalism is not beyond the capability of the disobedient (Lv. 26:29). Sacrifice from one who is disobedient is unacceptable since sacrifice should be an outward manifestation of faith (Lv. 26:31). Disobedience deserves death (Lv.26: 25, 33, 37, 38) and exile (Lv. 26:33, 44). Whereas death is separation from the body, exile is separation from the land.¹⁹⁰

God's attitude towards obedience and disobedience has not changed. Although we are no longer under the law, but are under grace, God's personality is the same, since He is the same yesterday, today, and forever (cf. He. 13:8). This is the same Christ who calls those who obey His commands friends (cf. Jn. 15:14-16), and, although He does not wish the death of a sinner but rather that he returns and lives (Ez. 18:23, 33:11), states that those who do not believe in him are already condemned, because they have not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God (cf. Jn. 3:18). This is a natural consequence, as St. Paul states, "For the wages of sin *is* death, but the gift of God *is* eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rm. 6:23).

The principles of God's dealings with New Testament believers by means of reward and/or chastisement are basically the same as the principles by which He dealt with Israel under the covenants. This must not be construed, however, to mean that New Testament saints are under the same covenant relationship as Israel. The similarity is due to the same God, not to the same covenant. The very nature of God demands that the natural consequences of sin be exacted from His people in all ages (cf. 1 Co. 11:30; Ga.

¹⁹⁰ Barrick, William D. (Spring 2005). The Eschatological Significance of Leviticus 26. *The Master's Seminary Journal*, 16/1, 122.

6:7-10). The same God provides lessons for believers in every era, based upon His historical deeds (cf. Rm. 15:4; 1 Co. 10:11-13). The same God blesses in tangible ways those who are faithful (cf. 2 Co. 9:6-15). The same God is loyal even in the face of His people's disloyalty (cf. Pm. 1:6; 2 Ti. 2:11-13). The same God is Lord (cf. 1 Co. 12:3). The same Lord requires confession, humility, and restitution (cf. Pm. 1-25; 1 Pt. 5:5-7; 1 Jn. 1:9). The same God promises that obedient service will be rewarded (cf. 1 Cor 15:58). The same God demonstrates that the believer has been delivered from bondage into a servitude that is totally unlike the bondage of fear and the curse (cf. Ac. 26:18; Rm. 6:12-23; Cl. 1:12-13; He. 2:14- 15).¹⁹¹

Looking to the conclusion of this chapter, after proclaiming the extent of bitterness of man because of his disobedience, God again confirms that the only way for man to enjoy the blessing instead of the curse will be his return to God by repentance. For this reason, God will remember His promise, proclaiming that, even while they were in their darkest moments, God did not intend for their utter perdition, but for their chastisement.¹⁹²

¹⁹¹ *Id.* at 125.

¹⁹² Malaty, Fr. Tadros Y. *A Commentary on the Book of Leviticus*, 280.

Chapter 8: Vows (Lv. 27)

Introduction to the Appendix

The Appendix (Lv. 27) describes the statutes of the vows (Lv. 27:1-25), the firstlings (Lv. 27:26-27), a person or property doomed to destruction (Lv. 27:28-29), and tithes (Lv. 27:30-34). As mentioned previously, this chapter is usually seen as an appendix to the book and not part of the Holiness Code proper since Lv. 26 makes an appropriate ending to Leviticus.¹⁹³ It is filled with general blessings and curses, and would otherwise provide a fitting conclusion, “These are the statutes and judgment and laws which the Lord made between Himself and the children of Israel on Mount Sinai by the hand of Moses” (Lv. 26:46).¹⁹⁴

This division concerns vows and voluntary services, the free-will offerings of one’s mouth.¹⁹⁵ These are the gifts to the sanctuary, whether by conditional vows or by unconditional acts of pious gratitude.¹⁹⁶ Vows are mentioned frequently in narratives about Jacob (Gn. 28:20), Jephthah (Jg. 11:30), Hannah (1 Sm. 1:11) among many others.¹⁹⁷

Perhaps some devout serious people among the Israelites might be so affected with the words spoken by Moses in the previous chapter that, out of zeal and excitement, they consecrate themselves, their children, and their estates to Him. God will accept such sacrifices, yet, out of mercy, God allows these people an opportunity to redeem these gifts, or purchase them back.¹⁹⁸ However, warnings are given against rash and hasty vows in Dt. 23:22 and Ec. 5:1.

The Statute of the Vows (Lv. 27:1-15)

There are two conditions for a vow to be authentic. First is that the vower has to be mature, under no guardianship by anyone. If the vower is a slave, he would be released of his vow in case his master disapproved, and proclaimed his objection against his vow once he heard about it. The same applies to a wife, if her husband objects, or a girl in her father’s house. The second condition is that the object of the vow has to be holy and not unclean. Otherwise he has to pay a ransom. As an example, no unclean animal will be offered to the house of the Lord, nor a vow will be offered from the price of a sin, as when a woman fulfills her vow from the price of her adultery.

Who is this utterly free Nazirite, who presents a holy vow that brings pleasure to the heart of the Father, other than the incarnate

¹⁹³ Henry, Matthew. *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Wherein Each Chapter Is Summed up in Its Contents, Each Paragraph Reduced to Its Proper Heads, the Sense given, and Largely Illustrated with Practical Remarks and Observations, Genesis to Revelation*. Hendrickson Publishers, 2002, 185.

¹⁹⁴ Barton, John, and John Muddiman. *The Oxford Bible Commentary*. Oxford University Press, 2001, 108.

¹⁹⁵ Henry, Matthew. *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Wherein Each Chapter Is Summed up in Its Contents, Each Paragraph Reduced to Its Proper Heads, the Sense given, and Largely Illustrated with Practical Remarks and Observations, Genesis to Revelation*. Hendrickson Publishers, 2002, 185.

¹⁹⁶ Plaut, W. Gunther. *The Torah: A Modern Commentary*. Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1981, 964.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁸ Henry, Matthew. *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Wherein Each Chapter Is Summed up in Its Contents, Each Paragraph Reduced to Its Proper Heads, the Sense given, and Largely Illustrated with Practical Remarks and Observations, Genesis to Revelation*. Hendrickson Publishers, 2002, 185.

Word of God, who delivered His own life a burnt offering of obedience, smelled as sweet fragrance by His Good Father? We, as well, in order to present our vow, hiding ourselves in the divine Nazirite, as members of His body, so that His sweet fragrance would come out of us, to bring pleasure to the heart of the Father.¹⁹⁹

Statutes Regarding the Firstling (Lv. 27:26-27)

While the previous section concerned optional vows, the firstlings, or rather the first born, belonged to the Lord by right (Ex. 13:2,12; 34:19; Nu. 18:15). Since these belonged to God by right, they could not become the object of a vow (Lv. 27:26-27). The clean animals were separated unto the Lord, never to be exchanged, and were thereby sacrificed (Nu. 18:17). The unclean animal could be redeemed by its owner, paying its worth plus one-fifth, or sold by the priests.

The Firstborn is our Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Mt. 1:25), who is recognized as the firstborn not only because in Him we received all the blessings in heavenly places in Christ (cf. Ep. 1:3), but also that He is the acceptable sacrifice to be offered on our behalf.

Tithes (Lv. 27:30-33)

Tithing is more ancient than the written law. Abraham offered tithes to Melchizedek (cf. Ge. 14:20) and Jacob, upon seeing the ladder, promised to give God a tenth (cf. Ge. 28:20-22). God commanded the tithe in Lv. 27:30, calling the tenth “holy unto the Lord.” He said “You shall truly tithe all the increase of your grain that the field produces year by year” (Dt. 14:22).

The people used to offer one-tenth of their crops, whether grains or fruits, holy to the Lord. And in case a person wishes to keep the one-tenth, he had to pay its price plus one-fifth.²⁰⁰ The tithe of produce from land and trees can be redeemed with the customary addition of the one-fifth, but not the tithe of flock and herd.

Every tenth animal to pass under the counting-rod belongs to God, that animal and no other, and if any change is made, then both belong to Him.²⁰¹ The mothers were separated aside, then the young ones were made to pass through a narrow gate, wide enough for one at a time. While passing through, someone lifted up a stick to count nine, the tenth will be holy to the Lord, and a sign will be put on it to designate it. By such a way, their owner will have nothing to do with the choice, and will have no right to substitute one beast for another, even if his intention was to offer what is better; And in case he does, he will have to offer both beasts to the Lord.²⁰²

The Practice Of Tithing (Lv. 27:30-33) provided for the needs of the Levites (Nu. 18:21, 24) as well as of the poor (Dt. 26:12). This ten percent (10%) of all farm produce was not

¹⁹⁹ Malaty, Fr. Tadros Y. *A Commentary on the Book of Leviticus*, 281.

²⁰⁰ *Id.* at 284.

²⁰¹ Peake, Arthur S., et al. *Peake's Commentary on the Bible*. Thomas Nelson, 1964, 253.

²⁰² Malaty, Fr. Tadros Y. *A Commentary on the Book of Leviticus*, 284.

considered a voluntary offering.²⁰³ Redemption, however, was permitted for grain and fruit tithes at determined value plus 20 percent. Only clean animals were taken as tithes. They were chosen by a process of impartial selection.²⁰⁴ The tithe was God's possession, as Malachi pronounced, those who withhold the tithe from God have robbed Him (cf. Ma. 3:8-9). To those who give the tithe, God asks to try Him, that He will open the windows of heaven and pour out such blessing that there will not be enough room to receive it (cf. Ma. 3:10).

The tithe is not the maximum of what we give, but is only a minimum. When we pay the tithe, we do not say that we have given God His due. Rather, we open our hearts to the poor and needy. "Let love be firm in your heart, and do not deal with God, the Church, or the poor mathematically without a heart. Whenever you get a chance to do a merciful deed, do not close your heart by saying you have already paid the tithes."²⁰⁵ Rather, let us tithe and give gifts, as the Levitical law prescribes, that we may have treasure in heaven (cf. Mt. 6:20).

²⁰³ Brown, Raymond E., et al. *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*. Prentice Hall, 1990, 79.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁵ Pope Shenouda. *The Spiritual Means*. Chapter 37 on tithes.

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