James Philip Bible Readings

THE BOOK of LEVITICUS

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THE BOOK of LEVITICUS

'The Book of Leviticus contains the laws which are to govern the organized people of God in their religious and civil life. At Mt. Sinai the Israelites had been formally organized into the theocratic nation. The basic law had been given, the covenant had been ratified, and the Tabernacle had been erected. Thus, the Lord had taken up His abode in the midst of His people. Before the people could continue their journey to the Promised Land, however, it was necessary that they should know the laws, which were to guide them in their worship of the Lord at the Tabernacle. These laws are contained in Leviticus. Hence, it is apparent that, although Leviticus is a self-contained unit, it is in its proper place and presupposes for its correct understanding the narratives of Exodus.' (E.S. Young)

I) *1:1*

It would be true to say that Leviticus is one of the least read and studied books of the Old Testament today (although it was not always so), and perhaps the least understood. It is all the more necessary, therefore, to spend some time in introductory considerations, so as to set the book in its context and show where it 'comes in', so to speak, in the over-all Old Testament revelation. This is an indispensable necessity for a true understanding of it, and for an adequate presentation of its truth. A general analysis of the book indicates that it falls readily enough into two divisions, 1-16 and 17-27, the first of these dealing with the removal of the defilement of sin which separates man from God, and the second with the restoration of the lost fellowship between man and God. In more detail, these two divisions may be sub
divided as follows:

1.	1:1- 7:38	The law of sacrifices
2	8:1-10:20	The consecration of the priests
3.	11:1-15:33	The clean and unclean. Purification.
4.	16:1-34	The day of atonement
5	17:1-16	The blood of sacrifice
6.	18:1-20:27	Religious and ethical law and punishments
7.	21:1-22:33	The holiness of the priests
8.	23:1-24:23	The consecration of seasons
9.	25:1-55	The sabbatical and jubilee years
10.	26:1-46	Promises and threats
11.	27:1-34	An Appendix

This will prove a sufficiently useful guide for our ongoing study in the Notes that follow.

2) *1:1*

We have said enough in our ongoing Old Testament studies over the years to indicate the pattern of the Divine revelation in Scripture and the purpose of God in redemption. As one commentator has put it, 'In Genesis, the kingdom of God, rejected by corporate humanity in the founding of the Babylonian world power, but continuing on earth in a few still loyal souls in the line of Abraham and his seed, at last, according to promise, had been visibly and formally re-established on earth at Mt. Sinai', in the constitution of the Hebrew people as the covenant people of God through whom He would bring to fruition in the fulness of the time His purposes of redemption through His promised Messiah and Redeemer. The purpose of their calling was therefore to be the repository of the Divine revelation, and to be a light to lighten the Gentiles. In this regard, Leviticus is a 'code' given to Israel to direct them how they might live as a holy nation in fellowship with God (and thus fulfil that calling), a code of law which should secure their physical, moral and spiritual well being, creating a separate people, revealing to them the holiness of the God Who had called them, and the alone way to have and maintain fellowship with Him.

3) *1:1*

In addition to what has been said, we need to understand the significance of the Levitical code in the context of the teaching of the Book of Exodus. Israel was constituted as the people of God in their great deliverance from Egypt. The Law was given then as the expression of how a redeemed people should live in the world. But it was also given as part of God's ongoing Divine revelation, in this sense: The whole story of the Bible, quite simply, is God's mighty effort to rid the universe of sin forever. God knew from the beginning that only when men meet the Saviour would sin be dealt with; but men do not know this from the beginning, because sin has clouded their eyes, nor did Israel, and so God's plan must be somehow to direct men's hearts to a Redeemer. But men do not look for a Redeemer until they feel their need of one, that is to say, until they become conscious of sin. And so, God gave the Law, in order to make man conscious of his need of salvation. As Paul says, 'By the law is the knowledge of sin'. It is significant that following hard upon the giving of the Law comes the instruction about the building of the Tabernacle (Exodus 25ff), for in the Tabernacle the people are made to see how in their sin they could draw near to a holy God. This 'way of approach' is unfolded and elaborated in the book of Leviticus. There are two further and substantial comments that require to be made before we are in a position to turn to the text of Leviticus. These will serve to further our understanding of the context of the book, and will occupy the next two Notes.

4) *1:1*

The first of these comments relates to the fundamental truth that lies behind the whole concept of sacrifice as such: It is the fact of the anger or wrath of God by human sin, and expressed in Paul's phrase 'the wages of sin is death'. Concerning the reality and inevitability of this 'sentence' Emil Brunner finely says, 'This is the situation; it cannot be otherwise unless something takes place which would satisfy the divine anger, that is, something which would do away with the necessity for our death, which would provide an equivalent for our death. It is at this point that religion inserts the idea of sacrifice, with the right feeling that something must happen, something extraordinary, something which resembles human death, as a kind of forfeit for all that makes life precious, for the very substance of life itself. This idea of an equivalent, which lies behind the idea of sacrifice, would not have exercised such an immense influence, it would not have been so widespread, dominant, and tenacious all through the course of history were it not for the fact that behind it there lies a deep truth. Of course there is no human equivalent. Naturally every sacrificial cult, as an attempt to buy oneself off, only offers a 'cheap' solution. But the search for an equivalent is not false. For it expresses the idea that only on this presupposition is it possible to live on at all, the feeling that we simply cannot go on any longer 'without something'. We cannot live without God. But also we cannot live with God so long as our guilt is not expiated.... Religion has never been able to find a way out of this dilemma: that every sacrifice is only an apparent equivalent, only an apparent solution of the conflict, and yet that there ought to be some 'sacrifice'. God alone can make this sacrifice. He alone can expiate, can 'cover' guilt as though it had never been; He alone can stop up the hole, fill up the trench....it is indeed God Himself who takes everything upon Himself....Thus in the New Testament the Cross of Christ is conceived as the self-offering of God. It is God who does it, it is God Himself who suffers, and it is God who takes the burden upon Himself.' (The Mediator, pp 481, 482)

5) ***1:1***

The second of the two comments (referred to earlier) relates to the essentially 'interim' and indeed defective nature of the Old Testament sacrifices, underlined for us in the words of Hebrews 10:4, 'It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins'. The sacrifices have no inherent worth as such; they are merely channels cast upon the course of history by the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, and they all alike point forward to the Coming One, Who would be the real sacrifice for sin. While this is true, however, something else requires to be said, by way of qualification, and it is this: In the Old Testament dispensation these sacrifices had an efficacy which was sufficient for the time, as the Westminster Confession points out in its chapter 'Of God's Covenant with Man': 'This covenant (of grace) was differently administered in the time of the law, and in the time of the gospel; under the law it was administered by promises, prophecies, sacrifices, circumcision, the paschal lamb, and other types and ordinances delivered to the people of the Jews, all for signifying Christ to come, which were for that time sufficient and efficacious, through the operation of the Spirit, to instruct and build up the elect in faith in the promised Messiah, by whom they had full remission of sins, and eternal salvation'. We must realise therefore that, as shadows and types of a Reality yet to come, they were real means of grace. The knowledge of forgiveness that was experienced by the saints of the Old Testament economy was by grace through faith, but it was mediated to them through the appointed ordinances and sacrifices, which pointed forward to Christ and His atoning sacrifice for sin. That this was no fiction for them but something very real is seen very clearly in our Lord's own words in John 8:56 about Abraham rejoicing to see His day. What else could Christ have meant by these words except that He was set forth in an unmistakable way in the old economy, and that men of faith were able to 'see' Him and rejoice in hope of the coming fulfilment of all the prophecies made to them.

6) *1:1-17*

We are now in a position to look at the text of Leviticus. It is best to read the whole of the first chapter in one, dealing as it does with the first of the five main sacrifices laid down for Israel, the burnt offering (the others are: the meal offering, 2:1-16; the peace offering, 3:1-17; the sin offering, 4:1-35; and the trespass offering, 5:1-19; the first three being 'sweet savour' offerings, and the latter 'non-sweet savour' offerings). There is much for us to learn in the various details given about how the offerings were to be made; but we will content ourselves today with some preliminary comments. The offerings are described in different places throughout the book (3:11, 16; 21:6, 8; 22:25) as 'the bread of thy God'. This provides a helpful key to a proper understanding of them - that which is life to God, what He most desires. God, Who is love, desires love, and delights in seeing its expression in all these offices of self-forgetting and self-sacrificing service in which love manifests itself. This is to God what food is to us; indeed, it is food to Him. Love cannot be satisfied without a return of love. This surely points to the self-offering of the Son to the Father. It was the sacrifice on Calvary which most fully became 'the bread of God' - satisfying not only the Divine justice (though it did that) but the Divine love.

7) *1:1-17*

An old commentator has expressed the thought mentioned at the end of the previous Reading very beautifully and we transcribe it here in the confidence that it will be a blessing to all who read it: 'The Cross, as foreshadowed by the burnt offering, had an element in it which only the Divine mind could comprehend. There was a voice in it which was intended exclusively for, and went directly to, the ear of the Father. There were communications between the Cross of Calvary and the throne of God which lay far beyond the highest range of created intelligence. We are too apt to look upon the Cross merely as the place where the great question of sin was gone into and settled, between eternal Justice and the spotless victim - as the place where our guilt was atoned for, and where Satan was gloriously vanquished. Eternal and universal praise to redeeming love! The Cross was all this. But it was more than this. It was the place where Christ's love for the Father was told out in language which only the Father could hear and understand. This truth invests the Cross with peculiar charms for the spiritual mind. It imparts to the sufferings of our blessed Lord an interest of the most intense character. The guilty sinner, no doubt, finds in the Cross a divine answer to the deepest and most earnest cravings of heart and conscience. The true believer finds in the cross that which captivates every affection of his heart, and transfixes his whole moral being. The angels find in the Cross a theme for ceaseless admiration. All this is true; but there is that, in the Cross, which passes far beyond the loftiest conceptions of saints and angels, namely, the deep-toned devotion of the heart of the Son presented to, and appreciated by, the heart of the Father. This is the elevated aspect of the Cross which is so strikingly shadowed forth in the burnt offering.'

8) *1:1-17*

The ritual in all the offerings alike, not only the burnt offering, was as follows: first of all the presentation of the victim (3) - this was to be done by the offerer himself. Personal involvement was necessary. No man could do this for another. This was to be done at the door of the Tabernacle, where the altar of burnt offering confronted the worshipper at the threshold. Next, there was the offerer's laying of his hand on the head of the animal, thus identifying himself with the offering and therefore signifying transference of sin to the animal of sacrifice (4). Thirdly, there was the slaying of the animal (5) - as soon as sin was laid on the victim, sin's penalty was exacted before the Lord. This threefold ritual was common to all the sacrifices. In the next three parts - the sprinkling of the blood, the burning of the victim and the sacrificial meal - differences appear in the various sacrifices, which give each its distinctive character. In the case of the burnt offering, the sacrificial meal is omitted, the whole animal being burned on the altar.

At this stage the offerer's part is now completed, and the priest takes over. It is he who sprinkles the blood (5) for this is a priestly act. In the burnt offering, the idea of expiation, though present, is not the main idea. Hence the blood was sprinkled only on the sides of the altar. In the sin and trespass offerings (4:1ff; 5:1ff), where expiation is the main idea, the sprinkling of blood was more elaborate. The sacrificial burning which follows has its own particular significance, and this we shall look at in the next Note.

9) *1:1-17*

The sacrificial burning of the victim (6-9, 12, 13, 17) is given its significance in the phrase in 9 - 'a sweet savour unto the Lord'. The burning does not symbolise atonement the killing, and the blood, do that - rather, it is the ascending of the offering in consecration to God. All was for Him, and in the burning the offering forever passed beyond the offerer's recall. What is signified here, therefore, is not Christ representing His people in atoning death, but Christ representing His people in perfect consecration and entire self-surrender to God. It is the self-surrender of the Son to the Father which is a fragrant odour to God. In this, the burnt offering speaks the language of the Psalmist in Psalm 40:6-8, especially the words, 'I delight to do Thy will 0 my God', and of the apostle in Hebrews 10:5-10, which quotes and elaborates the Psalmist's word. The Apostle Paul also takes up the theme in Romans 5:19, 'By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous', and particularly in Romans 12:1, where he speaks of 'presenting our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God'. The old commentator, already quoted, puts it thus: 'It was an ineffable delight to Him (Christ) to accomplish the will of God on this earth. No one had ever done this before. Some had, through grace, done 'that which was right in the sight of the Lord'; but no one had ever, perfectly, invariably, from first to last, without hesitation, and without divergence, done the will of God. But this was, exactly, what the Lord Jesus did. He was 'obedient unto death, even the death of the cross' (Philippians ii.8). 'He steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem'. And as He walked from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross of Calvary, the intense devotion of His heart told itself forth in these accents: 'The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?''

This is what lies at the heart of the ritual of the burnt offering.

10) 2:1-16

This chapter brings us to the second of the sweet-savour offerings, called in the AV the 'meat' offering, but more accurately rendered the 'meal' offering. Before looking at it in detail, however, some further comment on the interpretation of the offerings may be useful. When we look into the commentaries on Leviticus we tend to find two main emphases and interpretations - one, the offerings are taken as displaying different aspects of Christ's death on the Cross, the other as signifying consecration of the offerer's life and service to God - and mostly it is the one or the other. These are different ideas and conceptions, and it may be thought that there is something arbitrary in so interpreting them when the emphases are so different. The key to understanding here is the distinction between symbol and type and the relation between them. A contemporary Reformed theologian, Geerhardus Vos, has some very helpful things to say on this distinction in his book 'Biblical Theology' (pp 144ff). He defines 'symbol' as being 'in its religious significance something that profoundly portrays a certain fact or principle or relationship of a spiritual nature in a visible form. The things it pictures are of present existence and present application. They are in force at the time in which the symbol operates. With the same thing, regarded as a type, it is different. A typical thing is prospective; it relates to what will become real or applicable in the future'. Vos goes on to say: 'The main problem to understand is how the same system of portrayals can have served at one and the same time in a symbolical and a typical capacity. Obviously this would have been impossible if the thing portrayed had been in each case different or diverse, unrelated to each other.... The solution of the problem lies in this, that the things symbolised and the things typified are not different sets of things.... A type can never be a type independently of its being first a symbol. The gateway to the house of typology is at the farther end of the house of symbolism.... Only after having discovered what a thing symbolizes, can we legitimately proceed to put the question what it typifies, for the latter can never be aught else than the former lifted to a higher plane. The bond that holds type and antitype together must be a bond of vital continuity in the progress of redemption. Where this is ignored, and in the place of this bond are put accidental resemblances, void of inherent spiritual significance, all sorts of absurdities will result, such as must bring the whole subject of typology into disrepute'. This is a statement worthy of closest study and consideration for those who seek a true understanding of the significance of Leviticus.

11) *2:1-16*

There is another consideration also to look at before we go further: the link between Christ's offering of Himself and our offering of ourselves. This is seen very clearly in Paul's Letter to the Philippians. In Philippians 2:5ff the apostle unfolds in memorable language the self-offering of Christ, and His obedience unto death, and subsequent exaltation. This is followed in Philippians 3:4ff by Paul's testimony to his own self-consecration and his identification with Christ in His sufferings and death - a significant juxtaposition indeed, with the one inevitably leading to the other. The same pattern is seen in Romans 6:13 in his exhortation 'Yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead' - this corresponding to Christ's dying and rising again. The same is also underlined in the exhortation in Romans 12:1, 'I beseech you therefore, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice'. It can hardly be without significance that so many of the characteristic references to discipleship in the New Testament are couched in terms of offering and sacrifice. Nor should we fail to note that in our Lord's own reference to His disciples being 'as sheep in the midst of wolves', the 'sheep' is a sacrificial animal, and not merely or principally a defenceless creature. These are all considerations that have an important bearing in our studies on the Levitical offerings.

12) 2:1-16

We now consider the 'meal' offering. Delitzsch says that the usual epithet applied to them in the Hebrew literally means 'a present' (cf Genesis 32:13, Jacob's present to Esau) and signifies a gift brought by the worshipper to God as a sign of grateful acknowledgement that the offerer owed everything to Him. It is interesting to note that Isaac Watts, in his wonderful hymn, 'When I survey the wondrous Cross' originally wrote, 'Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were a present far too small'. There is no idea of expiation here, and consequently, there is no laying on of the hand upon the offering. Rather, it is the idea of 'memorial' that is in view (2). It is interesting in this connection to note how some of the Psalms, such as Psalm 38 and Psalm 70, are designated in their titles as Psalms 'to bring to remembrance'. The offerings consisted of fine wheaten flour (1-3), or cakes of such flour (v4-6), or roasted grains as an offering of first fruits (1416). To all of them there were added oil (1, 4-7, 15) and salt (13); and to those which consisted of flour and grains, incense also (1, 15). Only a handful of each kind was burned upon the altar; the rest was handed over to the priests, as 'a thing most holy' (3).

13) *2:1-16*

Before we turn to the 'typical' significance of this offering (which is considerable) we must think of it in terms of the kind of offering which it represents. It was an offering of the products of the soil, and those produced by cultivation, and what it speaks of is the people's consecration in all their works. God's claim of consecration extends to and covers all our activities (corn and oil were the staple food of the people). What is represented here is the consecration to God, by the grace of the Holy Spirit (the oil), with prayer (frankincense) and praise, of all the work of our hands; and the salt that was added was the symbol of the unchanging covenant between God and His people (cf Numbers 18:19; 2 Chronicles 13:5). God accepted the offering thus presented by the people, as a savour of a sweet smell, with which he was well pleased but - though their consecrated offerings were accepted, they were not accepted because of the offerings. The meal offering was not to be offered alone but along with the burnt offering and the others. Only when our person has been accepted, is the consecration of ourselves acceptable or possible. The 'memorial' idea mentioned earlier indicates that God graciously accepts the consecrated fruit of our labours. It 'reminds' the Lord of the service and devotion of his servant but - and this is the 'type', to which we shall turn more fully in the next Note - every meal offering pointed to Christ in His consecration of all His works to the Father (cf 'for their sakes I sanctify Myself', John 17:19).

14) 2:1-16

The 'type' or picture the meal offering gives of Christ is this: where the burnt offering typifies our Lord in His death (offering Himself without spot to God) the meal offering typifies Him in His life. The 'shadow' of this Perfect Man passes before us in the fine flour in the fact that there is no thought of sin-bearing or atonement, and therefore no question of blood shedding in this offering. We have here, as one old commentator has put it, 'A beauteous type of Christ, as He lived and walked and served, down here, on this earth....the pure and perfect Manhood of our blessed Lord is a theme which must command the attention of every true Christian'. The doctrine of the humanity of Christ is an important and essential one in the Christian gospel. And in that His was a perfect humanity, without spot, it is this that invests the death that He died with such incalculable virtue and value. When we speak of 'the precious blood of Christ' it is in this that the preciousness consists. It is simply infinite. The 'oil' (2, 5, 6) typifies the Holy Spirit. All our Lord did was by the Holy Spirit – He was conceived, He was anointed, He was empowered, and He offered Himself to God by that eternal Spirit. And if 'oil' typifies the power of our Lord's ministry, the 'frankincense' typifies the object of it as being the glory of God, typifying that in the life of Christ which was exclusively for God, and bearing the fragrance and grace of our blessed Lord to the heart of the Father (significantly, it was the 'fire of the altar' that drew forth the sweet odour of the frankincense, and the fiery baptism of the Cross supremely released the fragrance of His perfect humanity as a sweet savour to God. The old commentator, already referred to, writes: 'Did we but enter, with a more artless faith, into the truth that there is a real Man, at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens - One whose sympathy is perfect, whose love is fathomless, whose power is omnipotent, whose wisdom is infinite, whose resources are exhaustless, whose riches are unsearchable, whose ear is open to our every breathing, whose hand is open to our every need, whose heart is full of unspeakable love and tenderness towards us - how much more happy and elevated we should be, and how much more independent of creature streams, through what channel so ever they may flow!'

15) *3:1-17*

We come now to the third of the sweet-savour offerings, the peace offering which, like the burnt offering, is a blood offering. A threefold possibility is outlined here in the kind or nature of the sacrificial animal: it was to be either of the herd (cattle), or of the flock (sheep), or of the goats. The differentiation is somewhat similar to that in chapter 1, and indicates a descending order of values, from the higher to the lower - surely, as in 1:1-17, a concession to those with less means (cf 12:8, and Luke 2:24). Clearly, the point in these references is ability or otherwise to provide a worthy sacrifice. Those of means were not permitted to sacrifice an animal of the lower order (one recalls David's words in 2 Samuel 24:24, 'Neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing', and Paul's in 2 Corinthians 8:12, '...according to that a man hath and not according to that he hath not', and, of course, our Lord's commendation of the widow's mite.

The six-fold pattern, mentioned earlier, obtains here again: (i) Presentation, (ii) Laying on of hand, (iii) Killing of the victim, (iv) Sprinkling of blood, (v) Burning, (vi) Sacrificial meal. Here, as in the burnt offering (i) and (iv) are identical, with the same symbolic and typical significance. But (v) and (vi), the burning and sacrificial meal, are markedly different. In the burnt offering, everything was burned on the altar; but here in the peace offering, it was all the fat and no more (3, 4, 9). In 9 'rump' (AV) is rendered 'the fat tail entire' in the RSV. The reference is to a special breed of sheep, whose tail would weigh 15 lb and more, full of fat and marrow, and estimated as the most valuable part of the animal for food. The 'fat' being burned speaks of the Divine appropriation of the richest and best part of the animal (this may be what lies behind such references as Psalm 36:8, 'They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house' and Isaiah 55:2, 'Let your soul delight itself in fatness'.

16) *3:1-17*

The sacrificial meal (cf Leviticus 7:11-21; Deuteronomy 12:6, 7, 17, 18) is rich in symbolic significance. The sacrifice 'made peace', and this signified reconciliation between God and sinful man. And the feasting upon the sacrifice was the symbol of friendship restored, and communion and fellowship established. It was a feast given by God, and based on His creation. We need, however, to read along with this chapter the references in Deuteronomy mentioned above and the 'law' of the peace offering in Leviticus 7 to get the full flavour of what was involved: the offerings were to be eaten, by the offerer, not at his own home, but before the Lord at the central sanctuary; he was to include in this sacrificial feast all the members of his family, and any Levites that might be with him; and he was to make the feast an occasion of holy joy before the Lord. The 'type' in all this is of Christ: the 'fat' burnt represents the very heart of the sacrifice given for the offerer, and the supreme excellence of what He offered to God for us, so making peace. In theological terms, this indicates that reconciliation is Seed upon atonement; and, reconciled, the sinner is now invited by God to eat in His house. The Father bids us sit at the feast, and the Victim, given as sacrifice for sin, is now made food for the redeemed (cf, in this connection, the words in John 6: 52, 53 about eating the flesh of the Son of God). We see from 7:11-21 that there were different kinds of peace offerings, described in terms of thanksgiving, but these we shall look at in greater detail when we come to that chapter.

17) *4:1-35*

The 'sin offering', to which we now come is, in contrast to those we have dealt with thus far, a 'non-sweet savour' offering. There is some difference of view among the commentators as to where the account of this 'sin offering' ends and that of the 'trespass offering' ends. 5:1-12 is said to give an account of the trespass offering, but this in 5:6 is better translated 'for his guilt', since in 5:6, 7, 9 'sin offering' is used three times, and therefore probably belongs to chapter 4. The difference between a sin offering and a trespass offering is that the latter invariably refers to the kind of sin that 'trespasses' on others' property, whether God's or man's. All trespass is sin; but all sin is not necessarily trespass in the sense above-mentioned. Both alike, however, are non sweet savour offerings. Distinctions are made throughout the chapter on those who make the sin offering - a soul (2), the priest (3), the congregation (13), a ruler (22), one of the common people (27). Also, there is a descending degree of importance in the sacrificial offering - a bullock (3, 14), male kid goat (23), female kid goat (28), lamb (32). There is also a distinction in ritual as between priest/congregation on the one hand and individual ruler/ common people on the other, particularly in the ritual of blood sprinkling (compare 6, 7, 17, 18 with 25 and 30). In the priestly and congregational offering, the blood is (a) sprinkled before the veil, (b) put upon the horns of the altar of incense, (c) poured at the altar of burnt offering. In the individual's offering it is (a) put upon the horns of the altar of burnt offering and (b) poured at the altar of burnt offering. More on this in the next Note.

18) *4:1-35*

With regard to the priestly and congregational offerings, three things may be said to be involved: God's dwelling place in the assembly, the worship of the assembly, and the individual conscience. The sprinkling of the blood seven times before the veil of the sanctuary secured the Lord's relationship with the people, and His dwelling in their midst. The blood on the horns of the altar of incense meant that the true basis of worship was preserved. And the blood poured at the foot of the altar secured the claims of the individual conscience, for the brazen altar was the place of individual approach, the place where God met the sinner. With the individual, it was merely a question of the individual conscience, and therefore there was only one thing done with the blood, it was all poured at the bottom of the altar of burnt offering. The symbolism here is significant. The sin of an individual could not, in its influence, reach 'the altar of incense', the place of priestly worship, nor to the ‘veil of the sanctuary’, the sacred boundary of God's dwelling place in the midst of His people. Its place was at the altar of burnt offering, where alone it could be dealt with. One old commentator says, 'It is well to ponder this. We must never raise a question of personal sin or failure, in the place of priestly worship, or in the assembly. It must be settled in the place of personal approach. Many err as to this. They come into the assembly, or into the ostensible place of priestly worship, with their conscience defiled, and thus drag down the whole assembly and mar its worship. This should be closely looked into, and carefully guarded against.'

19) *4:1-35*

We should note particularly the repeated reference throughout the chapter (2, 13, 22, 27) to sins of ignorance. Two things may be said about this. On the one hand, it is clear that in the Levitical system no provision was made for deliberate, presumptuous sin (cf Numbers 15:30; Deuteronomy 17:12; Psalm 19:13). Presumptuous sin was unthinkable, within the context of the covenant of grace. This raises problems for our thinking. It is sometimes said that in the New Testament, by contrast with the Old, all sin, not merely sins of ignorance, is dealt with in the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. This is true; but a qualification has to be added, in this respect, that the New Testament itself speaks warningly about the consequences of wilful sin (cf Hebrews 10:26-31; 1 John 5:16). What, however, are we to make of statements such as our Lord's on the Cross, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do' (Luke 23:34), and Paul's in 1 Timothy 1:13, 'I did it ignorantly and in unbelief'? How could it be said that the scribes and Pharisees crucified Christ in ignorance, or that Paul persecuted the church in ignorance? Well, what we have to recognise is that there are two elements in all sin: the wayward, and the wilful, sins of the flesh and sins of the spirit. This is an important distinction. In the deepest sense, the scribes and Pharisees could not fully know what they were doing because, in the foul deed they committed, their minds were blinded by the gods of this world, just as Paul was the dupe and tool of Satan in the terrible persecution he led against the Church. This is why the sin in each case, though great and terrible, was forgivable. We shall look further at this distinction in the next Note.

20) *4:1-35*

Here is an excerpt from Notes in this series on 1 Timothy 1:12, 13 on Paul's statement about his sinning ignorantly: 'There are two different elements in sin that require to be distinguished. On the one hand, there is that of human frailty and weakness, which calls forth the compassion and mercy of God. To be the dupe of the devil is to be an object of pity, and when we are, we never know in the fullest extent just how pathetic and miserable creatures we are. On the other hand, however, there is that in sin which is deliberate and malignant, and which does not spring from the weak or sensual part of our nature, but is the mark of our revolt and rebellion against God. In Satan, sin is purely spiritual (in the evil sense), and unmixed with any frailty or sensual weakness; it is pure and utter rebellion. And this is why satanic sin is unforgivable. But in men, sin is rarely, if ever, pure revolt, but generally mixed to a greater or lesser degree with sensual weakness, and for this reason it is forgiven. But the nearer to the satanic man's sin comes, the more dangerous and critical it is, since it approaches, so to speak, a point of no return, beyond which forgiveness becomes impossible. This is why the sin against the Holy Ghost, about which our Lord speaks with such solemnity, is elsewhere (Hebrews 10:26) spoken of as wilful sin. If Paul's rebellion and revolt had gone on much longer, it may well have come to this. Viewed thus, it should be clear that Paul has no thought of offering the plea of ignorance as an excuse for his sin. Ignorance can never be an excuse for guilt; but it does constitute a plea for mercy.'

21) ***4:1-35***

The other point to be noted about sins of ignorance concerns a different interpretation placed upon them. It is that there are many things which our conscience might pass over, and indeed escape our consciousness altogether, although vivid and real in God's sight, and which the Divine holiness could not tolerate. Our sins are far deeper than we know, and we always need to pray 'That which I see not, teach Thou me' (Job 34:32). The atonement wrought in Christ effects pardon and forgiveness for all our sins, what we are conscious of and what we are not conscious of at all, sins of ignorance as well as known sins.

We are now at this point able to compare the sin offering here with the burnt offering in 1:1ff, where we said that though expiation is present it is not the primary feature, and therefore the 'blood' is not very markedly emphasised. Here, however, it is central, since expiation, and indeed propitiation, are paramount. Therefore the blood of atonement is presented before the presence of God, before the altar of incense and before the veil, the entrance to the holy place. In the burnt offering Christ is seen as offering Himself in His perfection to God, as a sweet-smelling savour. But in the sin offering He is seen as offering Himself as a Sacrifice that bore the penalty of sin. It is this distinction that is reflected in the seemingly contradictory statements in John 18:11, 'The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?' and Matthew 26:39, '0 My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me'. The contradiction is indeed only seeming: the two statements simply illustrate the two different aspects of our Lord's atoning work, as foreshadowed in the two offerings in Leviticus.

22) *5:1 - 6:7*

We come now to the second of the non-sweet savour offerings. We have already pointed out that the distinction between the sin offering and the trespass offering is that the latter refers to acts which are an invasion of the rights of others especially in respect of property or service, whether of God's or man's (some additional instruction about this enactment is found in Numbers 5:5-10). The distinction in ritual as between the sin offering and the trespass offering lies in this: for any invasion of the rights of another in regard to property, not only must expiation be made, but also satisfaction and restitution. This latter is the predominant emphasis, which explains why the application of the blood here is limited to sprinkling on the altar of burnt offering (7:2). It was strictly an individual's offering, never that of the congregation. Also, while in the sin offering there were gradations in the value of the offering, dependent on the means of the offerer, here, in the matter of trespass, the offering is one (15), to signify that so far as guilt is concerned there was no difference: the obligation of full payment lies on every debtor, be he poor or rich. Also, the offering must be 'vetted' by the priest (5:15 - 'by the shekel of the sanctuary'), it was to be God's estimate of the situation not the trespasser's. The one-fifth to be added to the principal (6:5) was designed to compensate for the 'loss of amenity' suffered by the complainant. It was, so to speak, 'interest' paid on what had been 'borrowed'!

23) *5:1 - 6:7*

The legislation is divided into two sections: (i) trespass 'in the holy things of the Lord' (5:14-19); (ii) trespass 'on the property rights of man' (6:1-7). In (i) there is a sub-division, 14-16 and 17-19. In 14-16 it is the Lord's possessions that are in view. One thinks of Malachi's famous statement, 'Will a man rob God?', where what is in view is the matter of tithes. Another example would be the withholding of first fruits of the land, which are the Lord's. In 17-19 it is made clear that ignorance is no excuse. We should have known! But where there is no exact knowledge of the amount of the trespass, restitution is not possible, and is not required here. Yet it is still sin, and sacrifice must be made. The insistence of culpability even 'though he wist not' (17) is a reminder that ignorance may effect the degree of our guilt, but not the fact of it.

In (ii) it is sins against one's fellow men - in the matter of a deposit (2), fraud in a 'bargain' (2), robbery, the finding of something lost and not restoring it (3). There is no mention here of 'sins of ignorance': doing such things is a conscious act. We know we are doing wrong, even when we may have stilled our consciences about them. It is interesting to see the change of order as between 5:14-19 and 6:1-7: in the former, bringing the offering to the Lord is first, then the work of restitution follows. In the latter, however, it is the other way round: first we do the restitution, and then we bring the offering to God. The reason is clear: we cannot get right with God before we square things with our fellows. As Jesus put it in Matthew 5:23, 24, 'First be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift'.

24) *5:1-6:7*

The 'typical' teaching here is that of Christ making satisfaction for us in the death that He died, and reparation, or restitution, to God for our sins. A familiar illustration will help us here: if my house is burgled, not only must the burglar be punished by the law, but also I want my valuables returned. The concept here is that of debt. Sin is regarded as debt, due from us to God. God has claims upon us for service which we have never met, claims for a portion of our substance which we have often withheld. This lends new understanding to the words in the Lord's Prayer, 'Forgive us our debts' (cf also our Lord's parables in Matthew 18:23-35 and Luke 7:41, 42). It is interesting in this connection to note that in Luke 13:4, in our Lord's words about the men who perished in the fall of the tower of Siloam, 'Think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwell in Jerusalem?' The Greek word translated 'sinners' is 'debtors'. Christ's death was the supreme act of obedience by which He discharged 'to the uttermost farthing', even with the added fifth of the law, all the transcendent debt of service due from us to God. A further thought should be recorded, with reference to the fifth to be added to the restitution: in the sacrifice of Christ, God received more than He lost in the tragedy of the Fall, in this sense, that the offering of the perfection of Christ is something far greater than the best man could ever have done, had he never sinned. By the same token, man also receives more through the sacrifice of Christ than he would have had, had he never sinned. The latter state of the prodigal son was so much better than it was for him before he left home. This is the triumph of redemption.

25) *6:8-30*

The remainder of this chapter, together with the whole of the next, is occupied with the 'law' of the various offerings to which reference has already been made. Here it is the law of the burnt offering (8-13), the law of the meat (or meal) offering (14-18), the law of the sin offering (24-30), with the addition, in 19-23, the priests' meat (or meal) offering. While many of the instructions are necessarily repeated from the general regulations given in the earlier chapters, so far as the different kinds of sacrifice and the mode of presenting them are concerned, it should be noted that these 'laws' are communicated to Aaron and his sons, and they relate to the duties and rights which devolved upon them in relation to the sacrifices. These regulations should therefore be read back into the instructions given in the earlier chapters. What is added in the law of the burnt offering is that the fire on the altar was to be kept burning constantly, it must never go out. It was the divinely appointed symbol and visible sign of the uninterrupted worship of Jehovah, which the covenant nation could never suspend either day or night, without being unfaithful to its calling. In the law of the meat (or meal) offering, new instructions are introduced with regard to what was left and had not been burned on the altar. This the priests were to bake without leaven and eat in the court of the tabernacle. The law of the sin offering (24-30) gives more precise instructions, particularly in regard to the offerings brought by the people, as to the place of slaughtering, and as to the holy character of the flesh and blood of the sacrifice, and the implications of this for all who touched it. The meat (or meal) offering of the priests (19-23) is introduced as a new law, with a special formula, and is inserted here in the special instructions given for the priests. This was offered by the priests on the day of their anointing.

26) 7:1-38

The law of the trespass offering (1-10) and that of the peace offering (11-36) occupy this chapter, and once again it will be useful to look back to the earlier chapters to compare what is said here with the original statements on these offerings. One point remains to be underlined, which is that it is mentioned that what was not burnt of the offerings went to the priest as his portion. The rationale behind this is unfolded in 35, 36, in the words 'This is the portion...'. It does not mean that it is less given to God, for even when the priest is given it, it is given to God nevertheless, and it is God Who gives of His own to the priest. To give to the priest in this sense is to give to God. The significance of this is elaborated in 28-34. Here, it is the breast and the right shoulder (or thigh) that are set apart for the priest. These were the choice parts of the animal: God, and those representing Him, must have the best of everything. But, in order that no one might think that the priest receives these from men, but from God, and that it is from God that he is fed and provided for, certain ceremonies had to be used: the breast was to be 'waved' (30) and the shoulder 'heaved' (32) before the Lord (cf Exodus 29:24, 27). 'Waving' is the name applied to the ceremony in which the priest laid the object to be waved on the hands of the offerer, then placed his own hand underneath, and moved the hands of the offerer backwards and forwards in a horizontal direction, to indicate by the movement forwards, i.e. towards the altar, the presentation of the sacrifice to God, and by the movement backwards the reception of it back again from God to the priests (so the Talmud, according to Delitzsch). The 'heave-shoulder' is the portion lifted off from the sacrificial animal as a gift of honour for the officiating priest. Together, these two portions, imposed as a tribute by God, were given to the priests as a right which they could claim forever.

27) *8:1-36*

The previous chapter completes the record of the institution of the various offerings. With this chapter we come to the subject of the priesthood and the consecration of Aaron and his sons into the priestly office. The association of ideas between sacrifice and priesthood is important, in the insight it gives into our Lord's redemptive work: as a sacrifice, Christ introduces His people into a settled relationship with God, while as a priest He maintains them in that relationship. As believers we need the continuing ministry of our merciful and faithful High Priest (cf Hebrews 3:1, 2; 4:14ff; 5:1ff; 7:24ff; 8:1ff). The consecration ceremonies fell into four parts: (i) washing with water (6); (ii) investiture (7-9); (iii) anointing (10-12); (iv) the sacrifices (13-31). The chapter opens with an account of the preparations for this solemn ceremony. Moses was to take Aaron and his sons, the garments that had been prepared for them, the anointing oil, and the appointed sacrifices, and bring them before the assembled congregation at the door of the tabernacle. The congregation were involved because Aaron and his sons were to be consecrated as priests for them, and standing mediators between them and the Lord (cf Exodus 28:1 and 29:1-37 - it is this to which reference is made in 5, in the words 'this is the thing which the Lord commanded to be done'. The act of consecration itself begins in 6 in the washing of the priests. This cleansing from bodily uncleanness was a symbol of the putting away of the filth of sin, and therefore a symbol of spiritual cleansing, without which no one could draw near to God. One readily thinks of New Testament references in this connection, such as John 3:5; Ephesians 5:26; Titus 3:5 which are surely invested with new meaning and significance in relation to what is said in this chapter.

28) *8:1-36*

The clothing or investiture of the high priest with the garments described for us in Exodus 28 - 'garments for glory and for beauty' - was a symbol of his endowment with the character required for the discharge of the duties of his office. His anointing (10-12), according to the directions given in Exodus 30:26-30, followed the anointing of the tabernacle and everything in it. The holy oil was poured upon Aaron's head, this signifying the endowment with the spirit of God for the duties of his office. The anointing was not only to sanctify Aaron and his sons as organs and mediators of the Spirit of God, but the vessels of the sanctuary also. 'As channels and vessels of the blessings of grace and salvation, which God as the Holy One would bestow upon His people, through the service of His priests, and in the holy vessels appointed by Him. On these grounds the consecration of the holy things was associated with the consecration of the priests' (Delitzsch). The sacrificial ceremony (14ff), with which the consecration was brought to a climax and concluded, consisted of a threefold sacrifice - the first, a sin offering (14-17), the second, a burnt offering (18-21), and the third, a peace offering (22, 23). These were made in accordance with the instructions given earlier to Moses in Exodus 29 (including the detail of anointing the right ear, the right hand, and the right foot of Aaron with the blood of sacrifice, signifying that he was always to hearken to the Word and commandment of God, always to discharge the priestly functions properly, and always to walk correctly in the sanctuary). Finally, there was the sacrificial meal (31), by which Aaron and his sons were received into that special, priestly covenant with the Lord, the blessings and privileges of which were to be enjoyed by the consecrated priests alone.

29) 9:1-24

We come in this chapter to the induction of the priests into the duties of their office in the tabernacle, following their consecration and that of the tabernacle in the previous chapter. We should note the significance of what is said in 6, 'This is the thing which the Lord commanded that ye should do'. Here is a people living under the authority of the Word of God - similar to the oft-repeated word in Exodus about doing things 'according to the pattern shown you in the mount'. There is significance also in the order of the offerings in 3ff - sin offering, burnt offering, meal offering and peace offering. The sin offering always came first, because it served to remove the estrangement between man and God caused by sin. This is always the way, and indeed the only way, into fellowship with God. Next, came the burnt offering, as an expression of the surrender of the offerer to the Lord, with the meal offering similarly signifying the consecration of the fruit of his labours to God; and finally the peace offering, signifying the reality of reconciliation and fellowship with God in the covenant relationship. This is a wonderful sequence, in the illustration it gives of spiritual life. Expiation of sin and consecration of life as one's response to the mercies of God necessarily precede fellowship with Him. There is no other way of knowing God than this (cf John 14:21, 23, and 2 Corinthians 5:13ff), where Paul makes so clear that reconciliation is based on atonement; cf also 1 John 1/2, where John indicates that our fellowship with the Father and with the Son rests upon and grows from the fact that Christ is the propitiation for our sins.

30) *9:1-24*

When the sacrificial ceremony was over (22ff) Aaron blessed the people from the altar with uplifted hands before coming down to the people; after which he and Moses went into the tabernacle - we are not told why they did this, but surely it was to introduce Aaron into the sanctuary where he was to serve the Lord and to show him the place and the nature of his ministrations there. Having done so, they came out again and blessed the people. There was therefore a double benediction pronounced upon the people. There is no indication as to the significance of this double blessing, although we may certainly think in terms of the great Aaronic benediction in Numbers 6:24-27, 'The Lord bless thee and keep thee...'. It is interesting, however, to think of our Lord's action recorded in Luke 24:50, 51, which is expressed in language almost identical to that in 22 - it was surely a high priestly action on our Lord's part, following His offering of Himself to the Father. Reverent commentators have also associated these verses with the well-known words in Hebrews 9:24-28. The blessings, at all events, marked the completion of the inauguration services, and the manifestation of the glory of the Lord marked the divine attestation of His approval of all that had been done 'according to the pattern', and to quote Delitzsch, 'to give a divine consecration to the altar, or sacrificial service of Aaron and his sons, through which a way was to be opened for the people to His throne of grace, and whereby, moreover, the altar-fire was consecrated....into a divinely appointed means of reconciliation to the community'. Delitzsch adds, 'The whole nation rejoiced at this glorious manifestation of the satisfaction of God with this the first sacrifice of the consecrated priests, and fell down upon their faces to give thanks to the Lord for His mercy.'

31) *9:1-24*

The account given in this chapter of the induction of the priests into their duties in the tabernacle affords a graphic and fruitful illustration and lesson in symbol with regard to an ordination or induction service as we know it today in the Church, or the beginning of a new ministry. The things that are of supreme importance for any man called of God to a work of the ministry are, first of all, that he should be a man under the authority of the Word of God. He is a servant of the divine Word, and an ambassador for Christ, and an ambassador is one who speaks not in his own name but on behalf of his sovereign. One of the implications of this is that there is necessarily 'givenness' about his message. He is not at liberty to change or modify that message but rather he is to hand it over as it has been given to him (cf 1 Corinthians 15:1ff, 'I delivered unto you first of all that which I received....'). Only when he recognises himself as being under that authority can he fulfil his responsibility as an ambassador. And so it is with the minister of the Word. In the second place, he must have a true appreciation of the nature of his message, and a true understanding of the way back to God - through the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross which alone makes atonement for sin through the reconciliation wrought in His blood, by which alone men are brought into fellowship with God. Israel was left in no doubt as to the way into the Presence of God, and no man of God can afford any uncertainty or doubt about the message he has to proclaim. But with these two realities (being under the authority of the Word, and being clear about its message) assured, the man of God should expect a manifestation of the Divine Presence, and a bestowal of blessing, as a seal and attestation from God upon his ministry. God is no man's debtor: 'Them that honour Me', He says, 'I will honour'.

32) *10:1-11*

The contrast between this chapter and what precedes it is complete. There, all was light and blessing (cf 9:22-24); here all is darkness and judgment. There, all was done 'as the Lord commanded'; here, it was something concerning which 'He commanded them not', indeed, which had been expressly forbidden (cf Exodus 30:9). We are told that Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, offered strange fire before the Lord, and that this called forth immediate judgment upon them, for their abuse of the office that they had received. It is not clear or certain as to what was the exact nature of their offence. Whether it was that they did not take the fire for the incense from the altar-fire, but from elsewhere, or usurped their father's prerogative, or offered at a time not ordained by God, or that they pressed in within the veil rashly and presumptuously -such are some of the suggestions made by commentators – we cannot say with any certainty. What is clear, however, is that their act of sacrilege took place in the context of their consecration as priests of the Lord, and that it was committed so soon after the manifestation of the Presence of God (9:22ff). That is the disquieting thing about this story, for it argues a lack of perception and appreciation of the solemn nature of their calling that they should have intruded so complacently into holy things. Perhaps they thought it did not matter if they were sincere in what they did (other evidences of such an attitude may be seen in the fate that overtook Uzzah, in 2 Samuel 6:6 for presumptuously putting his hand to the Ark of God; and the judgment upon King Uzziah, 2 Chronicles 26:16, for burning incense on the altar, which was the prerogative of the priests, not his, to do). If so, their complacency was rudely shattered in the instant and terrible judgment that fell upon them.

33) *10:1-11*

Questions about the severity of this judgment inevitably arise in people's minds. Does not this, they say, reveal a barbarous, severe and 'unchristian' God? But one has only to think of the Apostle Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 11:30-32 about the death of believers as a judgment and condemnation by God upon sacrilegious behaviour in an act of worship, to realise that Old and New Testaments are at one in issues of this nature (cf also the story of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5). If God has definite ideas about how His people are to worship Him, and has made them known, surely it is wisdom to take them seriously and reverently, remembering that 'to obey is better than sacrifice'. This serves also to explain the seeming severity (4-7) in the refusal to allow public expression of mourning and grief, an attitude which likewise has its parallels in the New Testament, in the words of our Lord Himself, such as 'Let the dead bury their dead' and 'If any man....hateth not his father and mother....he cannot be My disciple'.

It might be wondered what is the connection between what is said in 8-11, and what precedes these verses. The link seems to be in the words 'Lest ye die' (9), and commentators think there may be a hint in these verses as to why Nadab and Abihu acted as they did. 'It is possible, although by no means certain, that we are to infer from these verses that Nadab and Abihu acted as they did because they were under the influence of liquor'. Does the recollection of this incident lie behind the Pauline injunction in 1 Timothy 3:2, 3?

34) *10:12-20*

The remaining verses of the chapter reveal something of considerable interest. In 12-15 there is a repetition of the commandment previously given, concerning the use to be made of the meal offering and the peace offering, that there was to be a resumption of duties after the judgment recorded in the previous verses. Life was to go on, notwithstanding the awful thing that had happened. It is clear from what follows that Moses was particularly sensitive in view of Aaron's sons' dereliction, and his anger was kindled again when he discovered that the goat of the sin offering had been burned instead of eaten in the place of the sanctuary as had been the Divine directive concerning it. Why this transgression of the Divine command by Aaron's remaining sons, seemingly compounding the earlier sin? What had been done, it seems clear, had been done with Aaron's knowledge and sanction, for he now answered on his sons' behalf in the words of 19. He tells Moses, in effect, that he had been so overwhelmed by a sense of family guilt that he felt he could not eat the sacrifice. Could it be the will of God that a house in which was found the guilt of such a sin, should yet partake of the most holy things of God in the sanctuary? It is true that the letter of the law had been broken, yet God had not visited Aaron with further judgment. Rather, his penitent and broken spirit was accepted, and Moses was content (20). This shows that the judgment on his sons had proved salutary for Aaron and his family. The Apostle Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 7:10, 11 are an eloquent commentary on the spirit shown by Aaron in this matter: 'Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of'.

35) *11:1-23*

In this chapter we come to a new section of the book which gives a series of laws relating to clean and unclean animals. Delitzsch's introductory comment to this chapter is very illuminating and will serve as a useful introduction to our study: 'The regulation of the sacrifices and institution of the priesthood, by which Jehovah opened up to His people the way of access to His grace and the way to sanctification of life in fellowship with Him, were followed by instructions concerning the various things which hindered and disturbed this living fellowship with God the Holy One, as being manifestations and results of sin, and by certain rules for avoiding and removing these obstructions. For example, although sin has its origin and proper seat in the soul, it pervades the whole body as the organ of the soul, and shatters the life of the body, even to its complete dissolution in death and decomposition; whilst its effects have spread from man to the whole of the earthly creation, inasmuch as not only did man draw nature with him into the service of sin, in consequence of the dominion over it which was given him by God, but God Himself, according to a holy law of His wise and equitable government, made the irrational creature subject to 'vanity' and 'corruption' on account of the sin of man (Romans 8:20, 21), so that not only did the field bring forth thorns and thistles, and the earth produce injurious and poisonous plants (see at Genesis 3:18), but the animal kingdom in many of its forms and creatures bears the image of sin and death, and is constantly reminding man of the evil fruit of his fall from God'.

36) *11:1-23*

First of all, in these verses, we have the law of the clean and the unclean in relation to eating: in 2-8, beasts on the earth; in 9-12, fish in the waters; in 13-19, flying things; in 20-23, insects. In 2-8, 'clean' beasts are those that chew the cud and divide the hoof; in 9-12, 'clean' fish are those with fins and scales; in 13-19, all those forbidden are birds of prey, or those reputed to be unclean in their habits, living on flesh or carrion; in 20-23, all save those with 'springing feet' to leap with are forbidden and unclean. Older commentators have made much of the 'typical' significance of these regulations, as, for example, in 2-8, that the chewing of the cud expresses the natural process of inwardly digesting what one eats, while the divided hoof sets out the character of one's outward walk, and that this is illustrative of the Christian life: he who inwardly digests the Word of God will have an outward walk well-pleasing to God. It is, however, a perhaps more fruitful line of study to regard these regulations and prohibitions in the way in which we regard the prohibition about the forbidden tree in Genesis 3 - which was to be both a test of obedience and also an indication of the distinction between right and wrong. In the same way every beast became to Israel 'a remembrancer of the law, calling upon them to distinguish between what was right and what was wrong, what was permitted and what was forbidden. The Lord set up so many finger-posts which pointed Israel to the Fall and reminded them that they were in a fallen world....to imbue the mind of Israel with moral distinctions was the grand and primary use of this arrangement' (Boner).

37) *11:24-47*

These verses deal with the question of defilement by contact with the dead bodies of carrion. Minute charges are given with regard to eight species of unclean animals, of which six appear to be different varieties of the lizard family. It was not only touching such dead bodies that brought uncleanness, but even if such a dead body fell on household utensils, food or drink, uncleanness would result. The regulations, it should be noted, are simple and straightforward, clear and direct. What is not so simple, however, is what construction to place on these food laws, and to determine their significance, if any, for us today. What we have to understand, first of all, is that it is ceremonial, rather than moral, defilement that is in view, and that in the New Testament we are taught explicitly that the ceremonial law is superseded by the gospel. The reference for example in Acts 10:11-16 is clearly to these very enactments which the gospel sets at nought. In this sense, therefore, there is no application to us today. This is not, however, to dismiss the chapter as being irrelevant, and that for two reasons. On the one hand, there is a good deal of sound sense, from a hygienic point of view in these ancient laws, which anticipate by many centuries some of the findings of modern medical research - and, after all, is this not the age which lays so much store upon calories and cholesterol levels, polyunsaturates and the like? But, more importantly, these food laws were enjoined upon Israel 'to make a difference' (47) between them and all other peoples. They worked as instruments of identity and discipline. And the corresponding reality in the Christian message today is the 'pilgrims and strangers' teaching as found in 1 Peter 2:11 and elsewhere. There is a Christian identity to be maintained in the world and there is a need for a distinctive testimony to be borne by Christians. The danger of conformism today is that Christians are often so little different from others: they do the same things as unbelievers and their attitudes are so often undistinguishable from theirs. The genius of the Puritan testimony - whatever may be said in criticism of it - was that it was different.

38) *12:1-8*

This chapter deals with the ritual defilement that follows childbirth. The law is short and simple, and indeed straightforward: when a baby is born, the mother was ceremonially unclean for one week, if the baby was a boy, and two weeks if a girl. This was followed by the boy's circumcision, then a period of thirty three days completing the period of purification - forty days in all - and, in the case of a girl, sixty-six days - eighty days in all. The offerings to be made in this situation are described in 6, 7a, with special provision of a lesser offering for the poor, in 8, a provision graphically underlined in Luke 24 in the offering brought by Mary and Joseph for the infant Jesus. It is not easy to understand the thinking behind such a law. It is not that begetting and giving birth are defiling in themselves - and it is not this that is taught here - so much as the bodily secretions connected with generation and child-bearing. And it would seem that the message taught here in symbol is that the fountain of life in man is defiled. It is this that explains both the fact that a large family was looked upon in Israel as a great blessing from God (cf Leviticus 26:9; Deuteronomy 28:11; Psalm 127:3-5) and the undoubted emphasis in the theology of the old Testament that man was 'born in sin and shapen in iniquity' (Psalm 51:5). As one commentator puts it, 'In the birth of a child, the special original curse against the woman is regarded by the law as reaching its fullest, most consummate and significant expression. For the extreme evil of the state of sin into which the first woman, by that first sin, brought all womanhood, is seen most of all in this, that now woman, by means of those powers given her for good and blessing, can bring into the world only a child of sin. And it is, apparently, because we here see the operation of this curse in its most conspicuous form, that the time of her enforced separation from the tabernacle worship is prolonged to a period either of forty or eighty days.'

39) *13:1-59*

This is, a very long chapter which, along with the next, deals very fully with uncleanness from what is here called 'leprosy', but which may not in fact be the leprosy we know of today, since some of the most characteristic symptoms of present day leprosy - anaesthetic areas of the skin, painless and progressive ulceration of the extremities, facial nodules - are absent from the description given here. Whatever the disease was, however - and it is clear that it was regarded as serious - there can be no question of the importance that was attached to diagnosing and dealing with it. In 2-8, a first set of tests is given. One cannot but be impressed with the level of care, vigilance and patience to be shown by the priest in ascertaining whether the symptoms brought to his attention were in fact those of the dread disease or not. No hasty diagnosis was to be made, and the sufferer could be 'shut up' for seven days so as to allow the symptoms to develop unmistakeably, before the final diagnosis was made. A further set of tests is delineated in 9-17, in another kind of sufferer, in which similar carefulness was to be exercised, where the disease appeared without previous eruptions. The priest might find that this was an old, longstanding 'leprosy', and pronounce him unclean. A third 'case' is outlined in 18-23, in which the disease developed from a boil or abscess that had been cured and scarred over; and a fourth 'case' in 24-28, developing from a burn. In 29-37 it is signs of the disease on the scalp or the beard; in 38, 39 a form of disease that was comparatively harmless, and in 40-44 a form of baldness accompanied by a white reddish sore formed on the bald patch, which was a clear sign of the disease. The treatment of those diagnosed as having the disease is described in 45, 46: they were to rend their garments, bare their heads, put a covering on their upper lips and cry 'Unclean, unclean' that all might avoid them for fear of being defiled, and were to dwell in isolation outside the camp. 'In other words, they were to assume all the ordinary signs of mourning for the dead; they were to regard themselves, and all others were to regard them, as dead men. As it were, they were continual mourners at their own funerals.'

40) *13:1-59*

The last thirteen verses of the chapter, 47-59, deal with evidences of the disease in garments, whether woollen, linen or leather. The same patient investigation was to be made with respect to such garments as with persons, and the same firm prescription carried through: whenever anything of a suspicious nature was perceived, investigation was to follow.

There are two ways in which all these complex and detailed regulations may be said to have had significance for the people of God. One is, clearly, hygienic and sanitary. By the observance of them 'not only was Israel to be saved from many sicknesses and various evils, but was to be constantly reminded that Israel's God, like a wise and kind father, had a care for everything that pertained to their welfare; not only for their persons, but also for their dwellings (14:33-53), and even all the various articles of daily use'. But there was something beyond this: it would not be difficult to see the deeper lesson, with the leprosy of sin infecting not only man's person and being, but also the things around him, his environment, the circumstances in which he is placed. The Apostle Jude speaks of 'the garment spotted by the flesh' (Jude 23), referring to our external contact with the world around us, and in Revelation 3:4, our Lord refers to those from Sardis 'which have not defiled their garments', in spite of the allurements and sinful habits of those around them. But we may also apply this to the garments of character which we wear and in which we appear before men, the gestures, words and deeds, habits by which we express ourselves, any or all of which may betray what we really are at heart. These also can bear evidence of the disease of sin and require cleansing.

41) *14:1-32*

'The ceremonies for the restoration of the leper, when healed of his disease, to full covenant privileges, were comprehended in two distinct series. The first part of the ceremonial took place without the camp, and sufficed only to terminate his condition as one ceremonially dead, and allow of his return into the camp, and his association, though still under restriction, with his fellow-Israelites. The second part of the ceremonial took up his case on the eighth day thereafter, where the former ceremonial had left him, as a member, indeed, of the holy people, but a member still under defilement such as debarred him from approach to the presence of Jehovah; and, by a fourfold offering and an anointing, restored him to the full enjoyment of all his covenant privileges before God.' (Kellogg). It should be noted that the procedures here are ritual, not curative. The priest was not a doctor; more like a public health inspector, diagnosing rather than curing. The Levitical law provided no means of healing as such. The sufferer had to wait in hope of a cure from God. The ritual in 1-9 is full of interest. Two possible interpretations as to the significance of the two clean birds used by the priest in the ritual: one is (following Delitzsch) that the bird let loose symbolised the fact that the former leper was now imbued with new vital energy, and released from the fetters of his disease, and could now return to liberty again, into the fellowship of his countrymen. The bird that was killed portrayed the fate that would have overtaken the leper, but for God's mercy in healing him. The other interpretation is that the bird let loose is analogous to the scapegoat in Leviticus 16 (which see). The scapegoat carried away the nation's sins, whereas here the bird let loose carried away the polluting skin disease.

42) *14:1-32*

What follows the ritual of the two birds (10-32) unfolds the means whereby the cured man was incorporated once again into covenant relationship among his people. All the usual sacrifices - burnt offering, sin offering, meal offering, trespass offering - were involved. The significance of the trespass offering is that of the consciousness, or suspicion, that some specific sin had brought the leprosy upon the sufferer (cf the case of Miriam in Numbers 12, Gehazi in 2 Kings 5:20, and Uzziah in 2 Chronicles 26:17ff). The part of the ritual described in 14 echoes 8:23ff, where we pointed out that the reference was to all we hear, all we do, and wherever we go. Significantly, hearing comes first, as this is how the Word of the Lord comes to a man, and this is what he is restored to in being brought back into the covenant, then the acting and walking in the covenant grace of God. What a graphic illustration this is of what we are restored to, from the leprosy of sin (cf Isaiah 6, where the prophet's cleansing was followed by his hearing the voice of the Lord).

'In cases of poverty on the part of the person to be consecrated, the burnt-offering and sin-offering were reduced to a pair of turtle-doves or young pigeons, and the meat-offering to a tenth of an ephah of meal and oil; but no diminution was allowed in the trespass-offering as the consecration-offering, since this was the *conditio sine qua non* of reinstatement in full covenant rights.' (Delitzsch)

43) *14:33-57*

These verses speak of a further infection and infestation, that of dwelling houses. This link between 'skin disease' and garments (13:47ff) and houses, serves as we have seen as a reminder of the interaction of man and his environment. Human sin has implications not only for mankind, but for the rest of creation. The Apostle Paul expounds this link in Romans 8:19-23. The detailed description of the procedure for dealing with the infestation of houses is graphic, and reminds us of the thoroughness with which modern dry rot requires to be dealt with. Once again, as in the earlier instances, there was patient and painstaking investigation to ascertain whether the house was diseased, then the appropriate measures were taken to deal with it. It is not difficult to apply this in spiritual ways to a spiritual house, whether the church as a corporate body or the individual as the temple of the Holy Ghost. With what painstaking thoroughness, for example, did Paul examine the spiritual house at Corinth, and require that the diseased stones be removed. One has only to compare 1 Corinthians 5 with 2 Corinthians 7:11 to see how his zealous care was rewarded and the plague stayed. The Letters to the Seven Churches in Revelation 2, 3 provide further illustrations of priestly investigation, and we may well read them afresh with the message of this passage in mind.

44) *15:1-33*

This chapter deals with defilement from bodily secretions, normal and abnormal, in men (1-18) and in women (19-33). The principle in both is the same: the secretion, whether normal or abnormal, rendered the person affected unclean; but when abnormal, the defilement was regarded as more serious than in other cases, not only in a physical but also in a ceremonial and legal aspect, in which cases, in addition to the washing with water, the person affected must come before the priest and present for his cleansing a sin-offering and a burnt-offering (13-15). Similar regulations were laid down for women, both for normal and for abnormal discharges, with similar offerings to be made (29, 30). The principle underlying these regulations is similar to that mentioned in the Note on 12:1-8, and it will be useful to look back to what was said then. Once again here, as there, we must say that it is not that the process of procreation as such is defiling, but the bodily secretions that are connected with it. Once again, the message is that the fountain of life in man is defiled. It is specifically taught in Genesis 3 that the curse that came upon Adam and Eve through their sin should affect the generative power of the race: 'I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow shalt thou bring forth children'. Fallen man has lost the capacity to beget a creature like himself in his original state, i.e. in the image of God, and could only be the means of bringing into the world a creature subject to physical weakness and bodily and spiritual death. And the secretions mentioned here were regarded as making men and women unclean 'because they were manifestations of the curse in a part of man's nature which, according to the Word of God, sin has specially affected' (Kellogg).

45) *16:1-34*

We come with this chapter to the final part of the first half of the book of Leviticus. The first sixteen chapters of the book deal with the removal of that defilement which separates man from God, while the second half of the book (chapters 17-27) deal with the restoration of the lost fellowship between man and God. The first part of the book culminates with a description of the Day of Atonement, gathering up, so to speak, the teaching of the past chapters. We need to bear in mind that all the sacrifices with their rituals had for their concern and intention the reconciliation of God with His people that alone can make fellowship possible. In this connection, two things have to be said. One is that many sins and defilements would inevitably remain unacknowledged (through ignorance) and therefore without expiation - and therefore the sense of true fellowship would be lacking. The other is that unwitting infringement of the regulations (contained for example in chs 11-15) would pollute the sanctuary, and make it unfit for the presence of God. Hence, the once-a-year general and perfect expiation of all the sin and uncleanness that had remained unatoned for and uncleansed throughout the year. That is one link between this chapter and the previous ones. Another link is seen in 16:1, in the words 'after the death of the two sons of Aaron' - referring back to the incident recorded in 10:1ff, when Nadab and Abihu offered strange fire before the Lord. Thus, the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) ordinance was designed to prevent any further such infringement, and prevent any untimely death. It was without question the most important of all the ordinances unfolded in this book. And as in the law of the offerings the most distinctive part was the sin offering, so here, in the ordinance of the Day of Atonement the conceptions embodied in the sin offering found their most complete development, for the idea of sacrificial expiation, with the consequent removal of all sin, received the highest possible symbolical expression.

As to the analysis of the chapter: After an introduction (1, 2) the animals for sacrifice and the garments to be worn for the ceremonies are described (3-5); in 6-10 an outline of the ceremonies is given; in 11-28 these are described in detail, with the blood sprinkling rites (11-19), the scapegoat (20-22), and the cleansing of the participants (23-28); and finally, in 29-34, the people's duty.

46) *16:1-34*

The phrase in 2, 'not at all times' is rendered variously in the modern versions, but the meaning is surely that a general prohibition against entry within the veil except, on this one occasion, on the Day of Atonement, once a year. The reason for this exclusiveness is the holiness of God, appearing in the cloud above the mercy seat, in the Holiest of All (cf Hebrews 9:7ff). The bullock for a sin-offering and the ram for a burnt-offering were for Aaron and his household; the two goats for a sin-offering and a ram for a burnt-offering were for the congregation. The garment of white linen was not the usual dress of the high priest, but intended here as a representation of holiness, and therefore a symbolical shadowing forth of the holiness and glory of the One perfect Mediator between God and man, Who as the true High Priest, being holy, innocent, unspotted and separate from sin , entered once by His own blood into the holy place not made with hands, namely into heaven itself, to appear before the face of God for us, and obtain everlasting redemption (so Delitzsch).

After a brief summary outline of the ceremony in 6-10, this is described in considerable detail in 11-28. First of all, the sin-offering for Aaron and his house is described with the offering of incense upon the fire before the Lord, with its cloud covering the mercy seat, and the sprinkling of the blood of the bullock upon and around the mercy seat - all in relation to safeguarding the worshipper from the wrath of God, the sin-offering effecting atonement and reconciliation, and the cloud of incense creating a screen both to prevent the high priests from gazing on the Holy Presence and to hide the sinner from Him. This is followed by a similar ceremony with the sin offering for the people. This was to make atonement for the holy place because of the uncleanness of the people. The next part of the ceremony involving the other goat is of great importance, and we shall look at this in some detail in the next Note.

47) *16:1-34*

The second goat used in the sin offering for the people is called the 'scapegoat' in 8, 10 and 26. A marginal reading in the AV renders this 'for Azazel', a word for which several possible meanings have been given. One is that it was the name of a demon that dwelt in the wilderness (Delitzsch says 'Satan'). There is evidence in the Old Testament that the wilderness was looked on as a haunt of demons (cf Isaiah 13:21, 34:14, and cf Matthew 12:43). There can be no thought, however, of any idea of sacrifice being made to demons in this (indeed this is expressly forbidden in Leviticus 17:7); rather, in the sending of the goat into the wilderness it was a symbol of 'sending sin back to where it belongs'. Another meaning of 'Azazel' is that it is a rare Hebrew word meaning 'destruction'; and another that it means 'a rocky precipice', over which the goat is driven headlong and dashed to pieces at the foot (again signifying 'destruction'). This goat was a sin offering only inasmuch as it was laden with the sins of the people to carry them away into the desert. It is important to recognise that both goats - the one slain and the one sent away into the wilderness - constituted one sin offering, and both were devoted to one and the same purpose. The reason for making use of two animals is surely to be found in the physical impossibility of combining all the features, that had to be set forth in the sin offering, in one single animal (so Delitzsch). As such there is the resemblance - as was pointed out in the Notes on 14:4ff - between the two goats and the two birds used in the purification of the leper, of which the one to be set free was bathed in the blood of the one that was killed.

48) *16:1-34*

The ordinance of the scapegoat is rich and fruitful in the illustration it gives of Christ's atoning work on the Cross. Here is a note the Rev. William Still gave in his readings on Leviticus: 'This is the scapegoat, which bears the burden of all the transgressions and iniquities of the sins of the children of Israel, and which is sent away by a 'fit man' into the wilderness to a land not inhabited (cut off). This in type takes us as far as we can go into the mystery of our Lord's sufferings. Where did He go? What did He find there? What did He suffer in casting our sins behind God's back forever? This we shall never know. The nearest we can come to it - and it is wondrously near! -is the cry of dereliction which Christ uttered in the extremity of His agony, 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?' A fit Man indeed, to go so far from Home for us! There was no other good enough....O dearly, dearly has He loved.... And we must love Him too'.... Verily!

Another fruitful and thought provoking application of this ordinance is to the association between our Lord's work and the experience of Israel, God's chosen people. The Apostle Paul speaks of the casting away of the Jews as being the reconciling of the world, using the same words and language as he used in 2 Corinthians 5:19 of Christ's reconciling work on the Cross - a daring and mysterious association of ideas indeed! Did he have the 'scape-goat' ordinance in mind when he spoke of the 'casting away' of Israel? Prof. T.F. Torrance suggests that the ordinance of the two goats illustrates the mystery of atonement, with the one pointing to the death that Jesus died upon the Cross, and the other to the wanderings and the sufferings of God's people down the long centuries of their history, with both alike united, in a mystery vast beyond our understanding in the one redeeming work of God for the sins of the world. This is a thought worthy of reverent meditation, indeed!

49) *16:1-34*

The remainder of the chapter describes the completion of the ceremony (23-28), with the high priest removing his white garments and resuming his coloured state dress, and to offer the burnt offerings for himself and for the nation. Ablutions were also performed by the man who took the scapegoat into the desert and by those who burned the sin-offering outside the camp, since they had been defiled by the animals bearing the sin of the people. The final verses (29-34) give general directions for the yearly celebration of the Day of Atonement, on the tenth day of the seventh month, as a 'sabbath' during which every kind of work was to be suspended. The people necessarily were to enter in spirit into the significance of the ordinance. To this day 'Yom Kippur' remains the most important celebration in the Israel of the present time.

The New Testament application of all this is unfolded very fully in Hebrews 9/10 and this whole section of the epistle should be read carefully along with this notable chapter in Leviticus.

50) *17:1-16*

Commentators consider this short chapter to be a 'hinge' linking the two halves of the book of Leviticus, with chs 1-16 containing the ritual regulations for public life and worship, and chs 18-26 regulating the personal and private affairs of individuals. It deals with basic principles about sacrifice and food. In 3-7 it is laid down that no domestic animals were to be killed outside the Tabernacle. In the wilderness, no slaughter of animals was permitted save before the door of the Tabernacle. All were to be brought to the priest for ritual slaughter as peace offerings. The offerer would then receive back the flesh of the animal to eat. The penalty for infringement is set out in 4: such an one would be guilty of bloodshed, and 'cut off' - this has been interpreted variously as 'banished by God', 'expelled from the nation', 'premature death at the hand of God', and even 'judgment in the life to come'. The reason for the severity of this judgment is given in 5-7: to infringe the law, and slay the animal in the field meant to make sacrifice to devils, or 'goat demons' or 'goat-idols', as the modern versions render it, the idolatrous worship prevalent in Egypt in those days. It would be a flagrant breach of the first commandment (Exodus 22:20). As Wenham puts it, 'Anyone involved in secret demon worship might claim that he merely killed the animal outside the camp. To plug this potential loophole, it is enjoined that all animals must be killed in the tabernacle' (5). (We should note that the terms of this law presuppose camp-life, that is wilderness experience. It would have been impracticable in the Land; hence, in Deuteronomy 12:15ff this law is repealed, in favour of a more flexible regulation). By the same token, no sacrifices were to be offered outwith the Tabernacle (8, 9). This was probably also enacted for the same reason as expressed in 5-7. Other possible motives, however, could include sectarianism, and the breaking up of the unity of Israel's worship. (The 'stranger' also was expected to conform to the practice obtaining for the people of Israel).

51) *17:1-16*

In 10-12 prohibitions are made concerning the eating of blood. Two reasons are given for this prohibition, which goes back to Noah (cf Genesis 9:4 - cf also Leviticus 7:26, 27; Deuteronomy 12:16, 23; 15:23; 1 Samuel 14:32). The first reason is that 'the life of the body is in the blood', therefore by refraining from eating flesh with blood in it, man is honouring and reverencing life. The sanctity of human life is associated with not eating blood. The second reason is that the blood was given on the altar to make atonement for their lives: the blood ransoms (makes atonement) at the price of life. Because therefore animal blood atones for human sin, it is sacred, and should not be consumed by man. In 13-16 rules are given about the hunting of game. With regard to this, only the 'blood' prohibition applies.

What are the lessons, the applications, of this chapter and its regulations, to us, and to the Christian life? First of all, the 'peace offerings' represent the hallowing of all food as given us by God. The symbolism of bringing the animal to God and being given it back by Him and as from Him is rich in its significance. This is the idea lying behind 'saying grace' at table, giving thanks for the good gifts of God. Then, the warning about 'offering to demons' underlines the perils and the temptations facing Israel, and the encroachment of idol worship (cf Numbers 25:1ff; Deuteronomy 32:17; 2 Chronicles 11:15). Christ warned His disciples that they could not serve God and mammon (Matthew 6:24; Luke 16:13), and Paul warned the Corinthians against participating in heathen worship because this involved the worship of demons (1 Corinthians 10:20-22). Wenham observes, 'In new guises both materialism (mammon) and demonology still seek to woo the Christian from total commitment to Christ'. Furthermore, the making of sacrifices outwith the Tabernacle, as well as being offerings to demons, could be the evidence of sectarianism - the 'hiving off' on one's own, away from and apart from the body of the fellowship. William Still comments: 'This is a word to those who because their pride has been hurt, or who because they have refused to shed their peculiarities, elect to stay away from Christian fellowship, and develop a private religion. Beware! This sort of thing is the beginning of demon worship, and even worse, self-worship. The Christian fellowship with all its faults helps to knock the corners off, and if we are so delicate and sensitive that we cannot stand it, we are in all the greater need of the rough winds of adversity and reality'.

52) *17:1-16*

Continuing the thought at the end of the previous Note, in applying the lessons of this chapter, we will do well to realise that the question of motive is always a big one in the 'secession' syndrome, and in the determination to break away into independence. To be 'a big fish in a little pool' seems often to have a greater appeal than to be 'a little fish in a big pool'. It is far safer to be, in the words of Anna Letitia Waring's lovely hymn, 'content to fill a little space, if Thou be glorified'. Then there is the tendency shown by some to think they no longer have need for fellowship and ministry, for they have, in their own estimation, 'arrived'. How different was the robust and realistic view of the Reformers, whose attitude is well expressed in T.H.L. Parker's words: 'None may think that he has advanced beyond the necessity of hearing preaching because he is able to interpret the Bible for himself. No doubt if preaching were merely a man giving spiritual advice to his religious inferiors, then the spiritually advanced would no longer need this help; but since in preaching God Himself speaks to men, no one may say that he knows sufficient or is sanctified beyond the need of help from God. 'We see', says Calvin, 'that the most learned have need to be taught, the most upright and the most righteous have need to be admonished. If God has already put us on the good road and bestowed upon us the gifts of the Holy Spirit, we must not think that preaching is now unnecessary for us, for we must be led right up to the end, since our perfection is not in this world'.'

53) *18:1-30*

This chapter deals with what Delitzsch calls 'the holiness of the marriage relation'. This is a better title than 'basic principles of sexual behaviour', as another commentator has put it, not because it is more modest and less outspoken than the other (though it is), but because it describes better the point that is being made. For in mentioning these various acts, Moses is describing things that violate the sanctity of the marriage bond. This is one of the chapters that are better read in private than in public, especially the central section (6-23). Nevertheless these verses should be read with care, since, after all, they are the Word of God to His people; and it is a measure of the realism of the Bible that they stand where they do. The introductory verses (1-5) set the tone of the legislation, and the discussion. 'Do not be like those in Egypt, or those in Canaan', God says to His people. 'You have left Egypt; leave Egypt's standards and customs behind you. You are going into Canaan; but do not let Canaan's standards and customs mould you.' This is exactly what Paul stresses in Romans 12:2, in the words 'Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds...'. It is the separation, and the separated character of the people of God and their calling, that are stressed here. Be different: your moral standards must be different. This is stressed seven times throughout the chapter (twice in 3, 26, 27, 29, 30). Israel's morality is portrayed as something that marks them off as the Lord's special people. Certain standards of morality are decisive marks of religious allegiance, just as the earlier prohibitions in 17:1ff were. As one commentator has put it, '(Chapters 18-20) set out the foundation principles of social morality. The first place among these is given to the institution of marriage....the corner stone of all human society.... Any violation of the sacred character of marriage is deemed a heinous offence, calling down the punishment of Heaven both upon the offender and the society that condones the offence'.

54) *18:1-30*

In 6-18 the subject of forbidden union is dealt with, and a number of prohibitions are laid down which in general have remained the basis of modern law in this country until comparatively recent times. However, in our own legislation, the Marriage (Enabling) Act of 1960 liberalised some of these regulations, so that a marriage may now be legally contracted between a man and a woman who is the sister, aunt or niece of a former wife of his (whether living or not), and was formerly the wife of his brother, uncle or nephew (whether living or not) - Cox, an act of parliament. And this is forbidden here in 16. The reason for the prohibition is that marriage makes a man and wife as closely related as Parents and children. Also, a girl marrying into a family becomes an integral and permanent part of that family, in the same way that children born into that family do. The 'horizontal' blood relationship with the family persists. Hence a man marrying his wife's sister would be the same as marrying his own sister (the exception here is what is called 'levirate' marriage - cf Deuteronomy 25:5ff - by which a man may perpetuate his brother's name; but this, only if the woman has not borne a son). Two reasons are therefore before us: one is a genetic one, the other theological. Significantly, it is the theological considerations that are at a discount today, as witness the 1960 Act, and as witness also the activity for law reform in this whole area, in the desire for revision of the definition of incest in a more liberal way. Nothing closer than cousins' relationships are allowed in Scripture (cf Genesis 24).

55) *18:1-30*

Other, more disquieting deviations are dealt with in 19-23: adultery (20), offering children to the fire-god Moloch (21) - in this regard, lest we might think that this was an ancient practice long since discontinued, we should bear in mind the modern and largely accepted practice of the incineration of unborn foetuses; homosexuality (22), and also bestiality (in the classical meaning of that word, lying with animals), in 23. In relation to all this we should remember the warnings in 3 - 'not as those in Egypt or Canaan'. Today, the dangerous theme is 'Everybody is doing it'. The pressures brought to bear upon young people by this perverse philosophy are truly immense, and it is here that they need the strength and support of a true Christian fellowship and tradition, since it is precisely here that the attack is being made today on what is sometimes contemptuously called 'the puritanical British view of sex'. It is the fundamental structures of the biblical view of life, in personal relations (20) and in the sanctity of life (21) that are so much under attack today. It is not always realised, in the ongoing debate on what is natural and what is unnatural in personal relationships that there is only one ground on which such questions can be answered, but it is a sufficient one, namely that God has ordained, in the order of His creation, how He wants things to be, and that therefore deviations from that order are necessarily both unnatural and wrong. Man was made in the image of God: that is the norm, and the norm for man is heterosexual relationships. To be otherwise is the evidence of something wrong and distorted at the heart of personality. It is a tragedy, it is true; but it does not answer any questions to call it natural. What would such people say if someone who practised what is spoken of in 23 were to protest 'What is wrong with it? It is natural to me to do this'. Would they see the fundamental unnaturalness in this, or would their attitude be that 'anything goes'?

56) *18:1-30*

In the conclusion to this discussion (24-30) it is expressly stated that the judgment of God came upon the heathen nations of Canaan because of these things. They had so defiled the land that judgment became inevitable. Where, then, does this place us in the west? For the trends are unmistakable. When avant-garde writers can say 'When the barren virtues of chastity, innocence and restraint are removed from their absurd enthronement and put into their true proportion, to be replaced by experience, wisdom and joy, the human race can turn to its proper task...', and make such statements as 'fidelity between husband and wife is an outdated conception, due for some radical rethinking', is there not a need to 'remember the Lord, which is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons and you daughters, your wives and your houses' (Nehemiah 4:14), to establish and preserve the ancient sanctities on which alone a true and stable life and society can be built?

57) *19:1-18*

The key to this chapter's teaching is found in 2: 'Ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy'. This is the principle on which all the different commandments which follow are based, and the goal which the Israelites were to keep before them as the nation of Jehovah. All that follows is a spelling out of the meaning of holiness in everyday life. Holiness is to be the regulative principle in the everyday experience of God's people. It is, therefore, not so much an abstract, or mystical idea, as the spirit in which we fulfil the obligations of life in its simplest and commonest details. The chapter's structure is determined by the recurrent phrases 'I am the Lord your God' and 'I am the Lord' (2, 3, 4, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 25, 30, 31, 32, 34, 36, 37). First of all, the emphasis on 'I am the Lord': this is the fundamental reason for all true behaviour. The 'echo' is from Exodus 20:1, 2 - the covenant God Who by redeeming Israel from Egypt with mighty hand and stretched out arm, constituted them His covenant people - it is He Who enjoins this behaviour on them. This is indeed the same emphasis as we find in the New Testament, in Romans 12:1, 2, where Paul appeals for consecration of life 'by the mercies of God'. Following this emphasis, all of the Ten Commandments are referred to, expanded or developed in new ways, although not in their original order. It is a very comprehensive chapter, and its value for us lies in the interpretative insights that it gives on the Decalogue, as we shall see in the Notes which follow.

58) *19:1-18*

The first commandment to be discussed is the fifth - 'Honour thy father and thy mother...' (3a). Why this, to begin with? It tells us something very important: holiness begins in the home. This is where the foundation is laid - not in school, not in church, but in the home. This is very solemn and challenging. For the child, parents are in the place of God; through them he learns what God is like. Fatherhood on earth projects to a child the Fatherhood of God. False views of God can be so damaging and so disintegrating - at either extreme, whether harsh and forbidding on the one hand, or on the other sentimental and sloppy, projecting the idea of a benevolent grandfather rather than a father. Linked with this emphasis on the home is that on the Sabbath, in 3b. The Sabbath law depends for its authority on the explicit ordinance and command of God. The 'day' stands for God Himself; and to neglect the day is to neglect Him. 'The connection of these two precepts is significant. Even as honouring of parents stands foremost among human duties, the sanctification of the Sabbath is the first step towards holiness in his spiritual life.' The emphasis on the first and second commandments in 4 follows from 3: wrong views of God, and neglect of His day, lead to neglect of Him, and this involves and leads to making substitutes for Him. Inevitably! We are made for God and for the supernatural: when we leave either out of our lives, substitutes will certainly be looked for.

59) *19:1-18*

As a background to 5-9 see 17:1ff, which insists that only meat properly sacrificed as a peace offering may be eaten (this, to prevent idolatry, 4). In 9, 10, care for the poor takes up a theme constantly reiterated in Scripture (cf Ruth 2:7ff; Leviticus 23:22; Deuteronomy 24:19-22). Failure to be generous can easily lead to active dishonesty (11, 12), for both have at their heart the grasping, inturned, selfish and self-seeking attitude. He who steals will probably be led to lie about it, and dishonour God's Name, if need be, in a court of law. In 13, 14, it is exploitation of the weak who have no redress that is in view. Delay in the payment of wages, though not illegal can be hurtful, causing hardship, cf Deuteronomy 24:15. The deaf and the blind are particularly vulnerable, therefore they must have particular consideration. Taking advantage of anyone's helplessness is expressly forbidden. In 15, 16 impartiality in justice is emphasised, and gossip that can bring a man into court unjustly must be avoided. Resentment and hatred in the heart (17, 18) leading a man to take vengeance into his own hands cannot be countenanced. 'Vengeance is Mine', says the Lord, and courts of law are the prerogative of the powers that be, set up for the dispensing of justice.

60) *19:19-37*

In 19-25 what is enjoined is a prohibition against bringing about that which is not according to nature, and mixing things which are separated in the creation of God. Both the physical and the moral order of the world must be kept sacred. In 26-29 various heathen customs are forbidden - the eating of blood, augury or divination, disfigurement of the body by tattooing or suchlike, heathen mourning customs. In 29, 30, temple prostitution, a well known feature of heathen religion, is forbidden, as is spiritism (31). Respect for the aged (32) is enjoined, as is respect and compassion for the stranger (33, 34). In 35, 36, fair trading is a 'must'. The practical application of the commandments is very thorough, is it not! And indeed, this is as it should be. Nor has the need for this been superseded today. The moral law of God does not change with the dawning of the new dispensation of Christ, and it is incumbent on the Church to 'spell out' the implications of that eternal law for private and public life alike, if need be in great detail, until men 'get the message', and understand that God has standards of behaviour for all His creatures that may not be ignored with impunity.

61) *20:1-27*

It will be helpful to recall a quotation made at the beginning of our study in ch.19, as follows: '(Chapters 19-20) set out the foundation principles of social morality. The first place among these is given to the institution of marriage....the corner stone of all human society.... Any violation of the sacred character of marriage is deemed a heinous offence, calling down the punishment of Heaven both upon the offender and the society that condones the offence'. We saw how ch.19 dealt with various forbidden relationships, incest, adultery, homosexuality, bestiality, and how ch.19 dealt with issues such as honouring parents, the Sabbath, good neighbourliness, mixed breeding, pagan practices, and so on. In ch.20 most of the subjects dealt with have already been discussed in these two earlier chapters: the difference of treatment here lies in the fact that now the consequences of violating these laws in chs.18/19 are underlined and unfolded, and we are told what will befall the law-breakers. The analysis of the chapter is as follows: after a brief introduction (1, 2a), sins against religion are dealt with (2b-6), followed by an exhortation to holiness (7, 8); then, sins against the family (9-21), followed by a further exhortation to holiness (22-26), with a final warning about sins against religion (27).

62) 20:1-27

It is interesting to note the different terms used in these laws: the phrase 'put to death' in 2, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 27; the manner of death variously described - 'stoning' (2, 27), 'by fire' (14), 'set My face against' (3, 5, 6), 'cut off' (3, 5, 6, 17, 18), 'die childless' (20, 21); 'his blood....upon him' (9, 11, 12, 13, 16, 27); 'bear their iniquity' (17, 19). 'Stoning' was the usual form of execution in Old Testament times, expressing perhaps the community's rejection of the sins which brought about the death penalty (cf Deuteronomy 17:7). The phrases 'cut off' and 'set My face against' may be additional to the sentence of execution, and if so they refer to something even worse than death, viz. eternal judgment. Perhaps, however, they are distinct from and different to 'execution', and refer to a sentence of ex-communication, and a withdrawal of grace and providence for those who receive them - or even death by the hand of God (cf 1 Corinthians 11:30). 'Childlessness' (20, 21) seems also to be a judicial divine verdict of punishment, analogous to the above-mentioned excommunication. 'Burning' may refer not so much to burning at the stake or death by burning so much as the burning of the corpse after the man had been stoned to death (so Delitzsch, who refers to Joshua 7:15, 25; Leviticus 21:9 and Genesis 38:24). The phrase 'their blood shall be upon them' (e.g. 16) and 'they shall bear their iniquity' (e.g. 19) seem to be equivalent: 'iniquity' equals 'guilt' equals 'he has brought it upon himself to be killed'. We shall look at some of the implications of all this in the next Note.

63) 20:1-27

The biblical laws unfolded here are significant in the prominence they accord to human values, as opposed to the economic considerations of much of heathen law. This is a point of some importance in relation to present-day attitudes, in which there is more than a little emphasis on, for example, the money and effort going into research on alcoholism not so much for the good of lives and families as for the improvement of industrial performance and the saving in man-hours. Also, whereas crimes against persons are regarded in Scripture as more serious than crimes against property, it has generally been very different in the legislation of the western world.

Generally speaking, the Pentateuch lays down three main types of punishment: the death penalty for the gravest public sins against life, religion and the family; 'cutting off' for grave private sins; and restitution for property offences. The problem of severe and indeed ultimate penalties for not only killing but for other offences is a real one. Concerning this, two things may be said: first, it is a matter of history, not least in more modern times, that there has tended to be a great stringency in punishments exacted by new, young communities, for the good reason that their continued existence virtually depended on the evil things, for which the punishment was meted, being extirpated from their life. For example, in the early years of the Soviet State, following the revolution, the death penalty was exacted for industrial sabotage and suchlike for these evils threatened their survival. One thinks also of the stringency of divine discipline in the Early Church, in the summary dealing with Ananias and Sapphira - for their particular poison to have been allowed to spread would have been fatal for the Church's continued existence. The fact, however - this is the second point - that the death penalty is not now exacted does not alter the seriousness of the crimes for which it was once applied, and it is still wrong to do these things. The integrity of the law does not change, though penalties have done so over the years.

64) 21:1-24

This chapter and the next deal with the holiness of the priests, the religious leaders, whereas the previous chapters have concentrated on the holiness of the people. It is clear from what is said that higher standards were expected of the priests than of the ordinary Israelites. The chapter divides readily enough into three sections: 1-9, restrictions on mourning and marriage for ordinary priests; 10-15, restrictions on mourning and marriage for high priests; 16-24, physical impediments to the exercise of the priestly office. It is to be noted that the phrase 'I the Lord, which sanctify you, am holy' occurs three times, in 8, 15 and 23. Priests were forbidden to take part in funeral ceremonies for anyone who was not a close relative (2, 3). The NIV rendering of 4 probably captures the sense better than the AV 'He must not make himself unclean for people related to him by marriage, and so defile himself' - the statement stands in contrast to what is said in 2, 3, which speak of blood relatives, whereas in 4 the reference is to someone related to the priest by marriage. In 5, 6, defacement of the human body (in the expression of mourning) is prohibited as incompatible with holiness - cf 19:27, 28 for the general prohibition so far as the people were concerned: how much more then for the priests! Such practices were out of character with the calling, status and dignity of the people of God. In 10-12, even stricter prohibitions are made for the high priest, in which he is forbidden the normal, allowed marks of grief, because his hair had been anointed with the oil of God, and it would nullify his consecration if he did so (10). He was not even allowed to take part in the burial of his closest relatives, father and mother, so total is his dedication to the service of God (11, 12). Official duties always take precedence over family ones.

65) *21:1-24*

It is important for us to see the echoes of this legislation in the teaching of the New Testament, both in our Lord's words and in the epistles. In Matthew 10:37, 'He that loveth father and mother more than Me is not worthy of Me', and in Matthew 8:22, 'Follow Me: and let the dead bury their dead', and in 1 Corinthians 7:29, 30, 'It remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not...', what is being said about discipleship is that it is a royal calling, to the highest possible spiritual dignity - not merely a spiritual priesthood but a high priesthood. This is the point that is being made, and nothing must be allowed to influence or detract from this high calling.

The regulations about marriage and the priesthood in 7, 8 and 13-15, are similarly strict. The priests are consecrated to God, and therefore their wives must be of good character. If we compare 7 and 14, we see by implication that a priest was allowed to marry a widow, but the high priest was not so allowed. The strictures were even more severe for the high priest. We should bear in mind that this was all in the interests of the separated character of God's people and His priesthood. They were holy unto the Lord. Again, the links with the New Testament are evident - cf Ephesians 5:27 '...not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish'; 1 Timothy 4:12, 'Be thou an example of the believers....in purity'; Titus 1:6, '...having faithful children' - this last, compared with 9 here seems to suggest that if children of believers and particularly of priests sin, their guilt will be judged as more serious than that of others. Well might our Lord say, 'Unto whomsoever much is given...much shall be required'.

66) *21:1-24*

In relation to the physical impediments to the exercise of the priestly office (17-24), a significant distinction is made. On the one hand, those suffering from impediment or deformity were excluded from service in the sanctuary; on the other hand, however, they were not excluded from the participating in the priestly portion, for it is said in 22, 'He shall eat the bread of his God, both of the most holy and of the holy'. Again, it is the symbolism of the holy that is at work here. All these physical defects bespoke and signified ceremonial defilement, they were evidences of imperfection, and therefore could not approach to God. Lest we should feel this to be a harsh and unfeeling enactment - for who among those who suffer such handicap or infirmity could but feel the pain of such an exclusion we must recognise the spiritual implication and application of all this in the way our Lord Himself, and the Scriptures indicate concerning the spiritual defects that mar Christian testimony and service - lameness of walk, defective spiritual vision, lack of singleness of eye, withered hands in prayer, service or fellowship, moral blemishes, imperfect, stunted spiritual growth. Nor should we forget the wonderful promise given to the disadvantaged and disabled 'Even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off' (Isaiah 56:5).

67) 22:1-33

The teaching of this chapter is closely linked with and continues that of the previous one, and deals with further related ordinances. Here also there is a natural division of the chapter by the use of the formula 'I the Lord do sanctify them' (9, 16, 30). Following upon the list of physical impediments against the exercise of the priestly office (21:17-24) which did not however prevent the eating of the priestly food, here, in 1-9, are circumstances in which priests can neither officiate nor eat priestly food. Ceremonial uncleanness, of whatever sort - skin disease, discharge, contact with dead men or animals - disqualifies from eating priestly food. The reasoning behind this prohibition is that the priestly food had been sanctified and consecrated by having been set aside for the sanctuary, and therefore it must not be polluted by contact from those who were ceremonially unclean, even if that uncleanness were only temporary. In 2, we are told that Aaron and his sons were to keep away from the holy gifts of the children of Israel which they consecrated to Jehovah, that they might not profane His holy Name by defiling them. This, of course, is a ceremonial enactment, but it certainly has something to say to us in the moral and spiritual realm, with regard, for example, to the stewardship of the gifts God's people bring to Him, and lays a solemn responsibility of exercising a right and honourable stewardship of it. We sometimes speak of a Congregational or Financial Board as being responsible for the temporal and material affairs of a congregation; but this teaching serves to elevate that responsibility to a high spiritual dignity. It is a solemn thought that we could defile the offerings of God's people by wrong, unworthy or irresponsible attitudes.

68) *22:1-33*

Also, as it was forbidden to the priest to eat with those holy things which were his rightful portion, with his defilement or uncleanness on him, till he should first be cleansed, so also today, the same care must be exercised in the Church, as cf. Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 11:28 where he insists on the need for a man 'to examine himself' when he comes to the Lord's Table. Perhaps this apostolic injunction rests upon the principle expressed here. In similar vein, there is a New Testament application in relation to the care to be exercised as to who was to be regarded as belonging to the priest's family (10-16): 'outsiders' were excluded (10); merely to live with the priest or work with him, is not enough to qualify a man (10b). But slaves and their children did count as members of the family (11), but visitors (strangers or outsiders) or day labourers were excluded. Incorporation into the family of Israel was the important thing. Has not this something to say to us on the subject of who should, for example, sit at the Lord's Table. 'Incorporation into the family' is the touchstone: you join a church; you are born into a family. Also (12ff), the daughter of a priest, if she were widowed, or divorced, and returned childless to her father's house, would qualify again to eat of the priest's food, becoming once again a member of his household; but if she had children, then she formed with them a family of her own, and therefore did not qualify. In 14ff, if an outsider ate unwittingly, he was to bring the equivalent of what he had eaten plus one fifth as reparation to the priest, to restore what the priest had been deprived of (cf 5:16, 'interest' paid on what had been 'borrowed', being loss of amenity).

69) 22:1-33

Blemishes in sacrificial animals are dealt with in 17-33 and indications are given as to what are acceptable sacrifices. The blemishes detailed in 22ff are described, as one commentator points out, in terms that echo the blemishes in the priestly candidates in 21:17-21 - there, they were evidences of imperfection and therefore they could not approach to God. In optional sacrifices, as for example, freewill offerings, minor blemishes were passable but these would not do for vows. The references in 24, 25 are to castration. The words 'You must not do this in your own land' (NIV) constitute a prohibition of castration altogether, since it is a mutilation of God's creation, and therefore something unnatural. Neither could such animals be received from a stranger or foreigner - i.e. either animals offered by them or bought by Israelites from them. It was the fact of the castration, not who did it, that was important. The fact of it is the 'corruption'. The humanitarian considerations in 26-30 are noteworthy - young animals (27) were to be left at least seven days with their mother before being taken from her (cf Exodus 22:30), before this they would not have attained to a self-sustained life. In 28 it is a prohibition about killing mother and calf in the same day (cf Deuteronomy 14:21; 22:6, 7). This is not only a humanitarian consideration, but also, more significantly, a prohibition against wanton destruction. The cow could bear again, and would, if left to live. The chapter's concluding exhortation (31-33) underlines the truth that all the enactments are designed to hallow the Lord's Name among His people. Obedience (31) hallows that Name; neglect or disobedience profanes it.

70) 23:1-22

This chapter deals with the various feasts or festivals, and it readily divides into two sections, marked by the phrase 'I am the Lord your God' in 22 and 43. The first section deals with the spring festivals (1-22) and the second with the autumn festivals (23-44). Another phrase 'It shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings' further sub-divides each section (14, 21, 31, 41). After a brief introduction referring to the Sabbath (1-4), the spring festivals, the Passover and Unleavened Bread are dealt with 5-14, and the feast of Weeks in 15-22. Next follow the autumn festivals, the solemn rest day and Day of Atonement in 23-32, and the feast of Tabernacles in 33-42, with a concluding summary in 44. (A further additional commentary on this chapter may be found in the notes in this series for Numbers 28 and 29). What comes over very clearly in this chapter is the great place that worship had in the Old Testament. It is no exaggeration to say that the whole of life is set in the context of God and lived for God and unto God. This is the real point in the ordinance of the Sabbath (1-4). Wenham makes the observation that the difference between Numbers 28/29 and this chapter is that while Numbers specifies in detail what animals are offered each day, this chapter is usually content with a brief reference to 'food offerings', a phrase covers all sacrifices except the purification offering. Thus, the chapter is a calendar for laymen, not for priests. It was enough for the layman to remember that he had to attend the holy convocations, at which sacrifices would be offered on his behalf, and to observe the extra rest days.

71) 23:1-22

The 'holy convocation', mentioned in 3, 4, 7, 8, 21, 24, 27, 35, 36, 37 was a national gathering for public worship, principally an occasion for the offering of sacrifices, but in later times it may have included the reading and exposition of Scripture (Deuteronomy 31:10ff; Nehemiah 8/9). The Sabbath (3) was the weekly festival, the principle which really underlay all the others. Of this principle Wenham writes, quoting from Keil, 'Through sheer familiarity the weekly Sabbath could come to be taken for granted. But these festivals constituted major interruptions to daily living, and introduced an element of variety into the rhythm of life. In this way they constantly reminded the Israelite what God had done for him, and that in observing the Sabbath he was imitating his Creator, Who rested on the seventh day'. The Passover feast (5) is but briefly mentioned here, and knowledge of it is presupposed by the writer. It had been fully expounded earlier and elsewhere. The feast of Unleavened Bread (6) was so called because no ordinary leavened bread could be eaten during the week, recalling the exodus from Egypt, when the Israelites had to leave so suddenly that there was no time to leaven the bread (Exodus 12:14ff). Wenham says that 'feast' may literally mean 'pilgrimage', and this may reflect that in later times these feasts were always celebrated in the central sanctuary in Jerusalem, and involved a pilgrimage for those outside the city who wished to participate in them. The first and seventh days (7, 8) were like 'Sabbaths', in that no work was done in them. By offering the sheaf of the first fruits of the harvest (10-13) as a dedication offering, and a lamb as a burnt offering, with the prescribed accompaniments of cereal and drink offering, the Israelites were to consecrate their daily bread to the Lord their God, and practically to acknowledge that they owed the blessing of their harvest to His goodness.

72) 23:1-22

Fifty days after the first sheaf was offered, a feast was held to mark the end of the grain harvest (15,16). This was the feast of Weeks (or Pentecost - 50 days), and also called the feast of Harvest. The sacrifices were much more elaborate, befitting the successful grain harvest, and it was a feast of rich thanksgiving, for the rich blessing of God that had just been gathered in. We should not miss the significance of what is said in 22 in the provision made for the poor and the stranger. It is very clear that a generous spirit was inculcated. One readily recalls the generous spirit shown by Boaz in the lovely story in the book of Ruth, when he enjoined his servants not only to allow Ruth to glean among the sheaves but also to let fall some 'handfuls of purpose' for her. This incident serves to illustrate in a graphic and wonderful way the manner in which the Levitical ordinances found expression in the life of the people, and makes the book of Leviticus light up in a way that underlines that the heart of its message is not legalism but grace.

73) 23:23-44

The autumn festivals were heralded by a special Sabbath (24, 25), introduced by the blowing of trumpets (see once again the notes in this series on Numbers 28/29). Delitzsch's comment on these verses is a helpful one: 'The seventh month of the year (24), like the seventh day of the week, was consecrated as a Sabbath or sabbatical month, by a holy convocation and the suspension of labour, which were to distinguish the first day of the seventh month from the beginning of the other months or the other new moon days throughout the year. For the whole month was sanctified in the first day, as the beginning or head of the month; and by the sabbatical observance of the commencement, the whole course of the month was raised to a Sabbath. This was enjoined, not merely because it was the seventh month, but because the seventh month was to secure to the congregation the complete atonement for all its sins, and the wiping away of all the uncleanness which separated it from its God, viz. on the day of atonement, which fell within this month, and to bring it a foretaste of the blessedness of life in fellowship with the Lord, viz. in the feast of Tabernacles, which commenced five days afterwards. This significant character of the seventh month was indicated by the trumpet-blast, by which the congregation presented the memorial of itself loudly and strongly before Jehovah on the first day of the month, that He might bestow upon them the promised blessings of His grace, for the realization of His covenant.'

74) 23:23-44

The feast of Tabernacles or Booths (33ff) took place on the fifteenth day of the seventh month and was the greatest festival of joy of all the feasts. It followed the completion of the ingathering of the fruits of harvest, and marked the sense of gratitude and joy towards the Lord, the Giver of such bountiful provision. The construction of the booths (40) with 'the boughs of goodly trees' and palm branches served as a memorial of the grace, care and protection which the Lord afforded His people in 'the great and terrible wilderness' (Deuteronomy 8:15) through which they passed on their way to the promised land. We should not miss the significance of the 'type' that the ritual offers of things to come, pointing to the passing of the ritual sacrifice when the perfect Sacrifice appears in the Person of Christ. Bonar hints at such an application by quoting the words in Revelation10:7, 'in the days of the seventh angel....the mystery of God shall be finished'. The eighth day (35) was reckoned the great day of the feast (cf John 7:37), and it is impossible not to transfer our thoughts to the moving scene in the temple at Jerusalem, when our Lord cried out, 'If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink...', for He was the fulfilment of all the sacrifices, and the heart and meaning of the feast.

What stands out not only in these verses but throughout the whole chapter is the prevailing emphasis on worship, blessing and joy. In the truest sense the feasts were celebrations and festivals; and this surely gives the lie to the mistaken notion (held by those who apparently do not take the trouble to read it) that the Old Testament is a gloomy and forbidding compendium of legalism. Right worthily do the Scriptures, Old and New alike, bid us rejoice in the Lord.

75) *24:1-23*

Commentators point out the difficulty of determining why this chapter comes where it does in a section of the book dealing with the festivals in ch. 23 and the sabbatical and jubilee years in ch. 25, when these two chapters seem naturally to belong to one another. Delitzsch's comment is helpful here: 'This service consisted in the fact, that in the oil of the lamps of the seven-branched candlestick, which burned before Jehovah, the nation of Israel manifested itself as a congregation which caused its light to shine in the darkness of this world; and that in the shew-bread it offered the fruits of its labour in the field of the kingdom of God, as a spiritual sacrifice to Jehovah. The offering of oil, therefore, for the preparation of the candlestick, and that of fine flour for making the loaves to be placed before Jehovah, formed part of the service in which Israel sanctified its life and labour to the Lord its God, not only at the appointed festal periods, but every day; and the law is very appropriately appended to the sanctification of the Sabbaths and feast-days, prescribed in ch. 23'. Another natural connection is that ch. 23 describes the feast of Tabernacles, which celebrated the ingathering of the harvest of grain and fruit, while here what is to be done with a portion of each of these harvests is now described, in the use to which the olive oil and the fine flour are put. As to the candlesticks (cf Exodus 25:3139; 37:17-24; 40:24, 25) and the table of shew-bread (Exodus 25:23-30; 37:10-16), there is a rich symbolism contained in them which adds a dimension of depth to the celebration involved in the festivals that have already been described. This we shall discuss in the next Note.

76) *24:1-23*

The symbolism of the candlestick proclaims a twofold message, on the one hand that God is the light of His people - and how truly this is borne out in the account of Israel's pilgrimage to the promised land, with the pillar of cloud and fire accompanying them on all their journey - and on the other hand by association of ideas the people themselves are to be a light to lighten the Gentiles. They themselves were to bring the pure oil: the illumining of the Holy Place, although specially tended by the high priest was constituted as a service in which all the children of Israel were to have a part. This is surely what our Lord had in mind in the sermon on the mount when He said, 'Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid' (Matthew 5:14), and Paul in Philippians 2:15, 'Among whom ye shine as lights in the world'. It is rather wonderful to see from this that the devotion, the consecration and the prayers of God's people, in the fulfilling of this ordinance, all make their contribution to the continuing of the light. In the same way this twofold symbolism applies also to the shew-bread. On the one hand Christ is the bread of life - and the shew-bread was always to be there, as a symbol of God's constant supply for His people. But also, the fact that the people themselves were to bring the fine flour for the bread indicates their personal involvement in its provision. In a real sense the people of God were to be broken bread for the life of the world. There is more than a hint of this in Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 9:8-12, especially in the words of 12 'This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God' (NIV).

77) *24:1-23*

The account in 10ff of the punishment of a blasphemer is introduced in the midst of the laws because the blasphemy 'took place at the time when the laws relating to sanctification of life before the Lord were given, whilst the punishment denounced against the blasphemer exhibited in a practical form, as a warning to the whole nation, the sanctification of the Lord in the despisers of His name' (Delitzsch). The detail with which this matter is described is an evidence of how seriously blasphemy should be viewed. The phrase in 14 'laid their hands upon his head' seems to imply that the blasphemy implicated those who heard it as well as the one who committed it, necessitating the 'transferring' of the guilt to the guilty one's head. This bears eloquent witness to the effect blasphemy has on us, and how painful and intolerable it is to hear the Name of God reviled. As Christians we should respectfully but firmly, ask people to refrain. When it is done in public, whether on radio or TV, we have protection from the law, and we can rightfully protest. If it is done privately in our presence we ought to withdraw. We do not have to listen to the Name we hold dear being reviled. Even when done unthinkingly, as so often it is, it can bring people up with a start to be so challenged. In 16b-22 some cardinal principles of biblical laws are unfolded, applicable to native Israelite and resident alien alike. It is important to realise that the 'eye for eye' pattern does not represent a harsh and vindictive incitement to vengeance, but is designed as a limiting, merciful enactment, to restrain the natural human tendency to exact far more than could ever be justified. Nor is there any justification for 'taking the law into one's own hands'. ‘Private' justice is not in view; it was Moses, as the Lord's minister, who pronounced the judgment on the wrongdoer (23).

78) 25:1-7

The law for the sabbatical and jubilee years recorded in this chapter brings to a close the laws given to Moses by the Lord on Mount Sinai. Delitzsch observes, 'the institution of the jubilee years corresponds to the institution of the day of atonement (16:1ff). Just as all the sins and uncleanness of the whole congregation, which had remained unatoned for and uncleansed in the course of the year, were to be wiped away by the all-embracing expiation of the yearly recurring day of atonement, and an undisturbed relation to be restored between Jehovah and His people; so by the appointment of the year of jubilee, the disturbance and confusion of the divinely appointed relations, which had been introduced in the course of time through the inconstancy of all human or earthly things, were to be removed by the appointment of the year of jubilee, and the kingdom of Israel to be brought back to its original condition.' The sabbatical year was to be kept 'unto the Lord', and during it, the land was to be neither tilled nor reaped, and the produce arising from the land during the fallow period was not to be claimed by the owners of it, but was to be a common good, for man and beast. The central thought of the ordinance 'was that man's right in the soil and its product, originally granted from God, during this sabbatical year reverted to the Giver; who, again, by ordering that all exclusive rights of individuals in the produce of their estates should be suspended for this year, placed, for so long, the rich and the poor on an absolute equality as regards means of sustenance' (Kellogg). Israel was to learn that although the earth was created for man, it was not merely created for him to draw out its powers for his own use, but also to be holy to the Lord, and participate in His blessed rest; and also that the great purpose for which the congregation of the Lord existed did not consist in the uninterrupted tilling of the earth, but in the peaceful enjoyment of the fruits of the earth which the Lord their God had given them, and would give them still without the labour of their hands, if they strove to keep His covenant and satisfy them with His grace.

79) 25:8-12

The intention of the sabbatical year comes out still more plainly in the year of jubilee, in which the idea of the sanctification of the whole land as the Lord's property is still more strongly expressed. We should note, in this connection, the ascending order of the sabbath concept - the seventh day, the seventh month, the seventh year, and the seven-times-seven years, followed by the year of jubilee, the fiftieth year. This jubilee was heralded by the sounding of the trumpet (interestingly, one Hebrew word for 'trumpet', though not the one used here, which is 'shopper', 'yobel', of which our English word 'jubilee' is a simple transliteration). This trumpet was to sound 'on the tenth day of the seventh month' which, significantly, was the day of atonement - 'Yom kippur'. The association of ideas is important: just as the day of atonement marked the wiping clean of all the sins of the year that led up to it (see 'quote' from Delitzsch in the previous Note), so the jubilee trumpet marked the cleansing of all life up to that time. It was the signifying of a new start. And, in the nature of things, it would happen only once in a normal lifetime. Such is the symbolism of the year of jubilee. This is surely one of the meanings of the words in Psalm 89: 'O greatly blessed the people are, the joyful sound that know'. In the verses which follow, we are told of the effects of this jubilee year on the possession of property, whether land or houses (13-34) and upon the personal freedom of the Israelites (35-55). We shall look at these in the next two Notes.

80) *25:13-34*

In the year of jubilee, land was to be returned to those who had had to sell it because of financial stringency or want. The general rule or principle in this is expressed in 23 - the land belongs to the Lord, and Israelites were to regard themselves as tenants of it, not owners. All therefore that a man could buy or sell was the right to its products. Hence the regulations in 14-19, which are governed by the equitable principle that the price paid was to be exactly proportioned to the number of years between the time of sale and the year of jubilee. In this way injustice and oppression of the poor were to be prevented. Three ways in which the redemption of the land could be effected are given in 24-28, the first, the case of a man who became poor and sold his property, when a kinsman was to come and buy back on his behalf what he had been obliged to sell because of his poverty (cf 48, 49). The second case (26, 27) is that of a man who has no kinsman to help him, but became able himself to raise the sum of money required. In this situation, he is able and permitted to redeem it. The third case is that of a man who has no kinsman to help him, and no means of his own, or prospect of having any, to redeem the land. In such a case, the purchaser was to hold it until the jubilee year, when the land reverted without compensation to him. The buyer lost nothing by this, for he had fully recovered all that he paid for the annual harvests and produce of the land up to the year of jubilee, from the amount which those harvests yielded. As Delitzsch rightly observes, 'Through these legal regulations every purchase of land became simply a lease for a term of years.'

With regard to the redemption of houses (29-34), three matters are distinguished: houses in walled cities could be redeemed only within one year of the purchase, after which nothing could be done; houses in villages were redeemable on the same basis as the redemption of land; while in the case of Levites' houses, there was to be eternal redemption, that is, the right of repurchase was never lost, and houses were to revert to the Levites without compensation in the year of jubilee. In addition, the fields and pasturage around their houses were not to be saleable, and not even to be let till the year of jubilee. Their rights were completely safeguarded.

81) *25:35-55*

The effect of the year of jubilee on the return of a man, who had become a slave, to liberty is next discussed, and is prefaced by an exhortation to give help to an impoverished brother (35-38). He is to be helped by interest-free loans to deliver him out of his predicament. If through extremity of poverty a man has been sold, or has sold himself, into slavery, the year of jubilee provides his deliverance. Two cases are instanced: slavery to a Hebrew (39-46) and slavery to a foreigner resident in the land (47-55). In the first of these, a certain attitude is enjoined, that of compassion and caring; the man in bondage is to be treated more as a hired servant and a sojourner than as a slave. It is the dignity and humanity of the treatment and attitude that is so impressive here: this must obtain until the time of jubilee, when he and his family were to go out free. In the other instance, that of bondage to a foreign resident in the land, the owner of the slave must recognize the right of redemption: it was the privilege of the man himself, or of a kinsman, to buy him out of bondage, with due compensation paid to the owner in accordance with the number of years remaining to the next jubilee, at which time he would be obliged to release him, whether redeemed or not. And in the meanwhile, the owner of the slave was to treat him humanely, and not 'with rigour'. One has only to think of the very different treatment meted out to slaves by heathen nations in ancient times to see how different this was. Given the institution of slavery as a fact, the treatment within the institution, so far as Israel was concerned, was a notable evidence of a completely different scale of values obtaining within the commonwealth of Israel.

82) *25:1-55*

The lessons a Christian may learn from this chapter have been ably summarised by one commentator as follows: Social justice - the jubilee was intended to prevent the accumulation of the wealth of the nation in the hands of a very few. Every Israelite had an inalienable right to his family land and to his freedom. If he lost them by falling into debt he recovered them in the jubilee. The biblical law is opposed equally to the monopolistic tendencies of unbridled capitalism and thoroughgoing communism, where all property is in state hands. Social worship - the jubilee is presented here as an extension of the sabbath day and sabbatical year. True religion is not opposed to a just society. Concern for the one should go hand in hand with concern for the other. The prophetic word 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice' (Hosea 6:6; Matthew 9:13; 12:7) was a word to a society who thought God would be satisfied with sacrifice by itself. Had they paid attention to Leviticus, the men of Hosea's day might not have made that mistake. Personal virtues - 'Love your neighbour as yourself' (Leviticus 19:18) is the all-embracing moral principle that inspires the jubilee legislation. The New Testament too recognizes that the rich have an obligation to give to the poor (e.g. 1 John 3:17; James 2:15ff). The jubilee also draws attention to the fleeting nature of man's earthly abode: 'you are resident aliens and settlers with Me' (23). Equally Christians must recognize that they are but pilgrims and sojourners here and look for another city 'whose builder and maker is God' (Hebrews 11:10). Finally, believers in both covenants are assured that those who put God's will first will have all their physical needs provided (18ff, Matthew 6:25ff). Messianic typology - at Nazareth Jesus declared (Luke 4:18, 19), 'He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives...to set at liberty those who are oppressed...'. In Isaiah 61:1, from which Jesus was quoting, the word used for 'release' is the same as that found in Leviticus 25:10. It seems quite likely, therefore, that the prophetic description of 'the acceptable year of the Lord' was partly inspired by the idea of the jubilee year. The messianic age brings liberty to the oppressed and release to the captives. This age was inaugurated with Christ's first coming (Luke 4:21). It will be completed by His second coming (James 5:1-8; cf Luke 16:19-31). The jubilee, then, not only looks back to God's first redemption of His people from Egypt (Leviticus 25:38,55) but forward to the 'restitution of all things', for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells (Acts 3:21; 2 Peter 3:13).

83) *26:1-46*

This chapter comprises a series of promises and threats, or blessings and cursings, dependent on obedience or disobedience of the statutes unfolded in the chapters that go before it. Commentators tell us that a collection of such blessings and cursings was the usual way to close a major legal text in biblical times, and point out that the main section of Deuteronomy ends similarly (Deuteronomy 28). There is another connection, however, with the previous chapter, as cf 34, 43, and the Divine insistence on the sabbath for the land, when the people fail to obey His injunctions - in much the same way as some commentators point out that when men fail to acknowledge God by giving the tithe of their income, He brings them to grief financially, and takes the tithe from them. There are two possible ways of looking at such a chapter as this - either to regard it as a curious and outdated, even legendary compendium of observations belonging to ancient folklore, and having no kind of relevance and to be dismissed as unworthy of any serious consideration; or, to recognize that in these statements is enshrined a fundamental principle valid and operative in every age, and as relevant today as it was in the life of the people of God in Moses' time. If ever a message needed to be learned and heeded, now is surely the time for such learning and heeding, in a day when there are so many disquieting signs of things going wrong all around us in society. How needful to listen to what this chapter is saying!

84) 26:1-46

The blessings promised to obedience are enumerated in 3-13 - the gift of rain and good harvests (4, 5), the gift of peace, security and wellbeing (6-10), and the gift of God's presence (11-13). It is not difficult - and indeed it is necessary

- to expand these blessings in terms of economic prosperity
- 'bread to the full', social security and peace in society
- and how attractive and desirable the quality of life expressed in the words 'none shall make you afraid'. What a promise in the light of the dangers on our streets from thugs and muggers and heartless attacks on defenceless old people so much a part of our society today! Does not the prevalence of these evil things underline the relevance of this chapter for our time? The threats and cursings are given at length in 14ff. The passage makes grim reading indeed: the disobedience which would bring these judgments were not single breaches of the law but presumptuous and obstinate rebellion and a breaking of the covenant. This would bring severe judgments (14-17) which are spelt out in graphic detail, as if to say, 'This is what life will be like when God's providential gifts are withdrawn'. And, so to speak, these are but the beginning of sorrows, for if the hardening obstinately continued, these judgments would intensify in a fourfold manner - with utter barrenness in their land (18-20), one punishment, then the extermination of their cattle by beasts of prey, and childlessness (21, 22), two punishments; then war, plague and famine (23-26), three punishments, then the destruction of all idolatrous abominations, the overthrow of their towns and holy places, the devastation of the land, and the dispersion of the people among the heathen (27-33), four punishments, which would bring Israel to the verge of destruction. Grim picture indeed, with an awesome ascending order of intensity in the judgments falling upon the failure to repent and obey.

85) *26:1-46*

The clear implication in these verses is the association of economic and social distress and breakdown with moral and spiritual declension and disobedience, and prosperity with obedience. In fact, this kind of breakdown is seen in the subsequent history of Israel following the time of Joshua - the anarchy in the days of the Judges, the breakdown in law and order, and every man doing that which was right in his own eyes. The principle is surely a perennial one - it applied in Israel as a nation, may we not also say that it applies to any nation? In Israel, it applied, even unto exile and also beyond that time, in Jesus' own day, as the devastation visited on Jerusalem by Rome in AD 70. This is why it is not in the least fanciful, but on the contrary a sober assessment to say that the continuing ills of our own land can only be adequately described in these terms - the recurrent crises on the economic and industrial sphere, the ongoing erosion of traditional moral values, the continued secularisation of society, with all the attendant ills this brings in its train - on, on it all goes, bringing the increasing feeling 'Will we ever get out of the bit?' It is not so long ago that Lord Home, in his autobiography 'The Way the Wind Blows' quoted words spoken to him by Harold Macmillan in answer to the question whether he could put his finger on the point in time when the slide in values in Britain began to set in. Without hesitation Macmillan said 'The day when people stopped going to Church regularly on a Sunday morning'. Well, some people in authority see the connection: do we?

86) *26:1-46*

We should not, however, miss the import of the final verses of the chapter (40-46), for they indicate that the punishments are disciplinary, and that there is a promise of restoration, and a remembrance of the covenant (cf Deuteronomy 30) - 'I will remember the land' (42). Nor should we miss the prophetic element in them, for the reference in 39 to Israel's pining away in their enemies' lands found fulfilment centuries later in the captivity of Babylon. It is very impressive to read the assurance that, in spite of the judgments delineated in the previous verses, the nation should never become extinct and pass away, especially in view of the witness of the history of the centuries since these words were written down to the present day. It is one of the most remarkable phenomena of all history that the Jews should have remained indestructible throughout centuries of exile and unequalled oppression and suffering, and that in our own day they should have at last returned to their land, to make it once more 'blossom and flourish as the rose' (and cf Zechariah 12:8-13:1, which speak of something yet more wonderful). What could underline more persuasively than this the divine inspiration of the Scriptures!

87) 27:1-34

The final chapter of Leviticus deals with various vows. The question arises as to why this should come at the end of the book when the theme of the blessings and cursings in the previous chapter might seem to make a more fitting ending. In this regard, two suggestions have been made. On the one hand, in ch 26 we have in a sense God's vows to His people, His promise as to what He would do for them, and now we have the people's response to His promises. Also, men tend to make vows when in dire straits and 'up against it', as Israel would certainly be in face of the judgments mentioned in the previous chapter, hence the legislation concerning such vows given here. On the other hand, the theme of vowing is closely related to the principal concern of the whole book - the worship of God. Holiness is more than correct ritual, it is a matter of giving oneself, without reserve, in consecration to God. Hence the vows involving people and animals, the dedication of houses and land, to the Lord. Part of the purpose of the chapter may be to discourage the making of rash vows, by fixing a relatively high price for the discharge of them, and penalising those who had 'second thoughts' about what they had vowed (after a crisis is over, men who have vowed may well feel that their vow was foolish and extreme, and want to revoke it. The biblical warnings about breaking vows are very solemn (cf Deuteronomy 23:21-23, Eccles 5:2-5), underlining the seriousness of 'reneging' on them. At the same time, however, it has to be recognized that there is such a thing as a rash or ill-advised vow, such as Jephthah's vow (Judges 11) or Herod's to Salome (Matthew 14) which, since what was involved in their fulfilment was clearly contrary to the will of God, ought not to have been made in the first place and should have been departed from. Calvin has a fine passage on this, which we shall include in the next Note.

88) *27:1-34*

Calvin says: 'As timid and inexperienced consciences, even after they are dissatisfied with a vow, and convinced of its impropriety, nevertheless feel doubts respecting the obligation, and are grievously distressed, on the one hand, from a dread off violating their promise to God, and on the other, from a fear or incurring greater guilt by observing it, it is necessary here to offer them some assistance to enable them to extricate themselves from this difficulty. Now, to remove every scruple at once, I remark, that all vows, not legitimate or rightly made, as they are of no value with God, so they ought to have no force with us. For if in human contracts no promises are obligatory on us, but those to which the party with whom we contract wishes to bind us, it is absurd to consider ourselves constrained to the performance of those things which God never requires of us, especially as our works cannot be good unless they please God, and are accompanied with the testimony of our conscience that He accepts them...Therefore if it be not lawful for a Christian man to attempt anything without this assurance, and if anyone through ignorance has made a rash vow, and afterwards discovered his error, why should he not desist from the performance of it? Since vows inconsiderately made not only are not binding, but ought of necessity to be cancelled.... Hence we may conclude, that vows which have originated in error and superstition, are of no value with God, and ought to be relinquished by us.'

89) *27:1-34*

All that remains in our study of this chapter is to note that as to detail an Israelite might consecrate to the Lord either persons, or of the beasts of his possession, or his dwelling, or the right in any part of his land. On the other hand, the 'firstling among beasts' (26, 27) any 'devoted thing' (28, 29) and the tithe (30-33) might not be made the object of a special vow, for the simple reason that each of these already belonged to the Lord as His rightful due. Under each of these special heads a schedule of valuation is given according to which, if a man should wish, for any reason, to redeem again for his own use that which, either by prior divine claim or by a special vow, had been dedicated to the Lord, he might be permitted to do so. As to the dedication of land (16ff), it had to be redeemed before the jubilee by paying 20% more than the valuation price. Failure to redeem it before the jubilee was penalised by forfeiture.