

Sacrifice, Sabbath, and the Restoration of Creation

by

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Graduate Program in Religion
Duke University

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the
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ABSTRACT

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Abstract

Sacrifice often connotes death or some form of lack within popular discourse. The association of sacrifice with death is assumed in some strains of the Christian tradition that employ sacrifice within a penal substitutionary account of the atonement. In this framework, sacrifice is understood as death for the purposes of punishment. This dissertation challenges the identification of sacrifice with death. It presents a reinterpretation of sacrifice through a canonical and literary reading of Old and New Testament texts. Sacrificial practice displayed in Leviticus and Hebrews suggests that sacrifice is oriented at life rather than at death. Specifically, sacrifice in Leviticus aims toward a reinstatement of the good order of creation displayed in Genesis 1. The *telos* of the Levitical cult is humanity's redemption and creation's restoration. Both are achieved on the Day of Atonement described in Leviticus 16 as a Sabbath. Hebrews expands upon the sacrificial logic of Leviticus in presenting Christ's resurrection as the perfection of the cult. Christ's sacrifice is his resurrected body, not his death. Christians are called to participate in Christ's sacrifice, and discipleship assumes a form that challenges society's deathly sacrifices.

Dedication

To Clay, Luke, and Adam

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1 Sacrifice and Creation

This dissertation contends that God's institution of sacrifice on display in the biblical narrative counters and redeems practices of sacrifice that so often lead to death, destruction, or forms of diminution in our existing social order. The vision of sacrifice I hope to portray is a way of life God intends for God's people where they are trained to draw near to God and away from practices and habits of death. The *telos* of sacrifice is creation's redemption and humanity's resumption of life with God, and its most fitting and blessed end is resurrection. A theological interpretation of sacrifice based upon its role in key parts of Scripture emphasizes the identification of sacrifice with life and provides an important corrective to the frequent identification of sacrifice with death. In turn, this reconceptualization of sacrifice provides resources for discipleship to enable the church to live into God's call to be a "priestly kingdom and a holy nation" (Exod 19:6). These resources are especially needed in our current context, where God's creation suffers at the hands of human exploitation and degradation.

1.1 *Sacrifice?*

Before presenting a re-visioning of sacrifice based upon its role in God's drama of salvation displayed in the Bible, a brief account of some influential ways sacrifice is currently used in non-Christian and Christian contexts will help to shed light on the

difference I seek to establish in how sacrifice is understood and practiced. While by no means monolithic, the concept of sacrifice in contemporary Western contexts often connotes various forms of loss or limitation. A cursory search of recent news items on the internet reveals a wide variety of sacrifice in popular discourse: Russians claim they would sacrifice alcohol and cigarettes for political gain,¹ a survey depicts millennials' willingness to sacrifice professional friendships for career advancement,² self-help gurus debate the role of sacrifice in familial relationships,³ and political pundits opine on ways to honor the sacrifice of American soldiers given the ongoing instability in the Middle East.⁴ The notion of sacrifice applies to the loss of a soldier's life as well as to the "ultimate sacrifice" of a sports fan donning a rival jersey for a charity event.⁵ Sacrifice entails the "giving up" of something valuable in order to achieve a perceived greater good. In many of these contexts, sacrifice is considered to be an optional, unique act.

¹ The Moscow Times, "Poll: Most Russians Would Sacrifice Booze and Cigarettes to Hurt West," cited 8 April 2015. Online: <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/poll-most-russians-would-ban-imports-of-booze-and-cigarettes-to-hurt-west-506442.html>.

² Joe Gullo, "Survey: Millennials More Likely Than Other Generations to Sacrifice Work Friendships for a Promotion," cited 8 April 2015. Online: <http://www.mychamplainvalley.com/story/d/story/survey-millennials-more-likely-than-other-generati/41705/g131-mBc2E2eHV7uTLow7Q>.

³ "Why self-sacrifice is actually a good thing," cited 8 April 2015. Online: <http://www.today.com/klgandhoda/why-self-sacrifice-actually-good-thing-1D80117675>

⁴ James L. Jones, "How to Save Iraq and Honor American Sacrifice," cited 8 April 2015. Online: <http://online.wsj.com/articles/james-jones-how-to-save-iraq-and-honor-american-sacrifice-1408057895>.

⁵ "Ultimate sacrifice by Sunderland fan," cited 8 April 2015. Online: <http://www.hartlepoolmail.co.uk/news/local/ultimate-sacrifice-by-sunderland-fan-1-6820927>.

The fact that the notion of sacrifice can be found describing vastly divergent situations reflects its domestication. Christians living in this milieu are at risk of being influenced by this imprecision, of assuming that sacrifice primarily means some form of negation. Moreover, sacrifice is not usually used to describe an entire way of life. In contrast, as I hope to display in the pages ahead, sacrifice in the story of God's redemption of creation in the Old and New Testaments reflects a type of on-going formation for God's people in order to live in God's holy presence. Sacrifice is not primarily a "one and done" event, but a way of life where God's people are trained in proper forms of offering and taking. This training enables a rehabilitation of the human proclivity to take so clearly on display in the story of humanity's expulsion from the garden in Genesis 3 and the narratives that immediately follow. This rehabilitation has consequences for the entire created order.

The importance of this type of formation is illuminated by the deployment of *sacrifice* within the environmental community. While I do not seek to claim that sacrifice means the same thing or functions the same way among environmentalists as in my interpretation of sacrifice in Scripture, I find the use of and debate over sacrifice within environmental discourse to highlight aspects of what is at stake in the absence of properly ordered sacrifice for all of us. In short: environmentalists conceptualize sacrifice as forms of human taking, and they see the consequences this taking has on the created order.

1.2 *Sacrifice and Environmentalism*

Sacrifice has figured prominently in environmental discourse by suggesting an ongoing modification of one's lifestyle for the benefit of the planet. Environmentalists have frequently used the rhetoric of sacrifice to encourage individuals and communities to exercise restraint in their use of natural resources and engagement with ecosystems in order to foster sustainability.⁶ Recently, sacrifice has become a contested idea in environmental circles. Ted Nordhaus and Michael Shellenberger argue in their 2007 book *Break Through: From the Death of Environmentalism to the Politics of Possibility* that the environmental movement should reject language of sacrifice. They base their contention on two main claims. First, they associate sacrifice with forms of self-denial and assert that advocating against excess consumption is impractical. They believe that "none of us, whether we are wealthy environmental leaders or average Americans, are willing to significantly sacrifice our standard of living."⁷ They advocate for *different* rather than *less* consumption.⁸ Second, they hold that the notion of restraint hampers, rather than furthers, the cause of environmental protection. Specifically they state that "environmentalism has also saddled us with the albatross we call the politics of limits,

⁶ Paul Wapner, "Sacrifice in an Age of Comfort," in *The Environmental Politics of Sacrifice* (ed. M. Maniates and J. M. Meyer; Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2010), 33.

⁷ Ted Nordhaus and Michael Shellenberger, *Break Through: From the Death of Environmentalism to the Politics of Possibility* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2007), 125.

⁸ Nordhaus and Shellenberger, *Break Through*, 126.

which seeks to constrain human ambition, aspiration, and power rather than unleash and direct them.”⁹ They believe that unlimited economic and technological growth will yield solutions to environmental crises. For them continued development is a necessary precursor for environmental preservation. Growth and development not only produce greener technologies; they also generate the prosperity and security necessary to enable humans to extend care to the natural world.¹⁰

In 2010, MIT Press published an edited volume of essays entitled *The Environmental Politics of Sacrifice* in response to competing appreciations of sacrifice in environmental circles. The contributors to this volume display the complexities of sacrifice. They note how sacrifice is commonly advocated by environmentalists as a necessary practice by the wealthy in order to avoid ecological calamity, but they contend that this rhetoric is often alienating and paternalistic.¹¹ Sacrifice in this context is presented as something one must do out of fear based on predictions generated by experts. This concern finds common ground with that of Nordhaus and Shellenberger who see sacrifice as promoting a form of negativity.

⁹ Nordhaus and Shellenberger, *Break Through*, 17.

¹⁰ Nordhaus and Shellenberger, *Break Through*, 52.

¹¹ John M. Meyer, “A Democratic Politics of Sacrifice?” in *The Environmental Politics of Sacrifice* (ed. M. Maniates and J. M. Meyer; Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2010), 13.

In contrast to viewing sacrifice as a proposed solution to environmental problems, many contributors point to the fact that forms of sacrifice are currently occurring as a result of environmental exploitation. They reframe the issue to highlight that sacrifices are already occurring. The degradation of the Gulf of Mexico is a prime example. The devastating 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill killed eleven crew members, impacted 650 miles of fragile coastal habitats, and ranks as the worst environmental disaster in the United States.¹² Over the course of three months, approximately 4.9 million barrels of oil leaked into the Gulf.¹³ British Petroleum has set aside a \$20 billion fund for economic losses for an area that generates more than \$40 billion annually in coastal tourism and commercial fisheries.¹⁴ The harm caused by this oil spill is not a unique event of human pollution in this sensitive area. Ninety-percent of domestic offshore drilling occurs in the Gulf of Mexico, and spills and pipeline leakages have

¹² National Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and Offshore Drilling, *Deep Water: The Gulf Oil Spill Disaster and the Future of Offshore Drilling: Report to the President* (Washington, D.C.: Supt. of Docs., U.S. G.P.O., 2011), 176-7.

¹³ William R. Freudenburg and Robert Gramling, *Blowout in the Gulf: The BP Oil Spill Disaster and the Future of Energy in America* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2011), 13.

¹⁴ National Commission, *Deep Water*, 185-7. Additional costs related the spill also include human health impacts as a result of clean-up efforts. Cf. Rocky Kistner, "As Dolphins Die, Gulf Residents Ask What About Us?" *Facing South*, cited 4 March 2013. Online: <http://www.southernstudies.org/2011/11/as-dolphins-die-gulf-residents-ask-what-about-us.html>.

released more than half a million barrels of oil prior to the Deepwater Horizon spill.¹⁵

Since 1972, a “dead zone” has formed every summer in the Gulf of Mexico as a result of nutrient deposits from the Mississippi River encouraging algal growth, decay, and oxygen depletion, rendering the area unfit for oxygen-dependent sea life.¹⁶ In the summer of 2010, the area of the dead zone extended to approximately 7,700 square miles, an area larger than the landmass of New Jersey.¹⁷

Frances Beinecke, one of the commissioners who served on the National Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and Offshore Drilling, observes that “for too long we’ve treated [the Gulf] as a place apart, a place to pay the price and bear the risk of our costly dependence on oil. But the Gulf of Mexico is not a national sacrifice zone. It is a unique natural resource that provides Americans everywhere with food,

¹⁵ Campbell Robertson, “Gulf of Mexico Has Long Been Dumping Site,” *The New York Times* (29 July 2010). Cited 15 January 2013. Online: <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/30/us/30gulf.html>. The authors note that these numbers don’t include spills in state waters, “including hundreds of spills in Louisiana alone.”

¹⁶ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, “Hypoxia 101,” cited 23 September 2013. Online: <http://water.epa.gov/type/watersheds/named/msbasin/hypoxia101.cfm>. Larger fish can flee hypoxic areas, but slower moving or inert creatures suffocate.

¹⁷ National Commission, *Deep Water*, 198. In 2015, the size of the dead zone is 6,474 square miles, an area roughly the size of Connecticut and Rhode Island combined. According to NOAA, “The average size of the dead zone over the past five years has been about 5,500 square miles, nearly three times the 1,900 square mile goal set by the Hypoxia Task Force in 2001 and reaffirmed in 2008.” The Gulf’s hypoxic area ranks as the second largest in the world. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, “2015 Gulf of Mexico Dead Zone ‘Above Average’” (4 August 2015). Cited 15 August 2015. Online: <http://www.noaanews.noaa.gov/stories2015/080415-gulf-of-mexico-dead-zone-above-average.html>

energy and jobs that are essential to the prosperity, security and welfare of the nation.”¹⁸

Beinecke’s comment is revealing. She seeks to remind her audience of the Gulf’s value by denouncing the role it has played as a “national sacrifice zone” in the pursuit of oil.

Beinecke rightly names that Americans have sacrificed the Gulf for forms of wealth and well-being.

This naming is significant because too often such sacrifices are rendered invisible. Thomas Princen argues that the notion of heroic sacrifice obscures and facilitates current sacrifices like those of the Gulf’s ecosystems and communities. Heroic sacrifice, like those offered by soldiers, policemen, and firefighters, are overt sacrifices celebrated by American society. These sacrifices are reserved for special offices, and, according to Princen, “the rest of us not only are absolved from making such sacrifices, but are expected not to make any at all, certainly not in the commercial realm, not in our producing and consuming, not in that all important task of keeping the economic engine primed.”¹⁹ Princen sees heroic sacrifice in conjunction with the concept of consumer sovereignty as enabling our economic overconsumption and environmental

¹⁸ Frances Beinecke, “Foul waters, hard lessons from BP oil spill,” cited 15 January 2013. Online: <http://www.cnn.com/2011/OPINION/01/13/beinecke.gulf.oil.commission/>.

¹⁹ Thomas Princen, “Consumer Sovereignty, Heroic Sacrifice: Two Insidious Concepts in an Endlessly Expansionist Economy” in *The Environmental Politics of Sacrifice* (ed. M. Maniates and J. M. Meyer; Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2010), 155.

degradation.²⁰ Contra Nordhaus and Shellenberger who want to dispense with the idea of sacrifice, Princen highlights that sacrifice is unavoidable. The question is not *will* Americans sacrifice, but *what* will they sacrifice. Princen and others in the volume attempt to provide alternative accounts of sacrifice in order to render it serviceable for environmental activists.²¹ These environmentalists present sacrifice as embedded in daily practices.

Within environmental discourse, the notion of sacrifice is a pressing issue, one that has direct consequences for everyday living. All those involved in the debate over the use of sacrifice in environmental rhetoric recognize the relationship between sacrifice and the economy. For this community, sacrifice is not a one-time, “extreme” event. In stark terms, sacrifice raises the questions of *what* and *how much* one is taking. Many environmentalists comprehend that one cannot separate sacrifice from issues of anthropology. Nordhaus and Shellenberger begin their book asking “*What kind of beings are we?* and *What can we become?*”²² Sacrifice as limitation on consumption is anathema to Nordhaus and Shellenberger because they view humans to be of ultimate importance. In their final chapter, entitled “Greatness,” they quote approvingly, “We are as gods and

²⁰ Princen, “Consumer Sovereignty, Heroic Sacrifice,” 145.

²¹ Princen considers this to be a challenging task. He observes that “for practical purposes, the term is so loaded in societies such as the United States that an entirely new term may be needed.” Princen, “Consumer Sovereignty, Heroic Sacrifice,” 154.

²² Nordhaus and Shellenberger, *Break Through*, 8.

might as well get good at it.” They contend that “humans have become the meaning of the earth” and that humanity’s greatness and hubris are needed for our ability to overcome global warming.²³ In contrast, Princen considers the conceptualization of humans as primarily consumers to be a root cause in overconsumption and environmental harm. He counters consumption as our dominant purpose with notions of citizenship.²⁴ For Princen, citizenship has a *telos* that allows for sacrificial practices of restraint that consumerism does not. While Nordhaus and Shellenberger differ from Princen in their evaluation of humanity’s place relative to the rest of the created order, all three understand sacrifice as a set of practices that limit use of the earth’s resources.

The editors of *The Environmental Politics of Sacrifice* end the volume expressing the desire that environmental activism might enable practices of sacrifice that would promote ecological health.²⁵ They list various strategies that seek to reframe sacrifice so that it might be more tenable for the activist community. In doing so, they describe an altered politics, one that involves enhanced democratic deliberation over proposed courses of action, conversation about the goods of life, and honesty about the costs and benefits of our current economic practices. They seek to illuminate current “hidden”

²³ Nordhaus and Shellenberger, *Break Through*, 271-3.

²⁴ Princen, “Consumer Sovereignty, Heroic Sacrifice,” 162.

²⁵ Michael Maniates and John M. Meyer, “Conclusion: Sacrifice and a New Environmental Politics,” in *The Environmental Politics of Sacrifice* (ed. M. Maniates and J. M. Meyer; Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2010), 317-8.

forms of sacrifice in order to persuade Americans to make different choices. They conclude, “The challenge, especially for scholars and activists working together, is to develop principles for an engaged environmental politics that enables public conversation about equitable and effective forms of shared sacrifice, as opposed to a politics that denies the need to have this conversation.”²⁶ For them, sacrifice is not an optional act.

1.3 Sacrifice and Creation?

The contours of the debate over sacrifice within the environmental community possess many points of contact for Christians. Christians might identify a “theological” framing to some environmentalists’ hope. They could narrate that practices of environmental sacrifice would produce a form of discipleship based on wise and restrained use of the earth’s resources in order to achieve a type of atonement or reconciliation: namely, Americans would discipline their daily consumption in ways that would promote the flourishing of the rest of the natural order. Christians could easily identify with notions of discipleship and reconciliation. Certainly, many Christians would affirm that Christian ethics should be grounded in conceptualizations of who we are and who we are called to be. Christians surely would be moved by

²⁶ Maniates and Meyer, “Conclusion,” 318.

evidence of harm to our human and non-human neighbors as a result of pollution and over-consumption of resources.

Yet, many Christians might find this idea of *sacrifice* to be discordant with their own understandings of discipleship. Sacrifice is certainly a key idea within Christianity, but Christians in the United States have largely not embodied practices of economic self-restraint for the benefit of the planet.²⁷ A recent Pew survey found that only 6% of American Christians claim that their religious beliefs play the biggest role in determining their thinking on environmental rules and regulations.²⁸ Christian agrarian writer Wendell Berry condemns contemporary Christianity's economic witness, observing, "I think its idea of a Christian economy is no more or less than the industrial economy – which is an economy firmly founded on the seven deadly sins and the breaking of all of the Ten Commandments."²⁹ Berry sees Christians as "just as likely as

²⁷ Nordhaus and Shellenberger observe that part of the reason a new politics of environmentalism is necessary to combat global warming is because of the relative apathy of American evangelicals on this issue. *Break Through*, 205.

²⁸ The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, "Few Say Religion Shapes Immigration, Environment Views: Religion and the Issues: Results from the 2010 Annual Religion and Public Life Survey," cited 16 September 2014. Online: <http://www.pewforum.org/Politics-and-Elections/Few-Say-Religion-Shapes-Immigration-Environment-Views.aspx#2>. Black Protestants (at 12%) are the largest group that states religious beliefs hold the most prominence when thinking about proposed environmental regulations, followed by white evangelical Protestants (11%), Hispanic Catholics (9%), white Catholics (3%), and white mainline Protestants (2%).

²⁹ Wendell Berry, "Christianity and the Survival of Creation," in *Sex, Economy, Freedom & Community: Eight Essays* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1993), 100.

anyone else to join the military-industrial conspiracy to murder Creation.”³⁰ Biologist E.O. Wilson directly petitions Christian leaders for help in caring for creation in his recent book, *Creation: An Appeal to Save Life on Earth*.³¹ The Pope’s encyclical, “*Laudato Si’: On Care for Our Common Home*,” examines the root causes of our environmental crisis and calls for a change in our habits and hearts. While there is a burgeoning creation-care movement within North American churches, it is a relatively new phenomenon. One Christian leader associated with this movement commented that caring for creation is often considered to be “an ornament of theology, not a foundation.”³² Broad Christian witness in the United States fails to exhibit a discernable form of discipline relative to

³⁰ Wendell Berry, “Christianity and the Survival of Creation,” 94. Berry’s words are even more pointed later in this lecture, which was delivered at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky:

Despite its protests to the contrary, modern Christianity has become willy-nilly the religion of the state and the economic status quo. Because it has been so exclusively dedicated to incanting anemic souls into Heaven, it has been made the tool of much earthly villainy. It has, for the most part, stood silently by while a predatory economy has ravaged the world, destroyed its natural beauty and health, divided and plundered its human communities and households. It has flown the flag and chanted the slogans of empire. ... It has admired Caesar and comforted him in his depredations and defaults. But in its *de facto* alliance with Caesar, Christianity connives directly in the murder of Creation. For in these days, Caesar is no longer a mere destroyer of armies, cities, and nations. He is a contradicter of the fundamental miracle of life (114-115).

³¹ Wilson frames the entire book as a letter to a pastor, and he tries to make the case that the preservation of creation is indeed a cause that Christians should embrace based in part on creation’s inherent value. He notes that such an appeal is necessary since he is puzzled “that so many religious leaders, who spiritually represent a large majority of people around the world, have hesitated to make protection of the Creation an important part of their magisterium. Do they believe that human-centered ethics and preparation for the afterlife are the only things that matter?” Edward O. Wilson, *The Creation: An Appeal to Save Life on Earth* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2006), 5-6.

³² This sentiment was expressed by a participant in a Duke University project involving conversations with church leaders on the topic of climate change during the fall of 2012.

ecological care and concern. The discipleship that many environmentalists seek does not find a recognizable partner in that offered by most Christian communities.

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, dubbed “the Green Patriarch” for his attention to environmental issues, calls sacrifice the “missing dimension” in caring for creation in a talk concluding the Fourth Symposium on Religion, Science, and the Environment in 2002.³³ His claim that sacrifice is “missing” presumably applies to Christian and non-Christian members of his audience alike. He identifies sacrifice with repentance, and he laments that sacrifice is commonly understood as some form of loss or death. He cites this negative framing of sacrifice as a primary reason for its eschewal. As we have already seen, sacrifice’s negative connotation leads some within the environmental community to dismiss it.

For many Christians, though, the identification of sacrifice with death is reinforced by their theological understanding of Jesus’ death. The book of Hebrews in the New Testament offers an extended reflection on Jesus’ priestly work, and many Christians have historically interpreted these passages in a particular way: specifically, that Jesus’ sacrifice is his death. This understanding is often reinforced by notions that his death is penal in nature. This framework poses a particular threat for Christians’ apprehension of sacrifice, for it risks divorcing sacrifice from discipleship. Instead of

³³ Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, *On Earth as in Heaven: Ecological Vision and Initiatives of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew* (ed. John Chryssavgis; New York: Fordham University Press, 2012), 222-225.

sacrifice leading to death, I will argue in the following chapters that sacrifice redeems humankind, training Israel in a way of life consonant with God’s intentions in creation. Sacrifice is not death, but rather its institution signals a new way of life that promotes the flourishing of all. This vision of sacrifice-as-life challenges the narrative of sacrifice-as-death that figures prominently within significant strands of Christian discourse, and it offers rich resources for Christian practices that would inherently embody care for creation. Put succinctly, sacrifice-as-life embeds the care of creation in the heart of Christian theology and discipleship.

1.3.1 Sacrifice and death in Christian discourse

Particular strains of Christian theology support an understanding of sacrifice-as-death. For many Reformed Protestants, the rhetoric of sacrifice is bound to interpretations of Christ’s atoning work. Jesus’ sacrificial death is often understood in penal terms: Jesus is punished to appease God’s wrath. John Calvin provides key support for this framework. In his commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews, Calvin emphasizes that a priest’s office “is to appease the anger of God.”³⁴ Calvin states that “the priest is only a peacemaker between God and men when a victim is sacrificed, because without sacrifice there is no remission of sins and the wrath of God is not

³⁴ John Calvin, *Calvin’s Commentaries: The Epistle of Paul The Apostle to the Hebrews and The First and Second Epistles of St Peter* (ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance; trans. William B. Johnston; Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1963), 33, 58.

appeased.”³⁵ While the *telos* of sacrifice under Calvin’s reckoning is reconciliation with God, the mechanism is through the death of a victim and the subsequent removal of God’s anger. Calvin here does not explain *how* sacrifice placates God, but his emphasis on Jesus’ death will prove consequential for the historical development of penal substitutionary accounts of the atonement. With the emphasis on Jesus’ death, Calvin understands sacrifice, blood, and death to be functionally synonymous. In reflecting on Hebrews 9:22 – “according to the law, I may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and apart from the shedding of blood there is no remission”³⁶ – Calvin highlights how blood is related to death:

Men are shut off from the sight of God because of the fact that since He is justly wroth with them all, there is no reason for them to promise themselves any favour from him until He has been pacified. The one way of pacifying is by the atonement of blood, and hence no pardon for sin can be hoped for unless we bring blood. This happens when we find refuge by faith in the death of Christ.³⁷

Calvin earlier discusses the importance of a priest bringing a sacrifice, and here he equates sacrifice with blood as the element needed to pacify God. Christians have access to this blood-sacrifice that appeases God through their faith “in the death of Christ.” Throughout this discussion of priesthood and sacrifice invited by the Epistle to the

³⁵ Calvin, *Hebrews*, 59.

³⁶ Calvin’s translation, *Hebrews*, 124.

³⁷ Calvin, *Hebrews*, 127.

Hebrews, Calvin never interrogates the Old Testament witness upon which Hebrews draws to inform his understanding of the cult. Calvin reduces the complexities of blood, death, and sacrifice to a simplistic mechanism of anger assuagement absent from the account of the cult in Torah.

Calvin's more systematic treatment of sacrifice in his reflections on Christ's priestly office in the *Institutes* adds the element of justice to his interpretation of Hebrews. He writes:

a pure and stainless Mediator he is by his holiness to reconcile us to God. But God's righteous curse bars our access to him, and God in his capacity as judge is angry toward us. Hence, an expiation must intervene in order that Christ as priest may obtain God's favor for us and appease his wrath. Thus Christ to perform this office has to come forward with a sacrifice. . . . To sum up [the author of Hebrews'] argument: The priestly office belongs to Christ alone because by the sacrifice of his death he blotted out our own guilt and made satisfaction for our sins (Heb. 9:22)...Thus we see that we must begin from the death of Christ in order that the efficacy and benefit of his priesthood may reach us.³⁸

Calvin understands Christ's priestly work to take place in a juridical setting. While the notion of satisfaction is famously articulated by Anselm, Anselm does not use priestly language and imagery in his formulation of this concept.³⁹ When Calvin applies a

³⁸ John Calvin, *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion* (LCC; ed. John T. McNeill; trans. Ford Lewis Battles; 2 vols.; Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox Press, 1960), 501-2.

³⁹ Anselm, "Why God Became Man," in *A Scholastic Miscellany: Anselm to Ockham* (ed. and trans. E. R. Fairweather; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1956).

forensic frame to practices of sacrifice, the concepts of judgment and punishment accompany notions of sacrifice and death.

Calvin pays no attention to Christ's resurrection in his priestly office. In a following section in the *Institutes* where he expounds upon Christ's work as articulated in the Apostles' Creed, Calvin affirms the importance of the resurrection, though tellingly he writes that "we have in his death the complete fulfillment of salvation, for through it we are reconciled to God, his righteous judgment is satisfied, the curse is removed, and the penalty paid in full."⁴⁰ Despite Calvin's insistence that an understanding of Christ's death apart from his resurrection is incomplete, his attention and rhetoric amplify the former rather than the latter. For Calvin, death constitutes the heart of Christ's priestly work.

In a recent book on Leviticus, Old Testament scholar Allen Ross highlights the importance of death in the sacrificial rituals of the cult. When describing the theology of the burnt offering outlined in Leviticus 1, he writes that this ritual "enables the sinner to live and to enter [God's] presence through the death of a substitute."⁴¹ Blood is used, because it "is a graphic way to ensure the death of the victim, because the life is in the blood. Blood dashed against the sides of the altar was the public witness that the

⁴⁰ Calvin, *Institutes*, 520.

⁴¹ Allen P. Ross, *Holiness to the Lord: A Guide to the Exposition of the Book of Leviticus* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2002), 86.

sacrifice had been made.”⁴² For Ross, the focus of the ritual seems to be the production of death. In commenting on the capture and use of blood in the description of the burnt offering, he adds that the “sudden display of the blood figuratively cried out to God that satisfaction had been exacted through the death of the victim (cf. Heb. 12:24). . . . The point is clear: the Lord required the shedding of blood for atonement.”⁴³ Like Calvin, Ross holds death and ritual bloodshed to be synonymous. His use of the term “satisfaction” suggests that he understands sacrifice to be a form of punishment, a claim supported by his reflection that the ritual slaughter of the animal signifies “that the penalty of death had been executed.”⁴⁴ He holds that the purpose of the burnt offering “was to turn away or appease God’s wrath against sin and defilement and thereby purge the offender.”⁴⁵ Ross understands atonement in the cult to occur through death, and he connects the burnt offering with Christ’s work on the cross: “In line with the burnt offering, the death of Christ on the cross completely satisfied the wrath of God against all sin. When Jesus was lifted up between heaven and earth, his blood was shed as a visible sign that his life had been given as a ransom (Matt. 20:28).”⁴⁶ Ross’ book on

⁴² Ross, *Holiness to the Lord*, 86.

⁴³ Ross, *Holiness to the Lord*, 92.

⁴⁴ Ross, *Holiness to the Lord*, 169.

⁴⁵ Ross, *Holiness to the Lord*, 94.

⁴⁶ Ross, *Holiness to the Lord*, 96.

interpreting Leviticus provides a contemporary example of biblical interpretation in which sacrifice is conceived as death as a form of punishment for the sake of removing God's wrath.

In addition to academic literature, sacrifice appears in pastoral strains of Christian thought that advocate a penal substitutionary account of the atonement. Peter Jensen, the 11th Anglican Archbishop of Sydney, Australia, describes penal theories of the atonement as "inherent to evangelical religion."⁴⁷ Jensen articulates this theory of atonement whereby he states that "to describe what [Christ] has done, the Scriptures use the category of *sacrifice*."⁴⁸ He holds that the Old Testament witness of animal sacrifice highlights "our need to have our sins removed through blood-shedding" and quotes Hebrews 9:27 to clarify Jesus' work: "Just as man is destined to die once, and after that face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people."⁴⁹ Like Calvin's interpretation, this formulation holds death, sacrifice, and bloodshed to be equivalent.

⁴⁷ Peter Jensen, "The Good News of God's Wrath: At the Heart of the Universe, There is a Just and Gracious God," *Christianity Today*, (March 2004): 47.

⁴⁸ Jensen, "The Good News of God's Wrath," 46 (italics original).

⁴⁹ Jensen, "The Good News of God's Wrath," 46.

Jensen identifies “three great words” that illuminate the meaning of sacrifice: substitution, punishment, and propitiation.⁵⁰ Regarding substitution, he writes, “It was as a substitute that Jesus made this sacrifice; he took the place of those who were condemned.” He notes that this substitution of his death for ours is also a punishment whereby, in his passion, “every sign of God’s wrath is experienced by Jesus.” Jesus therefore propitiates God by enduring God’s just wrath directed at sinful humanity.⁵¹ This framework emphasizes the suffering and death of Jesus’ body as a means of salvation.

In its most basic form, as Jensen lays out in his article, sacrifice as a form of penal substitutionary atonement has no account of resurrection, the redemption of creation, or sanctification. As a result, the relationship between sacrifice and discipleship is tenuous. John Howard Yoder notes that satisfaction theories of the atonement separate justification from sanctification to the detriment of discipleship, often rendering sanctification a secondary good.⁵² He observes that this framework denies any ethical component to Christ’s sacrificial work and renders nonsensical New Testament passages that liken Christians’ sufferings to those of Christ, for the “Christian’s ‘cross’ neither

⁵⁰ Jensen, “The Good News of God’s Wrath,” 46.

⁵¹ Jensen, “The Good News of God’s Wrath,” 46.

⁵² John Howard Yoder, *Preface to Theology: Christology and Theological Method* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos Press, 2002), 302.

placates an offended holiness nor is the Christians suffering a transaction with the Father.”⁵³ Some feminist theologians object to this penal configuration of sacrifice because of the implications it holds for discipleship. Contra Yoder, these theologians contend that understandings of atonement that valorize Jesus’ suffering to placate an angry God have been used to reinforce the plight of women and marginalized peoples by encouraging them to identify with Jesus and stay in abusive and oppressive situations. As feminist theologian Bonnie Miller-McLemore observes, “Many feminists have dumped sacrifice and for good reason.”⁵⁴

The association of sacrifice with death within these Christian formulations risks underdeveloped or misdirected forms of discipleship. Christians could easily conclude that they need not engage in sacrificial practices since Christ’s sacrifice is definitive in obtaining salvation – God’s wrath has finally been appeased⁵⁵ – or that Christian sacrifice is constituted through the endurance of suffering in itself. At the very least, this Christian articulation of sacrifice reinforces the general connotation of sacrifice as some form of negativity, loss, or lack. Understood in this way, there are few resources for

⁵³ Yoder, *Preface to Theology*, 303.

⁵⁴ Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, “Generativity, Self-Sacrifice, and the Ethics of Family Life” in *The Equal-Regard Family and Its Friendly Critics* (ed. J. Witte Jr., M. C. Green, and A. Wheeler; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2007), 32.

⁵⁵ This conclusion is reinforced by Hebrews 10:18: “And it is by God’s will that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”

apprehending how sacrifice relates to God's intentions for creation's redemption and humanity's transformation.

1.3.2 Seeing sacrifice anew

Environmental rhetoric highlights what penal formulations of sacrifice often obscure, namely that sacrifice is unavoidable and is a key component of our economic life. As we are creatures who depend on elements of creation for our survival – we have to eat! – we are enmeshed in practices of taking. We use and consume natural resources for our own benefit, too often in ways that harm our fellow creatures. Because of the extent of humankind's environmental impact, scientists have been considering classifying our current geological epoch as the "Anthropocene." A leading stratigrapher notes that the scale and scope of the effects of anthropogenic carbon emissions are such that future geologists may perceive it to be as profound as the asteroid strike that ended the Cretaceous period 65 million years ago.⁵⁶ Indeed an article in the science journal *Nature* suggests that humans have initiated a sixth mass extinction event.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Elizabeth Kolbert, "Age of Man," *National Geographic* (March 2011). Cited 5 April 2011. Online: <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2011/03/age-of-man/kolbert-text/1>.

⁵⁷ A mass extinction event is defined when the Earth loses more than 75% of its species in a geologically short time span. Anthony D. Barnosky et al., "Has the Earth's Sixth Mass Extinction Already Arrived?" *Nature* 471 (3 March 2011): 51-57. Cited 7 September 2013. Online: <http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v471/n7336/full/nature09678.html>.

Many environmentalists argue that unrestrained consumption entails the sacrifice of habitats and ecosystems. Some might feel that the types of sacrifices environmentalists identify have nothing to do with Christ's sacrifice as frequently portrayed in theological discourse. What does the desolation of the Gulf of Mexico have to do with Israel's Tabernacle or Christ's death on the cross? Likening profane types of taking to divinely sanctioned actions might seem to be a category mistake. In the following pages, I propose a reading of sacrifice in the Bible as God's solution to human taking that is at the heart of humanity's alienation from God.

I hope to display through a reading of Torah that God is in the business of redeeming our profane practices of taking through the institutionalization of sacrifice in the cult. God's prescribed form of sacrifice serves as an antidote to the fallen habituations that have marred human relations since humanity's expulsion from the garden. This healing that God offers humankind, and, through them, all nonhuman creation, is perfected through Christ's offering and resurrection. In the narrative culminating in the Tabernacle, we see that God cares about *what* and *how much* we take. God's disciplining of Israel (and the church) through sacrifice has immediate implications for the health and well-being of the created order.

The Bible plays a crucial role for Christians in ascertaining God's purposes for us and the rest of creation. The interpretation of Hebrews that yields an understanding of sacrifice as a form of punishment, as seen in Calvin and contemporary Christians

influenced by the Reformed tradition, shapes imaginations and influences the contours of discipleship. A canonical and theological reading of sacrifice in the Bible that is informed by key texts in Genesis, Exodus, and Leviticus offers valuable insights into the role sacrifice plays in the redemption of God's people and the created order. As will be argued in the chapters ahead, God's institution of sacrifice in the Levitical cult serves to remedy humanity's fallen proclivity to take wantonly. Through sacrifice, Israel is trained in proper use and offering. This formation enables a form of redemption for Israel, for the *telos* of the cult is Sabbath. This theological interpretation of the cult helps to illuminate the argument of Hebrews, where Jesus is understood to perfect the sacrificial system of the Old Testament by the offering of his body and blood in the resurrection. This interpretation of these texts suggests that sacrifice is God's chosen means of overcoming death. Through sacrifice, Adam is restored and all things rest properly in God's blessed presence, seen provisionally through the cult's relationship with the Sabbath, and definitively in Jesus' resurrection.

Sacrifice is a way of life that Christians are to embody in their discipleship. In the absence of rightly ordered sacrifice, Christians remain at risk of embracing death-dealing practices and enabling an economy that is self-destructive. The cult reminds Christians of the right use of creation's goods and humanity's proper place in creation's order. Christians are called to participate in Christ's perfection of the cult through the disciplining of their engagement with fellow creatures. Through sacrifice grounded in

God's economy, Christians begin to enable the restoration of creation actualized in Jesus' resurrection. Sacrifice leads to life in its fullest, and through sacrifice Christians are simultaneously justified and sanctified.

The exegetical argument of this dissertation will begin with an interpretation of the first three books of the Old Testament. Chapter two examines the narrative display of Genesis and Exodus that attends to God's purposes for creation and God's efforts toward restoration. We will see God's household rightly ordered on the seventh day of creation, where God rests with humans exercising dominion and embodying the *imago Dei*. Soon after, humans rupture this good order by withdrawing from God in their illicit taking of the forbidden fruit. God seeks to heal the brokenness that ensues through various episodes of re-creation, culminating in the formation of a people constituted by sacrifice. Chapter three explores how the book of Leviticus provides a display of sacrifice that stands as an alternative to the taking that characterizes the fallen systems of the world. Rather than another instance of death for the sake of power and security, the sacrificial regime of the Tabernacle cult is a means by which God rehabilitates humanity so it may abide with God in a restored creation. Sacrifice is a means by which Israel becomes holy. The dynamics of the fallen order are undone through God's disciplining of Israel through offering. Israel's sacrificial life yields a wholeness befitting the Sabbath. It is true that Israel's sacrificial practices often involve death. However, this death is

itself life-giving. It is the offering of life in service of ending death's power, rather than facilitating creation's demise.

Chapter four considers the account of Christ's sacrificial work in the book of Hebrews. Hebrews attends to the particularities of Israel's cult and explores how Christ perfects the Tabernacle's practices. Christ achieves the right ordering of humanity that the Levitical cult intends. He offers his resurrected body to the Father and restores humanity's place in God's presence, thereby inaugurating a Sabbath rest for those who participate in him.

Chapter five explores some ramifications of this interpretation of sacrifice-as-life for Christian theology and ethics. Rather than supporting a penal substitutionary account of the atonement, Levitical sacrifice is best understood as a type of recapitulation in which God transforms humanity to be able to abide in God's presence once again. Sacrifice is a means by which God restores what has been lost with the fall. Discipleship possesses a sacrificial shape as Christians participate in Christ's perfectly ordered life. Sacrifice is not a "new" set of practices for Christians, but a conforming of our lives to the One who has defeated death and renewed creation.

2 Creation and Restoration: God's Work of Redemption in Genesis - Exodus

We are in the habit of contention – against the world, against each other, against ourselves. It is not from ourselves that we will learn to be better than we are.

– Wendell Berry¹

2.1 Introduction

The Bible clearly displays that humans are “in the habit of contention” against the rest of creation. Indeed, Scripture’s story provides both the diagnosis of this disordered condition and God’s purposes for healing the brokenness that ensues. The first three books of Torah – Genesis through Leviticus—provide a narrative arc of humanity’s fall and restoration: humans withdraw from God by violating the divine boundary of taking the proscribed fruit and God rehabilitates humanity through Israel’s sacrificial cult that hosts the divine presence. It is in the book of Leviticus that one finds a vision of a healthy economy.²

¹ Wendell Berry, “A Native Hill,” in *The Art of the Commonplace: The Agrarian Essays of Wendell Berry* (ed. N. Wirzba; Emeryville, Calif.: Shoemaker & Hoard, 2002), 29.

² Many might find this to be a strange claim as Leviticus has long been considered specialized material for priests, and its arcane and enigmatic descriptions of the sacrificial rituals within the Tabernacle cult have largely been ignored by Christian interpreters. This is beginning to change with the work of Jacob Milgrom and Mary Douglas. See Milgrom’s observations in his introduction. Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus: A Book of Ritual and Ethics: A Continental Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), xii. For a description of Leviticus and economic health, see Ellen Davis’s chapter, “A Wholesome Materiality: Reading Leviticus” in Ellen F. Davis, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 80-100.

As noted in the previous chapter, many environmentalists highlight ways in which our current social order degrades creation. Environmental rhetoric often identifies this habitual exploitation as a type of sacrifice that members of society accept in order to enable economic growth. Whereas our contemporary economy engages in sacrificial practices that lead to creation's destruction, the vision of the cult's *telos* in Leviticus is one of creation restored. The life of the Tabernacle – sacrifice – makes possible the proper management of Israel's collective household because the practices of sacrifice are oriented toward facilitating wholeness. Levitical sacrifice functions as rehabilitation and training for Israel to abide with God and to enter into the Sabbath, the crown of creation.

This claim that the ritual life of Leviticus provides for creation's healing is based upon a canonical reading of Torah and an interpretation of Leviticus in relationship to other Old Testament texts, particularly ones that bear the mark of the Priestly school.³ Interpreting Leviticus in light of other "creation" material helps to highlight crucial theological insights, such as the importance of order, boundaries, and wholeness. These themes provide an interpretive key in analyzing ritual descriptions in Leviticus that are

³ Such a strategy is advanced by Rolf Rendtorff, "Is it Possible to Read Leviticus as a Separate Book?" in *Reading Leviticus: A Conversation with Mary Douglas* (ed. J. F. A. Sawyer; JSOTSup 227; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 34. It is displayed in Stephen A. Geller's essay, "Blood cult: An interpretation of the priestly work of the Pentateuch," in *Sacred Enigmas: Literary Religion in the Hebrew Bible* (London: Routledge, 1996), 62-86.

not accompanied by any explanation.⁴ In particular, they will help make sense of the roles of Sabbath and blood in the cult's display of creation redeemed. The Torah's narratives of "creation, un-creation, and re-creation"⁵ set the stage for understanding life in the new creation that is the Tabernacle and God's reformation of humanity through Israel.

In this chapter we will survey key moments in the story of God's redemption leading up to the display of Israel's sacrificial life in Leviticus. This drama begins with a description of creation's goodness and perfection on the seventh day in Genesis 1:1-2:3 and concludes with an account of the construction of the Tabernacle at the end of Exodus, which is figured as a re-creation. In between God's first act of creation and the new creation of the Tabernacle, the biblical story traces the dis-ordering of creation

⁴ This approach to interpreting ritual instructions was inaugurated by Mary Douglas in her work *Purity and Danger* and further developed in *Leviticus as Literature*. See Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 2002), 51-71; Mary Douglas, *Leviticus as Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). Jacob Milgrom departs from Douglas' conclusions in *Purity and Danger* but similarly interprets rituals as a symbol system, whereby rituals reflect a society's underlying values (Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 3; New York: Doubleday, 1991), 718-36). In *Purity, Sacrifice, and the Temple*, Jonathan Klawans builds upon the work of both Douglas and Milgrom, offering an "integrated symbolic approach to both purity and sacrifice," a synthesis he currently finds lacking in biblical scholarship. He suggests that two central theological ideas undergird both systems – the imitation of God and attracting/maintaining God's presence. While some of my conclusions resonate with those of Klawans, Klawans develops his thesis by focusing on the ritual aspects of the daily burnt offering, as opposed to attending to the literary display of sacrifice in its canonical placement in Torah and its attendant linkages to Genesis and Exodus. Specifically, Klawans begins with the description of the ritual performance and then provides images from prophetic texts to supply symbolic meaning (Jonathan Klawans, *Purity, Sacrifice, and the Temple: Symbolism and Supersessionism in the Study of Ancient Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 4, 11, 52-53, 62-66).

⁵ Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Creation, Un-creation, Re-creation: A Discursive Commentary on Genesis 1-11*. (London: T & T Clark, 2011).

inaugurated by humanity's wrongful taking and God's efforts aimed at restoration, first through the flood and later through the formation of Israel as a "priestly kingdom and a holy nation" (Exod 19:6). Throughout, we see salvation history constituted by God's care for the good ordering of creation, and God's commitment to humanity's vocation of imaging God through its right use of power manifest in a disciplined life. God's efforts are aimed at rehabilitating humanity's proclivity to take.

2.2 The Wholeness of Creation: Genesis 1:1-2:3

Walter Brueggeman has described the opening verses of the Pentateuch as a liturgical poem that "invites the congregation to *confess and celebrate* the world as God has intended it."⁶ The beginning of the story of God's creation and redemption of the world is a worshipful proclamation, carefully crafted to highlight creation's perfection, and it therefore sets the stage for the human drama that will progressively unfold. In response to God's words in creation that make the world "very good" (Gen 1:26, NRSV)⁷ and culminate in the blessed time and rest of the seventh day, Israel offers its response through its own liturgical language – a gesture that resonates with a later scriptural exhortation to "offer a sacrifice of praise to God continually" (Heb 13:15). Through this liturgical expression of gratitude for the gifts God bestows upon creation, Israel draws

⁶ Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis* (IBC; Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), 30 (italics original).

⁷ Unless otherwise noted, translations from Scripture come from the NRSV.

near to God. This is the constitutive activity of sacrifice and a fitting response that captures the goodness and health of the divine-human relationship. As Ellen Davis observes, this poem not only helps Israel to see the world accurately; it also facilitates a right participation in creation's order for the purposes of entering "more deeply into relationship with God."⁸ This poem functions as an enactment of humanity's proper role in creation.

How God creates provides crucial information about humanity's vocation, and it is against this backdrop that we can appreciate many of God's instructions and interventions in Genesis through Leviticus aimed at restoring the blessedness of space, time, and relations among creatures. God's creative activity assumes central place: for six days, God speaks and creation progressively assumes form. These verses highlight the importance of order and distinction. God's work occurs in separate stages, each day deliberately demarcated by God's speech and concluding with an accounting of each day, "and it was evening and it was morning, day [x]."⁹ Within each day, God's activity involves further differentiation. When God establishes the inanimate elements of creation in days one, two, and four, God creates in part through the process of separation. Each of these days contains a form of the verb *הבדיל* (divide, separate) to

⁸ Davis, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture*, 43.

⁹ Gen 1:3, 5; 1:6, 8; 1:9, 13; 1:14, 19; 1:20, 23; 1:24, 31.

describe an aspect of God's creativity.¹⁰ God creates clear boundaries through division: light from darkness, water from sky, day from night.¹¹ Distinction is also carefully articulated in the case of the creation of living beings. Days three, five, and six, which witness the creation of all living creatures, repeat the expression "after their kind" ten times.¹² Amidst the abundant description about the types of living things God creates in Genesis 1 – seed bearing plants, fruit trees, aquatic swimmers, crawlers, birds, herd-animals, and wildlife – the refrain "after their kind" serves to highlight their differentiations. Jon Levenson provides a helpful note about the importance of order and creation:

creation in the ancient Near East was not a matter of cosmogony as a modern westerner would conceive it, but rather a decisive instance of the victory of the forces of order (which are necessarily social and political) over potent opposition: what emerges from creation is a secure and ordered community whose center of authority is unchallenged, effective, and just.¹³

¹⁰ Gen 1:4, 6, 7, 14, 18. In verses 4 and 7, God is the subject of the verb "separate," while in the remaining verses, God is depicted as being an indirect agent of separation. Notably, these five verses contain the only instances of this verb in the book of Genesis, and it occurs only once in Exodus (26:33).

¹¹ Even though a form of the verb *בָּרַל* is absent, one could argue that division is similarly occurring on the third day with the gathering of the waters and the emergence of land.

¹² Gen 1:11, 12 (x2), 21 (x2), 24 (x2), 25 (x3). Notably, the phrase occurs 7 times between verses 21-25 relative to the creation of animals.

¹³ Jon Douglas Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), 69.

While God's activity in Genesis 1 is not marked by conflict like other ancient creation accounts, Levenson's emphasis on the importance of order remains instructive. God's ordering is both complete and, as the poem reiterates, good. This theme of order continues to be important throughout Torah.

The creation of humankind in verse 26 breaks the pattern established in the creation of the other living creatures. Rather than being created "after their kind," humans instead are created in God's image, according to God's likeness (1:26-27). As a result, humans are to "have dominion over the fish of the sea, the fowl of the heavens, animals, all the earth, and all crawling things that crawl upon the earth."¹⁴ The repeated listing of animal types in verses 28 and 30 not only suggests the scope of humanity's concern; it also reiterates the distinctiveness of the other animals emphasized in God's creation of them.

If being made in the image of God is related to having dominion, then both concepts can be better understood by the description of God's careful creation of and charge to the unique beings celebrated in this pericope. J. Richard Middleton notes that being created in God's image and likeness at least means that "the human vocation is

¹⁴ Fox's translation. Everett Fox, *The Five Books of Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy; A New Translation with Introductions, Commentary and Notes* (vol. 1 of *The Schocken Bible*; New York: Schocken Books, 1995), 15.

modeled on the nature and actions of the God portrayed in Genesis 1.”¹⁵ He further specifies that clues from Genesis 1 combined with comparative study of other ancient Near Eastern texts leads to a “functional – or even missional—interpretation of the image of God in Genesis 1:26-27. On this reading, the *imago Dei* designates the royal office or calling of human beings as God’s representatives and agents in the world, granted authorized power to share in God’s rule or administration of the earth’s resources and creatures.”¹⁶ Part of humankind’s vocation of dominion entails the maintenance of the distinctions and separations God establishes in creation: order, limitation, and boundaries are divinely ordained categories humans are called to uphold for the flourishing of all. Indeed, embracing these parameters would be crucial in order for humans to properly manage the food system, as Davis suggests is the chief task of being made in God’s image.¹⁷ This poem assumes that humans are able to apprehend nature’s productive, harmonious diversity in order to facilitate its blessing.

Biblical scholars note the unique role that the seven-day structuring plays among creation accounts from the ancient Near East.¹⁸ In summoning forth the material features

¹⁵ J. Richard Middleton, *The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos Press, 2005), 60.

¹⁶ Middleton, *The Liberating Image*, 27.

¹⁷ Davis, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture*, 58.

¹⁸ Blenkinsopp, *Creation, Un-creation, Re-creation*, 20; Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, 66.

of the cosmos, God is meanwhile creating a liturgical unit of time, a week culminating in a day of rest, the full importance of which is realized for Israel after the exodus in the introduction of the Sabbath.¹⁹ The importance of the Sabbath as it relates to creation is underscored by the prominence of the number seven in Genesis 1:1-2:3. In his Genesis commentary, Umberto Cassuto observes that the first and second verses of Genesis 1 have seven and fourteen words, respectively, while the verses related to the seventh day contain thirty-five words.²⁰ Key words and phrases occur in multiples of seven: “living things” (חַיִּים) appear seven times, God (אֱלֹהִים) thirty-five times, heavens (שָׁמַיִם), twenty-one times, earth (אָרֶץ) twenty-one times, and the phrase “it was good” seven times.²¹ This deliberate crafting highlights the perfection of creation, of which the seventh day is an integral part.

The seventh day stands out in both form and content. Unlike the pattern for the other six days, on the seventh day God does not speak, and the phrase *seventh day* is specified three times in its description. The structural uniqueness of the seventh day is reflected in its contents: God rests from the work of creation and blesses and sanctifies

¹⁹ Blenkinsopp, *Creation, Un-creation, Re-creation*, 21.

²⁰ Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis Part I: From Adam to Noah Genesis I-VI* 8 (trans. Israel Abrahams; Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1961), 14-15.

²¹ Cassuto, *Genesis Part I*, 14.

the day. The concept of God's work occurs three times in these four verses, just like the three-fold identification of the seventh day. God's work is highlighted as that which God has finished and from which God ceases. Unlike the previous days of productivity in which God blesses parts of his creation, the seventh day is blessed for its being and is set apart. God hallows it, and in doing so, provides a link between holiness and wholeness.²² This is the first time the root קדש appears in Torah, and it provides a key conceptual understanding for interpreting the Sabbath injunctions in Exodus and Leviticus. On this day, creation is complete, and all members of God's created household are in perfect order. The Sabbath represents the wholeness of creation, a wholeness Israel is called to embody.

No end is specified for the seventh day, and Samuel Balentine concludes that "the suggestion is that the primordial seventh day exists in perpetuity."²³ As a conclusion to creation in which creation is fully completed in God's restful enjoyment of it, the vision of the seventh day lingers as a blessed possibility for creation, especially for humans made in the image of God. This day of rest, of un-work, stands as an example of creation fulfilled in which space, time, and relations among living-things are ordered and sanctified. This is a vision that frames later descriptions of Israel's vocation.

²² Mary Douglas develops the connection between holiness and wholeness in *Purity and Danger*, which she employs to interpret the classification of animals in Leviticus 11 based on the ordering of Genesis 1. Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 67-71.

²³ Samuel L. Balentine, *The Torah's Vision of Worship* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 93.

2.3 *The Order of the Garden and the Disorder of Blood:* *Genesis 2:4-4:24*

The vocation of human beings to maintain creation's order through their proper exercise of divinely-granted power is reinforced and nuanced by the description of God's placement of man in the garden "to till it and tend it" (NRSV 2:15). Davis notes the ambiguity present in the Hebrew verbs. While the verb עָבַד can mean to work on the soil, she notes that the verb can also mean to "work for" or "serve" the soil.²⁴ The second verb שָׁמַר is better understood as "observe" or "keep." Davis writes, "So it may be that the human is charged to 'keep' the garden and at the same time to 'observe' it, to learn from it and respect the limits that pertain to it."²⁵ Serving and observing entails apprehending and honoring the order God established in creation, particularly so if a primary task of humanity is to manage the food system.

Christians traditionally understand that a rupture in this good order occurs when Eve takes the forbidden fruit in Genesis 3:6. The Hebrew verb for "take" (לָקַח) is the first instance of this verb with a human subject in the Pentateuch, and its occurrence is suggestive as this act of wrongful taking almost immediately inaugurates a history of disordered acquisition. While Adam and Eve do not suffer immediate physical death by

²⁴ Davis, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture*, 29. Davis provides the caveat that service to the soil should be properly placed within service to God.

²⁵ Davis, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture*, 30.

their taking and eating of the fruit (*contra* Gen 2:17 and in accordance with the snake's assurances in Gen 3:4),²⁶ it is notable that their transgression is associated with death; they are not only denied immortality, but also are subject to death as a force that now infects creation.²⁷ Karl Barth observes, "Death is not so much God's direct reaction against man's sin; it is rather God's abandoning of the men who have abandoned Him."²⁸ By grasping the fruit, Adam and Eve reject God, and death enters with their withdrawal from God's presence. God's design for the flourishing of life in Genesis 1 is now challenged by the disorders Adam and Eve introduce, expressed in God's curses

²⁶ See James Barr's critique and Leigh Travaskis's review of Barr and a discussion of Adam and Eve's "death" as symbolized in "exile." James Barr, *The Garden of Eden and the Hope of Immortality* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 8-11; Leigh M. Trevaskis, *Holiness, Ethics and Ritual in Leviticus* (Hebrew Bible Monographs 29; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2011), 99-101.

²⁷ Jacob Milgrom discusses the idea of death as a force in his commentary on Leviticus. In introducing Priestly theology he notes the following about understanding impurity: "Because the quintessential source of holiness resides with God, Israel is enjoined to control the occurrence of impurity lest it impinge on his realm.... The forces pitted against each other in a cosmic struggle are no longer the benevolent and the demonic deities who populate the mythologies of Israel's neighbors, but the forces of life and death set loose by man himself through his obedience to or defiance of God's commandments." While Milgrom develops this idea as a symbol system in Leviticus, the concept of forces of life and death plays a key role in Fretheim's interpretation of the conflict between Pharaoh and Moses. Given the intertextual argument I am crafting, I am extending this notion of oppositional forces to the Genesis texts I am examining and incorporating it into a traditional Christian interpretation of the fall. See Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16, 47*; Terence E. Fretheim, *Exodus* (IBC; Louisville: John Knox Press, 1991), 23-170.

²⁸ Karl Barth, *Christ and Adam: Man and Humanity in Romans 5* (trans. T.A. Smail; Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1956), 13. Augustine makes the same points in more explicit terms:

For in that unruly disturbance that arose in the flesh of the unruly soul, which caused our first parents to cover their *pudenda*, there was experienced one death, the death in which God forsook the soul. This death was indicated by the words addressed to the man, who was hiding himself, out of his wits with fear, when God said, "Where are you, Adam?" Obviously God was not asking for information; he was rebuking Adam; and by the form of the rebuke he was warning him to take notice where he was, in that God was not with him.

Augustine, *City of God* (trans. Henry Bettenson; Penguin Books, 2003), 13.15 (524).

relative to human and agricultural fertility and the ruptures in relationships between humans and other animals (the snake), one another, and with God. Adam and Eve, as agents of discord, no longer rightly embody humanity's vocation as made in the image of God.

After their expulsion from the garden in Genesis 4, Adam and Eve bear Cain and Abel, therefore apparently fulfilling God's creational intentions that they should be fruitful. All is not well, as trouble lurks amidst the blessing of reproduction. Cain's naming is accompanied by an etymological gloss: "Now the man knew his wife Eve, and she conceived and bore Cain (קַיִן), saying, 'I have produced (קָנִיתִי) a man with the help of God'" (Gen 4:1). Scholars note the word play in this verse with the suggestion that Cain's name be understood in light of the verb קָנָה so that both would carry the meaning of "acquire" or "possess."²⁹ Read in this way, Eve's celebratory exclamation bears an ominous tone, hinting at Cain's "inherited" proclivity to take.³⁰ Blenkinsopp observes that the Cain and Abel story functions as a sequel to the garden narrative. He writes, "It reproduces the same plot as the previous episode, entailing transgression,

²⁹ Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1990), 220; Bruce K. Waltke with Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2001), 96. Blenkinsopp notes that Josephus and Philo offer a similar interpretation. Blenkinsopp, *Creation, Un-creation, Re-creation*, 99.

³⁰ Waltke supports this interpretation and points to the birth hymns of Hannah (1 Sam. 2:1-10) and Mary (Luke 1:46-55) as evidence of Eve's proclamation as foreshadowing problems in Cain and his line. Waltke, *Genesis*, 96.

punishment involving expulsion and exile, followed by a mitigation of the punishment.”³¹ Just as Eve took the forbidden fruit, so also Cain takes Abel’s life.

After the birth of Abel and a brief description of their respective vocations, the narrative resumes when Cain and Abel bring offerings to God, one from the field and one from the flock (Gen 4:3-4). This action occurs without any explanation or background. Just as Adam and Eve fulfilled God’s charge to reproduce, so too might this early act of worship reflect God’s commission of humankind in Genesis 1:28 to exercise dominion, a constitutive activity of being made in the image of God per Genesis 1:26-27. Bringing gifts to God – offering the fruits of one’s labor with creation’s good, life-sustaining materials – embodies God’s work of bringing forth life for the flourishing of all during the six days of creation.

No reason is stated for why Cain’s offering fails to please God. Cain becomes upset, and God speaks for the first time since expelling Adam and Eve from the garden. In this prior speech, God sends the humans away because they have “become like one of us, knowing good and evil; and now he might reach out his hand and take (לִקַּח) also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever” (Gen 3:22). God’s assessment of the human condition foreshadows Cain’s aggrieved state: God recognizes that humans face good and evil and possess a proclivity to “reach out his hand and take.” In response to

³¹ Blenkinsopp, *Creation, Un-creation, Re-creation*, 91.

Cain's resentment, God counsels him in "intending good" in Genesis 4:7: "Is it not thus: If you intend good, bear-it-aloft, but if you do not intend good, at the entrance is sin, a crouching demon, toward you is his lust – but you can rule over him."³² The Hebrew verb יטב appears twice in this verse, the first mention of "good" since Genesis 3:22. Cain does not choose the good: instead, he kills his brother Abel.

The disorder that accompanied the taking of the fruit is now made manifest in the spilling of blood through murder. Where humans were commissioned to "observe" or "keep" (שמר) the soil in Genesis 2:15, Cain flouts his calling when he lies to God about Abel's whereabouts [he says he does not know!] and asks "Am I my brother's keeper (שמר)?" (Gen 4:9). Humans no longer honor their proper place within creation, and their eschewal of God's good order has led to death, a result directly opposed to God's command to be fruitful and multiply. The specter of death that God introduces relative to the fruit in Genesis 2:17 has now been actualized.

God's response to Cain's denial highlights the enormity of Cain's betrayal: "What have you done? Listen; your brother's blood is crying out to me from the ground! And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive (לקח) your brother's blood from your hand" (Gen 4:10-11). These richly descriptive verses contain the first mention of blood in the Bible. In this scene, blood is personified as

³² Fox's translation. Fox, *The Five Books of Moses*, 27.

“crying out,” a powerful representation of the claim in Leviticus that “the life of the flesh is in the blood” (17:11). In failing to “keep” his brother, Cain has also failed to “keep” the soil.³³ Instead of cultivating the soil for life-giving food, Cain has used his hand to sow his brother’s blood. The perversion of creation in this scene is further illuminated by the injunction against eating blood that occurs in Genesis 9:4, for in the description of the first murder we are presented with an image of the soil ingesting the blood taken from Cain’s hand. Abel’s spilled blood irreparably degrades God’s created order, and as a consequence Cain departs from God’s presence (4:16). As we will see in God’s attempt to restore creation with the flood, Cain’s bloodshed represents a violation of the image of God. It will be God’s reordering of blood, and humanity’s restoration, that will be corrected by the cult. Through the cult, Israel will be able to abide in God’s presence once again.

Cain’s descendent Lamech, the seventh generation from Adam, embraces the violence Cain unleashed. In what Waltke calls a “song of revenge” in Genesis 4:23-24, Lamech boasts of his killing of another in retaliation for a minor injury and promises vengeance without limits.³⁴ While the biblical account of Cain’s line ends with Lamech’s

³³ Of the 2 verbs in Gen 2:15 – עבד and שמר – Cain in 4:2 is described as one who fulfills the former, while this pericope displays his failure at the latter. This episode suggests the importance of both verbs in humanity’s commission.

³⁴ Waltke, *Genesis*, 100.

children, the continuation and intensification of violence foreshadows the state of the earth before the flood.

2.4 *Noah and Recreation: Genesis 5-9*

Even with Adam and Eve's progeny through Seth, humans as a whole fail to live into their divine vocation to exercise dominion in a way that honors the image of God.³⁵ As a result, in Genesis 6:5 God assesses the state of the earth, and while he had previously seen that creation was very good, God now sees two aspects of creation's disorder. First, God sees "that great was humankind's evildoing on earth and every form of their heart's planning was only evil all the day" (Gen 6:5).³⁶ This is the first time the word *evil* has been used since Genesis 3:22 when God states that humans know good and evil as a result of taking and eating the forbidden fruit.³⁷ Cain implicitly embraced evil when he did not choose the good in 4:7, as did Lamech in following in Cain's footsteps, but now evil-doing has become all-encompassing.³⁸ The second thing God

³⁵ Enoch and Noah, who both "walked with God," are the exceptions that prove the rule.

³⁶ Fox's translation. Fox, *The Five Books of Moses*, 33.

³⁷ There are seven occurrences of "evil" רַע between the introduction of the term in 2:9 and the conclusion of the flood pericope in Gen 8:21 (2:9, 17; 3:5, 22; 6:5x2; 8:21).

³⁸ See the two-fold repetition of the word "all" (כָּל) in this verse – "every form" (וּכְלֵי־יִצְרָאֵל) and "all the day" (כָּל־הַיּוֹם).

sees is the result of humankind's evil: "Now the earth had gone to ruin (שחת) before God, the earth was filled with wrongdoing (רוע). God saw the earth, and here: it had gone to ruin, for all flesh had ruined its way upon the earth" (Gen 6:11-12).³⁹ Rather than fulfilling its commission to be fruitful and multiply, humans have instead spread corruption and violence upon all flesh.⁴⁰ The created order is utterly perverted, and, as a result, God decides to destroy it.

Sandwiched between the account of humanity's evil in 6:5-7 and its ruinous consequences in 6:11-12 lies a brief reference to Noah. Noah is first introduced in Gen 5:29 as a new Adam figure, for he is hoped to be one to bring comfort from the Lord's curse upon the soil. This anticipation is born out, for unlike the rest of the earth, Noah "found favor in the sight of the Lord" (6:8) and was "a righteous man, blameless (תמים) in his generation; Noah walked with God" (6:9). As one righteous and full of integrity, Noah embodies the characteristics opposite to evil, corruption, and lawlessness. Consequently, Noah enjoys a closeness to God reminiscent of that enjoyed by Adam and Eve when God walked in the garden (Gen 3:8). The fact that Noah's goodness is bookended by descriptions of humanity's demise highlights Noah's role in God's re-

³⁹ Fox's translation. Fox, *The Five Books of Moses*, 35.

⁴⁰ Cf. Waltke, *Genesis*, 134.

creative purposes. Noah is a new Adam, and one of his distinctive features, תמים, translated “wholehearted” by Fox,⁴¹ will figure prominently in the book of Leviticus.

In caring for the animals on the ark, Noah displays what it means to be righteous and wholehearted. Middleton writes, “It is significant, I believe, that the one righteous person in the antediluvian period exercises rule over the animals by taking them on the ark and thus preserving their life in a time of threat. Noah in the flood story is an example of someone imitating the paradigmatic life-enhancing use of power that God is depicted as exercising in Genesis 1.”⁴² Noah’s efforts preserving life reinforce his portrayal as a new Adam, and they highlight the characteristics God hopes to facilitate in humanity through God’s preservation of Noah.

God saves Noah, his family, and representatives from the rest of the animal kingdom while bringing about the destruction (שחת) of the rest of life on earth through the flood. The verb שחת occurs seven times in the flood narrative.⁴³ Three times this verb appears in relation to the state of the earth due to human wrongdoing (6:11, 12x2) and four times related to God’s activity (6:13, 17; 9:11, 15) – suggesting God’s complete ruination of creation. Blenkinsopp posits that the deluge is an act of un-creation, since it

⁴¹ Fox, *The Five Books of Moses*, 35.

⁴² Middleton, *The Liberating Image*, 296.

⁴³ Waltke, *Genesis*, 134.

occurs as a result of a rupture of the boundaries of the waters set in place by God in Genesis 1:6-10.⁴⁴ The impressive parallels between Genesis 1-4 and the story of Noah and the flood in Genesis 6-10 highlight that God's actions with Noah are for the purposes of re-creation.⁴⁵

The echoes that occur during the conclusion of the flood narrative carry particular weight. The flood concludes when Noah sees solid ground "in the first month, the first day of the month" (Gen 8:13). Cassuto notes the importance of this date: "Precisely at the commencement of the year, on the anniversary of Creation, the world resumed again the form that God had given it when first it came into being."⁴⁶ Like the first creation, God commands Noah and all the living things on the ark to "be fruitful and multiply" (Gen 8:17). Noah, like Cain and Abel, without prior instruction or narrative commentary offers offerings to God (Gen 8:20). God responds to Noah's offering and commits not to curse the ground again or strike down every living creature "for the inclination of the human heart is evil from youth" (Gen 8:21). Whereas the consequences of sacrifice in the first instance lead to Cain's embrace of evil and its

⁴⁴ Blenkinsopp, *Creation, Un-creation, Re-creation*, 141.

⁴⁵ Waltke, *Genesis*, 127-130; cf. Blenkinsopp, *Creation, Un-creation, Re-creation*, 141. Key words that are repeated include **אֶת־כָּל־בְּרִיָּה** Gen 1:2; 7:11; 8:2; **רִיחַ** Gen 1:2; 8:1; and the phrase "after every kind" (**לְכָל־בְּרִיָּה**) 10 times in Genesis 1 (see footnote above) and 7 times in Genesis 6-7: 6:20(x3); 7:14(x4). The next time this phrase is found is in Leviticus 11, where it occurs 9 times.

⁴⁶ Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis Part II: From Noah to Abraham Genesis VI 9 - XI 32* (trans. Israel Abrahams; Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1964), 113.

contagion upon the earth warranting the flood, Noah's offerings influence God's decision to refrain from further global destruction. At this early stage in the biblical narrative, sacrifice is charged with cosmic consequences – how humans have related to God *vis à vis* various material offerings have influenced the flow of history for good or ill. Noah's sacrifice is an initial, but essential, step in reversing Cain's murder, for in sacrifice rightly offered, it participates in God's work of preserving creation.

At the end of Genesis 8, God recognizes that the evil that originated with Cain and that spread throughout humankind has not been healed with the flood. God's first speech to Noah and his sons in Genesis 9:1-7 provides a remarkable restating of God's work on the sixth day of creation in Genesis 1:26-31 when God creates humanity.

Consider the corresponding sequence of ideas in these two texts:

Genesis 1:26-31	Genesis 9:1-7
(a) our [God's] image (v. 26)	
(b) dominion	
(a') image of God (v. 27)	
(c) blessing (v. 28)	(c) blessing (v. 1)
(d) be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth	(d) be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth
(b') subdue earth and have dominion over "the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth."	(b) fear and dread by "every animal of the earth, and on every bird of the air, on everything that creeps on the ground, and on all the fish of the sea; into your hand they are delivered" (v. 2)
(e) green plants for food (v. 29-30)	(e) animals for food: "Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you; and just as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything." (v. 3)
(f) it was very good (v. 31)	(f) blood prohibition against eating blood and shedding human blood (v. 4-6a)
	(a) image of God (v. 6b)
	(d') be fruitful, multiply

The beginning of chapter 9 largely follows the progression of ideas in Gen 1:28ff.: God is reaffirming God's commission to humans in this moment of re-creation after the flood. Given the similarities in these two texts, the differences are pronounced and of the

greatest consequence.⁴⁷ Rather than exercising dominion in ways that facilitate creation's flourishing through managing animals and the vegetative food supply, human activity toward animals will now be constituted by the threat of death as all animals are allowed for food. Verse 2 descriptively states that "into your hand they are given,"⁴⁸ suggestively reminding readers of the human propensity to "send forth his hand and take" elaborated by God in Gen 3:22. God's good ordering of creation celebrated in Genesis 1 has been compromised.

With God's postdiluvian recognition of humans' inclination toward evil, God adjusts God's expectation for humankind regarding relationships with other living creatures. However, the disjuncture of Genesis 1 and Genesis 9 at this point suggests that this is not a concession to be celebrated.⁴⁹ While Genesis 1:31 celebrates the goodness of creation that has culminated in humanity's commissioned relationship with the rest of the created order, Genesis 9 follows up God's allowance for meat-eating with a prohibition against the ingestion of blood. This is the first time blood has been mentioned since its initial, two-fold appearance in the account of Abel's murder in

⁴⁷ Cf. discussion by Michael A. Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 318-321.

⁴⁸ Fox's translation. Fox, *The Five Books of Moses*, 42.

⁴⁹ Blenkinsopp observes, "There remains nevertheless a deep and sad sense that this is not the way it was meant to be. . . . This is now a damaged world calling for damage control." Blenkinsopp, *Creation, Un-creation, Re-creation*, 146.

Genesis 4:10-11. At the corresponding moment of “very good” in these parallel texts, Genesis 9:4-6 provides a gloss on Cain when he eschews the good and kills his brother.⁵⁰ The command against eating blood in 9:4 recalls Genesis 4:11, when Cain is cursed from the ground, “which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand.” The text describes Cain’s killing of Abel as enabling a perverted form of eating. This linkage between murder and ingestion of blood in Genesis 4 supports the logical flow between the prohibition against eating blood in 9:4 and the restriction against human killing in verses 5-6.

This gloss on Cain is further suggested by the key vocabulary words of blood (דָּם), hand (יָד), and brother (אָח) in 9:5 when God demands satisfaction for the taking of human life: “And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it; and at the hand of every man, even at the hand of every man’s brother, will I require the life of a man.”⁵¹ Genesis 4:11 and 9:5 are the only verses in Pentateuch where these three words occur together.⁵² In his commentary on this verse, Cassuto observes that “whoever takes a human life is like Cain.”⁵³ Not only does this

⁵⁰ See the presence of “good” in 4:7.

⁵¹ JPS translation.

⁵² They do occur together in one other verse in the Old Testament: Judges 9:24.

⁵³ Cassuto, *Genesis Part II*, 127. Cf. Blenkinsopp’s observation of an echo to Genesis 4. Blenkinsopp, *Creation, Un-creation, Re-creation*, 147.

suggest that “homicide is fratricide” as Sarna notes, but it also speaks to the deep disorder Cain embodies.⁵⁴ Genesis 9:6 provides a rationale for the divine reckoning of capital punishment for manslaughter: “Whoever sheds the blood of a human, by a human shall that person’s blood be shed; for in his own image God made humankind.” God’s image is so valuable that humans are not to destroy it, either in another or in themselves through killing. Outside of Genesis 1:26-27, this is the only place in the Old Testament where image of God language occurs.⁵⁵ A statement about the *imago Dei* at the end of God’s speech of re-creation in Genesis 9 not only reinforces the text’s connection to Genesis 1, but it also highlights Cain’s perversion of God’s image by the shedding of his brother’s blood. Cain has previously been indicted as a failure of Adam in his refusal to “keep” his brother (and thereby the soil in his contamination of it). Now he is portrayed as one who has violated God’s image. In recommissioning humankind through a reworking of Genesis 1:26-31, Genesis 9:1-7 also addresses Cain’s disorder that continually threatens God’s creation through legislating against eating blood and murder. While the flood is a moment of re-creation, creation remains marred by bloodshed.

⁵⁴ Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 61.

⁵⁵ Image (אִמָּגוֹ) occurs three times in Gen 1:26-27. Genesis 5:1 declares that humankind is made in God’s likeness, and Gen 5:3 states that Adam begot Seth in his likeness and image.

In his commentary on Genesis 8:21, where God proclaims never to destroy the earth again “because of man, since the devisings of man’s mind are evil from his youth,”⁵⁶ Nahum Sarna notes that the phrase “from his youth” suggests that humanity’s inclination toward evil may be corrected by obedience to laws and posits that this corresponds with the blood prohibitions in chapter 9.⁵⁷ Sarna’s identification of the law as a means of human rehabilitation provides background for understanding God’s efforts at another new creation through the establishment of the people Israel. Levenson notes that just as Noah recapitulates Adam, so too does he prefigure Moses – both emerge from the chaos of the sea to be granted a covenant.⁵⁸ As I hope to display in the following pages, God’s formation of Israel through God’s wilderness teaching and the legislation at Sinai, culminating in the establishment of the cult, serves to restore Israel, and through Israel the rest of creation, to God’s very good order. In particular, God reforms Israel’s proclivity to take, and thus to shed blood – a habituation embodied in the figure of Cain.

⁵⁶ New JPS translation.

⁵⁷ Sarna, *Genesis*, 59.

⁵⁸ Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, 10-11, 76. More will be said about Noah and Moses parallels in the following section.

2.5 *The Exodus and Recreation: Exodus 1-15*

God's formation of the people Israel is a new act of re-creation. Exodus 1:7 echoes Genesis 1:28, 9:1, and 9:7 when it describes Israel's fecundity in Egypt: they "bore fruit, they swarmed, they became many, they grew mighty (in number) – exceedingly, yes, exceedingly; the land filled up with them."⁵⁹ Fretheim notes that through Israel's being fruitful, multiplying, and filling the earth, "*God's intentions in creation are being realized in this family; what is happening is in tune with God's creational purposes.*"⁶⁰ Sarna writes that the resonance with Genesis "suggests a conception of the community of Israel in Egypt as a microcosm, a miniature universe, self-contained and apart from the larger Egyptian society – the nucleus, spiritually speaking, of a new humanity."⁶¹ At the same time, God is fulfilling his promise to Abraham in Genesis 17:2-6 to make them "exceedingly, exceedingly many" and to cause them to "bear fruit exceedingly, exceedingly."⁶² Cassuto observes that seven expressions related to Israel's increase

⁵⁹ Fox's translation. Fox, *The Five Books of Moses*, 257.

⁶⁰ Fretheim, *Exodus*, 25 (italics original).

⁶¹ Nahum M. Sarna, *Exodus: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1991), 4.

⁶² Fox's translation. Fox, *The Five Books of Moses*, 71-72.

comprise this verse, suggesting perfection of God's intentions.⁶³ While the flood issues in a new creation, the fullness of its realization is dependent on God's work with Israel.

Like the state of the original creation, God's purposes with Israel are opposed by human action. Fretheim posits that Pharaoh's opposition to Israel is a reiteration of the fall and its consequences as Pharaoh "*counters God's life-giving work with death-dealing efforts.*"⁶⁴ Pharaoh considers the fruitfulness of Israel to be a threat to Egypt's national security, rather than as a means for cosmic blessing. As a result, Pharaoh proposes enslaving Israel in the service of constructing storage-cities for the empire (Exodus 1:11). Pharaoh's plan, devised out of his own sense of wisdom in Exod 1:10 – "Come, let us deal wisely with them" – reverses Joseph's wisdom in storing food for the seven years of famine for the purposes of saving life, particularly the lives of his family (Genesis 45:5-7).⁶⁵ Storage cities are now in the service of diminishing Israel's presence.

Pharaoh's plan harkens to another infamous building project in Genesis that runs counter to God's purposes. Pharaoh's statement, "Come let us deal wisely with them" (הַבְּנֵה נַתְחַכְמָה), contains the same grammatical construction that occurs three times in

⁶³ Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus* (trans. Israel Abrahams; Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1967), 9.

⁶⁴ Fretheim, *Exodus*, 27 (italics original).

⁶⁵ Notably, wisdom bookends Joseph's plan – Genesis 41:33, 39.

the story of the tower of Babel and appears nowhere else.⁶⁶ Both plans involve bricks: the word for brick, as either a noun (לבנה) or verb “to make brick” (לבן) appears twice in Gen 11:3 and seven times in the narrative about Israel’s enslavement to Pharaoh immediately in Exod 1:14 and again in 5:7, 8, 14, 16, 18, 19.⁶⁷ Thematically, both episodes follow a notable act of “re-creation” – the tower incident involves Noah’s descendants after the flood, and Pharaoh’s devisings are a reaction against Israel’s embodiment of God’s creative purposes – and both display the human tendency to attempt to live without limits toward the goal of amassing power and security. As the tower incident foreshadows, God will not allow Pharaoh’s enterprises to succeed. God has plans for a “priestly kingdom and a holy nation” (Exod 19:6), one constituted by the Tabernacle.

When Pharaoh’s building program backfires with Israel’s continued multiplication, Pharaoh pursues a regime of death, by directing first the Hebrew midwives (unsuccessfully) and then all his people to kill all the Hebrew baby boys (Exod 1:15-22). Pharaoh’s embrace of death recapitulates Cain’s: just as Cain kills his

⁶⁶ Gen 11:3: “Come, let us make bricks [לְבָנִים לְבָנָה וְהָרָה], and burn them thoroughly.”

Gen 11:4: “Come, let us build ourselves a city [עִיר] וְנִבְנֶה-לָנוּ, and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves; otherwise we shall be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.”

Gen 11:7: “Come, let us go down [לְבָנִים לְבָנָה וְהָרָה], and confuse their language there, so that they will not understand one another’s speech.”

⁶⁷ This root is relatively rare. It only occurs one other place in the Pentateuch: Exodus 24:10, where it denotes pavement. Throughout the rest of the Hebrew Bible it occurs only six times: Ezekiel 4:1; Isaiah 9:9, 65:3; Nahum 3:14; Jeremiah 43:9; 2 Samuel 12:31.

brother as a result of his displeasure over God's regard for Abel, so too does Pharaoh respond with death when faced with Israel's favored status as expressed in its fecundity. Pharaoh may be considered Cain, writ large, for Cain's proclivity to take is now institutionalized: Pharaoh takes bodies at will, whether for enslavement or death.⁶⁸ Moreover, Pharaoh's regime of oppression involves the denial of Sabbath rest. Davis notes that the first mention of Sabbath in the book of Exodus occurs from Pharaoh's lips when, in his first speech, he refuses to give Israel rest from their work.⁶⁹ According to Fretheim, Pharaoh is important "not simply as a historical figure, but as *a symbol for the anticreation forces of death* which take on the God of life."⁷⁰ Pharaoh's idolatrous dominion will wreak havoc on the natural order.

God's activity to restore Israel and through Israel, creation, against Pharaoh's onslaught is manifest in Moses' birth narrative. Like God's sevenfold affirmation that creation is good in Genesis 1, Moses' mother sees that he "is good" (Exod 2:2).⁷¹

⁶⁸ Waltke claims that the builders of the tower "are the spiritual heirs of the line of Cain" and points to multiple textual similarities to make this case. Waltke, *Genesis*, 177-178.

⁶⁹ Exodus 5:5: **וַיֹּאמֶר פַּרְעֹה הַיְרַבִּים עִתָּה עִם הָאָרֶץ וְהִשְׁבַּתֶּם אֹתָם מִסִּבְּלָתָם**
 Ellen F. Davis, "Slaves or Sabbath-Keepers? A Biblical Perspective on Human Work," *ATHR* 83, no. 1 (2001), 31.

⁷⁰ Fretheim, *Exodus*, 27 (italics original).

⁷¹ William H. C. Propp, *Exodus 1-18: A New Translation with Commentary* (AB 2; New York: Doubleday, 1999), 147; Fretheim, *Exodus*, 38.

Moreover, Moses' hides him in an "ark" (תִּבְרָה) in the Nile (Exod 2:3). This word is only used to describe Noah's ship and Moses' basket.⁷² Like Noah, God delivers Moses through the watery forces of un-creation for the purposes of creational renewal.⁷³ This divine action will be recapitulated in the plagues and the exodus.

Fretheim claims that through Pharaoh's life-limiting policies toward Israel, "Egypt is an embodiment of the forces of chaos, threatening a return of the entire cosmos to its precreation state."⁷⁴ Consequently, he argues that the plagues be understood as a distortion of the created order as a consequence of Pharaoh's anti-creational activities.⁷⁵ The plagues embody a form of "hypernatrality" whereby creation no longer abides by its intended order – "water is no longer water; light and darkness are no longer separated; diseases of people and animals run amok; insects and amphibians swarm out of control."⁷⁶ Because of Pharaoh's corrupt moral order, God's judgment via the cosmic realm renders the plagues as "*a kind of flood story* in one corner of the world, that corner where God's creation purposes were beginning to be

⁷² Notably, this word occurs 26 times in 6-9 and twice in Exodus 2.

⁷³ Fretheim, *Exodus*, 38. Sarna notes that the echoes of both Exod 2:2 and 2:3 with creation and with Noah suggest that Moses' birth "is intended to be understood as the dawn of a new creative era." Sarna, *Exodus*, 9.

⁷⁴ Fretheim, *Exodus*, 106.

⁷⁵ Fretheim, *Exodus*, 107.

⁷⁶ Fretheim, *Exodus*, 109.

realized.”⁷⁷ As a result of his regime of oppression, Pharaoh has desecrated the created order as fulfilled in the seventh day of creation: Pharaoh’s dominion has inaugurated a perversion of space, time, and relations among living things. Like Cain’s inauguration of a history violence leading to God’s undoing of creation in the flood, Pharaoh’s unleashing of chaos is met with an analogous set of divine responses. Both stories attest that God does not allow unlimited disordering of God’s creation.

Just as Noah preserves a microcosm of creation through the deluge for the purposes of God’s re-creation, so too does Moses shepherd Israel through God’s mighty works of upending Pharaoh’s reign of death and oppression. Biblical scholars note the resonances between Israel’s crossing of the sea and cosmogonic combat myths common to the ancient Near East.⁷⁸ In his commentary on Exodus, William Propp notes that this association suggests that “creation is complete only when God’s reign on earth commences at Sinai. In effect, Exodus 14-15 and the entire Torah are a Creation Myth.”⁷⁹ Through God’s destruction of Pharaoh and his forces in the sea, God continues his work of new creation in the form of God’s people Israel. Much of the remainder of the book of

⁷⁷ Fretheim, *Exodus*, 110 (emphasis mine).

⁷⁸ Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, 76; Propp, *Exodus 1-18*, 557-561; Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*, 356-7; Carol L. Meyers, *Exodus* (New Cambridge Bible Commentary; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 119.

⁷⁹ Propp, *Exodus 1-18*, 561.

Exodus, in particular Exodus 16, Exodus 25-31 and Exodus 35-40, attends to God's work of re-establishing creation. This, in turn, forms the backdrop for the restored creation that is Israel in its cultic life as displayed in Leviticus.

2.6 Manna and Sabbath: Exodus 16

The new creation that God inaugurates with Israel begins to take shape with the lesson on manna in Exodus 16. This chapter contains Israel's first major narrative after the exodus from Egypt, and it provides a rich gloss on Israel's vocation of dominion as made in the image of God as presented in Genesis 1. In this episode Israel learns restraint against profligate taking in the midst of entering into God's restoration of time through the Sabbath. These early lessons will be reiterated later in Exodus in the account of the construction of the Tabernacle.

Encamped in the wilderness, the Israelites grumble against Aaron and Moses and say, "Would that we had died by the hand of YHWH in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, when we ate bread till (we were) satisfied! For you have brought us into this wilderness to bring death to this whole assembly by starvation!" (Exod 1:3).⁸⁰ Israel's articulation of this complaint reveals a stunning perspective. Israel does not perceive God as a God of life, as one who has delivered them into a life of freedom from slavery. Rather, Israel presents God as an agent of death who is intent to destroy Israel.

⁸⁰ Fox's translation. Fox, *The Five Books of Moses*, 346.

Moreover, Israel shockingly remembers Egypt as a land of abundance. This complaint lacks any memory about the crushing labor conditions or genocidal policies under Pharaoh. Unlike the impending manna, food in Egypt did not miraculously appear for Hebrew slaves, a truth strangely elided in this account. The presence of food in Egypt leads Israel to prefer slavery over God's deliverance. Israel fears death because of inadequate material resources more than death by God's hand, the power of which Israel has witnessed in the plagues and the rescue by sea. This fear of privation animates Israel's rebellion and reveals a deep challenge to Israel's relationship with God: to what extent can Israel trust God rather than human industry to provide the resources necessary for life? Can Israel resist wrongful taking? This first lesson for Israel directly addresses God's re-creative purposes for Israel, for it challenges Israel to eschew Egypt's fear-based practices of hoarding, oppression, and death. It seeks to rectify humanity's proclivity to take manifest in the garden.

God's response is likewise striking. God tells Moses:

I will make rain down upon you bread from the heavens, the people shall go out and glean each day's amount in its day, in order that I may test them, whether they will walk according to my Instruction or not. But it shall be on the sixth day: when they prepare what they have brought in, it shall be a double-portion compared to what they glean day after day. (16:4-5)⁸¹

⁸¹ Fox's translation. Fox, *The Five Books of Moses*, 346.

These two verses stress Israel's work: for six days, Israel is to glean God's provision of bread. Some form of the word *day* appears five times in this brief passage,⁸² thereby emphasizing the daily nature of Israel's vocation. Israel's work is thus of a limited scope: a day of gleaning is sufficient for Israel's sustenance. In verses 16-21, the text will emphasize that a day's work is limited not only by time, but also by need. Each Israelite is to discern how much would satisfy his household and is not to gather any excess. This discipline of limitation runs counter to Egypt's economy of storehouses, an economy which knows no restraint of labor, resources, or time. Israel is learning how to take rightly.

Israel's task is framed as a direct response to God's creative activity. The mention of the sixth day in combination with the repetition of "day" establishes a link to the creation account in Genesis 1. Just as God creates the world in six days, so too does God continue the work of preserving creation in providing for Israel's needs. For six days, God rains bread and Israel gleans. This episode presents a powerful depiction of what God intends for human work, and it is a vocation completely counter to Pharaoh's never-ending labor for the purposes of Israel's demise. This work in Exodus 16 harkens to God's activity in Genesis 1. Here, the text describes Israel's tasks for six days of the week: Israel is to trust God's provisions and gather what God provides. Integral to

⁸² This is true for the Hebrew text, as well.

Israel's work is the ability to gather the right amount. In this way, Israel is to make distinctions and differentiations, a mode of engagement similar to God's work of creation, and suggestive of humanity's task of dominion as a mode of being created in the image of God.

Six days are stressed in order to highlight the seventh day as a day of rest. In verse 23, Moses declares that the seventh day is to be a Sabbath. This is the first time in the biblical text that Sabbath appears as a noun, and it appears a total of four times in verses 23-29, thereby emphasizing the call to rest on the seventh day. This lesson in time-keeping is a means by which God rehabilitates God's image in Israel. Mark Smith notes that "in imitating the divine creator of this order [of rest and work], the human person practicing this routine of rest fulfills the calling of being made in the image of the divine."⁸³ Allen Ross understands the institution of Sabbath to coincide with Israel's, and creation's, redemption.⁸⁴

The first introduction of Sabbath in verse 23 includes a unique formulation: **שְׁבֻתָּהּ** - **שְׁבֻתוֹן שְׁבֻת**. Whereas most instances of Sabbath are indicated by the single word **שַׁבַּת**, there are six occasions in the Bible where the Sabbath is described as **שְׁבֻת שְׁבֻתוֹן**:

⁸³ Mark S. Smith, *The Priestly Vision of Genesis 1* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 110.

⁸⁴ He writes that it was "impossible for God to impose the Sabbath on fallen humankind, because the thing that it memorialized – divine rest in a perfect creation – had been destroyed. God began the work of redemption toward a new creation that once again was at rest. The idea of Sabbath, therefore, disappeared from Scripture until it was reinstated at Mount Sinai for the people whom God redeemed." Ross, *Holiness to the Lord*, 397-398. I part ways with Ross in seeing this redemption begin with the lessons of manna.

Exodus 31:15; 35:2; Leviticus 16:31; 23:3, 32; 25:4.⁸⁵ This first mention of the Sabbath is highly suggestive. Containing both terms **שבת** and **שבתון**, Exodus 16:23 introduces the Sabbath in its most powerful terms and thereby connects it to the other six instances, revealing a seven-fold occurrence of this expression within the Pentateuch.⁸⁶ Given the prominence of the number seven as a structuring principle by the Priestly writer,⁸⁷ the presence of **שבת שבתון** in Exodus 16 links this narrative to other key instances of Sabbath observance that have profound implications for the ordering of Israel's life in accord with God's creational purposes.

Exodus 16 makes clear that Israel is called to imitate God on the Sabbath. Like God's rest on the seventh day of creation, Israel's activity on the Sabbath is to be one of cessation: they are not to gather food. The text indicates that God also rests on the Sabbath, for on this day God does not provide manna. God's double provision on the sixth day gives Israel the ability to rest in peace, confident that God's work will sustain them without additional effort on their part. Such trust is not easily gained, for the temptation to secure and control material resources is strong: some of the people

⁸⁵ The noun Sabbath occurs approximately 50 times in the Pentateuch.

⁸⁶ These seven verses are the only ones in the Old Testament that contain these two terms.

⁸⁷ Wilfried Warning, *Literary Artistry in Leviticus* (*BibInt* 35; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 27-29; Frank H. Gorman, *Divine Presence and Community: A Commentary on the Book of Leviticus* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1997), 8.

attempt to glean on the seventh day, despite the double portion on the sixth (16:27). God's command to keep the Sabbath in Exodus 16 is the first commandment Israel receives after the Exodus.⁸⁸ This auspicious beginning to Israel's new life indicates the role that trusting in God's sufficiency will play in Israel's freedom. Fear of scarcity and the temptation to be like Pharaoh will continually need to be unlearned. God is instructing Israel in a new economics, and the lesson of manna is one the Israelites practice for the entirety of their forty-year sojourn in the wilderness.

Simultaneously, God reveals to Israel God's presence in the giving of daily bread. In verse 7, Moses and Aaron tell the Israelites that they will see the glory of YHWH (כבוד יהוה) so that they will know that the miraculous provision of food comes from God. This promise is fulfilled in verse 10 when the Israelites face the wilderness and "the Glory of YHWH appeared in the cloud." God's divine self-revelation not only authenticates God's role in providing food for Israel, but it also suggests a growing closeness between God and Israel. Because God is near, God communicates that God's providence can be trusted: God is close enough to Israel to know Israel's needs. This is the first time in Scripture that Israel sees God's glory, but it looks forward to three important moments in Israel's history in which the presence of God's glory affirms or

⁸⁸ This observation is noted by Raphael Jospe, "Sabbath, Sabbatical and Jubilee: Jewish Ethical Perspectives," in *The Jubilee Challenge: Utopia or Possibility? Jewish and Christian Insights* (ed. Hans Ucko; Geneva: WCC Publications, 1997), 80.

establishes God's presence with Israel: the giving of the law and the instructions for the Tabernacle at Mount Sinai in Exodus 24:16-17, the completion of the Tabernacle in Exodus 40:34-35, and the institution of the ritual cult in Leviticus 9:23. In each of these instances, God's fearsome nearness facilitates Israel's ability to follow God's commands to practice limitation and live in trusting dependence on God.

2.7 Tabernacle and Cosmos: Exodus 25-31 and 35-40

The account of Israel's construction of the Tabernacle in Exodus 25-31 and 35-40 builds upon the theological claims in the prior Pentateuchal narratives examined here, that God is renewing the created order through the people Israel. Through God's restoration of space and time in the Tabernacle, God is preparing for a complete rehabilitation of the cosmos – space, time, and relations between creatures – through the lives of Israelites in the cult, culminating in the Day of Atonement. As will be displayed below, the Tabernacle is figured as creation renewed: Leviticus will give us an account of restored life through humanity's redemption.

God's commissioning of the Tabernacle's construction occurs within the context of the covenant at Sinai in which God calls Israel to be "a priestly kingdom and a holy nation" (Exod 19:6). Balentine writes:

God's inauguration of covenant – just like God's creation of the world – finds its ultimate goal in Israel's empowerment to join God in a relationship of creaturely partnership. In the cosmic design of creation, God commissioned humankind to image God as both royal stewards and humble servants. In the liturgy of covenant-making, God concretizes the primordial commission by summoning

Israel to a vocation of imagining God on earth as a “priestly kingdom and a holy nation” (v. 6). In other words, the Torah understands that covenant-keeping, from Israel’s perspective, requires a solemn partnership commitment that places Israel in harmony with the liturgy of creation.⁸⁹

According to Balentine, the *telos* of Israel’s election is a fulfillment of God’s original design for creation. Middleton and Walsh echo that Israel’s election “is a postfall rearticulation of *imago Dei*, the purpose of which is to further plot resolution so that God’s purposes from the beginning might be realized.”⁹⁰ Israel’s sacrificial life embedded in the new creation of the Tabernacle functions as a primary means by which Israel is able to embody their vocation as a priestly and holy people.

Davis observes that the detailed instructions and construction report for building the Tabernacle encompass thirteen chapters at the end of Exodus, occupying the same amount of space as the story of Israel’s bondage in Egypt in the book’s beginning.⁹¹ She argues that this balanced treatment contrasts Pharaoh’s perverted labor with God’s holy work for Israel.⁹² As she notes in another article, “the Tabernacle is not a storehouse; it is erected in the wilderness as the product of wise and holy work, a visible instantiation of

⁸⁹ Balentine, *The Torah’s Vision of Worship*, 123.

⁹⁰ J. Richard Middleton and Brian J. Walsh, *Truth is Stranger Than It Used to Be: Biblical Faith in a Postmodern Age* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Intervarsity Press, 1995), 129.

⁹¹ Davis, “Slaves or Sabbath Keepers,” 30.

⁹² Davis, “Slaves or Sabbath Keepers,” 30-31.

the economy of God.”⁹³ In this divine building project, God continues and extends the lessons begun with giving Israel her daily bread. If the manna instruction introduced Israel to limited work, holy time, and unlearning acquisitiveness, the Tabernacle construction will incorporate Israel’s reformed work into the instantiation of holy space.

Many scholars have identified a strong correspondence between the creation account in Genesis 1 and the building of the Tabernacle.⁹⁴ Just as creation proceeds over the course of seven days, scholars have identified seven speeches through which God instructs Moses about the Tabernacle’s construction (25:1; 30:11, 17, 22, 34; 31:1, 12). The giving of these instructions occurs at an important moment in the revelation at Sinai. In chapters 20-23, God reveals the Decalogue and the code of the covenant to Moses, and Moses ratifies the covenant with all of Israel in chapter 24. At this point, Moses is invited to approach God’s presence at the top of the mountain to receive a written version of the Decalogue (24:12), and after six days of being near the glory of the Lord, Moses is summoned into the midst of God’s glory on the seventh day, from which he is given the divine instructions for the Tabernacle over the course of forty days (24:12-18). Like the giving of manna, the establishment of the Tabernacle is a divine means of

⁹³ Ellen Davis, “The Tabernacle is not a Storehouse: Building Sacred Space,” *STRev* 49, no. 3 (2006): 315.

⁹⁴ See Joseph Blenkinsopp, “The Structure of P,” *CBQ* 38 (1976): 275-83; Jon Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, 82-86; Frank Gorman, *The Ideology of Ritual: Space, Time and Status in the Priestly Theology* (JSOTSup 91; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 47-48; Michael Fishbane, *Text and Texture: Close Readings of Selected Biblical Texts* (New York: Schocken Books, 1979), 11-13; Balentine, *The Torah’s Vision of Worship*, 138-40.

sustenance for Israel, for the cult will enable Israel to live faithfully in God's presence. While God's glory is manifest on both occasions, the intimacy revealed when Moses enters God's glory on Mt. Sinai foreshadows the nearness of God's glory in God's dwelling in the Tabernacle. That the instruction for the Tabernacle begins on the seventh day suggests that the Tabernacle is an extension of creation. Its inauguration on the seventh day is significant, for the *telos* of the Tabernacle is to redeem humankind through the restoration of the *imago Dei*, thereby enabling Israel to enter into God's Sabbath that is creation's fulfillment.

Other connections between the Tabernacle and creation abound. Both before and after the golden calf episode, the text states that Bezalel, the chief architect of the Tabernacle, has been filled with the "spirit of God" (רוח אלהים) the same spirit that hovers over the waters in Genesis 1:2 (Exod 31:3; 35:31).⁹⁵ The use of this phrase suggests that God is present and operative in both creation and the building of the Tabernacle, though God chooses to work through human agents in the Tabernacle's construction. Similarly, details about the Sabbath appear in significant ways and places in this narrative. Between Exodus 16 and Exodus 31, the Sabbath appears explicitly only

⁹⁵ This phrase occurs only once between Gen 1:2 and Exodus 31:3 (in Gen 41:38, cf. Gen 8:1). Levenson argues that its relative absence suggests the "homology of world building and temple building." Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, 84.

in the Decalogue in 20:8-11.⁹⁶ Unlike the version in Deuteronomy 5:12-15, the Sabbath commandment in Exodus is rooted in God's rest on the seventh day of creation. Israel is to imitate God in its work and rest. While the Sabbath commandment stands out as the most prominent of the Decalogue,⁹⁷ the attention given to the Sabbath in the account of the Tabernacle reveals the important relationship between sacred time and sacred space. In Exodus 31, God gives his seventh and final set of instructions to Moses about the construction of the Tabernacle, informing Moses that he is to command Israel to keep God's Sabbaths (v. 12). This concluding direction comes right after God reveals God's appointment of Bezalel, Oholiab, and "wise-hearted" others who will do the work of the Tabernacle's construction. Given this context, the call for Israel to keep the Sabbath indicates the priority of this "task." Not only is Israel's Sabbath observance linked once again God's resting on the seventh day of creation (31:17), but the Sabbath is also described as *שבת שבתון*, an absolute Sabbath, an observance so holy and important to God that those who profane it are to die (31:14-16). Just as creation culminates with the Sabbath in Genesis 2:3, so too do God's instructions about the Tabernacle. This passage effectively closes the account of Moses' forty-day encounter with God, and the next chapter begins with the golden calf debacle.

⁹⁶ It appears indirectly in 23:10-12. The Sabbath is clearly in mind in verse 12, even though the term itself does not appear.

⁹⁷ See Davis, "Slaves or Sabbath-Keepers," 32.

Significantly, once the task of constructing the Tabernacle resumes in chapter 35, Moses first commands Israel to keep the Sabbath. The last command given to Moses regarding the Tabernacle is the first one Moses imparts to the Israelites. Similarly, this Sabbath is also an absolute Sabbath, and those who do work on it are to be put to death (35:2-3). Of the commandments found in the Decalogue, the Sabbath command alone closes God's instructions regarding the Tabernacle and opens Moses' direction of its construction. That the Sabbath is emphasized and not any of the other commandments is instructive: one might expect to see a reiteration of the first and second commandments – for Israel to have no other gods and not to construct and worship images – in God's instructions about sanctuary building. Instead, the prominence of the Sabbath commandment embeds the task of Tabernacle construction in the work of creation and highlights God's work of rehabilitating the *imago Dei*.

Most compellingly, several scholars note the linguistic similarities between the creation of the world and the completion of the construction of the Tabernacle:⁹⁸

⁹⁸ Blenkinsopp, "The Structure of P," 280; Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, 85-6, Balentine, *The Torah's Vision of Worship*, 139. The quoted parallel texts are from Balentine.

Creation of the world	Construction of the Tabernacle
And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good (Gen 1:31)	And Moses saw all the work and behold, they had done it (Exod 39:43)
Thus the heavens and the earth were finished (Gen 2:1)	Thus all the work of the Tabernacle of the tent of the meeting was finished (Exod 39:32)
On the seventh day God finished his work which he had done (Gen 2:2)	So Moses finished the work (Exod 40:33)
So God blessed the seventh day (Gen 2:3)	And Moses blessed them (Exod 39:43)

Balentine further observes that Moses completes the set-up of the Tabernacle in 40:17-33 through the fulfillment of seven tasks.⁹⁹ Just as creation comes into being in obedience to God's speech, so too does Israel comply perfectly with God's seven speeches of instruction on the Tabernacle's construction.

Echoes of creation abound at every stage of the Tabernacle's description. Even at the very end of Exodus when the Tabernacle is finally established, the text stresses that Tabernacle is erected on the first day of the first month of the year (Exodus 40:2, 17), suggesting a link to both the beginning of the world and the recreation of the world after

⁹⁹ Balentine, *The Torah's Vision of Worship*, 64.

the flood.¹⁰⁰ These parallels and symbolic similarities indicate a profound resonance between the work of creation and the building of the Tabernacle. Not surprisingly, the rabbis see the Tabernacle as a microcosm of creation.¹⁰¹ Either as a crowning of creation

¹⁰⁰ Fishbane, *Text and Texture*, 12; Fretheim, *Exodus*, 269.

¹⁰¹ Arthur Green, "Sabbath as Temple: Some Thoughts on Space and Time in Judaism," in *Go and Study: Essays in Honor of Alfred Jospe* (ed. R. Jospe and S. Fishman; Washington: B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundations, 1980), 296. Levenson also notes an understanding of the Temple as microcosm was common throughout the ancient Near East. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, 86, 90. Both Green and Levenson include selections of similar midrash of the tabernacle as a microcosm. Consider the one cited in Green (295-7), taken from *Midrash Tanhuma*:

"These are the accounts of the tabernacle" (Exod 38:21) ... Said Rabbi Jacob ben Assi: Why does Scripture say "Lord, I love the habitation of Your House and the place where Your Glory dwells" (Ps. 26:8)? Because [God's house] is parallel to the Creation of the world. How is this?

Of the first day it is written: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." It is also written "He stretched forth the heavens like a curtain." (Ps. 104:2). And what is written regarding the tabernacle? "You shall make curtains of goatskins" (Exod 26:7).

On the second day: "Let there be a firmament," and separation is mentioned, as it says: "Let it separate waters from waters." And of the tabernacle: "And the veil shall separate for you between the holy and holy of holies" (Exod 26:33).

On the third day water is mentioned: "Let the waters be gathered." And in the tabernacle: "You shall make a brass basin with a brass base ... and place water there" (Exod 30-18).

On the fourth day He created the lights, as it says: "Let there be luminaries in the heavenly firmament." And in the tabernacle: "You shall make a gold candelabrum" (Exod 25:31).

On the fifth day He created the birds: "Let the waters swarm with every living thing and let birds fly." Parallel to them in the tabernacles are sacrifices of lambs and birds. [Alternative reading: "And in the tabernacle: 'The cherubim spread their wings upward' (Exod 25:20)."]

On the sixth day man was created, as it says: "He created man in His image. He created him through the glory. Man (Adam) in the tabernacle is the high priest, anointed to serve and minister before the Lord.

On the seventh day: "Heaven and earth were completed." And in the tabernacle: "All the work was completed" (Exod 39:32). Of creation: "And God blessed [the seventh day]," and of the tabernacle: "And Moses blessed them" (Exod 39:43). Of Creation: "God completed," and of the

or as a means of re-creation, the Tabernacle exists as divinely instituted space whereby God will dwell with Israel: indeed, the glory of the Lord fills the Tabernacle upon its completion (40:34, 35). Moreover, this re-creative moment speaks to Israel's budding transformation, as well: as a result of her complete obedience to God's second building project, Israel aligns herself with the ordered elements of the first creation that God declares very good. Space, time, and humanity are entering into a new phase.

God's giving of God's presence in Israel's Tabernacle signifies an amazing development in God's relationship with Israel: not since humanity's habitation of the garden has such nearness with God been possible. Like Adam and Eve who experienced God walking among them, Israel now has the opportunity to live radically near God's presence once again. In the Tabernacle, God is both close and accessible. Terence Fretheim goes so far as to state that the Tabernacle "may thus be said to be a kind of *material 'body' for God.*"¹⁰² God's dwelling in the Tabernacle, like humanity's existence in the garden, is contingent upon Israel's honoring of God's prescribed way of life. In this way, one sees the fullness of Israel's freedom from slavery: Israel has been

tabernacle: "On the day when Moses completed" (Num. 7:1). Of Creation: "And He made it holy," and of the tabernacle: "He anointed it and made it holy" (ibid).

¹⁰² Fretheim, *Exodus*, 315. Fretheim is careful to state that "*the tabernacle does not collapse [the divine] presence into immanence*" (italics original).

given an opportunity for a relationship with God restored to that intended in creation. This new life will be characterized by the practice of Sabbath and its attendant disciplines.

Unlike the Genesis account of creation that witnesses God's cessation, the conclusion of the description of the construction of the Tabernacle does not attest that Moses rests. This absence is noticeable, not because of an implication that Sabbath observance is unimportant, but rather because it highlights the role Sabbath has played throughout the building project. Resting every seventh day is an integral task in the Tabernacle's assembly: this most sacred work is not so important that the Sabbath is not honored.

God's reformation of humanity through Sabbath-keeping begins in Exodus 16 and continues in the building of the Tabernacle. Just as God's provision of manna allows for Israel to do its work of gleaning, so too does the work of the Tabernacle presuppose a sufficiency of resources. God's initial instructions for Moses is to collect precious building materials "from all those whose hearts prompt them to give" (25:1-8). The result of this collection is stunning: the craftsmen of the Tabernacle complain that they are inundated with the people's offerings, and Moses commands an end to the people's generosity (36:3-7). As Davis observes, the work of the Tabernacle, like the lesson of manna and *unlike* Pharaoh's regime of destructive unceasing labor, involves the wise

assessment of sufficiency.¹⁰³ Those doing the work apprehend when they have enough: “So the people were restrained from bringing; for what they had already brought was more than enough to do all the work” (36:6b-7). The people’s work is thus presented as one of simple response: the people already possess all the resources necessary for the Tabernacle. The people give freely and generously, acting in a way seemingly in imitation of God’s giving of manna. While God creates the manna *ex nihilo*, the narrative of Exodus suggests that Israel’s wealth originates with God’s deliverance of Israel from Egypt.¹⁰⁴ In this way, Israel returns to God what God first provides, both in material goods and time. God’s work through Israel in renewing creation through the construction of holy space simultaneously rehabilitates Israel as Israel embodies a proper form of dominion through its use of goods and observance of time in the Sabbath. This disciplined use God’s precious provisions not only is the foundational work that builds the Tabernacle; it also will undergird the practices of the Tabernacle outlined in the sacrificial system of Leviticus.

¹⁰³ Davis, “The Tabernacle is not a Storehouse,” 314-5.

¹⁰⁴ See Exodus 3:21-22; 11:2-3; 12:35-36.

2.8 Conclusion

Between Genesis 1 and Exodus 40, we have seen the creation of God's good order and various attempts by God to restore the disorder caused by humankind. The flood is unsuccessful at rehabilitating humanity's proclivities toward taking and bloodshed as inaugurated by Eve, Adam, and Cain, and thereby reinstating the primeval goodness of the garden. Nevertheless, the construction of the Tabernacle as creation anew, followed by God's filling of this sacred space with God's glory, suggests a new era in this history of relations between God and creation. Through the formation of the people Israel via their indoctrination into sacred time and space through the lessons of Sabbath, manna, and Tabernacle-building, God is refurbishing humanity to exercise dominion properly relative to other creatures and thus to embody the Image in which humans are made. The lessons of manna and Tabernacle prepare Israel for their ongoing life with God in the cult.

As I will argue in the next chapter, the first seventeen chapters of Leviticus, involving instructions for the various sacrifices that comprise the Tabernacle's life, along with the purity legislation that makes this life possible, function to train Israel in holiness through its regular regime of offering and blood manipulation. These practices enable atonement or reconciliation with God because they enact a righting of the wrongs caused by taking and bloodshed characterized by the early chapters of Genesis. As a result, at the heart of the Pentateuch, we are given a vision of creation completely

restored, humanity redeemed, and Sabbath fully observed in the climax of Leviticus, the Day of Atonement. This restoration enables a return to God's good order where God is able to abide and walk with humans once again.

3 Cult, Creation, and Sabbath: Redeemed Life in Leviticus

If we believed that the existence of the world is rooted in mystery and in sanctity, then we would have a different economy. It would still be an economy of use, necessarily, but it would be an economy also of return. The economy would have to accommodate the need to be worthy of the gifts we receive and use, and this would involve a return of propitiation, praise, gratitude, responsibility, good use, good care, and a proper regard for future generations. What is most conspicuously absent from the industrial economy and industrial culture is the idea of return. Industrial humans relate themselves to the world and its creatures by fairly direct acts of violence. Mostly we take without asking, use without respect or gratitude, and give nothing in return. Our economy's most voluminous product is waste...

–Wendell Berry¹

3.1 *Introduction*

In chapter one, I make the case that environmental discourse helps us to see that humans are engaged in practices of sacrifice that currently harm the created order. Environmentalists contest the use of this term within activism, citing sacrifice's negative connotations and claiming that American consumers are unwilling to sacrifice aspects of their lifestyles for the common good. This negative framing of sacrifice as a type of destruction resonates with some Christian understandings whereby sacrifice is configured in penal terms, bound to interpretations of Jesus' death as a form of punishment. Within these formulations, Christ's sacrifice is his death. Sacrifice

¹ Berry, "The Agrarian Standard," 146-7.

understood in this way seems to have very little to do with human use and consumption of creation's gifts and offers few resources for Christian discipleship. A consideration of God's institution of sacrifice as a part of salvation history affords a fuller appreciation of the relationship between sacrifice and redemption. Seen against the backdrop of God's work of creation and re-creation as displayed in chapter two, the sacrificial system of Leviticus is God's penultimate way of making all things new. The fullness of God's restoration will be explored in chapter four.

Chapter two displays God's intentions for creation, humanity's violation of God's ordering, and God's initial efforts toward restoration in Genesis - Exodus. Creation's wholeness is manifest in the vision of the seventh day of the week, the Sabbath. On this day, creation exists in perfect order and completeness, and humans have been made in God's image, commissioned to oversee and maintain the divisions and distinctions for the flourishing of all. It is all very good. Unfortunately, this good order is ruptured by Eve's grasping of the forbidden fruit, inaugurating a history of wanton, unlimited taking, seen most immediately in Cain's killing of his brother. Though God attempts to start anew with Noah and the flood, God recognizes that the cleansing deluge is not enough to reform humanity's inclination toward evil. Cain's bloodshed still mars creation, and though God provides legislation against murder and eating blood, humanity has not been fundamentally rehabilitated, as the life-denying practices of Pharaoh dramatically attest.

God's restorative work continues in the people Israel, whom he instructs in holy work and holy time, through the gathering of manna and the construction of the Tabernacle. At the end of the book of Exodus, time and space have been healed through the observance of the Sabbath and the completion of the sanctuary. When the priests are ordained and the Tabernacle is finally inaugurated in Leviticus 8-9, the glory of the Lord appears to all the people (Lev 9:23): not since the garden have things been this good. God now dwells with God's people.

Leviticus 16 recapitulates this goodness in the ritual of the Day of Atonement, whereby Israel and the Tabernacle are returned to this original pristine state. The full restoration of Israel and creation that Leviticus 16 describes, a day deemed a complete Sabbath, *שבת שבתון*, is arguably the highpoint of Torah. The work of Leviticus, specifically the sacrificial system portrayed in Leviticus 1-7 and the purity legislation of 11-15, enables the healing of humanity in such a way that humans are re-ordered to assume their rightful place in creation as presented in Genesis 1. Redemption through sacrificial practices and their formative effects on Israel makes possible the Jubilee described in Leviticus 25.

This rough narrative outline of Genesis – Leviticus establishes the trajectory of God's re-creative work in the formation of Israel and God's abiding with humankind once again, this time from the Tabernacle. The ritual and legal prescriptions of Leviticus nestled within this narrative of redemption display the constitutive work of the people

Israel, articulating the shape and character of redeemed life in ways resonant with God's creative purposes found in the early chapters of Genesis. Like the six days of creation and the six days of gleaning manna, the six forms of sacrificial ritual in Leviticus 1-7 form the basis of holy living for Israel.

At the same time, their repeated, habitual, practice forms Israel to be holy in three specific and related ways: 1) through sacrifice, Israel becomes a people constituted by offering and drawing near to God, rather than by selfishly taking God's gifts; 2) through sacrifice and the related purity legislation, Israel is taught to see and make amends for sin and death, thereby enabling wholeness for the individual and the community; 3) through the manipulation of blood as a part of sacrificial practice, Israel is taught to value blood and thus life as belonging to God. By returning blood to God's presence in the Tabernacle, Israel is symbolically healing the rupture that occurred with Cain's bloodshed. Instead of Abel's blood crying out from the ground as a result of rebellious, disordered relations, the blood of sacrifice brought near God's presence enacts a right ordering of humanity's engagement with life.

3.2 Toward a Theological Reading of Leviticus

3.2.1 Sacrifice, Blood, and Sabbath

Recent interpretations of the prescriptions of Leviticus have been greatly influenced by the work of Mary Douglas. In her seminal 1966 text *Purity and Danger*, she provides an analysis of the dietary laws of Leviticus 11, arguing that they are best

understood as a part of a symbolic system based upon an appreciation of God's holiness. Using key texts from Leviticus and Deuteronomy, she contends that holiness is related to wholeness and completeness, as represented both by unblemished bodies and by adherence to classes of creation.² According to this logic, the dietary rules not only reflect God's holiness but also facilitate Israel's holiness through their consumption of only those animals that conform to the classification system of Genesis 1 based on their style of locomotion.³ Her anthropological method of interpreting rituals through a community's values has shaped much of the succeeding scholarship on Leviticus.

Jacob Milgrom, a leading scholar on Leviticus and author of the nearly 3000-page Anchor Bible Commentary on Leviticus, disagrees with many of the specifics of Mary Douglas's conclusions about the dietary system of Leviticus 11, but he shares her approach in considering the purity legislation as a symbolic system in his interpretation of this material.⁴ He asserts that there is a rationale that governs the impurity laws in Leviticus 11-15, and that the sources of impurity listed there – carcasses, scale disease, and genital discharges – represent death.⁵ He holds impurity and holiness to be antonyms and concludes that the association of impurity with death leads to an

² Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 62-67.

³ Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 69-71.

⁴ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 719-736.

⁵ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 46.

understanding of holiness as life. The purpose of the impurity system is to remind “Israel of the divine imperative to reject death and choose life.”⁶

Blood plays a key role in Milgrom’s symbol system. He draws upon the identification of blood with life in Leviticus 17:10-14 and Genesis 9:4 to argue that its loss in a menstruating or postpartum woman is a sign of death, while the use of blood in purification offerings functions to cleanse impurities.⁷ The signification of blood is therefore dependent on how blood is produced. Howard Eilberg-Schwartz observes the role *control* plays in the release of blood and how this affects the status of blood: sacrifice is a highly controlled form of bloodshed while genital discharges lack order or control.⁸ Disorderly flows of genital blood and discharges are contaminating, rendering the individual experiencing the discharge and those who touch him or her impure and unfit for God’s presence in the Tabernacle. Sacrificial blood, in contrast, is the very substance that cleanses impurity and renders Israel and the Tabernacle capable of hosting God as a result of the rituals of the Day of Atonement outlined in Leviticus 16.

Eilberg-Schwartz briefly develops the idea that the controlled bloodshed of sacrifice remedies the contamination resulting from disordered discharge through its

⁶ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 47.

⁷ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 46.

⁸ Howard Eilberg-Schwartz, *The Savage in Judaism: An Anthropology of Israelite Religion and Ancient Judaism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 188.

symbolic reversal.⁹ Instead of “deathly” blood flowing uncontrollably from the body and contaminating the Tabernacle because of the impurity it generates, sacrificial blood, containing life, is carefully collected and applied to specific parts of the Tabernacle’s features in order to remove the impurity. Blood is reordered in this process. What in one situation is “life” lost through leakage for no apparently good end, is, in sacrifice, life captured and returned to the source of all life, God, for the purposes of overcoming death.¹⁰ Rightly ordered blood – blood brought to God in the sanctuary through sacrifice – maintains God’s presence with Israel and enables Israel’s flourishing.

This observation about the ordering of blood and its reversal in the case of genital discharge applies to a more comprehensive understanding of the sacrificial system in Leviticus. Given the importance of order and distinction in the creation account of Genesis 1:1-2:3 where everything is very good and rests with God on the seventh day, Abel’s shed blood in Genesis 4:10 is dramatically out of place. It is a sign of creation gone awry.

The signification of blood as a sign of dis-order is manifest in the interplay of three Genesis texts from the primeval history: (1) the seven-day account of creation (Gen 1:1-2:3); Cain’s murder of Abel (Gen 4:3-12); and God’s re-commissioning of humanity

⁹ Eilberg-Schwartz, *The Savage in Judaism*, 188.

¹⁰ Jacob Milgrom is explicit: In addition to the priests, “Israel, too, as long as it serves God by obeying his commandments, can overcome the forces of impurity-death.” (*Leviticus 1-16*, 47).

through Noah and his family after the flood (Gen 9:1-7). As examined in chapter two of this dissertation, Genesis 9 recapitulates Genesis 1 but includes a concession for meat-eating and prohibitions against eating blood and shedding human blood. The mention of God's image in 9:6 as a rationale for the value of human blood and the deathly consequences that accompany its shedding highlight that manslaughter is incompatible with God's image. Cain's murder of Abel in Genesis 4 provides a narrative display of the disordered bloodshed God is trying to correct in God's renewed creation after the flood. The unique repetition of key words "blood," "hand," and "brother" in Genesis 9:5 from Genesis 4:11 suggests that Cain's spilling of Abel's blood stands as a paradigmatic instance of the violation of God's image. The creation of humankind in God's image in Genesis 1:26-31 is a constitutive component of the perfection of creation that God enjoys on the seventh day. The violation of God's image in Abel's bloodshed is a sign that the wholeness of creation celebrated on the seventh day has been broken. The rupture of creation's order that began with Eve and Adam's eschewal of limits and their illicit taking of the fruit is fully manifest in the disordered presence of Abel's blood within the soil as a result of Cain's deathly taking (Gen 4:10-11). In this schema, blood is antithetical to Sabbath.

Stephen Geller interprets blood's symbolism in the cult by giving special attention to the Day of Atonement rituals outlined in Leviticus 16 through an

intertextual interpretation of Leviticus 17 with Genesis 9. He observes that the Day of Atonement achieves a “heightened type of atonement” – specifically, that it

restores the shrine to its original state of purity on the day of dedication [Lev 8-9], when it was a fit repository of the Glory of the Presence. The purity of that day was beyond time itself. Owing to the connection of the shrine to creation, the Day of Atonement may be said to leap over all history and return the cult to a state of closeness to God that mankind experienced only before the rebellion in Eden.... The only adequate translation [for what is achieved on this day] is “re-creation.”¹¹

Geller discerns blood’s role in this re-creative process through the lens of the blood prohibition in Genesis 9. He sees the themes of “atonement by blood, slaughter for meat, and atonement by (prohibited) blood” in Leviticus 16-17 foreshadowed in Genesis 8-9 through the complex of “sacrifice, human sinfulness, slaughter, blood, covenant.”¹²

Geller contends that blood’s role in the conclusion of the flood narrative is a “symbol of human sinfulness” and is representative of the old order, while in the new dispensation that is the Tabernacle, blood is a remedy for sin.¹³ He writes, “No ingenuous substitution role will do [for interpreting blood’s atoning function]; it is the whole complex that blood represents, first as a sign of sin, then as a medium of redemption.”¹⁴

¹¹ Geller, *Sacred Enigmas*, 72, 74.

¹² Geller, *Sacred Enigmas*, 76-77.

¹³ Geller, *Sacred Enigmas*, 76-77.

¹⁴ Geller, *Sacred Enigmas*, 77.

Geller's analysis helps to display the connection between the cult and creation. While Geller limits his intertextual reflections to Genesis 9, the links between Genesis 9 and Genesis 1 and Genesis 4 strengthen his insight that blood is a sign of the disordering of God's first creation that God is healing through the new creation that is the Tabernacle. The seemingly opposing roles of blood make sense when they are considered to be reversible. Instead of blood's disordered loss manifesting the brokenness of creation in Genesis 4 as highlighted by Genesis 9, the careful placement of blood in God's presence in the sanctuary helps to repair humanity's relationship with blood and the wrongful taking it represents. The re-ordering of Israel's "taking" that begins with the lessons of manna and Tabernacle-construction reaches its zenith through the sacrificial system in Leviticus 1-16. Sabbath has played a central role in these lessons in the book of Exodus as Israel learns limitations related to food and work. God's restoration of humanity—and creation—through Israel culminates in the right ordering and offering of blood and provisions through sacrifice enabling the wholeness that is achieved on the Day of Atonement, described as a super Sabbath. Using Geller's terms, the Day of Atonement is a moment of "re-creation" because a symbolic wholeness has been achieved.

In his work on purity and sacrifice, Jonathan Klawans reminds his readers that sacrifice and purity are multivalent entities that defy a single explanation. He advocates identifying "organizing principles," defined in his work as "concerns central to the

priestly traditions of the Pentateuch," in order to provide an interpretation of Israelite ritual structures.¹⁵ I propose that the themes of Sabbath and blood are powerful organizing principles for the ritual system of Leviticus. Sabbath harkens to the wholeness and holiness of the seventh day of creation where everything is perfectly in place. Blood represents the corruption of this good order, for it is a sign of human sin and death. Through sacrifice, blood's re-ordering is a means by which wholeness can once again be achieved for Israel.

The symbolic wholeness that is achieved on the Day of Atonement is accompanied by a real reformation of humanity. Through participation in sacrificial and ritual purity observances, Israel's disciplined engagement with blood and death forms Israel to observe limits and eschew death. These practices make Israel more whole, healing humanity's propensity to be a blood-letter through indiscriminate taking. They train Israel in a way of life consonant with God's intentions for the role of humanity in creation.

¹⁵ Klawans, *Purity, Sacrifice, and the Temple*, 48. Klawans suggests that two central theological ideas undergird both systems – the imitation of God and attracting/maintaining God's presence. While some of my conclusions resonate with those his, Klawans develops his thesis by focusing on the ritual aspects of the daily burnt offering as described in Exodus 29:38-42, Numbers 28:3-8, and Leviticus 1:1-7. He begins with the description of the ritual performance and then provides images from prophetic texts to help supply symbolic meaning (58-68).

3.2.2 Literary Shaping

The opening chapters of Leviticus describe sacrifices to be performed in the Tabernacle. While many scholars focus on the historical or sociological dimensions of sacrifice while examining these texts,¹⁶ I will attend mainly to the texts *about* these ritual practices and examine their literary features as they are currently arranged in Leviticus. This approach differs from the one taken by Frank Gorman in his book, *The Ideology of Ritual: Space, Time, and Status in the Priestly Literature*, in which he advocates examining the rituals described by the texts in light of the Priestly worldview that informs them and that they, in turn, enact.¹⁷ Scholars point out that Gorman would be on surer footing had he emphasized the ritual text rather than the ritual itself as the object of study¹⁸; nevertheless, Gorman's work is helpful because he articulates the power of ritual for community formation.

Through ritual, one learns meanings and structures through which one is taught to see "reality" while at the same time learning appropriate ways to live in this world order. In this way, a given world view is affirmed for both the community and the

¹⁶ Cf. Gary A. Anderson, *Sacrifices and Offerings in Ancient Israel: Studies in Their Social and Political Importance* (HSM 41; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987); William Gilders, *Blood Ritual in the Hebrew Bible* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004); Roy E. Gane, *Cult and Character: Purification Offerings, Day of Atonement, and Theodicy* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2005).

¹⁷ Frank H. Gorman, *The Ideology of Ritual*, 15.

¹⁸ Trevaskis, *Holiness, Ethics and Ritual*, 30-34; Bryan D. Bibb, *Ritual Worlds and Narrative Worlds in the Book of Leviticus* (LHB/OTS 480; New York: T & T Clark, 2009), 42-43.

individual. Gorman identifies the notion of order as a fundamental principle for the Priestly writers. Gorman considers all Priestly rituals to be characterized by the role of order and its inauguration through separation and boundary-setting, as seen first in the creation account of Genesis 1.¹⁹ Given the close connection between creation and the building of the Tabernacle, liturgical performances can be understood as enactments of both the cultic and the cosmic order, whereby different elements are distinguished and separated from one another.²⁰ Thus, adoption of and participation in this order is of the greatest importance, for the maintenance of the world is at stake: God's departure from the Tabernacle would symbolize the violation of God's creational design. Gorman points to three fundamental categories – space, time, and status – where this ordering through separation provides foundational demarcations as seen in the setting apart of the Holy of Holies, the Sabbath, and the priesthood.²¹ Gorman's identification of the role of order through differentiation is undeniably helpful in making sense of sacrificial practices in Leviticus.

Many scholars recognize the high degree of literary artistry present in the figuration of the Tabernacle as creation renewed at the end of Exodus, but few exegetes

¹⁹ Gorman, *Ideology of Ritual*, 44-45.

²⁰ Gorman, *Ideology of Ritual*, 42; Balentine, *The Torah's Vision of Worship*, 64-65.

²¹ Gorman, *Ideology of Ritual*, 44-45.

apply this insight to the book of Leviticus in a sustained way.²² The textual craftsmanship and theological concerns of the Priestly tradition that shape earlier creation narratives in Genesis and Exodus are similarly operative in the book of Leviticus. If the Tabernacle is a restoration of creation, then it should not be surprising to apprehend creation themes in Leviticus' account of the cult. Indeed, the careful crafting of Leviticus encourages such a theological interpretation.

Some scholars question whether or not it is proper to consider Leviticus a separate book, given Leviticus' close narrative ties to the books of Exodus and Numbers (the Sinai pericope runs from Exod 19 - Num 10).²³ In contrast, Blenkinsopp highlights the structuring of the Pentateuch into five distinct books. He notes that the length of each of the books does not form the basis for the fivefold division, as Leviticus is by far the shortest, sandwiched between Exodus and Numbers, which are nearly identical in

²² Jacob Milgrom's magisterial commentary does not mention the Tabernacle's figuration as a new creation in either his introduction to the book or in his textual notes on the Tabernacle in 1:1. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 42-51, 139-43. Prominent counterexamples include Gorman, *The Ideology of Ritual*; Balentine, *Leviticus*; and Geller, "Sacred Enigmas." Douglas, Kiuchi, and Trevaskis also attend to creation themes, albeit in more limited ways: for Douglas and Kiuchi, creation figures mainly in their theological renderings of purity legislation, while Trevaskis applies it in exploration of the burnt offering in Leviticus 1. Nobuyoshi Kiuchi, *Leviticus* (Apollos 3; Leicester: Intervarsity Press, 2007), 29, 206-43; Trevaskis, *Holiness, Ethics and Ritual in Leviticus*, 172-207; Douglas, *Leviticus as Literature*, 134-94, 244-7.

²³ See the discussion in Rendtorff, "Is it Possible to Read Leviticus," 22-35. He concludes that it is possible, but he emphasizes the need to read it not separately but in relation to the other books of the Pentateuch, as I have tried to do in the prior chapter.

length to each another.²⁴ He concludes that this structuring serves to highlight Leviticus in the central position, suggesting that “its prescriptions for the holy life, and for the life of Israel as a holy people, were of central importance.”²⁵ Agreeing with Blenkinsopp’s observation, James Watts adds that the rhetorical features of Leviticus, especially those found in chapters 1-7, provide “further evidence that the Pentateuch reaches its climax in Leviticus.”²⁶ That Leviticus is arguably the highpoint of Torah reinforces the theological case I intend to make: that Leviticus presents a vision of and a means toward a restored creation through the practices of sacrifice.

Jacob Milgrom, Mary Douglas, and Christopher Smith are among those who attest to the high degree of literary craftsmanship in Leviticus.²⁷ A cursory scan of commentaries on the book of Leviticus reveals a rough scholarly consensus about the book’s structure. Jacob Milgrom’s landmark commentary provides a representative outline of the book: chapters 1-7 attend to the sacrificial system, 8-10 to the inauguration of the cult, 11-16 to the impurity system, and 17-27 to material from the Holiness

²⁴ Joseph Blenkinsopp, *The Pentateuch: An Introduction to the First Five Books of the Bible* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 46.

²⁵ Blenkinsopp, *Creation, Un-creation, Re-creation*, 5.

²⁶ James W. Watts, “The Rhetoric of Ritual Instruction in Leviticus 1-7,” in *The Book of Leviticus: Composition and Reception* (ed. R. Rendtorff, R. A. Kugler, and S. S. Smith; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 97.

²⁷ Cf. Wilfried Warning, *Literary Artistry in Leviticus* (*BibInt* 35; Leiden: Brill, 1999); Bibb, *Ritual Worlds and Narrative Worlds*, 5-33; Nobuyoshi Kiuchi, *Leviticus* (*Apollos Old Testament Commentary* 3; Leicester: Intervarsity Press, 2007), 18-26; Trevaskis, *Holiness, Ethics and Ritual in Leviticus*, 11-46.

Source.²⁸ While these units are identified by both thematic coherence and shared literary formulas, what is not regularly appreciated in this demarcation is the relationship between legal and narrative texts.²⁹ Douglas imaginatively posits that two narrative episodes in Leviticus (chapters 8-10 and 24:10-23) function to partition the text into three separate zones, thereby instituting the tripartite structure of both the Tabernacle and Mount Sinai. Consequently, these narratives function as the two screens within the Tabernacle, and the texts that they divide form ring structures that correspond to the Tabernacle's design.³⁰ While Douglas's proposal is intriguing, Christopher Smith provides a more straightforward proposition for Leviticus's organization. He identifies three narrative sections in Leviticus (8-10, 16, and 24:10-23), thereby yielding a seven-fold structure of alternating law and narrative sections (1-7; 8-10; 11-15; 16; 17-24:9; 24:10-23; 25-27).³¹ In this proposal, chapter 16 features prominently in the structural center of the book, an organizing principle recognized by multiple other Old Testament

²⁸ Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 17-22: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 3A; New York: Doubleday, 2000), 1267. Cf. John E. Hartley, *Leviticus* (WBC 4; Dallas, Tex.: Word Books, 1992), vii-viii; Gordon J. Wenham, *Book of Leviticus* (NICOT 3; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1979), xi; Samuel E. Balentine, *Leviticus* (IBC; Louisville: John Knox Press, 2002), xi-xiv.

²⁹ Christopher Smith, "The Literary Structure of Leviticus," *JSOT* 70 (1996): 20-22.

³⁰ Mary Douglas, *Leviticus as Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 195-251.

³¹ Smith, "The Literary Structure of Leviticus," 22.

scholars.³² Thus, the Day of Atonement described in chapter 16 resides at the heart of not only Leviticus, but also of Torah. This distinguished position fits with its content, for this day is considered a Sabbath that harkens back to the original state of creation where the entire created order is renewed and able to rest with God.³³

James Watts's work on law and narrative in his book, *Reading Law: The Rhetorical Shaping of the Pentateuch*, provides analysis that helpfully expands upon Smith's observation that Leviticus is structured by these two genres.³⁴ Watts attends to the canonical shape of the Torah and notes that "the laws' placement within stories suggests reading the laws within the narrative plot sequence."³⁵ Watts presents a sustained argument that oral reading of biblical laws shaped both the laws themselves and the entire Pentateuch.³⁶ He notes that persuasion was a leading reason for public readings of the law.³⁷ Watts contends that Israel's practice of reading legal materials aloud

³² Cf. Blenkinsopp, *The Pentateuch*, 222; Balentine, *Leviticus*, 125; Hartley, *Leviticus*, 217; Warning, *Literary Artistry in Leviticus*, 39; Bibb, *Ritual Words and Narrative Worlds*, 33.

³³ Geller, *Sacred Enigmas*, 74.

³⁴ James W. Watts, *Reading Law: The Rhetorical Shaping of the Pentateuch*, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999).

³⁵ Watts, *Reading Law*, 11.

³⁶ Watts, *Reading Law*, 24.

³⁷ Watts, *Reading Law*, 32.

influenced the rhetorical shaping of the literary form of the Pentateuch.³⁸ Upon examining rhetorical theory, Watts discusses the role that combinations of list (which includes laws) and story play in shaping a text's persuasive force. He writes,

Persuasion depends . . . on the correlation of the desired result with the narrative of its origins, of the proof with the statement of the case, of the list with the story. The story alone may inspire, but to no explicit end. The list alone specifies the desired actions or beliefs, but may not inspire them. It is the combination of both together which maximizes the persuasive effect of a speech or text.³⁹

Watts turns his attention to the literary shift that occurs in the middle of Exodus from texts dominated by narrative to ones that are full of legislation. He observes that earlier stories in the Pentateuch provide rhetorical force for these lists, writing, "The lists of laws thus provide the solutions to problems and issues detailed by the narratives, which in turn demonstrate the necessity of the law."⁴⁰ Watts asserts that there is a strong connection between stories and lists in material attributed to the Priestly writer: "The close relationship between P's narratives and lists suggests that the Priestly writers and editors worked with the larger context in mind and intentionally structured the whole to highlight Levitical legislation as the central list in the Pentateuch's rhetoric."⁴¹ From the

³⁸ Watts, *Reading Law*, 33.

³⁹ Watts, *Reading Law*, 45.

⁴⁰ Watts, *Reading Law*, 58-59.

⁴¹ Watts, *Reading Law*, 59.

perspective of the entire Torah, Watts is suggesting that the persuasive power of Leviticus is rooted in the earlier stories of Genesis.

Watts provides support for interpreting Leviticus in light of the human predicament depicted in Genesis where humans withdraw from God and inaugurate a history of wrongful taking. Such an orientation is fitting, given Leviticus' central placement in the Pentateuch and the Day of Atonement's designation as a super-Sabbath (שבת שבתון). The striking arrangement of legal and narrative material in Leviticus that Douglas and Smith identify highlights the theological nature of the sacrificial and purity legislation. The placement of sacrificial and purity legislation in Leviticus 1-7 and 11-15, respectively, disrupts the narrative account of the Tabernacle's inauguration and restoration and provides a display of God's provisions to restore humanity so as to complete the divine act of re-creation that began with the building of the Tabernacle.

3.2.3 Sacrifice and "Sabbath-time"

When reading the Pentateuch in the order of the canon, the juxtaposition between law and narrative in Leviticus has a startling effect on one's notion of time. Legal material often interrupts the narrative plot in ways that challenge a reader's accounting of chronological action. For example, Balentine observes that the giving of the law at Sinai in Exodus 19 – Numbers 10 begins on the seventh week after Israel's departure from Egypt. He writes,

But at this juncture the narrative tempo of the covenant liturgy changes. The seventh week now becomes the focus of extended reflection; like the seventh day of the primordial week, it is a time for careful deliberation concerning what lies ahead. In the Torah's vision, this seventh-week deliberation extends for eleven months, after which Israel's passage toward Canaan resumes (cf. Num. 10:11). In essence, the Torah envisions the sojourn at Sinai to be a *sabbath day experience*, a virtual suspension of time to enable the community to reflect on the importance of their covenantal commission to become partners with God.⁴²

Balentine contends that the interruption of chronological time that accompanies the giving of the law functions to link God's commands with God's intentions for creation.

Balentine sees at work a similar pattern of a "virtual suspension of time" when Moses is summoned on the sabbath day for another "sabbath day experience," in which he receives the instructions for the Tabernacle's construction over the course of forty days in Exodus 24:12-18.⁴³

This phenomenon is at work in the placement of the sacrificial and purity legislation in Leviticus 1-7 and 11-15. Multiple scholars point out that the content of Leviticus 8-9, which describes the ordination of priests and the inauguration of the Tabernacle, would logically follow the material at the end of Exodus.⁴⁴ The instructions for the consecration of the priests occur in Exodus 29:1-37, and they are the most

⁴² Balentine, *Torah's Vision of Worship*, 127 (italics original).

⁴³ Balentine, *Torah's Vision of Worship*, 136.

⁴⁴ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 61; Baruch A. Levine, *Leviticus: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 48; Timothy M. Willis, *Leviticus* (AOTC; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2009), 74-75.

prominent instructions that do not get fulfilled within the book. Exodus 40:2-15 calls for Moses to erect the Tabernacle and anoint the priests, and 40:16 curiously reports that “Moses did everything just as the Lord had commanded him,” even though Moses only completes the first set of tasks. Consequently, both Milgrom and Damrosch conclude that Leviticus 1-7, containing descriptions of the six forms of sacrifice that comprise Israel’s regular worship life, is an insertion.⁴⁵ Milgrom supports this claim with the additional observation that Exodus 39, Exodus 40:17-33, and Leviticus 8 all share a septenary structure. Leviticus 1-7 seems out of place.

The sense of confusion related to chronological time in Leviticus is accentuated by the two-fold announcement in the final chapter of Exodus that the erection of the Tabernacle occurs on “the first day of the first month” (Exod 40:2, 17), the same day celebrating the creation of the world and the earth’s re-creation after the flood.⁴⁶ Chronological time does not resume until Leviticus 8-10. In 8:33-8:36, the priests are commanded three times to remain within the Tabernacle precincts for seven days as a part of their consecration, and immediately following in 9:1, the inaugural service commences “on the eighth day.” Milgrom notes that this eighth day is reckoned based

⁴⁵ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 61; David Damrosch, *The Narrative Covenant: Transformations of Genre in the Growth of Biblical Literature* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 263.

⁴⁶ Per the declaration of this time in Genesis 8:13, Cassuto comments, “Precisely at the commencement of the year, on the anniversary of Creation, the world resumed again the form that God had given it when first it came into being.” Cassuto, *Genesis Part II*, 113.

on the first day mentioned in Exodus 40:17.⁴⁷ By Leviticus' own reporting, chapters 1-7 and the sacrificial life they display are anchored to the time of the "first day." Balentine has already characterized Israel's sojourn at Sinai as sabbath-like time. The placement of the sacrificial legislation on the first day underscores the contention that the *telos* of sacrifice is creation's redemption.

The opening seven chapters of Leviticus are bracketed by narrative markers that challenge one's sense of time in the telling of Israel's story. This sense of timelessness carries over from the conclusion of Exodus. In his commentary on the construction and erection of the Tabernacle, Propp observes numerous instances of temporal inconsistencies. He notes both that these anachronisms "are so pervasive that they cannot be the result of careless supplementation" and that they also cannot "reflect the Priestly Writer's apathy to chronology, for of all the Pentateuchal authors he is the most generous with dates."⁴⁸ He significantly concludes, "As difficult as it is to accept, I think that the writer *deliberately slurred time*, collapsing all the events surrounding the building and the Tabernacle into an atemporal *illud tempus*, a first time beyond time."⁴⁹ Time is both disrupted and fulfilled in the new creation that is the Tabernacle, for Propp

⁴⁷ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 571.

⁴⁸ William H. C. Propp, *Exodus 19-40: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 2A; New York: Doubleday, 2006), 692.

⁴⁹ Propp, *Exodus 19-40*, 692 (italics original).

discerns, “If the Sabbath is a kind of Tabernacle in time, no less is the Tabernacle a Sabbath in space.”⁵⁰ The first seven chapters of Leviticus detail life in this new reality that is a Sabbath in space.

Time’s dislocation relative to the Tabernacle fits with the disjunction that accompanies the description of God’s work on the seventh day in Genesis 2:2, where the markers of time that figure so prominently during the six days – evening and morning – disappear. The Tabernacle’s association with the Sabbath suggests that the “work” of both constitutes the true nature of reality. The irruption of God’s time into human history for the purposes of directing fallen creation to its intended end necessarily confuses our diminished faculties of perception, for the Sabbath rest that God enjoys and into which God invites humanity is the truth of our existence that we can glimpse only now in parts. The sacrificial practices on display in Leviticus 1-7 take place in this “creational time” represented by the Sabbath.

3.2.4 Seeing Sacrifice

The literary effect of this time-warp is two-fold. First, the timelessness of these opening chapters of Leviticus supports the observation made by multiple scholars that

⁵⁰ Propp, *Exodus 19-40*, 692.

Leviticus presents a vision of an idealized community.⁵¹ Obedient sacrifice in God's presence represents a healed humanity and thus a properly ordered creation, where the plurality of relationships between and among humans and non-human creatures is restored. Second, it reinforces the claim that Leviticus 1-16 reflects the concerns of Genesis 1-9: if we have just witnessed a reordering in space and time in the construction and erection of the Tabernacle, Leviticus 1-7 is nothing less than a vision of life in this newly-created reality.

Watts observes that the function of lists within the Priestly material is to "describe the ideal cult and ideal community; that is, they describe Israel as it should be. ... The lists' rhetorical force derives from a constant focus on the ideal, that is, from the persuasive power of a vision of cult and people structured for communion with God."⁵² Consequently, Watts holds that Leviticus' audience is encouraged to embrace this form of life described by the text.⁵³ He adds that the interruption of the golden calf story in

⁵¹David Damrosch, "Leviticus," in *The Literary Guide to the Bible* (ed. R. Alter and F. Kermode; Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987), 66; Bibb, *Ritual Words and Narrative Worlds*, 17; Watts, *Reading Law*, 53ff. John Sawyer observes that imperfective verb forms appear more frequently in Leviticus than in the rest of the Hebrew Bible. He concludes, "The author seems instead to want us to *imagine a state or a society* in which some elaborate procedures are carried out, some things are to be done and some are not to be done" (emphasis mine). John F. A. Sawyer, "The Language of Leviticus," in *Reading Leviticus; A Conversation with Mary Douglas* (ed. by J. F. A. Sawyer; JSOTSup 227; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 16-17.

⁵² Watts, *Reading Law*, 53.

⁵³ Watts, *Reading Law*, 54.

Exod 32-34 and the narrative of the inauguration of the Tabernacle in Lev 8-10 into the midst of textual lists serves to “develop a dialectical tension between the idealistic vision of a divine-human communion and realistic warnings of its dissolution due to popular disobedience and official malpractice.”⁵⁴ In the case of Leviticus, chronological time in chapters 8-10 interrupts the presentation of the model form for Israel’s life.

The first seven chapters of Leviticus that describe the dynamics of sacrifice are more than a manual or set of instructions for priests. Indeed, while Watts highlights the rhetorical power of list to inspire the community’s obedience, Bryan Bibb adds a further nuance when he notes that the ritualized nature of the texts themselves serve to “draw the reader deeply into the ritual world.”⁵⁵ David Damrosch’s observations reinforce this claim. He notes the careful construction of the first three chapters, which display “a consistent triadic form”: each of the first three chapters describes a different type of voluntary offering, and each one exhibits a three-fold structure where major details about the performance of the sacrifice are repeated.⁵⁶ Damrosch observes that this “tripled threefold structure gives these chapters a certain lyrical aspect.”⁵⁷ Moreover, he

⁵⁴ Watts, *Reading Law*, 55.

⁵⁵ Bibb, *Ritual Words and Narrative Worlds*, 61.

⁵⁶ Damrosch, *The Narrative Covenant*, 263.

⁵⁷ Damrosch, *The Narrative Covenant*, 264.

contends that the presentation of these ritual instructions is dramatic. He writes, “Rather than simply prescribing the necessary details, the text stages the event, showing us a little ritual drama of interaction between the person offering the sacrifice, the priest and God...”⁵⁸ The accent of this sacrificial texts falls less on instruction and more on engaging the imagination.

After reading about three types of sacrifices in the first three chapters of Leviticus, the reader has effectively witnessed nine displays of sacrificial ritual. This pattern continues to varying degrees through the first seven chapters. The rhetorical effect of this “repetitional design” functions as a form of imitation of cultic life for the reader. By attending to seven chapters of an unbroken catalogue of various types of sacrifice, the reader vicariously participates in the cycles and patterns of the cultic system. The painstaking description and detail not only suggests and encourages a life embedded in these practices as Watts contends; it also shapes the audience’s imagination to see themselves in the cult – perhaps better, to see their lives constituted by the cult. In these seven chapters, one witnesses a rich display of Israel’s engagement with God in which Israelites from across the social spectrum from wealthy to poor and priests to laity offer sacrifices to God for a variety of reasons. Bibb’s observation that the ritual in Leviticus has been narrativized leads to the following assessment:

⁵⁸ Damrosch, *The Narrative Covenant*, 264.

The narrative assumes that readers are interested in the outcome of the story, and that they acknowledge the necessity of learning these rules for themselves. In this way, the reader is drawn into the rhetorical web constructed by the narrative. This interpretive engagement follows the same contours of ritualization experienced by the characters in the story. We see and feel ourselves as participants within the community, standing alongside the priests as we watch every stroke of the knife, measuring our level of comprehension as the voice of God filters into our hearing.⁵⁹

The vision of life in the new creation God is initiating is more than the sum of its individual parts. The audience is not just encouraged to adhere to specific instructions about ritual offerings, for its imagination is shaped by a sense of participation in a communal life constituted by a continual drawing near to God. Such a redeemed life is only made possible by a community's adoption of certain disciplines and habits. This transformation that God is effecting in Israel facilitates humanity's restoration so that it is able to resume its intended place in God's new creation. The healing that these six sacrificial practices represent enables Israel to dwell peaceably with God on the Sabbath that is the Day of Atonement.

⁵⁹ Bibb, *Ritual Words and Narrative Worlds*, 75. While I agree with Bibb's assertion that readers are drawn into the drama of sacrifice, it is interesting to note that there are no mentions of knives or descriptions about the act of killing the sacrificial animal in Leviticus 1-5.

3.3 Restoring Order: The Six Forms of Sacrifice in Leviticus 1-5

3.3.1 Introduction

The first seven chapters of Leviticus are composed of two sections. Chapters 1-5 address the people of Israel and describe the routine offerings of the cult, and chapters 6-7 provide further administrative details about these offerings for the priests.⁶⁰ Within chapters 1-5, Jacob Milgrom identifies six distinct sacrifices:

- the burnt offering (Lev 1:3-17);
- the cereal offering (Lev 2:1-16);
- the peace or well-being offering (Lev 3:1-17);
- the purification offering (Lev 4:1-35);
- the graduated purification offering (Lev 5:1-13);
- the guilt or reparation offering (Lev 5:14-26).⁶¹

These six displays of sacrificial practice provide a vision for Israel's redeemed life in the new creation that is the Tabernacle. Just as the six days of creation (and the six days of gathering manna) lead to the Sabbath, so too do these six types of sacrifice lead to the Sabbath that is the Day of Atonement. As such, these dramatic presentations enact proper human dominion in service of restoring humanity's divine vocation of embodying the *imago Dei*.

⁶⁰ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 382.

⁶¹ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, v-vi. In English versions of the Bible, the reparation offering is found in Lev (5:14-6:7). See Milgrom's comment on the graduated purification offering for his rationale for considering it a distinct sacrifice: Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 307-18.

With the erection of the Tabernacle at the end of Exodus, the story of Israel told in the beginning chapters of Leviticus is that of a new creation. Like the non-identical repetition of God's acts of creation in Genesis and Exodus that culminates in the Tabernacle, Leviticus' depiction of life in this new reality is deeply rooted in God's original purposes for humanity. Humans were created in God's image and charged with exercising dominion, a key component of which involves honoring limitation and maintaining creaturely distinctions for the blessing and flourishing of all. God celebrates this good order on the seventh day. Read canonically, this ordering was to continue in humanity's vocation to "work and serve" the garden,⁶² in whose midst God's presence drew near.⁶³ Humanity marred its divine image and closeness to God with its wrongful taking of fruit and human life. It is therefore fitting that God's work of restoring creation through Israel involves Israel's continual drawing near to God through offerings. As opposed to disordered taking that results in death, Israel is now imagined as a people whose lives are constituted by returning life to God through the sacrificial cult for the

⁶² Gen 2:15. Cf. page 30. In reading *order* in the second creation account, I am eliding source-critical distinctions between these two stories that attribute only the first to the Priestly school. Given the connection between Genesis 9 and Genesis 4, it is fitting to see the "narrative of taking" that begins in the garden and climaxes in Abel's death (and later again with the flood) as a display of the violation of good's order and of humanity's role of being created in the image of God.

⁶³ Cf. Gen 3:8 "[Adam and Eve] heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden."

purpose of reconciliation with God and the rest of the created order. The actions of the cult symbolically “undo” the transgressions that led to the fall.

While the death of an animal is often involved in Levitical sacrifice, death is not the focus of the ritual, for there are no textual descriptions about the killing process.⁶⁴ Joshua Vis observes that “the fact that the priest is never indicated as the slaughterer almost certainly means that this part of the ritual is less critical than other parts of the sacrificial procedure.”⁶⁵ Sacrifice is a means by which the life of the animal, and by extension, the offerer, can enter into God’s presence. Jacob Milgrom highlights that sacrifice “means returning life to its creator.”⁶⁶ This is accomplished most directly through the manipulation of blood and the understanding that blood contains life (Lev 17:11-14). Vis underscores that it is the priestly actions involving blood that effect “atonement” (כַּפֵּר) in Lev 1-7 rather than the act of slaughter itself.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ B. Hudson McLean notes that this is in contrast to Greek sacrifices in which the death of the animals was accompanied by the shrill screams of women. B. Hudson McLean, *The Cursed Christ: Mediterranean Expulsion Rituals and Pauline Soteriology* (JSNTSup 126; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 30.

⁶⁵ Joshua M. Vis, “The Purification Offering of Leviticus and the Sacrificial Offering of Jesus” (Ph. D. diss., The Graduate School of Duke University, 2012), 265.

⁶⁶ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 1003.

⁶⁷ Vis, “The Purification Offering of Leviticus,” 265.

Mary Douglas concludes that “sacrifice is less a killing than a transformation from one kind of existence to another.”⁶⁸ When the animal is turned to smoke, the animal assumes a form similar to the manifestation of God’s presence in cloud and smoke in key moments in Exodus – in the exodus from Egypt (13:21-22), in the lesson of manna (16:10), in the giving of the law at Sinai (19:9, 16-18; 24:15-18), and in God’s residence in the Tabernacle (40:34-38).⁶⁹ Sacrificial smoke is often described as providing a pleasing odor (ריח נִיחֻדָּה) to YHWH.⁷⁰ Balentine observes, “The offerings are no longer merely animals; they are gifts. The offerers are no longer distant from God; they have drawn near to the most tangible presence of God that is available on earth.”⁷¹ Sacrifice is not primarily concerned with death: it is oriented toward communion.

After humanity’s expulsion from the garden, God’s presence has gradually drawn closer to the people Israel, beginning with the lesson of the manna in Exodus 16 where the glory of YHWH (כְּבוֹד יְהוָה) appears in the wilderness. God’s presence then alights on Mount Sinai where Moses ascends in order to receive the instructions for the Tabernacle (Exod 24:16-17), and, upon its completion, the כְּבוֹד יְהוָה fills the Tabernacle (Exod 40:34-35). As God’s presence has progressively approached Israel, Israel has

⁶⁸ Douglas, *Leviticus as Literature*, 68-9.

⁶⁹ Balentine, *Leviticus*, 29.

⁷⁰ This phrase occurs 14 times in Lev 1-17: Lev 1:9, 13, 17; 2:2, 9, 12; 3:5, 16; 4:31; 6:15, 21; 8:21, 28; 17:6.

⁷¹ Balentine, *Leviticus*, 29.

unlearned practices of unlimited taking and hoarding through manna instruction and Tabernacle construction. This work continues in practices of sacrifice at the site where God's presence is most immediate.

While our withdrawal from God in the form of wrongful taking is the source of alienation, our reconciliation with God comes in the form of offering. The Hebrew vocabulary that dominates Leviticus 1-7 are forms of (קרב/קרבן), offering and drawing near.⁷² The vision of life presented is one in which Israel is continually approaching God through giving important parts of their livelihood – either entire animals, valuable parts of animals, or grain – to God. For societies in the ancient Near East, domesticated animals played a significant economic role, for these animals produced a variety of by-products integral to meeting basic needs, including food, textiles, and fertilizer.⁷³ Sacrificing animals to God was indeed costly.⁷⁴ The cost goes beyond economic

⁷² For example, the verb form קרב appears 26 times in Lev 1-3, and the noun form קרבן appears 21 times in these chapters.

⁷³ Oded Borowski, *Every Living Thing: Daily Use of Animals in Ancient Israel* (Walnut Creek, Calif.: AltaMira Press, 1998), 231-2.

⁷⁴ Borowski notes that herd management dictated that unproductive animals were regularly culled from the herd or flock and that many of these animals were offered as sacrifices. While this practice might suggest a deflation of the value of sacrificial animals, he also notes that the sacrifice of yearling, culled animals represented a loss of income from a potential sale for its meat. Additionally, animals offered as burnt, purification, or reparation offerings were a complete economic loss to the offerer, for he did not even get the benefit of eating any of its meat. While priests consumed meat from the latter two offerings, only the meat from the peace or well-being offering was able to be consumed by the offerer. Borowski, *Every Living Thing*, 231, 215.

reckoning as domesticated animals may well have been considered members of the household.⁷⁵ Norman Wirzba observes that the “offering of the animal was a self-offering because in presenting the animal one also offered the hours of personal care that nurtured the animal to a full life. One offered one’s future life because for a farmer or pastoralist one’s future was inextricably tied to the health or breeding potential of the herd.”⁷⁶ Despite the recognition that sacrifice was costly, sacrifice within the life of the Tabernacle is not primarily a form of loss or lack, as many moderns might assess. Rather, sacrifice is a central means by which humankind is able to host God’s presence and sustain the renewed creation that God has inaugurated through Israel.

Offerings continue the practices of wise work integral to the construction of the Tabernacle, but the sacrificial life envisioned in this timeless ritualized narrative has no end. The sacrificial cult thus extends and builds upon the work of the Tabernacle that is redeemed space and time: through the regular and habitual drawing near to God by offering animals, Israel repairs the rupture between life-forms that has damaged creation since the fall and Cain’s inauguration of bloodshed. Through dedication of these animals

⁷⁵ Boer makes the case that “the clan does not stop with human beings” based on domesticated animals’ importance within a subsistence economy and biblical laws that place bestiality on par with injunctions against incest or sex with a menstruating woman. Roland Boer, *The Sacred Economy of Ancient Israel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, forthcoming), 93-94.

⁷⁶ Norman Wirzba, *Food and Faith: A Theology of Eating* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 118.

to God with a careful attention to blood, Israel participates in a fully restored creation where space, time, and relationships between living things are healed.

3.3.2 The Call to Sacrifice: Leviticus 1:1-2

After Leviticus 1:1 picks up the narrative in Exodus by affirming the Tabernacle's rootedness in creation with the present instructions occurring on the "first day," (Exod 40:2, 17), verse 2 states, "Speak to the Children of Israel and say to them: Anyone [אִשָּׁר] – when [כִּי] (one) among you brings-near a near-offering for YHWH from domestic-animals: from the herd or from the flock you may bring-near your near-offering."⁷⁷ While the majority of chapter one of Leviticus is dedicated to describing the procedures for the burnt offering, the chapter's initial set of instructions pertains to sacrifice generally.

The diction of this verse highlights the voluntary nature of sacrifice that characterizes the first three offerings detailed in the book of Leviticus. Leviticus 1:2 describes a situation – "when any of you brings an offering" – rather than issuing a command. While the construction represents an example of case law, Levine writes that "the syntax projects a hypothetical situation; a particular law applies only 'if' or 'when' a

⁷⁷ Fox's translation. Fox, *The Five Books of Moses*, 511.

certain situation arises.”⁷⁸ The text presupposes that Israelites will engage in this activity freely. This accords with the observation that sacrifice is among the first spontaneous human activities reported in the Bible following God’s acts of creation: Cain and Abel offer sacrifices in Gen 4, and Noah sacrifices to God in Gen 9. The impetus to sacrifice, to draw near to God through offering parts of God’s creation back to God, may be understood as a constitutive activity of being made in the image of God. At their best, through cultivating and caring for creation through agriculture and animal husbandry, humans “watch and work” creation in ways not unlike accounts of God’s creative activities in Genesis 1 and 2. Humanity’s offering of nature’s gifts to God – offering the fruits of one’s labor with creation’s good, life-sustaining materials – imitates God’s gift of creation to humans and the rest of the created order and embodies God’s work of bringing forth life for the flourishing of all during the six days of creation. Through the dynamic of creation and sacrifice, God and humans engage in practices of giving to the other. God’s careful craftsmanship yields the blessed unity of the created order manifest in the Sabbath. Through the grace of sacrifice, humans offer life-sustaining resources in the form of fruits of the field or beasts from the flock as a means of drawing near to God. Sacrifice in Leviticus is thus a creaturely reflection of God’s creative work under the

⁷⁸ Levine, *Leviticus*, 5. Cf. Milgrom, who writes, “The use of the relative conjunction *kî* also indicates the conditional and optional nature of the law that follows; the sacrifices discussed therein are not mandatory but voluntary” (*Leviticus 1-16*, 144).

conditions of sin. Had God's image been maintained, the reality of the Sabbath rest of the seventh day would have been a perpetual reality for creation.⁷⁹ Sacrifice is the means by which God reforms humankind through the reordering it accomplishes and thereby allows their participation in God's blessed rest on the Sabbath that is the Day of Atonement.

Sacrifice is necessary if God's good creation is to be properly preserved. Without rightly ordered sacrifice, humans will use, consume, and sacrifice wrongly, depending on themselves or some other false god, as seen all too clearly in the early chapters of Torah, in the episode of the golden calf in Exodus 32, and in our contemporary death-dealing economy. With the inauguration of the sacrificial cult in Leviticus, God instructs Israel on right sacrifice, practices that maintain Israel's relationship with God and with the rest of the created order.

⁷⁹ Eugene Masure provides an elegant reflection on sacrifice from a Thomistic perspective. He writes, "Sacrifice is the movement or action by which we try to bring ourselves to God, our end, to find true beatitude in our union with Him. *To sacrifice a thing is to lead it to its end.*" The introduction of sin into the world has caused death to intervene in this movement back to God: "Our original elevation to the supernatural state, an extension of our nature in its height and depth, would have dispensed us from this waiting; we should have possessed our end without really passing through suffering at all. That was God's first dream. But sin by entering into the world has brought with it grief and death, its offspring. . . . Offering our life to God in Eden would have been a prayer, a thing supremely sweet; to-day this encounter is called the world over by the name of death." Eugene Masure, *The Christian Sacrifice* (trans. Dom Illtyd Trethowan; New York: P. J. Kennedy & Sons, 1943), 41, 58 (italics original).

The mention of אָדָם “Adam” in verse 2 is thematically significant. Nehemia Polen reflects on the aims of the sacrificial system of Leviticus, suggesting that its complicated nature is illuminated by:

the first word of the book of Leviticus (after the prefatory phrases): ‘Adam’ – ‘When a man...’ (Lev 1:2). The complexity of the system is an effect of human participation, of human interaction with the clean lines, the purity of the divine plan. Much as the rest of Genesis after chap. 1 records the destructiveness and chaos that ensues when humans inhabit the neatly constructed world of Gen. 1, so does Leviticus establish provisions for handling the human traffic in the precincts of the idealized tabernacle/microcosm. But now, instead of leading to death and banishment from the Garden, the system anticipates the footprints humans always leave, the inevitable entanglements, the inherent messiness and imperfection of the human condition which P calls טְמִאָה (usually translated as ‘[ritual] impurity’).⁸⁰

Through the narrative arc culminating in Leviticus, God is at work on “Adam’s” redemption such that humans may dwell with God once again.

3.3.3 The Burnt Offering and Whole Bodies: Leviticus 1:3- 17

The third verse in Leviticus introduces specific instructions for the burnt offering (עֹלָה), and the text immediately prescribes that the animal should be unblemished (תָּמִים). Like “Adam” in verse two, this term has resonance with the early chapters in Genesis. The first two instances of this word in the biblical text occur in relationship to Noah and Abraham. In the first, Noah is introduced as a “righteous man, blameless

⁸⁰ Nehemia Polen, “Leviticus and Hebrews . . . and Leviticus,” in *The Epistle to the Hebrews and Christian Theology* (ed. R. Bauckham, D. D. Driver, T. A. Hart, and N. MacDonald; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2009), 217.

(תמיים) in his generation; Noah walked with God” (Gen 6:9). The second occurrence of this word appears at Genesis 17 where God appears to Abram and says, “I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless (תמיים). And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous” (Gen 17:1-2). Noah and Abraham’s virtue is related to their proximity to God: both walk with God, recalling God’s practice with Adam and Eve in the garden (Gen 3:8) and God’s intention to do so again with Israel (Lev 26:12). They also offer God burnt offerings (Gen 8:20; 22:2-13).⁸¹ Fox notes the various connotations for תמיים: for animals used in sacrifice, it implies “perfect or unblemished,” while for people it means “wholehearted, perfect, full of integrity.”⁸²

This term תמיים plays an important role in introducing the burnt offering in Leviticus 1:3-4:

If his offering is a burnt offering from the herd, he shall offer a male without blemish [תמיים]. He shall bring it to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, for acceptance on his behalf before YHWH [לְרִצְנוֹ לְפָנַי יְהוָה] (1:3).

He shall lean his hand on the head of the burnt offering, that it may be acceptable on his behalf to expiate for him [וְנִרְצָה לוֹ לְכַפֵּר עָלָיו] (1:4).⁸³

⁸¹ Trevaskis, *Holiness, Ethics and Ritual*, 204-6.

⁸² Fox, *The Five Books of Moses*, 511.

⁸³ Milgrom’s translation, *Leviticus 1-16*, 133.

After describing the animal as unblemished, the text states that the animal will be acceptable for the offerer. This idea is reinforced in verse four as a result of the participant's hand-laying, which Jacob Milgrom argues denotes ownership of the animal.⁸⁴ Given the significant first uses of תמים along with the two-fold notion of acceptance on the offerer's behalf, the preliminary description of the animal for the burnt offering suggests an identification between the animal and the offerer: the offerer, like the animal, is to be unblemished in order to draw near to God. Such identification does not indicate a sense of transference, as if the status of the offerer instantly changes upon presentation of the animal.⁸⁵ Instead, the unblemished animal represents what the offerer is to become, an idea supported by the examples of Noah and Abraham. The parallelism of Leviticus 1:3-4 supports an understanding of atonement (כפר) as being "before YHWH" (לפני יהוה)⁸⁶ The תמים animal represents God's intentions for a

⁸⁴ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 150-2.

⁸⁵ Milgrom notes that an understanding of transference occurs only when two hands are laid on the animal, as is the case with the scapegoat in chapter 16. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 150-2.

⁸⁶ The phrase "before YHWH" appears with a high degree of frequency, underscoring God's presence in the Tabernacle and nearness to Israel. In Lev 1-16, it appears 54 times: Lev 1:3, 5, 11; 3:1, 7, 12; 4:4x2, 6, 7, 15x2, 17, 18, 24; 5:19, 26; 6:7, 18; 7:30; 8:26, 27, 29; 9:2, 4, 5, 21, 24; 10:1, 2x2, 15, 17, 19; 12:7; 14:11, 12, 16, 18, 23, 24, 27, 29, 31; 15:14, 15, 30; 16:1, 7, 10, 12, 13, 18, 30. Scholars note the complexities in establishing the meaning of the root כפר. (For an example, see Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 1079-84.) In his recent dissertation, Joshua Vis offers a detailed analysis of כפר in Leviticus 16; 4:1-5:13; 17:11, and 10:16-20, arguing that the proper understanding of this term is "purge" when used in the context of the purification offering (221). However, when used in relation to the burnt offering, Vis accepts Milgrom's translation of כפר as "atone" (233-34). Milgrom holds "atone" and "expiate" to be synonymous (*Leviticus 1-16*, 1079, 1083). To be "at-one" with God, has everything do with being "before YHWH." Nehemia Polen observes that the occurrence of כפר in

restored humanity, the realization of which is represented by the wholeness of creation on the Sabbath.

The figures of Noah and Abraham have special resonance with the vision of Leviticus 1 because of three shared characteristics: being whole (תמים), walking with God, and offering sacrifice. With God's residence in the Tabernacle, God once again walks with God's people. In order for this restored reality to be actualized, God, through the institutions of sacrifice in Leviticus, is in the business of making Israel whole and redeeming humanity from the inclinations and habituations to violence and blood-shed that mark Cain. Being refashioned into the form of Noah is a direct counter to Cain's perversion of God's image where rupture and disorder reign.⁸⁷ In the new creation of the Tabernacle, God is offering Israel a fresh start to follow in the way of Noah rather than in the blood-soaked history inaugurated by Cain, freshly experienced during the reign of Pharaoh. Sacrifice is the means by which the participant achieves this status. Through participating in the life of the cult and offering valuable elements of creation to

relation to the burnt offerings that conclude the Day of Atonement ceremony "signals a return to wholeness, harmony, and covenantal love" ("Leviticus and Hebrews," 219-20). Leviticus 1:3-4 links the themes of wholeness (תמים), atonement, and being in God's presence. These themes harken to the display of God's order and purposes of creation displayed in Genesis 1-3 and set the stage for God's work of redemption in the cult.

⁸⁷ See pages 44-53.

God, one is trained in righteousness, a state necessary to ensure God's abiding presence. The cult disciplines Israel against wanton taking that exercises mastery over human activity. This new orientation to God and the rest of creation has striking material consequences, for wholeness begets wholeness. Consequently, Israel and creation are healed through humanity's new way of life. The regime of sacrifice within the Tabernacle makes God's people fit for the Sabbath that is Yom Kippur.

The burnt offering that opens the book of Leviticus represents the most complete offering to God. Aside from the blood, which is collected and cast upon the altar, and the skin that is given to the priest (7:8), the entirety of the animal is burnt on the altar. No portion of the offering is set aside for human consumption. The completeness of this sacrifice, and its first observation by Noah who is deemed a new-Adam, suggests that this sacrifice provides a model for life by those called to live in God's new creation. The quality of wholeness (תמימים) that characterizes this sacrifice – a complete offering of a perfect animal – sets the stage for the work of the cult in facilitating wholeness in Israel that will allow it to dwell near God's presence.

3.3.4 The Grain Offering and Fruit from the Ground: Leviticus 2

The grain offering follows the burnt offering in chapter 2. Given its placement, scholars contend that the grain offering functions as a poor person's burnt offering.⁸⁸ While the burnt offering is designated by the term **עלה**, meaning "that which goes up or ascends," the grain offering is represented by the word **מנחה**, which means "gift" or "tribute." The only prior narrative account of this sacrifice occurs in the offerings of Cain and Abel in Genesis 4:3-5.⁸⁹ In this story, the term **מנחה** appears three times to denote the respective gifts that Cain and Abel bring to God, though in the Genesis account Abel's **מנחה** takes the form of an animal offering.⁹⁰ The inclusion of the **מנחה** as the second presentation of sacrifice in Leviticus suggests the beginnings of Cain's redemption: this offering from the field that God famously and mysteriously disregarded is now displayed as an offering in God's new economy of life.

This redemption of Cain and Israel is rooted in righting the wrongful taking of fruit for eating. Unlike the burnt offering, the **מנחה** is clearly identified with Israel's

⁸⁸ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 195-6.

⁸⁹ This term does appear in two other narratives in which it functions as a gift or present between human parties (Jacob and Esau in Gen 32, and Joseph and his brothers in Gen 43). It also appears in Exodus as a part of ritual instructions (Exod 29:41; 30:9; 40:29).

⁹⁰ Two of the three uses of **מנחה** apply to Cain's offering.

dietary practices.⁹¹ Within the ritual prescriptions of Leviticus 2, the grain offering may take the form of either raw flour burned on the altar or wheat cooked at home in one of three ways – in an oven, on a griddle, or in a pan – and then brought to the altar to be burned. This three-form enumeration of food preparation underlines the grain offering's integration in Israel's domestic life. Additionally, a portion of the **מִנְחָה** (regardless of what form it takes) is reserved for the priests' consumption (Lev 2:3, 10). The highlighting of the **מִנְחָה** as a food product is notable because it is the first sacrifice to be listed in Leviticus that is also a food source. As an offering from the soil, it follows God's provision of plants for food in Genesis 1:29-30; it is thus fitting that in this vision of creation restored, a cereal offering appears before sacrifices that involve meat-eating. It hints not only at the correction of Cain's offering of "fruit from the ground" (Gen 4:3), but also at the illicit eating of the fruit by Eve and Adam (Gen 3:6). Food from the field, figured as a temptation for Israel, both in the fall and in the testing that accompanied the gathering of manna, is thus transferred to the sphere of the holy. The quotidian – bread – is rightfully included in God's redemptive purposes. In what seems like a simple

⁹¹ The offering of an animal in the form of an **עֹלָה** does not presuppose a meat-eating society. Its offering by Noah in Genesis 8:20 occurs just before God grants humanity permission to eat meat in Genesis 9:3.

offering of grain, the מנחה alludes to healing the initial rupture of the first wrongfully taken and eaten fruit, the consequences of which have plagued humankind ever since.⁹²

3.3.5 The Peace Offering and Disciplined Appetites: Leviticus 3

The third and final voluntary offering outlined by Leviticus is the well-being or peace offering (זבח שלמים). While the מנחה consists of grain, a portion of which the priests consume, this sacrifice is oriented at providing meat for the table.⁹³ The term זבח means “slain offering whose meat is eaten by the worshipper,” but the precise meaning of the second word (שלמים) is more difficult to identify, given the range of meaning for the root שלם.⁹⁴ Milgrom notes the various options upon which the etymology of שלמים is based: “peace,” “whole, sound, harmonious,” “communion,” “repay,” “covenant,” or “gift.”⁹⁵ That this sacrifice is related to peace in some form is significant, given the concession to meat-eating in Genesis 9:2-3, in which fear and dread, and not shalom, characterizes humanity’s new relationship with the rest of the animal kingdom. As

⁹² Ephraim Radner interprets the first three sacrifices of Leviticus in light of Cain and Abel, but he sees Abel’s offering reflected in the burnt offering, Cain’s in the grain offering, and the peace offering as their reconciliation. He considers all three christologically. Ephraim Radner, *Leviticus* (Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos Press, 2008), 43-56.

⁹³ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 221.

⁹⁴ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 218.

⁹⁵ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 220-1.

explored in the previous chapter, the allowance for the consumption of meat is enveloped in a charge against murder and eating blood as a part of God's commissioning of Noah and the rest of humanity after the flood. Meat-eating is an accommodation to postlapsarian violence.

If the grain offering redeems sacrifices from the field, the well-being offering displays a form of meat-eating that facilitates peace rather than brokenness. The key to this restoration lies in the text's emphasis on limitation. Even though the majority of the sacrificial offering is returned to the donors for consumption, the text stresses that the fat, the kidneys, and the liver lobe are to be reserved for the altar. This instruction is repeated three times, with the articulation of each of the possible sacrificial animals for the well-being offering: cattle, sheep, and goats (3:3-4; 9-10; 14-15). Not only is this careful apportionment emphasized, but also within each set of descriptions, the term for fat (חֵלֶב) occurs at least three times.⁹⁶ Moreover, verse 16 highlights that "all fat" belongs to YHWH, and verse 17 concludes, "It shall be a perpetual statute throughout your generations, in all your settlements: you must not eat any fat or any blood." While verse 2 reiterates the instruction from the burnt offering that the blood is to be dashed against the sides of the altar, verse 17 links blood and fat as two items forbidden for

⁹⁶ With the instructions for an offering of sheep, this term appears four times.

human consumption.⁹⁷ By the end of chapter 3, fat has been identified twelve times as a part of the animal reserved for God. The word for fat also can mean “the choicest parts,” suggesting that these commands instruct the Israelites to exercise restraint and dedicate the best part of the animal to God. Israel’s consumption is disciplined in these practices.

The instructions for the well-being offering end in 3:17 with the admonition that “you must not eat any fat or any blood.” Jacob Milgrom points to the blood prohibition in Genesis 9:4-6 as an indication that human violence can be curbed through ritual means.⁹⁸ He goes on to note that by abstaining from the consumption of animal blood, this command in Genesis indicates that humans can be trained to refrain from human bloodshed, for humans will learn to appreciate blood as a symbol of life to be honored. Because blood is to be respected due to its identification with life – “the life of all flesh is its blood” (Lev 17:14) – abstinence from ingestion of blood marks a limitation on human aspirations: a rejection of the life-force of another.⁹⁹

The well-being offering’s focus on not eating blood is coupled with an emphasis on the disposal of blood. For each of the three types of animal offerings, the text repeats

⁹⁷ Milgrom notes, however, that the ban on fat applies only to sacrificial animals while the blood prohibition applies to all animals Israelites might consume. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 214-5.

⁹⁸ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 47.

⁹⁹ Nahum Sarna notes that consuming blood was an attractive practice in the ancient world because of the belief that one could enhance one’s own vitality by acquiring another’s life-essence through ingesting its blood. He cites the frequency of the Torah’s prohibition against eating blood as evidence of its appeal. Sarna, *Genesis*, 60-61.

the instructions for the priests to “dash its blood against all sides of the altar”(Lev 3:2, 8, 13).¹⁰⁰ Milgrom notes that this handling of the blood is necessary since it “is not part of the offering but is the life of the animal (17:10-14), which must be returned to God via the altar lest the slayer-offender be considered a murderer (17:3-4).”¹⁰¹ The suggestion that anyone who slaughters a sacrificial animal apart from the Tabernacle is guilty of murder in Leviticus 17:3-4 is significant. Following this logic, the well-being offering, along with many of the instructions in Leviticus related to diet (chapters 11, 17 and 22), function to train Israel for an even stricter end than the one imagined by God’s covenant with Noah in Genesis. By functionally limiting meat consumption to a small number of domesticated animals that must be sacrificed as a well-being offering, Israel’s consumptive habits are radically restricted.¹⁰² Even though participants in this ritual are able to consume the meat, by identifying and setting aside a prime portion and abstaining from taking the blood, they represent and embody the right order essential to life in God’s creation.¹⁰³ Israel learns that the world is not theirs to take.

¹⁰⁰ These instructions are found in the procedure for the burnt offering as well (Lev 1:5, 11, 15). The proper handling of blood in the well-being offering is particularly significant since ingesting it along with the meat portions might be a temptation.

¹⁰¹ Milgrom, *Leviticus* 1-16, 156.

¹⁰² Milgrom, *Leviticus* 1-16, 50.

¹⁰³ The command to refrain from consuming fat and blood is repeated in 7:22-27, where the text stresses that one “shall be cut off from your kin” for violation of this injunction.

Through food legislation in Leviticus, Israel learns that it must respect the lives of its fellow creatures on at least two levels. First, there are only a very few animals Israel is permitted to eat, so Israel refrains from considering non-sanctioned animals as items for human nourishment. Second, of the animals that are permitted for Israel to eat, their consumption occurs with at least some degree of regulation: in the rare case in which an Israelite would eat game, he would have to drain blood on the ground and cover it with dirt (17:13).¹⁰⁴ For domesticated animals, the well-being offering is prescribed, and both the blood and the fat are separated to be donated to God. In this way, Israel's appetite is both restricted and oriented to God as the giver of life. The following midrash cited by Milgrom clearly understands the formative power of the sacrificial system: "[The sacrifices]' may be compared to a king's son who was addicted to carcasses and forbidden meats. Said the king: Let him always eat at my table and he will get out of the habit."¹⁰⁵ For Israel, the habits that sacrifice inculcates are those necessary to live rightly in God's creation, habits that train Israel to see and treat creation not as goods for consumption but as creatures whose lives are precious to God. The well-being offering and its ritualization of slaughter for the purposes of meat-eating

¹⁰⁴ Milgrom notes that hunting game was practiced "by relatively few" once Israel was settled in Canaan. He contends that because Israel's economy was primarily agricultural, only the royal class could indulge in what had become a leisure activity. Milgrom, *Leviticus 17-22*, 1480.

¹⁰⁵ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 440.

reform wrongful killing, eating, and bloodshed in ways compatible with peace so that Israel is fit for life in God's presence.

3.3.6 The Purification Offering and Blood's Reordering: Leviticus 4

The well-being offering concludes the three voluntary offerings at the beginning of Leviticus. While the well-being offering strikes at a root of human violence by focusing on meat-eating and bloodshed, it is fitting that three sacrifices follow that are mandatory for the removal of sin and its effects. After describing the many ways an Israelite can voluntarily offer thanks and praise to God, the fourth chapter of Leviticus introduces a new category of offerings: those prescribed in the event that an Israelite inadvertently violates one of God's prohibitive commandments. While many common English translations refer to the sacrifice offered in chapter 4 as a "sin offering" (חטאת) (e.g. King James, NRSV, NIV), Milgrom contends that this sacrifice is better described as a "purification offering."¹⁰⁶

Based on his extensive research on Near Eastern cults, Jacob Milgrom posits that Israel, like many of Israel's neighbors, understood impurity to be "an aerial miasma that possessed magnetic attraction for the realm of the sacred."¹⁰⁷ The presence of physical

¹⁰⁶ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 253-4. Milgrom argues that many of the instances that call for this offering, such as childbirth or the completion of a Nazirite vow, rule out a link with sin.

¹⁰⁷ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 257.

impurities and offenses against God, whether deliberate or inadvertent, defile the sanctuary to varying degrees. Milgrom specifies that the greater the sin, the further into the sanctuary it penetrates.¹⁰⁸ The sacrificial blood used as a part of the purification offering functions to cleanse the Tabernacle of the pollution caused by Israel's sins and impurities. Blood acts as a ritual detergent because it is a symbol of life that is able to absorb impurities, symbolizing life's victory over death.¹⁰⁹

In a recent dissertation, Joshua Vis challenges Milgrom's thesis about the goals of the purification offering. He agrees with Milgrom that impurities soil the sanctuary and that the purification offering purges the sanctuary during the rituals for the Day of Atonement in Leviticus 16.¹¹⁰ In his analysis of the purification offering as a part of the regular cult described in Leviticus 4-5, however, Vis argues that the object of purification is the offerer, not the Tabernacle. What is achieved through the purification offering is forgiveness or removal of the guilt the offerer is carrying.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 257.

¹⁰⁹ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 46.

¹¹⁰ Vis, "The Purification Offering of Leviticus," 93-133, 187.

¹¹¹ Vis, "The Purification Offering of Leviticus," 168.

In this schema, guilt is “a substantive object” that burdens the individual who has done wrong.¹¹² The purification offering removes this guilt through the application of blood on various parts of the Tabernacle. If the sin is communal in nature, committed by the high priest or the community, blood is sprinkled seven times before the curtain separating the Holy of Holies (4:6, 17) and then applied to the horns of the incense altar (4:7, 18) before being poured at base of the burnt offering altar. Whenever a ruler or a commoner offends, the priest applies the blood to the horns of the burnt-offering altar and pours the remainder at its base (4:25, 30). The root **חט** appears in the introduction of each of the four cases (4:3, 13, 22, 27), highlighting that guilt is what is purged as a part of this ritual.¹¹³ Sin has damaged both the Tabernacle and those who committed the wrong. This ritual begins the process of repairing the individual.

Blood plays a major role in the purification offering: the Hebrew **חַטָּאת** occurs fifteen times in Leviticus 4, more than in any chapter in the Old Testament.¹¹⁴ Unlike either the burnt or well-being offering, the purification offering involves additional applications of blood upon various surfaces within the Tabernacle, depending on the

¹¹² Vis, “The Purification Offering of Leviticus,” 168. For a similar discussion of sin as conceived as a weight one bears, see Gary A. Anderson, *Sin: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 15-26.

¹¹³ Vis, “The Purification Offering of Leviticus,” 177.

¹¹⁴ The term occurs 13 times in Lev 17, 10 times in Num 35, 9 times in Lev 16, and 4 times each in Lev 1 and Lev 3.

circumstance. The priest's manipulation of blood in this ritual is its most distinctive element. When blood is brought inside the Tabernacle to purge the guilt of the high priest or the whole community, the sprinkling of blood before the curtain and its application on the horns of the incense altar are each described as "before YHWH" (יהוה לפני). This description is repeated twice, resulting in a four-fold emphasis that the blood is being applied "before YHWH" (4:6, 7, 17, 18).

Blood is being reordered in this process. Through its manipulation, those who have violated God's order take an initial step toward wholeness through the removal of guilt and the forgiveness they receive through the purification offering. While Milgrom explains blood's instrumentality as a cleansing agent, blood can also be understood symbolically as a sign of disorder, which God is correcting by means of the cult. Cain's spilling of Abel's blood that cries out to God from the ground (Gen 4:10) infects the created order. Even God's efforts at recreation through the flood only succeed in placing limits on bloodshed – eating of blood and manslaughter are prohibited (Gen 9:4-6). The good order of Genesis 1 in which every created element has its place has yet to be restored, as bloodshed itself has not been redeemed. The disorder of creation is manifest in Israelites who pollute the Tabernacle through inadvertent sin and who are burdened with the guilt of their wrong-doing.

The ritual use of blood in Leviticus 4 undoes the movement whereby the earth has "opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand" (Gen 4:11). This

rupturing inaugurated by Cain is now countered by Israel's ritualized giving of blood to God. God's presence has taken up residence in the Tabernacle, and the placement of blood on the various components within the shrine as a part of the purification offering of Leviticus 4 – the curtain in front of the Holy of Holies, the horns of the incense altar, the horns of the burnt offering altar, and the base of the burnt offering altar – is a means by which Israel returns spilled blood to its only rightful place: back to God. By doing so, Israel is purged of the inadvertent wrongs committed.

Gary Anderson notes the prominent role the idiom “to bear [the weight] of a sin” [נשא עון] plays within the Old Testament. He points to its usage by Cain after God punishes him for killing Abel, translating Cain's response, “The weight of my sin is too great for me to bear [גָּדוֹל עוֹנִי מִנִּשָּׂא].”¹¹⁵ He observes that this concept of removal of the “thingness” of sin plays a prominent role in the scapegoat ritual of Leviticus 16, for the “goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities” (16:21, וְנָשָׂא הַשְּׂעִיר עָלָיו אֶת־כָּל־עֲוֹנֹתָם).¹¹⁶ Anderson reflects on this conceptualization of sin in these two instances:

[W]e should reiterate that both the Day of Atonement ritual and the story of Cain point out yet again that sin has a certain “thing”-like quality. When Cain murdered Abel, it was as if a weight was created ex nihilo and placed on his

¹¹⁵ Anderson, *Sin*, 24.

¹¹⁶ Anderson, *Sin*, 23-24.

shoulders. At first Cain did not realize the amount of weight he would be forced to bear, but once confronted by God, the full extent of his crime came into view. In Cain's case, it is not clear whether the burden can ever be removed. . . . it appears that culpability for sin does not disappear. But in Leviticus 16, after God enters into a covenantal relationship with Israel, arrangements are made for removing the burdens that individual Israelites have had to bear.¹¹⁷

Vis contends that **אָשַׁם** and **נָשָׂא עוֹן** are synonymous in Leviticus 5:1-4 and argues that it supports his translation of verbal forms of **אָשַׁם** in Leviticus 4 as "carry guilt."¹¹⁸ It is the removal of guilt that the purification offering accomplishes. Blood, a sign of Cain's sin that leads to the bearing of its weight, becomes a means for the removal of its weight in the purification offering.¹¹⁹ The removal of this "extra thingness" from Israel is a necessary first step toward humanity's restoration.

Combined with the burnt offering, the grain offering, and the well-being offering, which all focus on bringing-near material goods, the purification offering's accent on blood's purgative role serves to undo habits of taking and bloodshed that have haunted humankind since the woman first took the fruit. Whereas Cain's spilling of blood condemns him to "be a fugitive and wanderer on the earth" (Gen 4:11-12), Israel's

¹¹⁷ Anderson, *Sin*, 26.

¹¹⁸ Vis, "The Purification Offering of Leviticus," 167-168. Vis specifies that guilt in this context is a type of suffering caused by sin (167). Anderson uses sin and iniquity interchangeably in his discussion of sin as a type of burden to be borne (*Sin*, 23).

¹¹⁹ To be clear, the removal of sin that the purification offering accomplishes is of a different degree than that which is accomplished on the Day of Atonement. Milgrom notes that wanton sins like Cain's murder of Abel are not able to be forgiven, but the polluting effects of these sins are able to be cleansed (Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 257).

proper use of blood purges Israel and is a key provision in the process that ensures that God will continue to abide with God's people. The fullness of Israel's and creation's restoration will be realized during the Day of Atonement ritual, when both the Tabernacle and Israel are purified.

3.3.7 The Graduated Purification Offering and the Restoration of Speech and Touch: Leviticus 5:1-13

Following the purification offering, Jacob Milgrom identifies a fifth form of sacrifice, what he calls the graduated purification offering, a discrete type of **קטנות** (Leviticus 5:1-13).¹²⁰ While related to the regular purification offering, Milgrom notes that the graduated purification offering is distinctive in both the nature of the violations that it addresses and in the variability of offerings allowed, based on one's economic status.¹²¹ Unlike the purification offering that attends to inadvertent violations of prohibitive commandments, the graduated purification offering is presented for four specific cases in which one fails to act:

- failure of a witness to speak upon a call for testimony (5:1),
- failure to seek purification after touching an unclean carcass (5:2),
- failure to seek purification after touching human impurity (5:3), and
- failure to fulfill a rashly spoken vow (5:4).

¹²⁰ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 309-10.

¹²¹ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 310.

With the exception of the first case, the remainder all involve an element of inadvertence as the text notes that one's failure is hidden from him. The first case thus stands out as a situation where sacrifice is offered for a wrong done deliberately. When one feels guilt for any of these lapses, he is first to confess his wrongdoing and then bring his purification offering (5:5-6).

The graduated purification offering is striking in its articulation of distinct instances in which this sacrifice applies, and it therefore draws attention to the nature of the violations that comprise it. Noticeably, the four wrongs addressed in this ritual comprise two types of activity, speech and touch. Moreover, the list of these violations forms a chiasmic structure whereby disordered speech bookends instances of contaminated touching, thereby highlighting the relationship between these two activities. Whereas God's speech in Genesis 1 creates the world very good, corrupted speech on the part of the serpent in Genesis 3:1-5 immediately leads to illicit taking by Eve and Adam in Gen 3:6, thereby unleashing the forces of death. The graduated purification offering thus draws attention to speech's power and, through the role of confession in this ritual, provides a means for its healing.

3.3.8 The Guilt Offering and Righting Wrong Use: Leviticus 5:14-26

The sixth and final type of sacrifice described for the people of Israel in the opening chapters of Leviticus is the guilt or reparation offering outlined in Leviticus 5:14-26. While the NRSV translates this offering **חטאת** as "guilt," Milgrom notes that

reparation is preferable because this sacrifice has the most to do with the restitution of desecrated items.¹²² Like the graduated purification offering, this type of sacrifice is notable both for its relative specificity and for the form in which these distinct instances are articulated. The reparation offering addresses three different situations:

- inadvertent desecration of God's "holy-things" [מִקְדָּשֵׁי יְהוָה] (5:14-16);
- a suspected, but unknown, offense against God's prohibited commandments (5:17-19);
- and a known offense against God's name through violation of an oath when stealing from or defrauding a neighbor (5:20-26).

The order of these three cases also creates an envelope structure in which the first and third involve a form of sacrilege related to a misuse of property. Enclosed in the middle is a case that is a variant of the purification offering: instead of a known, inadvertent violation of a prohibitive commandment, the reparation offering allows for expiation in the situation in which one feels guilt and thus suspects that he has disobeyed one of the commandments.

The reparation offering is distinctive in that it focuses on making restitution for the wrong committed. While in each of the three cases the participant is to bring an unblemished ram, the most expensive of all flock animals, in the first and third cases he is also to provide monetary compensation for the violated item equal to its value plus

¹²² Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 339.

one-fifth (5:16, 24).¹²³ Thus, this ritual draws attention to the importance of restoring property that has either been ruined or wrongfully taken. In the prior five sacrificial rituals described in Leviticus, the focus has been on the devotion of resources (either an animal or grain) to God and the proper manipulation of blood. The amount of ritual description for the reparation offering is surprisingly sparse, focusing only on what the offender is to bring to the sanctuary. While these ritual details are elaborated within the set of instructions for the priests in 7:1-7, the procedure described in Lev 5:14-26 mainly highlights financial provisions necessary for repairing that which has been violated.

The reparation offering provides a vision for a direct mending of both the cosmic and the social orders through the restoration of God's sancta and a neighbor's property. Life in God's new creation as presented in Leviticus involves annual symbolic cleansing of the Tabernacle (and thus the world) by blood on the Day of Atonement, as well as immediate acts of justice toward one's neighbor. While the prior sacrifices function to redeem Israel from the fall through a discipline of dedicating goods to God, the reparation offering directly addresses disordered taking, whether that be any of the Lord's "holy things," God's name, or a neighbor's goods. By affording expiation for a brazen sin in the final sacrificial case in Leviticus 1-7 – the use of God's name in the service of fraud or stealing – the reparation offering directly highlights the sin of

¹²³ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 333.

wrongful taking, as this impulse is employed against both God and neighbor.¹²⁴

Through providing a means of forgiveness for illicit acquisition of property (5:26), the reparation offering provides a remediation for the practices of wrongful taking that have characterized human history since the garden.

3.3.9 Conclusion

Leviticus chapter five concludes the sacrificial instructions given to Moses by God for the entire people. With the exception of the final addresses at the end of chapter seven, chapters six and seven are dedicated to ritual instructions for the priests. The conclusion to the instructions on sacrifice in chapter seven indicates that the first seven chapters form a distinct unit. Whereas Leviticus 1:1 explicitly inaugurates God's communication from the Tabernacle, while suggestively likening it to Mount Sinai, Leviticus 7:37-38 concludes God's instructions for the regular operations of the cult, notably emphasizing Sinai as the locale from which these directions were given.¹²⁵ Thus, the bracketing of this section reinforces the appreciation of the Tabernacle as a place of divine revelation in continuity with Sinai. This association underscores the importance of God's commands in Leviticus. While the text indicates that the glory of the Lord was

¹²⁴ Milgrom observes that a false oath "defrauds" God. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 367.

¹²⁵ Milgrom emphasizes the difference between Mount Sinai and the wilderness of Sinai and that only the instructions given to the priests in chapters 6-7 are said to have been given to Moses on Mount Sinai. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 437.

made manifest at Sinai (Exod. 24:16-17), this revelation importantly occurs immediately prior to Moses' reception of the instructions for the Tabernacle. God's glory appears, but in this instance there is a sense in which it is reserved for Moses: Moses alone enters the cloud and communicates with God for forty days. However, with the completion of the Tabernacle in Exodus 40, the Lord's glory fills the sanctuary (vv. 34-35). Thus, when the Lord speaks to Moses from the Tabernacle in Leviticus 1:1, the words carry a heightened sense of immediacy and intimacy for the whole community of Israel, one which Balentine understands to be the most "immediate and intimate discourse from God available in all creation."¹²⁶

Given the careful shaping of the Exodus account of the construction of the Tabernacle that echoes the creation story in Genesis, one may not be surprised to find a similar design in the details of the work of the Tabernacle. Just as the presence of God in the Tabernacle suggests God's nearness to Israel, a careful examination of Leviticus 1-7 reveals that God's instructions for the sacrificial system are pointedly directed toward the entire community. Between Leviticus 1:1 and 7:38, there are six speeches given to Moses for all of Israel (1:1; 4:1; 5:14, 20; 7:22, 28), and Leviticus 7:37-38 functions as a seventh mention that God has commanded Moses to instruct all the Israelites about

¹²⁶ Balentine, *The Torah's Vision of Worship*, 149.

sacrifice.¹²⁷ Leviticus 1-7 therefore contains a seven-fold structuring of God's directions to Israel,¹²⁸ thereby linking it to the seven speeches of instruction for the Tabernacle's construction and the seven speeches inaugurating creation.¹²⁹

In this way, while the building of the Tabernacle represents a renewal of creation through the construction of sacred space, the sacrificial "work" of the Tabernacle suggests a divine design for human activity. Sacrifice is a reconfiguring of human life consonant with God's intended purposes for creation. The inspired work of sacrifice, consisting of the six sacrifices of the regular cult displayed dramatically in the opening chapters of Leviticus, heals humanity's proclivity toward disordered taking inaugurated by the illicit taking of the fruit. Through this ritual formation, Israel learns the importance of wholeness and practices limitation. Israel is disciplined in its consumptive habits. Like the six days of creation and the six days of gathering manna that are ordered by the Sabbath, these six sacrifices await the arrival of the seventh, the Day of Atonement, a super-Sabbath(שבת שבתון), for the cult's completion, for this day enables

¹²⁷ Balentine, *Leviticus*, 12.

¹²⁸ To be sure, Leviticus 1-7 cannot be understood without the directions given explicitly to the priests. While important, these priestly instructions play a subsidiary role in God's communication to Israel in these opening chapters. Such an emphasis is fitting, for the new dispensation inaugurated at Sinai is one in which the whole community is to be in an intimate relationship with God.

¹²⁹ Gorman, *The Ideology of Ritual*, 49.

the fullest display of humankind's redemption apart from the incarnation and resurrection.

However, before the perfection of the cult, and thus Israel and the world, is realized in Leviticus 16, Leviticus disrupts its account of redeemed creation with a narrative. The story of the Tabernacle consecrated and desecrated sets the stage for the Day of Atonement while inviting further reflection on humanity's needed reformation.

3.4 Creation and Fall: Leviticus 8-10

3.4.1 The Tabernacle Inaugurated and God's Dwelling with Israel: Leviticus 8-9

Following the display of sacrifice in chapters 1-7, Leviticus 8-9 resumes the narrative of the cult's establishment at the end of Exodus. In these chapters the emphasis shifts to the priests, their consecration, and the essential role Aaron the high priest plays in preparing the Tabernacle for worship. The activities of chapter eight fulfill the commands given to Moses in Exodus 29, and the phrase "as the Lord commanded [Moses]" occurs seven times (8:4, 9, 13, 17, 21, 29, 36), structuring the chapter.¹³⁰ Significantly, a seven-fold occurrence of this phrase also frames the account of the production of priestly apparel in Exodus 39 and that of the erection of the Tabernacle in

¹³⁰ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 542-3.

Exodus 40.¹³¹ In all three cases, this septenary repetition suggests a perfect fulfillment of God's instructions. Exodus 39 explicitly attests to the perfect obedience of the people in creating the priestly garments, following the directions of Exodus 28, while Exodus 40 witnesses the obedience of Moses' assembly of the Tabernacle with the works made by the people. Moses' completion of the divine commands in Leviticus 8 consecrates the priests so that they can officiate in worship, an important component of which involves a seven-day period of installation (8:33, 35) in which they emerge with a new status enabling them to serve in the "new world" of the Tabernacle.

These three chapters taken together indicate a three-fold presentation of perfect obedience involving the people, the Tabernacle, and the priests, thereby suggesting a consummation of God's plan for a renewal of God's relationship with Israel, and by extension, of all creation. It is fitting that God's presence appears to all the people from the sanctuary (9:4, 23-4). While the glory of the Lord has appeared to Israel before, Milgrom notes this is the only time that God's-self, apart from God's glory, is promised to Israel in the P material.¹³² In addition, this revelation is for all of Israel, not just Israel's elites who see God in Exodus 24:10-11. According to Milgrom, this theophany that

¹³¹ Exod 39:1, 5, 7, 21, 26, 29, 31; 40:19, 21, 23, 25, 27, 29, 32. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 543.

¹³² Milgrom writes, "This is the only place in all of P in which the direct revelation of the deity is not mediated by his *kābôd*" (*Leviticus 1-16*, 574). Leviticus 9:4 reads: כִּי הַיּוֹם יִהְיֶה נִרְאָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם

concludes the inauguration of the Tabernacle is presented as more important than the theophany at Sinai.¹³³ The manifestation of God's presence before "all the people" from the proximity of the sanctuary represents a newly established closeness.

Since first mentioned in Exodus 16, God's glory has progressively approached Israel: in 16:10, the Israelites see God's glory in the cloud as they "looked toward the wilderness," and in Exodus 24: 16-17, God's glory is revealed at the top of Mount Sinai, but only Moses is allowed to approach the summit. Now, in Leviticus 9, God's glory appears in the midst of Israel, and further, God's presence is manifest in a new way as God accepts Israel's offerings, signified in the divinely authorized fire that consumes the fat and burnt offerings upon the altar (9:24).¹³⁴ All the people respond in awe and worship, shouting for joy¹³⁵ and falling on their faces. In many ways, this moment could be considered a high point of Torah, for God's intended relationship with humanity has been restored. Leviticus 9 celebrates the full emancipation from Egypt: it is only now that Israel is able to sacrifice to God, thereby living into their vocation to be a priestly kingdom and a holy nation (Exod 19:6).

Reading Leviticus 8 and 9 in continuity with the end of Exodus yields a powerful appreciation of the sequence of the Tabernacle's completion, its inauguration, and the

¹³³ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 574.

¹³⁴ Milgrom posits that what the people see in 9:24 is "God himself and not just his *kābôd*" (*Leviticus 1-16*, 591).

¹³⁵ So Milgrom translates קָנַן in Lev 9:24. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 591.

way in which it suggests a “three-fold perfection.” The presence of Leviticus 1-7 is significant for the way that it disrupts the narrative flow. Time has been interrupted in the midst of this carefully crafted presentation of God’s re-creative activities to attend to the vision of the regular sacrificial life of the cult. This break in the story line serves to highlight the dramatic presentation of the six forms of sacrifice as itself a key component of the new life God is inaugurating. Wedged between the erection of the sanctuary and the joyous account of its inauguration “on the eighth day,” the audience of Leviticus sees a dynamic made possible by the cult, one in which God is drawing people near and undoing humanity’s habituation to selfish grasping for preeminence and control. In the midst of the new thing God is doing in establishing the Tabernacle is a display of God’s provisions for undoing humanity’s greed and bloodshed that have corrupted the created order since the garden. The sacrificial regime of Leviticus 1-7 reforms Israel so that it can inhabit its rightful place in creation that God intended for humankind from the beginning.

3.4.2 The Tabernacle Desecrated: Leviticus 10

Just as Adam and Eve’s stay in the garden was short-lived, so too is the moment of wholeness celebrated in chapter 9. After the glory of the Lord blazes forth and the people rejoice in worship, Aaron’s sons, Nadab and Abihu, offer “alien fire” not

commanded by God (10:1). Immediately, fire from before the Lord flares to consume them. While various theories abound to explain the exact nature of their transgression,¹³⁶ Nadab and Abihu's deaths while in the service of God reveal the fragility of humanity's ability to live in close proximity to God's holiness. The very good state of the inaugurated Tabernacle, and thus of creation renewed, is immediately damaged by human activity. The story of God's re-creative work is jeopardized as human action once again leads to death in the midst of God's good order.

Gary Anderson reflects on the significance of this moment of desecration following the "the very apogee of Torah" in the inauguration of Israel's cult in Lev 9:23-24.¹³⁷ He compares it to other significant moments in Israel's history in which a definite pattern is in display: namely, "as soon as Israel receives the benefaction of her election, she offers not praise and gratitude but rebellion."¹³⁸ He considers the editorial shaping of the canon to reflect an interest in establishing "the *immediacy* of human disobedience," what he considers to be the Old Testament's understanding of "original sin."¹³⁹ He uses this pattern to work backwards toward an appreciation of the placement of the Eden

¹³⁶ Cf. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 633-5.

¹³⁷ Gary A. Anderson, "Biblical Origins and the Problem of the Fall," *Pro Ecclesia* 10 (2001): 17-30.

¹³⁸ Anderson, "Biblical Origins and the Problem of the Fall," 26.

¹³⁹ Anderson, "Biblical Origins and the Problem of the Fall," 26.

narrative following the glorious display of creation's order in Genesis 1. He concludes, "By placing the story of Adam and Eve after the creation account of P, the editor of Torah has said something very profound about the propensity of human nature toward disobedience."¹⁴⁰

Anderson develops his thesis to provide an account for a biblical understanding of a doctrine of the fall. In doing so, he is mainly concerned with establishing the nature of the problem so as to explicate Paul's use of the Adam narrative in service of establishing a universal account of sin.¹⁴¹ What Anderson does not develop are the ways in which Torah points toward a cure for this human flaw that causes alienation from God. The new creation of the Tabernacle, with its attendant disciplines and new forms of life, is the means by which God seeks to heal humanity's proclivity toward disorder.

The placement of the narrative of Nadab and Abihu's violation suggests that the provisions of sacrifice displayed in Leviticus 1-7 are not sufficient for humanity's healing. The narrative action ends, only to resume again in chapter 16 when Aaron complies with God's instructions for the Day of Atonement ritual that purifies the sanctuary, a ritual initially needed because of the pollution caused by Nadab and

¹⁴⁰ Anderson, "Biblical Origins and the Problem of the Fall," 28.

¹⁴¹ Anderson, "Biblical Origins and the Problem of the Fall," 29-30.

Abihu's sin and corpse contamination following their deaths.¹⁴² The account of Nadab and Abihu's disordered actions function as another "fall narrative," for human action has once again violated God's designs. The purity legislation that follows is best understood as providing a means of re-creation that allows for the fullness of creation's reconstitution on the Day of Atonement.

3.5 Restoring the Body: Leviticus 11-15

The insertion of chapters 11-15 in the midst of the narrative effects a disruption similar to that of chapters 1-7.¹⁴³ In his commentary on Leviticus, Gerstenberger questions why this block of material on the various purity regulations appears at this moment in the text, especially since these stipulations pertain directly to the proper functioning of the cult in the first place: having an impure status disqualifies one from offering sacrifice.¹⁴⁴ Their placement makes no sense relative to the narrative progression. He concludes that this structuring is due to the text's evolutionary history

¹⁴² Milgrom posits that the Day of Atonement rite was originally an "emergency measure" for severe instances of pollution like that caused by Nadab and Abihu's trespass. He notes that the opening verse of chapter 16 – "The Lord spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they drew near before the Lord and died" – establishes a connection between chapters 16 and 10, such that chapters 11-15 can be understood as an insertion detailing all the types of impurities that could pollute the Tabernacle. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 1011.

¹⁴³ Wenham notes the parallel between Lev 1-7 and 11-15. For him, both sections provide background information for the texts that follow them. Wenham, *Leviticus*, 161.

¹⁴⁴ Erhard S. Gerstenberger, *Leviticus: A Commentary* (trans. Douglas W Stott; OTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 17. Milgrom does not address why it is logical for the text to discuss impurity regulations at this seemingly late moment in the series of ritual instructions.

involving multiple tradents and scribes, concluding, "The Pentateuchal material is often organized without any order at all. Old buildings exhibit a similarly disparate structure after several renovations."¹⁴⁵

This break in the text need not signal editorial inconsistency. The interruption of narrative nearly mirrors the beginning of the Leviticus. While chapters 1-7 detailing Israel's sacrificial practices are embedded in the account of the inauguration of the Tabernacle between Exodus 40 and Leviticus 8, these chapters on the purity system are nestled within the story of the sanctuary's desecration (Leviticus 10) and re-consecration (Leviticus 16). Similarly, chapters 11-15 contain six divine speeches that structure the purity regulations that are being taught in this section (11:1; 12:1; 13:1; 14:1; 14:33; 15:1).¹⁴⁶ The seventh speech occurs at the beginning of chapter 16 with the instructions for the Day of Atonement ritual that purifies the Tabernacle. As the seventh sacrifice of the regular cult and the seventh speech related to purity, the Day of Atonement completes both systems.

The regulations prescribed in both chapters 1-7 and 11-15 can thus be understood as key moments in God's re-creative processes. Just as chapters 1-7 present a vision of Israel's redemption through offering and blood manipulation, chapters 11-15 provide

¹⁴⁵ Gerstenberger, *Leviticus*, 17-18.

¹⁴⁶ Gerstenberger, *Leviticus*, 129.

further reflection on and remediation for Israel's entrenchment in death. Together they suggest the need for a two-fold healing: for the complete restoration of creation made possible by the Day of Atonement in chapter 16, Israel must be formed by both sacrifice and purity observance. If sacrifice rights wrongful taking through drawing near to God accompanied by proper use of blood, the purity system seeks to identify, limit, and make amends for humanity's propensity to be a bearer of disorder and death.

Nadab and Abihu's sin recapitulates the fall and highlights the foreign element that has entered creation as a consequence of humanity's first act of disobedience: death. Jacob Milgrom argues that the symbolization of death is the key to understanding the impurity system of chapters 11-15, where only three sources of impurity are identified: corpses/carcasses, skin disease, and genital discharges.¹⁴⁷ God introduces the purity legislation after the Tabernacle's violation when he commands Aaron that the priests "are to distinguish between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean; and you are to teach the people of Israel all the statutes that the Lord has spoken to them through Moses" (10:10-11). The verb translated "distinguish" (הבדיל) also means "to set apart" or "to separate" and appears five times in Genesis 1 as a constitutive act of God's creation.¹⁴⁸ In this restored creation that is the Tabernacle, Israel

¹⁴⁷ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 45-47.

¹⁴⁸ Balentine, *Leviticus*, 86; Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, 118.

is to live into its calling of embodying the *imago Dei* through honoring God's boundaries and promoting life. God's instruction to the priests and to all of Israel to distinguish between the holy and the common and the clean and the unclean underlines the claim that Israel is to identify and separate from forces of death.

Nadab and Abihu's transgression in bringing foreign fire represents the danger the sanctuary faces when Israel, in an impure state, approaches God. The death Israel symbolically carries when impure, like the strange fire, is an alien element that has no place in God's presence in the renewed creation. The impurity system provides a means to counteract the forces of death and symbolically make Israel whole.

God undoes Israel's enmeshment with death through imposing new dietary boundaries in the legislation in Leviticus 11. Being made in the image of God suggests seeing and honoring the divisions God has established in God's very good creation. This claim is made directly in Leviticus 11 as Israel is given "the law pertaining to land animal and bird and every living creature that moves through the waters and every creature that swarms upon the earth, to make a distinction (הַבְּרִיל) between the unclean and the clean, and between the living creature that may be eaten and the living creature that may not be eaten" (Lev 11:46-47). Israel is being instructed to make distinctions among animals based on a shared classification system with Genesis 1 involving living

things from the land, waters, and air.¹⁴⁹ Leviticus 11 harkens back to humanity's vocation in Genesis 1, with one crucial difference: whereas humankind's embodiment of the *imago Dei* in Genesis 1 is constituted by its management of the vegetative food supply for the flourishing of the whole created order,¹⁵⁰ Israel's task in Leviticus 11 is to discipline its own consumptive practices relative to meat. Humanity's meat-eating is associated with its violence (Gen 9:3-4).

Milgrom observes that this commissioning is directly related to God's call to Israel to become holy as a form of *imitatio Dei*, as the root holy (שָׁדָף) occurs five times in Leviticus 11:44-45.¹⁵¹ He argues that the dietary laws function as an ethical system that limit and shape Israel's bloodshed via meat-eating by restricting what animals Israel is allowed to eat.¹⁵² He notes that according to Leviticus 11, Israel is only allowed to eat "cattle, sheep, goats, several kinds of fish, pigeons, turtledoves, several other nonraptorial birds, and locusts" in addition to some permitted forms of game available

¹⁴⁹ Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 67-71; cf. Balentine, *Leviticus*, 95; Wenham, *Leviticus*, 165.

¹⁵⁰ Davis, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture*, 58.

¹⁵¹ Milgrom, *Leviticus: A Book of Ritual and Ethics*, 106-7.

¹⁵² Milgrom, *Leviticus: A Book of Ritual and Ethics*, 103. Milgrom also points to two other regulations that also contribute to "taming the killer instinct in humans": the prohibition against profane slaughter, where most meat-eating must accompany sacrifice per Lev 17 and outlawing the consumption of blood. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 704-13.

only to hunters.¹⁵³ This catalogue is notably limited, given the concession God grants to Noah in Genesis 9:3-4 that allows humans to eat meat as long as they abstain from the blood. This chapter also places a firm limitation on Israel's ability to touch animal carcasses, repeating fifteen times that various carcasses will render one impure.¹⁵⁴ Israel is to refrain from death, via restricted meat-eating and by avoiding direct contact with dead bodies.

While Leviticus 11 focuses on disciplines related to what Israelites put into their bodies through eating, chapters 12-15 attend to impurity arising from various forms of bodily flow or disruption. Postpartum blood, skin disease, and genital discharges all occasion various degrees of impurity. Milgrom contends that the loss of blood associated with birth or menstruation along with other genital emissions occasion impurity because they "symbolize the forces of death" by representing a "threat to life."¹⁵⁵ Similarly, the skin disease described in Leviticus 13-14 has the appearance of "peeling off" in a way that suggests that the body is disintegrating.¹⁵⁶ The sufferer thus bears a symbol of death in his flesh as his skin resembles decay.

¹⁵³ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 735.

¹⁵⁴ Lev 11:8, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 38, 39, 40.

¹⁵⁵ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 768,

¹⁵⁶ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 817-20.

Throughout chapters 11-15, the designation of various forms of impurity has served to call Israel's attention to the need to separate from sources of death. At a minimum, separation involves staying away from the sanctuary during the time of one's impurity. For severe cases of impurity, like scale disease, the impure person is quarantined from the community so as not to communicate his impure status to others. While periods of separation from the Tabernacle range from hours (in the case of a regular emission of semen) to years (for those with scale disease or an abnormal genital discharge), Israel is taught that the life-opposing forces it carries within its bodies are incompatible with God's presence. At the same time, God provides a ritual means involving sacrifice to reintegrate those who have had severe impurities into the worship life of the cult. Through offerings where sacrificial blood is brought near to God, Israel atones for its embodiment of death and the pollution it spawns.

Because impurity arises from normal bodily processes, experiencing impurity functions to train Israel to see itself as inescapably bound to forces of death. Douglas highlights that impurity variously arises in chapters 12-15 from a "breach on the body's limits."¹⁵⁷ Because impurity arises from the breakdown of bodily barriers, Israel is figured as a body vulnerable to disorder and bloodletting, unable to control either its own loss of life, and, by extension, the loss of life of its human and non-human

¹⁵⁷ Douglas, *Leviticus as Literature*, 185.

neighbors. Leaking bodies suggest a failure by humans to practice limitation and maintain God's ordering. Douglas observes, "The breach of the body's containing walls evidenced by escape of vital fluids and the failure of its skin cover are vulnerable states which go counter to God's creative action when he set up separating boundaries in the beginning."¹⁵⁸ These boundaries are oriented toward creation's flourishing. The loss of blood associated with birth or the discharge of genital fluids represent disorder relative to God's commission to humankind to "be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth" (Gen 1:28). Fluid flows associated with birth and sex are defiling because reproduction is a task by which humans image God.¹⁵⁹

On its own, humankind is the very opposite of תמיים (whole / righteous), far from the image of God present on the harmonious rest of the seventh day when all of creation was very good. The transgression of God's limits in the garden led to the unavoidable curse of death, played out in a history of violence and displayed in the vulnerability of

¹⁵⁸ Douglas, *Leviticus as Literature*, 190.

¹⁵⁹ Middleton observes, "God's twofold creative activity of separation and filling is replicated in the twofold task assigned to humanity in 1:28 ('fill the earth and subdue it'), though here the order is reversed. That is, humans are called to imitate or continue God's own twofold creative activity by populating and organizing (in a manner appropriate to humans) the unformed and unfilled earth" (*The Liberating Image*, 89). This claim counters that posed by Jonathan Klawans who contends that sexual impurity is better understood not in terms of death but because sex is an activity that compromises Israel's ability to be like God (*Purity, Sacrifice, and the Temple*, 57-58). On my account, sex defiles because of the losses of fluid associated with it – discharges that represent the loss of potential life and therefore humanity's often impotent ability to reproduce. As moments of creation, birth and sex are messy and therefore far from the well-ordered and contained depiction of creation in Genesis 1. It is this creational disarray that is defiling.

both the personal and social body. Embodying disorder, humans are unfit for the wholeness of creation represented by the Sabbath.

Douglas concludes that the text's description of the human body's ability to pollute the Tabernacle, combined with similar purification procedures for each, suggests that the body and the Tabernacle are analogues of each other.¹⁶⁰ Just as the bodies of Israelites can pollute the Tabernacle, so too can the work of the sanctuary make Israel whole. In doing so, more than Israel is restored. By adopting practices of limitation and embodying right order, humanity's reformation benefits all members of the ecosystem. From the soil that yields produce to the animals that creep upon it, creation is no longer a victim of wanton human exploitation. Unlike the death-dealing economy of Pharaoh's Egypt, Israel's life shaped by sacrifice cultivates habits of offering and restraint, not hoarding and death.

The Day of Atonement ritual described in chapter 16, in which the Tabernacle is cleansed of the pollution adhering to it because of Israel's impurities, serves as a remedy for death's power that infects the entire created order. Instead of humankind's death-prone bodies – represented by leaking fluids and disintegrating skin and realized in the figure of the blood-spiller Cain – the body of the Tabernacle, on the Day of Atonement represents a body of wholeness and life. On this day, Israel re-orders blood by bringing

¹⁶⁰ Douglas, *Leviticus as Literature*, 185-92.

it carefully near to God. This sacrificial blood is symbolically given a body when placed within areas of the Tabernacle. Through incorporation into “God’s body,” blood purifies the social and cosmic bodies and restores creation to God’s original design. This moment of re-creation is a rebirth.¹⁶¹ On this day deemed a Sabbath, wholeness is achieved for bodies, space, and time. Through the disciplines of the cult, Israel is a new people.

3.6 Creation’s Restoration: The Day of Atonement, Leviticus 16

The narrative of the cult’s inauguration resumes in chapter 16 from where it left off in chapter 10 with the Tabernacle’s defilement by Nadab and Abihu. The ritual account in chapter 16 provides the seventh form of sacrifice following the six outlined in Leviticus 1-5, the seventh speech related to impurity beginning with Leviticus 11, and a display of “super” blood manipulation. The Day of Atonement, the capstone moment in the cult, is a super Sabbath (שבת שבתון) in which the world is reordered and restored.

In many ways, the ritual described in chapter 16 is an expansion and magnification of the purification offering outlined in Leviticus 4. While the prior

¹⁶¹ Bringing blood into the Tabernacle for the purposes of life reverses and counters death, both in the form of killing and in the form of discharged genital fluids. This movement on the Day of Atonement is akin to a rebirth, as blood in the Tabernacle creates a momentary new reality as Israel and the Tabernacle/cosmos are declared pure. Instead of bloodshed and the unavoidable losses that accompany sex and childbirth – signs of death – Israel, through God’s provisions of sacrifice on the Day of Atonement, creates a Sabbath wholeness. Per Klawans’ understanding of the importance of imitating God as an organizing principle of sacrifice, Israel is like God in this moment through this act of regeneration.

description of the purification offering attends to the purgation of the offerer's guilt for singular instances of error, the purification offering as a part of the Day of Atonement ritual involves the purgation of the Tabernacle from the pollution of Israel's sins and impurities accrued over time. This day involves participation of every member of Israel, providing rites for both the high priest and the rest of the community that attend to the purging of sin not redressed by ordinary sacrifices over the course of the year. Only on this day are brazen sins forgiven and their effects purged from the sanctuary. According to Jacob Milgrom, the impurities have accumulated in the sanctuary and have infected the heart of the Tabernacle, and the ritual for the Day of Atonement directs the high priest to purge the Holy of Holies.¹⁶² After purifying this most sacred area, the high priest proceeds to purge the shrine and the outer altar.

Like the purification offering described in chapter 4, the Day of Atonement ritual calls for a seven-fold sprinkling of blood. However, this septenary practice is greatly expanded in chapter 16: verses 14-19 dictate this procedure for each zone of the Tabernacle, the Holy of Holies, the shrine, and the outer altar, involving blood from both the offense-offering bull for the high priest and his household and the offense-offering goat for the rest of the community. Milgrom analyzes these instructions and concludes that the total number of blood manipulations involved in purging the Tabernacle is 49,

¹⁶² Milgrom, *Leviticus: A Book of Ritual and Ethics*, 162.

the equivalent of seven times seven, thereby suggesting a “super” perfection.¹⁶³ This purgation involves a complete purification in each area of the sanctuary by all of Israel. The new creation that is the Tabernacle is thus restored. At the heart of this renewal is the high priest’s purification of the Holy of Holies: with this ritual of sprinkling blood before God, the high priest is putting blood in its most rightful place. It is at this moment that Cain’s disordered bloodshed is redeemed, for the blood no longer cries out to God from the ground but rather abides near God’s presence.¹⁶⁴

Blood is re-ordered in at least two ways in this process. First, Israel symbolically reverses the spillage of blood that marks the disorder of creation in Genesis 9:1-7. Through this enactment, Israel embodies the truth that bloodshed is incompatible with hosting God’s presence. Second, Nehemia Polen understands blood’s application within the Tabernacle to be “a gift of the self” that “renews and restores the sacred bond between God and Israel, collectively and individually.”¹⁶⁵ Israel’s obedience in bringing blood to God signifies that Israel is being reoriented: namely, that Israel is committed to drawing near to God in the new creation God has established with the Tabernacle.

¹⁶³ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 1038-9.

¹⁶⁴ This redemption is perfected in Jesus’ offering of his body and blood through the resurrection.

¹⁶⁵ Polen, “Leviticus and Hebrews,” 219.

Sacrifice transforms the human condition, for through it Israel becomes a people constituted by offering.

The vocabulary of chapter 16 emphasizes that the Day of Atonement effects a total purification, not only for the sanctuary but also for the people. Consider these two seminal points of description of the ritual. First, after detailing the purgation of the Holy of Holies, the text concludes in verse 16, “Thus he shall purge the adytum of the pollution (הַטְּמָאָה) and transgression of the Israelites, including all of their sins; and he shall do likewise for the Tent of Meeting, which abides with them in the midst of their pollution.”¹⁶⁶ In this account, God enables Aaron to purge the sanctuary of pollution, transgression, and “all of their sins.” This three-fold description includes the entirety of ways Israel pollutes the Tabernacle: through ritual impurities described in chapters 11-15 and moral impurities arising from either error or inadvertence or from flagrant acts of rebellion.¹⁶⁷ Second, the scapegoat ritual instructs that “Aaron shall lean both of his hands upon the head of the live goat and confess over it all of the iniquities and transgressions of the Israelites, including all of their sins, and put them on the head of the goat; and it shall be sent off to the wilderness... Thus the goat shall carry upon it all

¹⁶⁶ Milgrom’s translation. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 1010.

¹⁶⁷ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 1033-4.

of their iniquities to an inaccessible region" (16:21-22).¹⁶⁸ This account similarly presents a three-fold articulation of Israel's sin: "all of the iniquities (אֲשֶׁר) and transgressions of the Israelites, including all of their sins." Here, "iniquities" has replaced the term "pollution" found in the prior formulation; unlike the blood rite that purges the sanctuary, the scapegoat enables a removal of the wrongdoings themselves. Milgrom notes that the term translated "iniquities" corresponds in importance to impurities, therefore reinforcing the understanding of a total removal of Israel's wrongs, "the causes of the sanctuary's impurities, all of Israel's sins, ritual and moral alike, of priests and laity alike."¹⁶⁹ As a result of this purgation of sin from the Tabernacle and from the people, Vis notes that the Israelites move from "a state of being forgiven to a state of ritual purity."¹⁷⁰ Leviticus 16:30 declares that as a result of the actions of this day, Israel "shall be clean before the Lord." On this day, humanity has been reconstituted.

Through the blood of the purification offerings and the scapegoat, sin and its effects are completely removed from the entire community and the Tabernacle, in a moment of re-creation. As Stephen Geller describes, not only does the sanctuary return to its "pristine originality" manifest in the momentous theophany in chapter 9, but also

¹⁶⁸ Milgrom's translation. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 1010.

¹⁶⁹ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 1043-4.

¹⁷⁰ Vis, "The Purification Offering of Leviticus," 131.

Israel is restored to “a state of closeness to God that mankind experienced only before the rebellion in Eden.”¹⁷¹ In this way, the Day of Atonement supremely actualizes the *telos* of the cult: the redemption of humanity whereby Israel can experience the fullness of God’s intimacy as a part of the right ordering of creation. Fittingly, the text declares the Day of Atonement **שבת שבתון**, a “Sabbath of Sabbaths” (16:31). With the Day of Atonement time, space, and humanity are healed such that Israel is able to participate with God in God’s rest, which crowns creation.¹⁷² On this day, wholeness has returned to Israel and the cosmos.

3.7 Atonement and Sabbath

As a result of Israel’s participation in the sacrificial system as outlined in Leviticus 1-7 and 11-15, God redeems humankind and its tragic legacy represented in Cain as Israel learns limitation and respect for life through separating from death. With this learning, Israel is “prepared” for the Day of Atonement and the wholeness of

¹⁷¹ Geller, *Sacred Enigmas*, 73-4.

¹⁷² In this way, Lev 16 eclipses Lev 9. Not only does the Day of Atonement allow the cult to stay in existence, but, by being incorporated into the annual rhythm of Israel’s life, the Day of Atonement also enables the provisions of restoration, recreation, and intimacy to be experienced on a yearly basis. Thus, while chapter 9 is unique for its revelation of God’s presence, chapter 16 accentuates the importance of the cult’s presence, for through this ritual system it affords a means by which the wholeness and glory celebrated in Lev 9 can be regularly reclaimed.

creation it represents. Israel is ready to assume humanity's rightful role as the *imago Dei* on the Sabbath.

During this special day set apart from the rest of the year, Israel is granted the opportunity to reflect on God's gracious availability experienced in the daily life of the cult as well as to mourn over the fragility of life and the ever-threatening presence of death. These practices allow Israel as a community to see sin, take responsibility for it, and thus be able to confess it, as the high priest does when transferring Israel's sins to the scapegoat (16:21). Israel is able to tell the truth about death's power over their personal and communal lives as they are inclined, like Cain, to be blood-letters.

Israel is able to repent over the necessity for the Day of Atonement – over the fact that sin continues to infect Israel and threaten God's presence in their midst – by honoring God's command to practice self-denial (16:29, 31). On this day deemed a full Sabbath (שבת שבתון) where Israel and creation are restored, it is fitting for Israel to embody limitation, for it was humankind's rejection of God and God's limits that unleashed disorder, decay, and death. In doing so, Israel performs what it means to be made in the image of God. Like the lessons of manna and the weekly practice of Sabbath-keeping, abstention from work and self-denial on Yom Kippur reinforces Israel's dependence on God, reminding Israel of the reality of God's provision: Israel is totally dependent on God's grace for Israel's existence. This trust enables a right ordering of Israel's life, in the absence of which sin abounds, as witnessed all too clearly

in humankind's rejection of God in Adam, Eve, Cain, and Pharaoh. Through daily participation in the cult, Israel engages in a full range of experiences that turn it away from death in their drawing near to God, practices that are integral to a relationship with God such that when wholeness comes most fully on the Day of Atonement, Israel can rest with God in the blessedness of the Sabbath.

Sacrifice, Sabbath, and the restoration of creation converge on Yom Kippur. The cult not only makes this day of wholeness possible; the training it provides Israel also enables other forms of Sabbath-keeping: the Sabbath day, sabbatical years, and the Jubilee. The connection between the Day of Atonement and Sabbath is highlighted in Leviticus 23. This chapter outlines the liturgical year and begins with the command to observe the Sabbath day, emphasizing that Israel is to refrain from all tasks (23:3). The Sabbath is described as **שבת שבתון**, the same phrase used three times in Exodus (16:23; 31:15; 35:2) to describe the Sabbath day, and once before in Leviticus 16:31 to describe the Day of Atonement. Throughout chapter 23 the Day of Atonement is the only other appointed time similarly declared to be a "Sabbath of Sabbaths" (**שבת שבתון**) (23:32). Like the Sabbath day described earlier in the chapter, the Day of Atonement is a time when no work is to be done (23:28, 30, 31). Jacob Milgrom cites this similarity as reason

to hold the two days to be equal in importance.¹⁷³ At the same time, the penalty for violating the command to rest on the Day of Atonement (23:30) mirrors that of the Sabbath commands embedded in the instructions for constructing the Tabernacle (Exodus 31:15; 35:2). In both cases, the penalty is death.¹⁷⁴ Such a punishment is fitting, for the rejection of God's rest is a rejection of entering into God's presence. Death reigns when humans abandon God.

Leviticus unequivocally equates the Sabbath day to the Day of Atonement through both vocabulary and content. The reiteration of this linkage that occurs in chapter 23 only reinforces the claim posited in chapter 16 that the Day of Atonement, the crown of the sacrificial system that constitutes the life of the Tabernacle, corresponds to the crown of creation, the Sabbath. At the same time, the failure to exercise the restraint necessary to enter into God's rest reveals one's disordered dependencies. By not being able to trust in God's provision through the practice of rest, one witnesses instead to a reliance on self-focused acquisition. This inevitably violates the entire community – human and nonhuman alike, and thereby disrupts God's intended order where each lives within divinely prescribed limits.

¹⁷³ Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 3B; New York: Doubleday, 2001), 2023.

¹⁷⁴ At this point, Milgrom claims the parity breaks down because of how the penalty is administered, concluding that the Sabbath day is more severe. Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27*, 2024. For my purposes, it is sufficiently significant that death is clearly prescribed for both.

The role of sacrifice in enabling Sabbath-keeping is necessarily extended to sabbatical years and the Jubilee. In chapter 25 Israel is instructed to observe a sabbatical year for the land. This seventh year in which the land is to rest is similarly declared to be an “absolute Sabbath” (שבת שבתון). In this way, the land, like the people of Israel, is able to enjoy its created *telos*.¹⁷⁵ While the land lies fallow, the text indicates that the year’s after-growth will provide sufficient provision for seven recipients: “for you, your male slave, your female slave, your hired worker, your sojourner, your cattle and wild beast(s) in your land” (25:6-7).¹⁷⁶ This seven-fold designation suggests that the Sabbath yield is sufficient to provide for the entire community.¹⁷⁷

After describing the sabbatical year, the text introduces the Jubilee, the year following “seven Sabbaths of years” (25:8). Though Jubilee is not specifically described as a Sabbath, Levenson describes it as “the Sabbath of sabbatical years” and Shead notes that the act of sanctifying this year (25:10, 12) aligns it with Sabbath day (Gen 2:3; Exod 20:8, 11).¹⁷⁸ The Jubilee, like the sabbatical year, is a year in which the land is to rest, but

¹⁷⁵ Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27*, 2153.

¹⁷⁶ Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27*, 2159.

¹⁷⁷ Consider the beginning of verse 6: וְהִיְתָה שֵׁבֶת הָאָרֶץ לָכֶם לְאֹכְלָהּ. While most translators interpret this phrase as an ellipsis for the “the land’s Sabbath yield shall be food for you” (Milgrom, Fox, NRSV, TNK), the original maintains the intriguing suggestion that the land’s Sabbath is food in itself, for the practice of Sabbath that allows the land to rest is certainly life-giving in a multitude of ways.

¹⁷⁸ Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, 103; Andrew Shead, “An Old Testament Theology of the Sabbath Year and Jubilee,” *RTR* 61, no. 1 (April 2002): 19-33, 21. Milgrom notes that the term “Sabbath” is

it also is a year of release in which households are to return to their ancestral holdings. For this to be the case, Israel must cancel all debts of their kinsmen, whether in the form of land possession or indentured servitude.

Significantly, the Jubilee begins on the Day of Atonement (25:9). Traditional Jewish commentary has not made much of this connection,¹⁷⁹ but the perfection achieved on the Day of Atonement resonates with the instantiation of the ideal community envisioned during the Jubilee. The very habits and practices that make the Day of Atonement possible also enable the sabbatical year and Jubilee. By regularly offering God's gifts to God through the sacrificial system, Israel is similarly enabled to treat the land as God's (cf. 25:23-24), so Israelites who have acquired land through systems of debt are required and empowered to release it on the Jubilee. Through the disciplining of consumptive patterns, the sacrificial system trains Israel to trust God for God's care and provision such that they need not hoard personal resources. Sacrificial formation yields a renewed ordering of Israel's household in the Jubilee.

"assiduously avoided" when describing the Jubilee because the latter only pertains to Israelites and not aliens residing in the land, in contrast to the sabbatical year. Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27*, 2171.

¹⁷⁹ Jonathan Safren, "Jubilee and the Day of Atonement," in *Proceedings of the Twelfth World Congress of Jewish Studies, Jerusalem, July 29-August 5, 1997, division A: the Bible and its world* (ed. Ron Margolin; Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1999), 107.

The sacrificial cult displayed in the book of Leviticus presents a vision whereby humanity is redeemed through a new economic life constituted by the Tabernacle. In this life of God's new creation, Israel adopts practices of offering, rather than hoarding, and careful engagement with life rather than wanton bloodshed. This cult necessitates the apprehension and honoring of boundaries and limitations: a reformation that is no less than a return to God's creation of humans in God's image. This rehabilitation of humankind allows for two related moments of creation's renewal: the Day of Atonement and the Jubilee. The reordering, rest, and revivification of corrupted humanity that the practices of sacrifice and the Day of Atonement affords Israel also makes possible the social display of redeemed life that is the Jubilee. The possibility of blessing that concludes Leviticus in chapter 26, whereby creation is restored fully to its intended state – where land yields its produce in abundance, wild animals no longer pose a danger, Israel is fruitful and multiplies, and God dwells and walks among God's people (Lev 26:3-13) – is specifically contingent on the command for Israel "to keep my sabbaths and reverence my sanctuary" (Lev 26:2). Indeed, sacrifice and Sabbath enable one another and together make possible a restoration of creation.

3.8 Conclusion

Leviticus provides a display of redeemed life in the center of the Pentateuch. Continuing the narrative of re-creation represented by the construction of the Tabernacle that concludes the book of Exodus, Leviticus supplies a vision for life amenable to hosting God's presence. Life with God in the Tabernacle is one constituted by sacrifice, but it is not primarily about death or loss. Sacrifice makes Israel whole – תמים. Through sacrifice, Israel becomes a people constituted by offering and disciplined in consumption. Sacrificial blood provides a means for Israel to enact wholeness by re-ordering blood by bringing it to God in the Tabernacle. Instead of the wanton taking that mars creation in the disobedience of the garden and Cain's ensuing bloodshed, sacrifice entails the careful engagement with blood for the purposes of restoration. On the Day of Atonement, this blood is brought near God's presence in the Tabernacle where it purifies both the social and the cosmic body. The reordering that accompanies sacrifice enables a form of holiness, for Israel and creation are renewed and able to abide with God on the Sabbath that is Yom Kippur. Sacrifice is not focused on death as an act of loss or punishment but rather is a means by which Israel seeks to counter death's power.

The sacrificial cult is radical in its aims to separate Israel from the forces and habits of death, but it is ultimately incomplete. Only the sacrifice of Christ overcomes death, inaugurating life in its fullest. In the next chapter, we will extend the logic of the sacrificial cult to the book of Hebrews' account of Christ's priestly work. Christ perfects

the wholeness the cult attempts to facilitate. Through participation in Christ, discipleship assumes a sacrificial form. The display of sacrifice in Leviticus highlights habits and dispositions that enrich an account of the Christian life aimed at sanctification.

4 The Whole Body: Christ's Perfection of the Cult in Hebrews

Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said,
"Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired,
but a body you have prepared for me;
in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure.
Then I said, 'See, God, I have come to do your will, O God'
(in the scroll of the book it is written of me)."

– Hebrews 10:5-7

The vision of sacrificial life in Leviticus is grand, offering a restoration of creation on the Day of Atonement. Through the sacrificial ritual, blood enacts a total purification for the people and the sanctuary, allowing Israel to rest with God on this Sabbath. The whole complex of the life of the cult trains Israel to avoid death and inculcates habits of proper offering and limited taking. The regular life of the cult culminates in the Day of Atonement, in which Israel is made whole and dwells with God in a perfection not experienced since Eden. Sacrifice has enabled a resumption of the right ordering of creation displayed in Genesis 1, which was subsequently disrupted by humanity's violation of God's limits in their illicit taking of the fruit. Levitical sacrifice aims at death's undoing. Bringing blood into God's presence in the Tabernacle is a movement of repair, a symbol of reparation for the bloodshed inaugurated by Cain, which signals humanity's and creation's disorder. This highpoint of Leviticus, and arguably all of Torah, is a blessed moment in God's purposes for creation.

As glorious as this vision is, it is limited. Even in its most ideal form, the fullness of Sabbath rest is only possible at discrete times – the seventh day, the Day of Atonement, and sabbatical years – and the regular work of the Tabernacle continues the task of separating Israel from the power of death toward the goal of reforming humanity so as to dwell with God. As various biblical witnesses affirm, sacrificial practice in Israel failed to bring about the healing and rest envisioned by Leviticus.¹ As a result of Israel's pollution and sin, God departed from the sanctuary and Israel entered into exile once again from God's presence.² At its best, Levitical sacrifice engendered a symbolic, momentary wholeness. It was not able to overcome death, and God's renewed creation was not an ongoing reality for Israel.

God's mode of redemption displayed in Genesis – Leviticus is one of recapitulation. Noah and Moses are both new-Adam figures. God recreates through Noah, but the stain of Cain's bloodshed remains. Moses facilitates a new creation through the people Israel. The lessons of manna, the construction of the Tabernacle, and the sacrificial life of the cult form Israel to be a people who honor God's good order, who use resources with discernment and discipline, and who have a proper reverence

¹ Cf. Amos 5:21-27; Isaiah 1:1-17; Jeremiah 6:16-21.

² Ezekiel 10-11. See Milgrom's discussion on the pollution of the Tabernacle leading to God's departure. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 42-51.

for blood. The *telos* of the cult is to make humankind whole once again in their assumption of their rightly ordered place on the Sabbath.

In this chapter, I explore how the book of Hebrews completes the narrative arc of redemption begun by Torah. Hebrews tells the story of God's commitment to restore humankind: namely, how God, in Jesus, recapitulates Adam and restores creation by means of Israel's sacrificial practices. Jesus, in his life, death, and resurrection, actualizes the *telos* of the cult: he is תמים – perfectly whole. Blood is perfectly ordered in Jesus's body, as he is rightly oriented toward God in all that he does, and, as a result, God defeats death through Jesus' resurrection. Jesus presents his resurrected body and blood before God, achieving in reality what the cult has symbolized. The shed blood that has been out of place since Cain's murder of Abel, provisionally redeemed through blood's incorporation into the Tabernacle, is now perfectly restored in Jesus' resurrected body. Death has been overcome in Jesus' body, and, through him, humanity is able to enter into God's presence. The work of the Tabernacle foreshadows God's plan of salvation in Jesus' incarnation and resurrection. Through Jesus, God has definitively reversed the flow of blood that has constituted creation's corrupted condition.

Hebrews' account of Christ's recapitulation of Adam through sacrifice continues the sacrificial logic displayed in Leviticus. From this perspective, Christ's death is best understood not as a moment of punishment where Jesus suffers God's wrath in our place, but instead as a blessed offering of his perfected human life to God. Through

Jesus' resurrection, humanity and creation are redeemed and participate in God's Sabbath rest. This chapter builds upon my interpretation of sacrifice in the Pentateuch to display the continuity in God's work through Christ's priestly office in Hebrews. In presenting his resurrected body to God, Jesus possesses blood uniquely ordered. Unlike all other blood, this blood is perfectly in place in a body no longer vulnerable to the power of death.

The reading of Hebrews I am proposing draws upon two important recent works of scholarship related to Hebrews and sacrifice. First, I employ David Moffitt's argument that Jesus' resurrected body and blood is the sacrifice that Jesus offers to God. In making this case, Moffitt challenges the consensus view among Hebrews scholars that Jesus' death on the cross is the locus of atonement.³ This understanding resonates with that of many Christians, who, like Calvin, equate Jesus' sacrifice with his death. I argue in the prior chapter that one of the purposes of blood manipulation in the cult is a symbolic reordering of blood, redressing the disorder of bloodshed that marks creation's disarray highlighted by God's speech to Noah after the flood in Gen 9:1-7. It follows that the perfection of this movement is not a sprinkling of blood before God in the Holy of Holies per Lev 16, but instead the assumption of blood in the Incarnation and its blessed

³ Moffitt, *Atonement and the Logic of Resurrection*, 3-43.

restoration to Jesus' body in his resurrection, which dwells in God's presence. Only God can undo bloodshed, and God does so definitely in Jesus' resurrected body.

Second, I continue to utilize the work of Joshua Vis who highlights the importance of blood relative to death in the purification offering of Leviticus and the two-step process of redemption he discerns in Leviticus, which he sees continued in Hebrews. Vis supports Moffitt's thesis that Jesus' resurrection is an integral part of his sacrificial work, for through his resurrection Jesus is able to present his blood before God for purposes of purgation and purification, in continuity with the accounts of sacrifice in Leviticus. Jesus' blood both purifies believers and enables their transformation through their own anticipated resurrection, which will result in an ultimate Sabbath rest.⁴ Both Vis and Moffitt agree that while death is a necessary part of the sacrificial process, it is this moment of presentation achieved through Jesus' resurrection, rather than Jesus' death *in se*, that is the focal point of Jesus' salvific work.⁵

The institution of sacrifice displayed in Leviticus, aimed at overcoming death through symbolic renderings of blood and the formative practices associated with cultic life, achieves its ultimate end in Jesus' resurrection. Jesus actualizes the cult's intentions, for he is perfectly oriented to God throughout his life, and when he confronts and

⁴ Vis, "The Purification Offering of Leviticus," 257-258.

⁵ Vis, "The Purification Offering of Leviticus," 296-298; Moffitt, *Atonement and the Logic of Resurrection*, 289-295.

defeats the power of death, Jesus reverses humanity's bloodshed in his body. In him a new creation – a new Sabbath – is made possible. In response to this blessed recapitulative work, Jesus' followers offer a sacrifice of praise, reflected in lives lived in conformity to the one whose wholeness defeated death.

4.1 Sacrificial Logic in the Exordium

Hebrews provides the most sustained account of Christ's sacrificial work in the New Testament. The logic of recapitulation permeates the letter, and it appears in condensed form in the letter's prologue:

Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs (1:1-4).⁶

The opening words of this address immediately establish continuity with God's work displayed in the Old Testament, for they highlight God's work through Israel's forebears. Harold Attridge notes that the prophets probably include "the patriarchs

⁶ Attridge and Johnson both identify Heb 1:1-4 as the exordium, while Koester argues that it encompasses 1:1-2:4. Harold W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989), 36; Luke Timothy Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary* (New Testament Library; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 64; Craig R. Koester, *Hebrews: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 36; New York: Doubleday, 2001), 174-5.

through Moses, Joshua, David, and the classical prophets.”⁷ As the homily unfolds, the author pays particular attention to Moses and his faithfulness in leading God’s people and carrying out God’s sacrificial designs. The author establishes that the work of the Son is not different in kind from that which came before, by highlighting God’s activity speaking to Israel and now speaking to us by a Son.⁸

In introducing God’s renewed “word” – the Son – Hebrews affirms both his eschatological and protological roles: as Attridge notes, “Christ was made heir of that which he, as God’s agent, created.”⁹ God’s “new action” of speaking by a Son, which culminates in the Son’s inheritance of all things, is not new at all, for it is through this very Son that God created the cosmos. Thus at the outset of the homily, the Son’s work of creation and redemption are held together, and they point to God’s purposes of maintaining and restoring all things. This understanding of God’s cosmic activities accords with the display of the particularities of Israel’s and creation’s restoration by means of the Tabernacle. Through the cult, God seeks to reform humanity and redeem creation through disciplining Israel’s consumptive habits and reconfiguring blood. God is in the business of repairing that which has been broken.

⁷ Attridge, *Hebrews*, 39.

⁸ To be sure, the Son’s work will be different in degree, as the author’s stress on perfection indicates.

⁹ Attridge, *Hebrews*, 41.

The prologue hints that this Son is also the new Adam. Not only does the Son radiate or reflect God's glory, but he also is, in Bruce's translation, "the very image of [God's] being."¹⁰ Glory plays a prominent role in Psalm 8, which Hebrews addresses in chapter 2 in service of establishing an Adam Christology. The fact that the Son is the "imprint" or "image" of God harkens to God's creation of humankind in God's image in Genesis 1:26-27. While the Greek word used in Hebrews 1:3 is *χαρακτήρ* and not the more common *εἰκὼν* that appears in Genesis 1 of the Septuagint, Bruce makes the case that *χαρακτήρ* more powerfully expresses what "image" communicates in other places, namely that Christ is "God's exact representation and embodiment."¹¹ This dual description in terms of glory and imprint thus corresponds to the Son's identification at the end and the beginning of all things. Christ receives God's glory in his resurrection by perfectly recapitulating God's creation of humankind.¹²

After highlighting the Son's relationship to creation, both in its cosmic fullness and in its particularity in Adam, the exordium turns to three distinct actions: the Son's

¹⁰ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (rev. ed.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2012), 44.

¹¹ Bruce, *Hebrews*, 48.

¹² Karl Barth notes:

For Christ who seems to come second, really comes first, and Adam who seems to come first really comes second. In Christ the relationship between the one and the many is original, in Adam it is only a copy of that original. And that means, in practice, that to find the true and essential nature of man we have to look not to Adam the fallen man, but to Christ in whom what is fallen has been cancelled and what was original has been restored.

Karl Barth, *Christ and Adam*, 24.

maintenance of all things, his having made purification for sins, and his sitting down at the right hand of God. The Son's creative activity is focused not only at the beginning and at the end, but also throughout time, as his word sustains the created order. This emphasis on his on-going cosmic work reinforces his identification with and commitment to creation, and it also frames his work as High Priest. The claim that the Son sustains all things is immediately followed by the account of his purification for sins and his subsequent residence at God's right hand. In these brief phrases that are more fully developed throughout the homily, we observe a similar logic to that present in our analysis of the Levitical cult in its canonical context in Torah: sacrifice is a divinely instituted work for the purposes of redeeming humankind and the created order. It is fitting that the Son's sacrificial work occurs in the context of resurrection, for only the sacrifice of the Son is able to overcome death and restore creation to its fullness.

4.2 Christ as New Adam

After attending to the cosmic scope of Christ's work, the homily turns toward Jesus' identification with Adam. The prologue ends with the declaration of the Son's superior status to the angels. The rest of Hebrews 1-2 establishes the nature of the Son who holds this exalted office. Jesus' role as Son is informed by the author's citation of the Septuagint's version of Psalm 8:5-7 (MT Ps 8:4-6) in Hebrews 2:6-8: "What is a man that you should remember him or a son of man that you watch over him? You have made him for a little while lower than the angels; with glory and honor you have

crowned him; you have subjected everything under his feet.”¹³ The homilist zooms in on God’s purposes with creation to emphasize the fulfillment of God’s intentions. The verses of Psalm 8 that immediately follow those quoted by Hebrews catalogue the dominion humans were to have, over “all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the sea” (8-10 [LXX] / 7-9 [MT]). Psalm 8 harkens to God’s creation of humankind described in Genesis 1:26-28, where “beasts,” “birds,” and “fish” are similarly listed. The backdrop for Jesus’ work is the Genesis account of creation, where humans are properly oriented relative to their fellow creatures.

James Dunn highlights the christological application of Psalm 8 in New Testament texts in service of an understanding of Christ as a new Adam. He notes that these three verses articulate “God’s programme for man” but that the verses that immediately follow affirm that God’s original purposes of granting glory and dominion to Adam failed but have now been successfully fulfilled by Jesus:¹⁴

¹³ Attridge’s translation, *Hebrews*, 69.

¹⁴ James D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making: An Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation* (2nd ed.; London: SCM Press, 1989), 110. Cf. James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), 200-201; David Moffitt marshals evidence from extra-biblical material to show Adam’s prominence, both via linkages to Psalm 8 and to developed narratives of Adam reminiscent of the plot-line of Hebrews 1-2, to support his claim that Jesus is figured as a new Adam in these first two chapters of the homily. David Moffitt, *Atonement and the Logic of Resurrection in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (NovTSup 141; Leiden: Brill, 2011), 110-6, 133-44.

As of now we do not yet see all things subjected to him; but we do behold the one who “was made for a little while lower than the angels,” Jesus, because of his suffering death “crowned with glory and honor,” so that by God’s grace he might taste death for everyone. Now it was fitting for him, for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many sons and daughters to glory, to perfect through sufferings the one who leads the way to salvation. (Heb 2:8b-10).¹⁵

Through Jesus’ recapitulation of Adam, he receives the glory originally bequeathed to humankind but lost due to Adam and Eve’s transgression. Death lies at the center of this drama, as it is death that is overcome by Jesus.

Jesus’ identification with Adam is further supported by the claim in Hebrews 2:11 that the “the one who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all ἕξ ἑνὸς [of one].” Both David Moffitt and Morna Hooker posit that the “one” refers to Adam, in light of the preceding citation of Psalm 8, the following articulation of Jesus’ dual-fold identification with his brothers and sisters in verses 11-12, and the affirmation that Jesus shares flesh and blood with the rest of God’s children in verse 14.¹⁶ Hebrews stresses that Jesus is a new Adam not just because he achieved God’s eschatological end for humankind as celebrated in Psalm 8, but also because he did so through assuming Adam’s humanity and the attendant enslavement to death.

¹⁵ Attridge’s translation, *Hebrews*, 69, 78.

¹⁶ Moffitt, *Atonement and the Logic of Resurrection*, 130-3; Morna D. Hooker, “Christ, the ‘End’ of the Cult” in *The Epistle to the Hebrews and Christian Theology* (ed. R. Bauckham, D. D. Driver, T. A. Hart, and N. MacDonald; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2009), 200.

Jesus' association with Adam is theologically relevant on at least two counts. First, it links Jesus' person and work to God's purposes for the larger created order. The word πάντα, translated "all things," occurs five times in Heb 2:8-10.¹⁷ God's intentions that Jesus fulfills – all things are subjected to him – are cosmic in scope and therefore not just about human redemption. Just as Adam is embedded in the context of God's creation in the early chapters of Genesis for the flourishing of all, so too is Jesus' work framed in terms of concern for all things.

Second, Jesus' identification with Adam serves to nuance an understanding of the role death plays in Adam's salvation. Hebrews 2:9-10 stresses that a key component of Jesus' recapitulation of Adam is his suffering of death. While Moffitt contends that "suffering *qua* suffering is not the author's point" based on the emphasis throughout the homily of the importance of faithful endurance,¹⁸ the connection to Adam highlights that death is a force to be overcome, a notion the author emphasizes in verse 14 when he notes that "through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil." Death and the curses that attend Adam's fall corrupt humanity and the rest of creation, as seen all too clearly in the aftermath of Adam and Eve's expulsion from the

¹⁷ Three times in verse eight and twice in verse ten.

¹⁸ Moffitt, *Atonement and the Logic of Resurrection*, 196.

garden. God provisionally undoes the power of death through Levitical sacrifice.¹⁹ To be sure, sacrifice involves death (and sometimes suffering), but the goal is not death *per se* but a drawing near to God by means of the life that is in the blood. By regularly putting blood “in its place” in the Tabernacle by bringing it near God, Israel counters death’s disordered, destructive grip over their lives, as they enact individual and corporate wholeness. Levitical sacrifice reorders blood by giving it a new body when it is brought near God’s presence inside the Tabernacle. This sacrificial blood provides purification for Israel as it symbolically reverses the flow of blood that marks humanity’s corruption. Based on the logic of the redemptive purposes of the cult, and Christ’s role as high priest introduced in Heb 2:17, it is indeed fitting that God perfects Jesus through the offering of his resurrected body, a body in which his blood – previously shed – is now rightly ordered in his body. The explication of Christ as the new Adam in Hebrews 2 thus follows the logic foreshadowed by both the Old Testament narrative and by the Hebrews prologue: the new Adam redeems humanity and creation through sacrifice through overcoming death in his body. Jesus is both the new Adam – and the new Abel.

¹⁹ Death is not properly defeated by the cult, but instead sufficiently mitigated in order to enable the fullness of Israel, Sabbath, and creation on Yom Kippur.

4.3 *Christ and Moses*

Through Hebrews' retelling, Jesus' role as a new Adam involves Jesus' work as a new Moses. Jesus' ministry as high priest is first announced in Hebrews 2:17, but the exploration of this office does not begin until 4:14. A consideration of Moses comes first. Moses' work building the Tabernacle and inaugurating the cult are two key activities that inform the claim in Hebrews 3:2 that Moses was "faithful in all God's house." While commentators point to the ambiguity of this phrase, noting that "house" could refer to God's people, the universe, or the sanctuary,²⁰ the theological underpinnings of the Tabernacle hold these three understandings together.

As noted in chapter 3, the Tabernacle is presented as creation restored or fulfilled, and the Day of Atonement ritual offers a means by which Israel, the sanctuary, and thus creation return each to its original state where God dwells with Israel free from the presence of sin. Jesus, "the apostle and high priest of our confession" (Heb 3:1) is praised for his faithfulness and is compared to Moses, who was similarly faithful "in all God's house" (Heb 3:2). This mention of Christ's priestly work as part of what constitutes Jesus' faithfulness informs an understanding of what it means for Moses to be "faithful in all God's house." This phrase alludes to Numbers 12:7, where God, speaking from the Tabernacle, affirms Moses' prophetic leadership. God's presence in the sanctuary from

²⁰ Koester, *Hebrews*, 245-6; Cf. Attridge, *Hebrews*, 108-9.

which he directs Moses and Israel is conditional on Israel's obedience and sanctification, a key component of which is Israel's sacrificial life. For Moses to be faithful in all God's house thus includes a notion of God's people as formed by sacrifice. Said another way, *per* the Pentateuchal narrative leading up to Numbers 12, there is no household of God apart from the Tabernacle. Moses' faithfulness in all God's house, like Jesus', involves creation's re-ordering.

The introduction of Moses in Hebrews 3 reinforces the claim that sacrifice is constitutive of Christ's identification as a new Adam. Just as God works to restore humankind in Leviticus via sacrifice, so too does Jesus redeem Adam. However, as Hebrews explores in more detail in chapters 9-10, Jesus' recapitulation is one of perfection, and thus Jesus is worthy of more glory than Moses, as Hebrews 3:3 affirms. The writer invites his audience to see themselves as members of Christ's house as long as they hold fast to their "boldness and hopeful boast" (Heb 3:6b)²¹ a sense of assurance that Jesus has indeed restored God's purposes for Adam, creation, and thus for them through Jesus' priestly work.

Hebrews 3-4 emphasizes that the goal for both households is entering God's rest. Through the citation of Psalm 95:7-11 in Hebrews 3:7-12, the author reminds his audience that, despite Moses' faithfulness as a servant (Heb 3:5), Moses' leadership

²¹ Attridge's translation. Attridge, *Hebrews*, 104.

during the wilderness period was deficient in reforming Israel's heart. They were unable to enter God's rest (Heb 3:7-11), here figured as the promised land of Canaan.

The identification of Israel's disordered heart echoes earlier indictments found in Torah. After Cain, God "saw that great was humankind's evildoing on earth and every form of their heart's planning was only evil all the day" (Gen 6:5),²² and God responded to humanity and creation's corruption by destroying the earth with the purpose of ushering in a new creation through Noah and the remnant in the ark. As a result of Noah's offerings after the flood, God declared that he would never again seek to undo creation, "for the inclination of the human heart is evil from youth" (Gen 8: 21).²³ Instead, God sought Adam and Cain's rehabilitation through the establishment of the cult; and while Yom Kippur is characterized in Leviticus 16 as a Sabbath and thus as a moment of rest for Israel and the created order, it fails in effecting a lasting restoration.²⁴

Through reflection on Psalm 95 and Israel's history, the author of Hebrews contends that the wilderness generation's hardened and wayward hearts remain a danger for his current audience. Implicit in this judgment is the assessment that the reforming capacities of the cult ultimately failed in curing humanity's fallen condition.

²² Fox's translation. Fox, *The Five Books of Moses*, 33.

²³ Gen 6:5 and 8:21 both contain לָב.

²⁴ This "failure" is noted in the text, for times of Sabbath rest are demarcated for Sabbath days, sabbatical years, and the Jubilee.

Psalm 95 moves from praise for God's salvation and dominion over creation to exhortation for its listeners to embrace their identity as God's people by rejecting the witness of the wilderness generation. Similarly, the author of Hebrews moves from celebrating God's cosmic redemption through Christ in the first part of the homily to warning his brothers and sisters against having "an evil, unbelieving heart [καρδία πονηρὰ ἀπιστίας] that turns away from the living God" (Heb 3:12). Attridge notes that this disposition of the heart is one of "active resistance to God's will" that leads to "nothing less than abandonment of the 'living God.'"²⁵ This description not only resonates with Adam and Eve's abandonment of God in their disobedience, but it also accords with God's assessment of postlapsarian humanity's "evil heart" that precipitates and survives the flood. However, throughout the biblical narrative, God displays an unwillingness to accept this diseased state, as seen negatively in the flood and God's withholding of the "rest" of the promised land, and positively in God's working within Israel for its restoration.

The author of Hebrews contends that this healing of the human condition has been accomplished by Christ and is available to his listeners through their participation in him (Heb 3:14).²⁶ He stresses that this participation in Christ, and thus the prospect of

²⁵ Attridge, *Hebrews*, 116-7.

²⁶ While the NRSV translates the first part of verse 14 as "For we have become partners of Christ," both Attridge and Johnson argue for a more participatory understanding of the phrase μέτοχοι γὰρ τοῦ Χριστοῦ

entering God's rest (Heb 4:1), is conditional upon one's obedience and faithfulness (3:18-19); however, attaining God's rest is no longer understood as entry into the land of Canaan, but instead as the rest of the seventh day of the week, the Sabbath (Heb 4:4-10). The description of the seventh day in Genesis 2:2-3 departs from the pattern of the preceding six days in lacking a concluding formula, suggesting the possibility that God's rest is an ongoing reality.²⁷ The role of the Sabbath in the new creation that is Israel's life with God – displayed in the lesson of manna, the construction of the Tabernacle, and in the climax of the cult, the Day of Atonement – indicates that God is redeeming Israel and the rest of the created order for the purposes of entering God's Sabbath rest. According to the author of Hebrews, this rest was ultimately unattainable for Israel because of its disobedience (Heb 4:6). Now, God's Sabbath is once again a possibility for God's people because of Christ's priestly work, which reinstates creation's good ordering.

Jesus' role as high priest frames this entire section on Israel's sojourn in the wilderness and their failure to realize God's end for them. Hebrews 3 begins with a reiteration of Jesus' faithfulness embodied in his priestly office (Heb 3:1; cf. 2:17), and

γεγόναιμεν. Attridge, *Hebrews*, 118; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 118. Johnson notes that this phrase suggests that readers are "sharers in the Messiah" and thus participate in the messianic reality.

²⁷ F.F. Bruce offers a similar interpretation on Genesis 2:2, concluding, "God's rest has remained open to his people since the work of creation was finished, but it will be forfeited by disobedience." Bruce, *Hebrews*, 106-7.

Hebrews 4:14-16 concludes the author's exhortation to obedience and thus entry into the Sabbath with the affirmation that this prospect is made possible by Jesus' high priestly ministry.²⁸ The logic of Hebrews 3-4 builds upon and enhances an understanding of sacrifice as the means by which God restores humanity and creation. Jesus is not simply a recapitulation of Adam in his overcoming of death, but he is so by specifically recapitulating Moses and perfecting Israel's seminal period of their wilderness journey through his priestly work. Jesus perfects the cult Moses establishes, and in his fulfillment of Yom Kippur, he permanently makes possible God's Sabbath rest for God's people.²⁹

4.4 Christ as Priest

The homilist continues to recast Israel's salvation history christologically. After framing Christ as Adam, followed by Christ as Moses, Hebrews turns to an exploration of Christ as priest. Hebrews 4 ends with a call to obedience for God's people so that they can enter God's Sabbath rest. While Joshua's leadership failed to bring Israel into this

²⁸ Cf. Lane, who writes, "Jesus' high priestly ministry is the guarantee that God's people will celebrate the Sabbath in his presence." William L. Lane, *Hebrews 1-8* (Word Biblical Commentary 47A; Dallas, Tex.: Word Books, 1991), 103.

²⁹ Koester notes that the Sabbath connects God's work at the beginning of time with his purposes for the *eschaton*. He writes, "The first covenant's provision for a Sabbath foreshadows the final accomplishment of God's purposes under the new covenant – much as the first covenant's provisions for sacrifice foreshadow the work of Christ." However, he does not note the relationship between sacrifice and Sabbath – i.e., that the process of hallowing allows for participation in God's holy time. Koester, *Hebrews*, 279.

rest, Jesus as pioneer ἀρχηγός (Heb 2:10) succeeds in achieving salvation. Jesus does so by means of his role as high priest, for his perfection of the cult is what is most determinative for achieving Israel's *telos*. According to Hebrews, the prospect of entering God's rest does not rely upon the leadership of a military commander, judge, or king, as might be expected following the narrative of Israel's entrance into the promised land, but upon the work of a high priest. This identification of the cult's role in salvation by the author of Hebrews builds upon the interpretation of the Tabernacle's figuration within Torah as a means of re-creation and explicates the nature of Christ's recapitulation.³⁰

Central to Christ's work as high priest is his perfection (Heb 5:9). Indeed, the author stresses in Hebrews 7:11 that perfection is the decisive factor that differentiates Christ's work from that of the existing cult: "Now if perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood – for the people received the law under this priesthood – what further need would there have been to speak of another priest arising according to the order of Melchizedek, rather than one according to the order of Aaron?" Melchizedek figures as an alternative to Aaron because he is "without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God, he remains a priest forever" (Heb 7:3). The Levites

³⁰ Johnson notes that Hebrews' reflections on the cult are drawn from Scripture rather than from the practices of Second Temple Judaism. Johnson, *Hebrews*, 25.

descended from Abraham, all of whom died, while Melchizedek is understood to possess immortality (Heb 7:8, 23). Jesus' priestly status is validated because he, like Melchizedek, has "the power of an indestructible life" (Heb 7:16, 24).

Moffitt argues that Jesus' resurrection is the constitutive element of his perfection that enables him to be a high priest.³¹ As a high priest, he is able to present his own blood before God for the cleansing of the heavenly Tabernacle (Heb 9:23) and the cleansing of believers' consciences (Heb 9:14, 10:22).³² Moreover, Jesus' priestly work lays the foundation for the second act of perfection in which believers are transformed and share in his resurrection upon Jesus' return. Vis understands this second stage of redemption to correspond to the "sabbath rest" anticipated by the homilist in Heb 4:9-11, which he finds analogous to the two-step process of purgation that culminates in Yom Kippur, in which the Israelites move from a state of forgiveness to purity.³³

³¹ Moffitt, *Atonement and the Logic of Resurrection*, 199. Moffitt goes on to clarify his understanding of perfection language in the homily:

Perfection language is broader than resurrection and likely has to do with the ability of the human being to come into God's presence. Thus, when the author says in 7:19 that the Law made nothing perfect (cf. 7:11; 9:9; 10:1), he immediately adds that what has come about through the work of Jesus provides God's people with a better hope *by which they can draw near* to God (ἐγγίζομεν τῷ θεῷ). Perfection is therefore closely bound up with the purification of the human being such that humanity and God's presence can dwell together. Perfection has to do with making the human being fit to enter the world to come (199-200, italics original).

³² Vis, "The Purification Offering of Leviticus," 263-278.

³³ Vis, "The Purification Offering of Leviticus," 302-305.

Jesus' resurrection is revolutionary, for he accomplishes in his body what the cult could never do: overcome death. The author notes that compared to Jesus' work, the prior law was "weak and ineffectual (for the old law made nothing perfect)" (Heb 7:19). While the ideal vision of the cult in Leviticus displays its goal of redeeming humankind and creation in its orientation toward the Sabbath that is the Day of Atonement, ultimately it fails to deliver Israel from the power of sin and death. The goal of the cult was for Israel to be whole, and so it is indeed fitting that Jesus is described as "a high priest, holy, blameless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens" (Heb 7:26).³⁴ According to Hebrews, only Jesus embodies the goal of the Tabernacle's life that is God's means of redemption for Israel. As transformative as the Levitical cult might be, unlike the Son, it does not have the power to make Israel perfect forever (Heb 7:28).

The author of Hebrews continues to explicate Jesus' role as high priest relative to the work of the sacrificial system established in Torah. What is notable is not just the fact that Jesus' resurrection offers salvation, but that the means of his saving activity correspond to God's prior purposes with Israel. The homilist assumes his audience has comprehended "the basic teaching about Christ" – "repentance from dead works and faith toward God, instruction about baptisms, laying on of hands, resurrection of the

³⁴ While the three Greek adjectives translated "holy, blameless, undefiled" (ἅγιος ἄκακος ἀμίαντος) do not correspond in a strict sense to the vocabulary used to describe the cult in Leviticus, Attridge notes that they do "recall in a general way the biblical prescription for Levitical purity." Attridge, *Leviticus*, 213.

dead, and eternal judgment” (Heb 6:1-2) – but he displays how Jesus’ high priestly ministry accords with God’s faithfulness to God’s promise to Abraham “to bless and multiply you,” (Heb 6:14) to fulfill God’s intentions for creation through Abraham’s lineage.

This promise comes to Abraham in Genesis 22:17 after Abraham had exhibited his willingness to sacrifice Isaac, but it ratifies God’s earlier intentions for blessing and fruitfulness for creation directed to Adam and Noah (Gen 1:28; 9:1) and toward God’s people when addressed to Abraham in Genesis 17:1-2, where God says, “I am God Almighty; walk before me and be blameless. And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous.”³⁵ Koester notes that Abraham received “what was promised” through Isaac’s birth and preservation, but that from the perspective of the homily, this promise is ultimately fulfilled through “resurrection in the world to come.”³⁶ Thus, the author’s emphasis on God’s faithfulness to God’s promises is significant not only because he displays that God keeps God’s word, but also because of the example he provides – God’s commitment to creation’s fruitfulness, provisionally obtained through God’s blessing of Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice his only son.

³⁵ Cassuto, *Exodus*, 8-9.

³⁶ Koester, *Hebrews*, 326. Koester points to Hebrews 11: 13, 39 to qualify the extent to which God honored his promise to Abraham during his lifetime.

This example immediately precedes the author's main concern to offer his audience hope in the example of Jesus's priestly work (Heb 6:19-20). He points to God's oath uttered in Psalm 110:4, "The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, 'You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek,'" as a basis upon which his audience can be assured that, through Jesus, God has proven faithful to "the unchangeable character of his purpose" that he displayed "to the heirs of the promise" (Heb 6:17). The fullness of God's promise to Abraham – "the unchangeable character of his purpose" – conveys God's intention for the redemption of Adam and creation through the Son's offering. The author's reference to God's promise both to Abraham and his descendants encapsulates the logic by which God chooses to bring about God's purposes and emphasizes the means by which Jesus redeems; for Abraham, like Noah, walks with God, is blameless, and offers sacrifice, thereby provisionally obtaining the promise set forth in creation. Jesus recapitulates and perfects this pattern that is foreshadowed by Noah, Abraham, and the cult displayed in Leviticus. Thus, part of the ground for hope that the author extends to encourage his audience's endurance is the display of God's continuity in perfecting what God has begun. For the homilist, mere proclamation of Jesus' resurrection is not enough to provide a full account of the assurance that his audience needs in its time of trial; instead, he grounds God's redemption through Jesus in the specificity of God's prior work displayed throughout Torah.

This logic therefore accords with the writer's focus on Jesus' role as high priest, for the cult is rightly figured as the locus for God's work restoring Israel and honoring God's promises. After establishing Jesus' priestly status through his relationship to Melchizedek in Hebrews 7, the author turns to the fittingness of Jesus' priestly ministry as it relates to the new covenant proclaimed in the book of Jeremiah 31:31-34, which he cites in Hebrews 8:8-12:

The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will establish [συντελέσω] a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; not like the covenant that I made with their ancestors, on the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; for they did not continue in my covenant, and so I had no concern for them, says the Lord. This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws in their minds, and write [ἐπιγράψω] them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall not teach one another or say to each other, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more.

This reference to Jeremiah provides context for God's new work in Jesus that is in continuity with his prior covenant with Israel. As Hebrews will soon display, the discontinuity between the covenant established at Sinai and that inaugurated by Christ is based solely on their relative effectiveness: the sacrificial life of the Tabernacle fails to transform Israel in such a way that enables them to host God's presence permanently. The author's citation of Jeremiah 31:31(38:31 LXX) includes the verb συντελέσω, rather than διαθήσομαι found in the Septuagint. While the NRSV translates this verb "establish," commentators point out that συντελέσω is better translated as "complete,"

for it resonates with perfection vocabulary (τελ-) that permeates the letter.³⁷ God's new covenant is best understood as a completion of what God has previously initiated: it is more of an "upgrade" than a replacement.

Unlike the covenant God made with Israel at Sinai that Israel abrogated, God's new work will transform them in such a way that God's laws will be integrated into Israel's minds and hearts. The NRSV's translation, "write them on their hearts" (Heb 8:10), contains the verb ἐπιγράψω, which can be translated "engrave." Attridge notes that this verb "is more vivid than the simple 'write' (γράφω)," thus lending an intensification to the understanding that this new covenant will permanently shape Israel's heart that has heretofore been characterized as wayward or hardened in Hebrews 3.³⁸ Hardened hearts will no longer threaten Israel's relationship with God, for they will bear and therefore be transformed by God's imprint. The transformation of Israel's minds and hearts is such that Israel will have an intimate knowledge of God (Heb 8:11), thereby enabling Israel to be able to live into the longstanding promise God reiterates throughout the Old Testament – "I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Heb 8:10).³⁹

³⁷ Attridge, *Hebrews*, 227; Koester, *Hebrews*, 385-6.

³⁸ Attridge, *Hebrews*, 228; Koester, *Hebrews*, 386-7.

³⁹ Attridge lists prominent places where this pledge occurs – Exod 6:7; Lev 26:12; Deut 26:17-19; Jer 7:23; 11:4; Ezek 37:27 – and notes that it is "often associated with Yahweh's presence in his sanctuary." Attridge,

Like the emphasis on Israel's failure to obtain God's rest after its sojourn in the wilderness in Hebrews 3-4, the inclusion of this citation from Jeremiah in Hebrews 8 highlights this same period of Israel's history as the locus for God's perfecting work. Central to this historical reference is the establishment of the cult as Sinai as a means by which Israel was to be able to abide with God and thus be God's people. Just as Hebrews 4 concludes with an identification of Christ's priestly ministry as enabling an entry into God's Sabbath rest that had previously eluded Israel at the conclusion of the wilderness period, so too does the author turn to a discussion of the cult as the constitutive component of the renewed covenant through which Jesus attains salvation for God's people in Hebrews 9-10.⁴⁰

The beginning of Hebrews 9 links the first covenant with the Tabernacle, thereby identifying Israel's sacrificial life as the means by which the covenant might be maintained. After providing a brief description of the Tabernacle's design, the author focuses on the work of the high priest on Yom Kippur when the high priest enters the Holy of Holies "once a year, and not without taking the blood that he offers for himself

Hebrews, 228. After a similar catalogue, Johnson observes the continuity of God's new covenant with what has come before, observing, "The terms are not changed, only the agency by which they will be accomplished and the fullness of their realization." Johnson, *Hebrews*, 208.

⁴⁰ Attridge notes that the concluding verse of the Jeremiah citation – "For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more" (Heb 12) – "provides the essential link between the themes of covenant and priesthood." Attridge, *Hebrews*, 226.

and for the sins committed unintentionally by the people” (Heb 9:7). He goes on to claim that sacrifices under the old covenant “are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshipper” (Heb 9:9). In contrast, he writes that

when Christ came as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation), he entered once for all into the Holy Place, not with the blood of goats and calves, but with his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls, with the sprinkling of the ashes of a heifer, sanctifies those who have been defiled so that their flesh is purified, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to worship the living God! For this reason he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised inheritance, because a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions under the first covenant (Heb 9:11-15).

In comparing the work of the Levitical high priest to that of Christ, the homilist focuses on the inability of the old cult to “perfect the conscience of the worshipper.” The Greek word translated as conscience, *συνείδησις*, contains the notions of “consciousness” or “awareness”⁴¹ and is used by Paul to describe “an interior faculty for the personal discernment of good and evil.”⁴² Hebrews underscores the claim that the sacrificial practices of the Tabernacle do not perfect the conscience in describing the high priest’s practice of offering blood for “sins committed unintentionally (*ἀγνοημάτων*)” (Heb 9:7). While Leviticus posits that the blood ritual of Yom Kippur “shall purge the adytum of

⁴¹ Attridge, *Hebrews*, 242.

⁴² C. Spicq, “*συνείδησις*,” *TLNT* 3:332-6.

the pollution and transgressions of the Israelites, including all of their sins" (Leviticus 16:16),⁴³ the author's emphasis on sins committed through ignorance highlights the defective state of the conscience, for it fails in recognizing and therefore avoiding sin. This plagues even individuals seeking righteousness, for their crippled consciences will inevitably lead them astray. Because of this handicap, "the way into the sanctuary has not yet been disclosed" (Heb 9:8): God's people are unfit and thus unable to enter into God's presence. Despite God's transformative power to restore Israel and creation on Yom Kippur, the cult is unable to effect a lasting wholeness. It provides a means of remediation for humanity's disorder first manifest in the garden, but the Levitical cult does not definitively defeat death's corruption of creation.

Hebrews celebrates that Christ's priestly work perfects Israel's sacrificial life. Instead of a strict re-enactment of the Day of Atonement ritual, Jesus enters the Holy of Holies, "not with the blood of goats or calves, but with his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption" (Heb 9:12). Based upon the understanding that sacrificial blood represents life in Leviticus, Moffitt argues for the importance of Jesus' resurrected body as the vehicle by which Jesus presents his blood to God in the heavenly Holy of Holies.⁴⁴

⁴³ Milgrom's translation. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 1010, 1033-4.

⁴⁴ Moffitt, *Atonement and the Logic of Resurrection*, 218-225. Moffitt stresses that Jesus' blood offering, the moment upon which atonement hinges in Hebrews, does not principally refer to his death on the cross but rather upon Jesus' presentation of his resurrected body and blood before God (273).

Through his defeat of death in his resurrection, the unique power of Jesus' blood is on display in this moment of presentation. The homilist notes that the body Jesus offers to God through the eternal Spirit is "without blemish," ἄμωμον, the same Greek word used for the Hebrew תמיים in Leviticus to describe the animals acceptable for use in the cult. Jesus recapitulates the work of the Tabernacle in his own body, perfectly drawing near to God through death by means of the power of his blood.

Given this act of redemption and the homilist's understanding of the relative power of sacrificial rituals under the old covenant to purify flesh,⁴⁵ Hebrews encourages its audience to consider the sanctifying ability of Christ's blood to "purify our conscience from dead works to worship the living God" (Heb 9:13-14). The homilist's inclusion of the red heifer ritual in a passage otherwise describing the Day of Atonement functions to highlight the contrast between the power of blood in the old and new dispensations. In the old, the red heifer ritual involves the application of ashes in order to purify individuals from the impurities associated with corpse contamination (Numbers 19:14-20). At best, death's power is constrained through removing the infectious impurity associated with contact with dead human bodies. In the new dispensation, Christ's perfected, resurrected body has defeated death, thereby instituting a new order in which

⁴⁵ Vis highlights that the blood ritual accompanying the תמיים offering detailed in Lev 4:1-5:13 purges the offerer's sin or guilt and not his or her flesh and that flesh-purification is best understood relative to the red heifer ritual outlined in Numbers (262).

humanity has been reconfigured. Sin no longer corrupts humanity's flesh or its faculties. The homilist avers that Christ's blood is powerful enough to heal our consciences' proclivity toward dead works so that we can be free to worship the living God. The consciousness of the worshipper that has been prey to sin and death (Heb 9:7-9) is now, through the perfection of Christ's person, made whole and enabled to serve the God of life. Christ's life-blood enables a new humanity and therefore a new relationship with God.

This account of Christ's redemption of the conscience through the offering of his life complements the author's earlier indictment of Israel's diseased heart, mentioned explicitly in his citation of Psalm 95 in which he warns his listeners not to have "an evil, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God" (Heb 3:12) and implicitly in the Jeremiah 31 quotation where God's new covenant involves a form of cardiac repair (Heb 8:10). Attridge comments that the new covenant "will involve the innermost being of those with whom it is made. This intimate relationship to God in the new covenant will be located by Hebrews not in an interiorization of Torah but in the cleansing of conscience and in true spiritual worship."⁴⁶ This conceptual linkage therefore highlights the continuity with and perfection of God's earlier work with Israel, the core of which

⁴⁶ Attridge, *Hebrews*, 227. The Hebrew term for heart (לֵב) possesses a similar notion of "interiority," for it can denote "inner man," "mind," and "will." Brown, F., S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (London: Oxford, 1907), 524.

involved Israel's transformation in order to draw near to God and host God's presence, the opposite motion of the fall by which Adam and Eve withdrew from God, preferring a false sense of self-sufficiency. In his sacrificial work of entering God's presence through the perfection of his personhood, Christ overcomes the Tabernacle's inherent limitations.

In chapter 10, Hebrews emphasizes the superiority of Jesus' offering, reiterating the lingering presence of sin within the sacrificial system of the old covenant (Heb 10:1-4). While the homilist focuses on the efficacy of Jesus' blood as a means of perfection in Hebrews 9, in Hebrews 10 he expands upon his earlier claim by quoting Psalm 40: 6-8 (Ps 39: 7-9 LXX): "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. Then I said, 'See, God, I have come to do your will, O God'" (Heb 10: 5-7). This citation highlights the *telos* of the Levitical cult, for the point of Israel's sacrificial life is not the offerings *per se*, but their transformative power over Israel's bodies. The cult is figured as a means to rehabilitate humanity through an undoing of humanity's disorders: instead of destructive taking and its accompanying bloodshed, Israel routinely practices drawing near to God with the gifts of life God has provided in the form of grain and livestock and the proper placement of blood in God's presence. At the same time, the Tabernacle's purity legislation attends to a symbolic repair of the forces of death that

inhabit humanity's bodies. The cult helps Israel to become whole, symbolized by practices that atone for various forms of bloodshed and death.

As Hebrews repeatedly reminds its audience, the cult did not end up having this transformative effect for Israel. Sin continued to infect Israel both individually and corporately so that it was unable to be at one with God, resting in God's presence. Jesus, as a new Adam in human flesh and blood, obediently draws near to God throughout his life and death. He is without sin, and, through the offering of his blood in his resurrected body, he finally and fully enters God's presence. Jesus' perfection manifest in his resurrection is made possible by the integrity of his entire life, attested to by his obedience and endurance of sufferings (Heb 2:9-10, 18; 4:15; 5:7-9) and represented by the words of the Psalmist, "See, I have come to do your will, O God" (Heb 10:7). Jesus' body is free from the power of sin and thus able to live in conformity to God's purposes.

As a result, sacrifices for sin are obsolete, for Jesus is able to offer to God his body – whole (תמימים) in every way, including his heart or conscience – in service of God's will.⁴⁷ Jesus fulfills the *telos* of the Tabernacle, the redemption of humanity, by means of his own body, an accomplishment that accords with Hebrews' understanding of God's

⁴⁷ Apart from statements about his obedience and suffering, Hebrews does not enumerate in detail how Jesus' sinless life leads to his perfection that is the resurrection. A separate project could be developed around a display of Christ's recapitulation of Adam in the Gospels, with particular attention devoted to the temptation narratives, his ability to heal and thus make others whole, his dominion over creation, his inauguration of Jubilee, and his offering of his life and refusal to shed blood in the passion narratives.

purposes: “it is by God’s will that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Heb 10:10). Consequently, the homilist proclaims that through Jesus’ perfected body, his audience can be sanctified and perfected, too (Heb 10:10, 14). This allows the author to affirm that the new covenant announced by Jeremiah has become a reality for his audience: through Jesus’ offering that perfects and sanctifies, not only are their minds and hearts healed (Heb 10:16), but also their sins and lawless deeds are forgotten and forgiven (Heb 10:17-18). Since the redemption of Adam has come through Jesus, the homilist concludes that there is no place for continuing offerings for sin (Heb 10:18). Christ has reversed the fall, healing humankind and creation. The task remaining for Christians is christoform discipleship, living into the new reality of wholeness made possible by Christ’s life, death, and resurrection.

Hebrews sums up the consequences of Jesus’ priestly work for its audience:

Therefore, my friends, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain (that is, through his flesh), and since we have a great high priest over the house of God, let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water (Heb 10:19-22).

Jesus’ priestly mediation has allowed for “us to approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith,” unlike the Levitical cult where only the high priest could enter God’s presence once a year on Yom Kippur for the cleansing of Israel and the Tabernacle. A new era has dawned for God’s people, for they are invited into God’s presence

permanently “by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain (that is, through his flesh).”⁴⁸ Jesus has redeemed Adam through the perfection of his life attained in the resurrection, and, by means of his offering, Jesus’ brothers and sisters can draw near to God, too. Jesus’ wholeness heals his brethren, for through his blood, their hearts, previously at risk of being “evil” and “unbelieving” (Heb 3:12), are redeemed. God’s people participate in a new creation. As the end of Hebrews celebrates, Jesus’ blood indeed speaks a better word than the blood of Abel (12:24).

4.5 Christ, Creation, and Sabbath

Through his offering of his perfected, resurrected human body, Christ enters into the presence of God, restoring God’s plan for Adam, and providing a means by which his brothers and sisters can share in the promised eternal inheritance (Heb 9:15).

Multiple scholars note that the theme of abiding in God’s presence underlies the various eschatological images provided by the homilist.⁴⁹ What has often been overlooked,

⁴⁸ Koester argues that the preposition translated “through” (διὰ) in this verse functions instrumentally so that the verse is better translated “through the curtain, that is [by means] of his flesh.” Koester, *Hebrews*, 443. Moffitt concurs, noting that it is because of Jesus’ resurrected body that Jesus is able to enter into God’s presence in order to offer himself. Moffitt, *Atonement and the Logic of Resurrection*, 283.

⁴⁹ In addition to the heavenly Tabernacle, these images include God’s rest, the Sabbath, the heavenly Jerusalem, Zion, and God’s city. Stephen R. Holmes, “Death in the Afternoon: Hebrews, Sacrifice, and Soteriology,” in *The Epistle to the Hebrews and Christian Theology* (ed. R. Bauckham, D. D.

however, is the significance the Sabbath plays in Christ's recapitulative work.⁵⁰ Hebrews specifies that the end awaiting Israel is "a sabbath rest" (Heb 4:9). The Sabbath specifies that redemption involves creation's right ordering.

The Sabbath appears in Hebrews 4 as part of the author's indictment of Israel's failure to enter God's rest at the conclusion of their sojourn in the wilderness. Their diseased hearts led to disobedience and unbelief, resulting in their death in the wilderness (Heb 3:17-19). The homilist contrasts this example of rebellion and death with the prospect of entering into God's rest, and hence into the presence of the living God (Heb 3:12). As the presentation unfolds, the rest that is offered is God's rest on the seventh day of the week, the Sabbath (Heb 4:6, 9-10).

Driver, T. A. Hart, and N. MacDonald; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2009), 241; Koester, *Hebrews*, 272; Marie Isaacs, *Sacred Space: An Approach to the Theology of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (JSNTSup 73; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 83; Moffitt, *Atonement and the Logic of Resurrection*, 302.

⁵⁰ Attridge comments that the themes of Sabbath and God's rest "largely disappears after this pericope." Attridge, *Hebrews*, 131. Wray contends that the notion of rest does not carry over in the same way that "entering" does relative to the promised land, the sanctuary, the heavenly Jerusalem and Mt. Zion. She writes, "At no time, in the later chapters of Heb, is the sanctuary, into which Jesus and the faithful enter, associated with REST." Instead, she holds that rest is superseded by the theme of wandering and that its presence is best explained as "an important and effective sermon illustration." She concludes that rest remains undeveloped through the epistle, for the author does not incorporate it into his Christology. While she holds that "ENTERING INTO THE REST becomes a participation, a to-be-maintained participation in the completed cosmic work of Christ," she nevertheless asserts, "REST is a reward for faithfulness and not yet defined as an integral result of participation in Christ." Judith Hoch Wray, *Rest as a Theological Metaphor in the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Gospel of Truth: Early Christian Homiletics of Rest* (SBLDS 166; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 84-85, 91 (emphasis original).

In Genesis, God rests on the seventh day and blesses it for its being: for time, space, and relationships among creatures are perfectly ordered. While the disobedience of Adam and Eve profanes the integrity of creation, God works through the Tabernacle to redeem what was lost, culminating in the designation of Yom Kippur as a Sabbath, for on this day Israel and creation, figured in the Tabernacle, are cleansed and once again made whole. Humankind is able to dwell with God once again.

By inviting his audience to enter into God's Sabbath rest, the Hebrews homilist is not simply offering a blessed state of relaxation. Instead, the Sabbath encompasses an alternate reality, a reformed way of being in the world where humans rightly embody the *imago Dei*, where they exercise proper dominion relative to the rest of the created order, and where sin and death no longer reign. The Sabbath thus signifies creation as God intends it to be, and, as Hebrews recognizes, the *telos* of God's work of redemption.⁵¹

As in the Levitical cult, the means by which God makes possible the Sabbath in Hebrews is through sacrifice, for the author turns to a discussion of Christ's priestly work following his exhortation to enter God's rest. While the term Sabbath never occurs again in the homily, the logic follows that displayed in the Torah. Christ is a new Adam

⁵¹ Koester comes to a similar conclusion. He writes that "listeners are pressed to see their own future in light of God's design for the creation. Hebrews affirms that the God 'for whom all things and through whom all things exist' (Heb 2:10) will bring his people and his world to the end that he has designed for them." Koester, *Hebrews*, 275.

who overcomes death in his own body. Through the resurrection, Christ is fully whole, and he draws near to God by means of the life that is his blood, fulfilling God's intentions for humanity and creation. In Christ, death is no longer operative, initiating a cosmic economy where humans exercise dominion directed at the flourishing and blessing of all. Jesus' bodily resurrection heals not only human nature, but also the rest of the created order, for matter and spirit, his flesh as well as his heart, are perfectly ordered in him. Through participation in him, humans enter into a set of relations deemed very good by God upon the conclusion of his work. This redeemed reality made possible by Jesus' sacrifice – the drawing near to God by means of his perfected body – is indeed properly understood as a Sabbath rest. According to Hebrews, Sabbath, the goal awaiting God's people, is made possible only by Christ's sacrifice. This Sabbath is a possibility for us now through the sacrificial shape of our lives constituted in and by Christ's body.

In the next and final chapter, we will explore some of the implications of this relationship between sacrifice and Sabbath. The interpretation of Levitical sacrifice offered by this project enables an account of atonement in a particular key, and it does so in a way that holds creation and redemption together. As a result, our salvation made possible by Christ's sacrifice necessarily includes our formation relative to our fellow creatures in a way that promotes their health and life.

5 Sacrifice, Atonement, and Discipleship: Embodying Sabbath

An interpretation of sacrifice animates this dissertation. Namely: is God's institution of sacrifice in the cult associated primarily with death or with life? As presented in the first chapter, sacrifice as a general idea is often understood as death or some form of negation that usually takes the form of a single, discrete act. The debate over the use of sacrifice within the environmental community reveals many of the complexities of this term. Some environmentalists hold that sacrifice is best conceived in relation to a change in lifestyle that conserves resources, while others point out that our current levels of consumption are enabled by our willingness to sacrifice ecosystems and habitats for economic gain. Environmental discourse shifts the idea of sacrifice from some sort of limited or optional activity, to one that already entangles us in some fashion. Many environmentalists hold sacrifice to be unavoidable.

Some Christians interpret Jesus' priestly work in a way that understands his sacrifice as his death, which is meted out in punishment. In penal frameworks, Jesus' sacrifice is divorced from his resurrection and becomes as a stand-alone event that offers few resources for Christian discipleship. I argue through an exegesis of Scripture that Levitical sacrifice is best understood in terms of life rather than death, for these regular practices rehabilitate humanity in ways consonant with God's intentions for creation. Christ's priestly work depicted in Hebrews, in which Jesus offers his resurrected body to

the Father and inaugurates a new reality where death is defeated, perfects the Tabernacle's work of renewal. Christian discipleship that is understood as a participation in Jesus' offering will necessarily have a sacrificial shape. Understood in this way, sacrifice for Christians will neither be something "optional" or "missing." The Christian life will be sacrificial, and it will be so in a way aimed at fulfilling God's intentions for creation.

This understanding of sacrifice-as-life that emerges from the biblical narrative is an alternative to the common portrayal of sacrifice-as-death, and it offers important resources for Christian theology and ethics. First, it challenges the deployment of sacrifice within penal substitutionary models of the atonement. The account of Christ's priestly work in Hebrews encompasses and completes the work of the cult in a way that emphasizes re-creation, rather than punishment. In doing so, it provides an account of atonement that involves creation, Israel, and the particularities of God's revelation found in Scripture. Second, this articulation of sacrifice finds common ground with Christian theological reflections on God's recapitulative work found in Irenaeus, Origen, and Athanasius, which holds together death and resurrection in such a way as to point toward communion as our true end with God. In doing so, sacrifice-as-life facilitates a change in imagination, for God's institution of sacrifice points to life in its fullness. Finally, this interpretation of cultic sacrifice places the care of creation at the center of God's redeeming work. Sacrificially-formed discipleship practices involve limitation and

restraint that facilitate the nurture and flourishing of creation. The logic underlying the exhortations that conclude the book of Hebrews affirms that discipleship possesses a sacrificial shape.

5.1 Sacrifice and Atonement

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the City of the living God, heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, a festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn enrolled in heaven, and to a Judge who is God of all, and to spirits of righteous people made perfect, and to the Mediator of the New Covenant, Jesus, and to blood of sprinkling [αἷματι ῥαντισμοῦ] that speaks better than Abel.
–Hebrews 12: 22-24¹

Conceptualizations of atonement often depend upon an understanding of blood.

What does sacrificial blood, blood used for sprinkling, represent? For many, Christ's blood is a symbol of death, representing Christ's propitiatory sacrifice directed at assuaging God's wrath. As displayed in chapter one, Calvin and many of his theological descendants hold blood, sacrifice, and death to be synonymous. Through Calvin, sacrifice has often been incorporated into atonement discourses that focus on Jesus' death as a form of punishment.

The account of sacrifice developed in this dissertation offers an alternative interpretation, setting sacrificial blood in the context of the biblical narrative of God's purposes for humanity displayed in the Pentateuch. Abel's blood, and all ensuing

¹ Translation by Gareth Lee Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2012), 642.

bloodshed, has marked creation's disorder since the wrongful taking of the fruit. Given the careful ordering of creation manifest in God's works during the six days in Genesis 1, Abel's shed blood is indeed a sign of death. In the ground, Abel's blood is out of place. It is a product of humanity's proclivity to take, first manifest in the transgression of the divine boundary God establishes in the garden. Abel's blood attests to this rupture of the human and social body, "crying out" to God from the ground (Gen 4:10). In response to Abel's cries, God redeems this lost blood *and* rehabilitates blood-shedders through disciplining Israel in proper sacrifice. Leviticus displays a life of offering, not taking, and blood rightly ordered. Sacrificial blood – blood sprinkled and brought near God's presence in the Tabernacle – is a sign of life. Humanity, through Israel, is restored, for Israel is formed to eschew death. This movement is a foreshadowing of resurrection. Jesus' blood, like the sprinkled blood of the Tabernacle that he perfects, speaks a better word than the blood of Abel because Jesus' blood defeats death (Heb 12:24).

The elaboration of Christ's priestly office in the book of Hebrews builds upon the sacrificial system outlined in Leviticus, in order to display how Jesus embodies and completes it. This biblical display of sacrifice within God's drama of salvation suggests that sacrifice is a divinely-ordained means for human life to exist in its intended wholeness. Sacrifice is not primarily an act of death; rather, it is a re-ordering of blood. What is redemptive about sacrifice is not blood's loss as a sign of death, but blood's reconstitution into a new body. For the sacrificial cult detailed in Leviticus, this new

body is the Tabernacle, which in turn makes possible a new social body for Israel. The manipulation of blood during sacrificial rituals counters the disordering of creation effected by Abel's bloodshed. Through the discipline of sacrifice, Israel can host God's presence and reclaim humanity's role as God intended in creation, because Israel is trained in practices of offering and taking. This reconfiguration of humanity is completed in the person and work of Jesus, whose blood is perfectly ordered in his incarnation and resurrection. Jesus' sacrificial blood is redemptive because it is a part of his resurrected body, which he offers to the Father. The reconstitution of blood in Jesus' body is a sign that death has definitively been overcome. The role sacrifice plays in salvation history is best understood as offering, not death, destruction, or lack.

In this account, sacrifice is a means through which God achieves the purposes intended for creation by overcoming death and allowing humans to be near God's presence once again. Sacrifice understood in this way does not underwrite a penal substitutionary understanding of the atonement. Instead of sacrificial death effecting atonement, as is the case in penal formulations, God's gift of sacrifice as offering generates new life through the transformation of bodies. In this way, sacrifice is not portrayed as an act of punishment; nor is God's wrath a prominent theme.² Instead,

² The notion of anger or wrath only occurs twice in Lev 1-16. The root קנָה appears in Lev 10 relative to Nadab and Abihu's violation. In 10:6, Moses warns Aaron and his sons not to mourn Nadab and Abihu's deaths "lest you die and anger strike the whole community" (TNK). In 10:16, Moses is the one who is angry with Aaron's sons for burning and not eating the purification offering. God's anger is depicted as a threat to

sacrifice as offering participates in God's renewal of creation depicted in the narratives of Genesis and Exodus.

Moreover, this project's exegetical work attends to the particularities of the sacrificial system of Leviticus in a way that complicates a ready attempt to equate the cultic and forensic spheres. The rich dynamics of sacrifice detailed in Leviticus and assumed by Hebrews challenge Calvin's impulse to depict Christ's priestly office in a courtroom setting. While God is certainly described as a judge throughout Scripture, the particularities of the cult and the courtroom are sufficiently theologically significant that they should not be elided. Sacrifice is not necessarily a form of punishment meted out in a legal exchange. As Yoder states, "the easy juxtaposition of civil punishment with bloody sacrifice, which makes the Anselmian synthesis so powerful to convince, will not find support in the sources."³

In the biblical portrayal of salvation history, Levitical sacrifice is one of the means by which God restores humanity and the rest of creation. I seek to illuminate how

ensure proper protocol. In Hebrews, God's anger appears in chapters 3 and 4 when the homilist reflects on the fact that Israel failed to achieve God's rest due to their disobedience during the wilderness period per Psalm 95 (προσοχθίζω occurs in 3:10, 17 and ὀργή in 3:11 and 4:3). Implicit in the critique of Israel in Heb 3-4 is the understanding that the cult failed to effect Israel's transformation. These texts attest that God's anger results when God's purposes are thwarted (cf. the discussion about disobedience in Heb 10:26-31). If sacrifice is oriented toward humanity's remediation, then it is the failure of sacrifice as a result of humanity's rebellious recalcitrance, rather than sacrifice itself, that is most related to God's wrath.

³ Yoder, *Preface to Theology*, 301.

God saves through a particular mode of divine action revealed in Scripture. Sacrifice is one of several important motifs depicting God's work of restoration, as such prominent themes as "ransom" or "redemption" reveal.⁴ In explicating the biblical "story" of Levitical sacrifice as a central means of God's rehabilitation of Israel, I attend to the particularities of both humanity's fall and God's efforts of remediation in such a way as to suggest that cultic sacrifice cannot be properly understood via abstract notions of justice and punishment. God's designs for creation and humanity's disregard for divine limits and ordering provide an important theological context for the cult. Sacrifice not only forms Israel to embody its creational vocation, but it also functions to "undo" or reverse death symbolically by bringing sacrificial blood near God's presence. Penal substitutionary models that depict sacrifice as a form of punishment, as seen clearly in Calvin's placement of sacrifice in a forensic setting, risk abstraction from the witness of Scripture.

5.1.1 Sacrifice and Recapitulation

What we see in the story of sacrifice culminating in Leviticus is a form of recapitulation that Christ will later perfect. This interpretation of sacrifice-as-life finds common ground with early Christian theological reflections on Christ's salvific work. These articulations are significant because they tightly link recapitulation with

⁴ Yoder catalogues eleven key concepts he finds in the New Testament that relate to Christ's saving work in his discussion of atonement in *Preface to Theology* (284-288).

resurrection. Irenaeus famously develops the idea of recapitulation in his work *Against Heresies*, in which he affirms that when Christ “became incarnate, and was made man, He commenced afresh the long line of human beings, and furnished us, in a brief, comprehensive manner, with salvation; so that what we had lost in Adam – namely, to be according to the image and likeness of God – that we might recover in Christ Jesus.”⁵ Irenaeus clarifies a key aspect of Christ’s work: “God recapitulated in Himself the ancient formation of man, that He might kill sin, deprive death of its power, and vivify man.”⁶ Irenaeus does not address how Christ’s sacrifice may be recapitulative, nor does he articulate how Christ continues and perfects God’s transformation of humanity begun with Israel.

In fact, a sacrificial conceptualization of Christ’s death plays a minor role in *Against Heresies*.⁷ Irenaeus does, however, provide a reflection on recapitulation and

⁵ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.18.1 (ANF 446).

⁶ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.18.7 (ANF 448).

⁷ Boersma and Daly both attend to the few references that suggest such an interpretation. Daly contends, “The idea of the *sacrifice of Christ* is usually only implicit in his writing,” though he claims it “pervades his thought.” Robert J. Daly, *The Origins of the Christian Doctrine of Sacrifice* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), 93 (italics original). Boersma is particularly interested in finding support in Irenaeus for a propitiatory interpretation of sacrifice. He concludes that “the notion of Christ’s death being sacrificial and propitiatory remains marginal in Irenaeus,” and he identifies the strongest linkage in a section where Irenaeus reflects on Jesus’ relationship to the law: “For He did not make void, but fulfilled the law, by performing the offices of the high priest, propitiating God for men, and cleansing the lepers, healing the sick, and Himself suffering death, that exiled man might go forth from condemnation, and might return without fear to his own inheritance,” *Violence, Hospitality, and the Cross*, 161-2 [he is quoting Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 4.8.2 (ANF 471)]. As we will discuss later with Origen, the relationship between the work of the high priest and propitiation may not be as clear as Boersma claims. Irenaeus may underplay sacrifice in reference to Christ

blood-shed that resonates with the logic of the cult. In a section situated within a larger discussion of the importance of Christ's resurrection, Irenaeus argues that Christ assumes flesh and blood because the blood of the righteous "will be inquired after."⁸ He cites the importance of Abel's blood crying out in Genesis 4 and highlights the value of blood manifest in the law given to Noah against bloodshed in Genesis 9. He then quotes Jesus: "All righteous blood shall be required which is shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zacharias."⁹ From this Irenaeus concludes that Jesus "points out the recapitulation that should take place in his own person of the effusion of blood from the beginning, of all the righteous men and of the prophets, and that by means of Himself there should be *a requisition of their blood*. Now this [blood] could not be required unless it also had the capability of being saved...[Jesus saves] in his own person at the end that which had in the beginning perished in Adam."¹⁰

Irenaeus highlights the importance of blood and God's commitment to redeem it as

because he argues, following prophetic critiques, that Levitical sacrifices have no value since "God did not seek sacrifices and holocausts from them, but faith, and obedience, and righteousness." Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 4.17.4 (ANF 484).

⁸ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 5.14.1 (ANF 541).

⁹ Irenaeus is paraphrasing a quote found in Matthew 23:35-36 and Luke 11:50-51. In both of these contexts, this quote functions to establish the guilt of Jesus' generation. Irenaeus changes the accent of Jesus' saying by using it in this passage to emphasize Jesus' role in blood's redemption.

¹⁰ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 5.14.1 (ANF 541) (emphasis added).

attested in both the Old and New Testaments. Irenaeus contends that Jesus' salvific work involves a requisition of blood that has been spilled. The recapitulative power of Jesus's life is manifest not simply in his effusion of blood, but also in his reclamation of blood in his own body through the resurrection. In this account, Irenaeus does not place any salvific value in the spillage of blood in itself. On the contrary, he identifies God's care for blood first manifest in Cain's murder of Abel and his intentions to restore what has been lost. While he does not consider the redemption of blood relative to sacrifice, Irenaeus identifies a key aspect of God's saving purposes that first take place in the cult. The accent is on the restoration of blood, not on its loss as a sign of death.

Unlike Irenaeus, who does not develop an account of sacrifice and the cult in terms of recapitulation, Origen's treatment of the cult in his homilies on Leviticus displays that he understands the *telos* of sacrifice to include humanity's restoration. In Homily 9, Origen provides his most sustained attention to the Day of Atonement ritual detailed in Leviticus 16. He first considers that the "consecrated linen tunic" the high priest wears corresponds with Christ's earthly body, for flax comes from the earth, and, quoting Genesis 3:19, the body "is earth and it will go into the earth."¹¹ At the heart of Christ's high priestly vocation is the redemption of the body, as he says, "Therefore, my

¹¹ Origen, *Homilies on Leviticus*, 178.

Lord and Savior, wanting to resurrect that which had gone 'into the earth,' took an earthly body that he might carry it raised up from the earth to heaven."¹²

Origen expands upon Christ's work on the Day of Atonement to include his role as the "prepared man" who separates the two goats, one as "the lot of the Lord," the other as the scapegoat. As a result, he accomplishes two things. He "makes 'the lot of the Lord' his Church and consecrates it at the divine altar," and he designates "'the lot of the scapegoat' the opposing powers, 'the spirits of evil and the rulers of this world of darkness,' which he delivers 'to the wilderness.'"¹³ Origen notes that it is necessary for Christ to be "born a man among men" so that after he delivered the scapegoat to Hell, "he could ascend to the Father, and there be more fully purified at the heavenly altar so that he could give a pledge of our flesh, which he had taken with him in perpetual purity." Origen immediately concludes, "This, therefore, is the real day of atonement when God is propitiated for men."¹⁴ In this depiction, propitiation is accomplished by recapitulation: the powers have been defeated and humanity has been restored and is able to abide in the presence of the Father. The *telos* of Levitical sacrifice according to Origen lies in the new reality Christ makes present through his resurrection.

¹² Origen, *Homilies on Leviticus*, 178-179.

¹³ Origen, *Homilies on Leviticus*, 184.

¹⁴ Origen, *Homilies on Leviticus*, 185.

Origen posits that Christians participate in the work of sacrifice that Christ perfects. He exhorts his audience to choose to be among the “lot of the Lord” and not of the “lot of the scapegoat.” Origen considers caring for the needy, exercising justice, and protecting the innocent as among the good works that characterize those of the Lord’s lot. In contrast, people aligned with the scapegoat are those who are enslaved to their passions.¹⁵ He observes that those who are among the Lord’s lot do “not take hope in the present age but in the future” and that he who is among this group “dies daily” and “is killed and dies, that by his blood he may purify the people of God.”¹⁶ In contrast, if one is among the lot of the scapegoat, “he is not killed; neither is he worthy to be slain at the altar of God nor is his blood fit to be poured out ‘at the base of the altar.’”¹⁷ Notably, Origen portrays the Lord’s sacrificial goat to be God’s people, rather than Christ.¹⁸ By identifying the goat offered to God during the Day of Atonement ritual with Christ’s followers, Origen emphasizes the way in which the church participates in Christ’s offering. In doing so, he complicates an easy equation of sacrifice with punishment. Origen portrays God’s people in an analogous way to the sacrificial system of Leviticus, in which only whole, unblemished (תמימים) animals are fit for the altar. Those who are

¹⁵ Origen, *Homilies on Leviticus*, 183.

¹⁶ Origen, *Homilies on Leviticus*, 182.

¹⁷ Origen, *Homilies on Leviticus*, 182.

¹⁸ Origen has previously affirmed that Christ recapitulates every sacrifice (*Homilies on Leviticus*, 62).

worthy of God's presence are sacrificed, while those deserving punishment are "not killed" but sent away with the scapegoat. In Origen's account, sacrifice is the opposite of punishment, for sacrifice is a blessed means of participating in God's salvific work. Sacrifice as christoform discipleship allows one to enjoy communion with God.

Origen contends that Christ's priestly ministry involves offering the virtues of his followers. Origen lists mercy, justice, piety, and peace as fruits of God's people that are "offered at the altar," and he proclaims that "the high priest receives these and in them reconciles you to God."¹⁹ He specifies that propitiation on the Day of Atonement involves Christ's entry into the Holy of Holies where he approaches the Father and "prays for all those who believe in him."²⁰ As Frances Young observes, the propitiation Christ offers is "in fact the Christians' own gifts of pity, justice, piety, peace; he does not plead the merits of his own sacrifice, but offers the lives of transformed men."²¹ The

¹⁹ Origen, *Homilies on Leviticus*, 188. In Homily 4 that addresses sin and lying to a neighbor about a deposit, Origen considers that part of "the deposit" the Christian receives is God's entrustment of "his own image and likeness' to your own soul." He admonishes his audience that this deposit "must be restored by you just as intact as it was received by you." Being merciful, perfect, pious, just, holy, and pure in heart are ways to safeguard the deposit of God's image, while possessing cruelty, impiety, violence, turbulence, or greed forfeits the image (*Homilies on Leviticus*, 72). Although Origen does not make the connection, the similarity in his thought concerning what constitutes the deposit of God's image and those who belong to "the lot of the Lord" suggests that what Christians offer to God is the embodiment – and restoration – of God's image.

²⁰ Origen, *Homilies on Leviticus*, 187.

²¹ Frances M. Young, *The Use of Sacrificial Ideas in Greek Christian Writers from the New Testament to John Chrysostom* (Cambridge, Mass.: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1979), 171. In another homily, Origen explains what it means for a priest "to make a propitiation for a transgression." He writes, "If you should take the sinner, and by admonishing, exhorting, teaching and instructing him, lead him to repentance, turn

sacrifice of the “lot of the Lord” does not entail death or negation but a drawing near to God by means of humanity’s conversion.

Origen builds upon the sense of the significance of Christian participation in the Day of Atonement ritual, for he contends that Christian deeds of justice, piety, chastity, prudence, and related virtues constitute the “finely composed incense” that Christ the high priest brings before God in accordance with the ritual described in Leviticus 16:12.²² Christians contribute not only incense, but also burnt offerings that burn on the outer altar, from which Christ collects fire to bring before the Father. The burnt offering of Christians include such works as renunciation of worldly goods, martyrdom, giving up one’s life for others or for justice and truth, and putting to death desire of the flesh. Origen concludes, “Blessed is he whose coals of his whole burnt offering he finds so living and so fiery that he may judge them worthy to be placed upon ‘the altar of incense.’”²³ At stake for Origen is one’s salvation, for he contends that those who burn on account of worldly pleasures will suffer the same fate as Nadab and Abihu.²⁴ Origen

him from his error, free him from his vices, and make him such that God becomes gracious to him converted, you will be said ‘to have made a propitiation for transgression.’” Origen, *Homilies on Leviticus*, 98.

²² Origen, *Homilies on Leviticus*, 193, 197.

²³ Origen, *Homilies on Leviticus*, 197.

²⁴ Origen, *Homilies on Leviticus*, 198-9.

understands sacrificial formation to be a zero-sum game. If one is not on fire for God, it is because that individual is consumed by an “alien fire.”²⁵

Origen’s portrayal of the Day of Atonement focuses on Christ as the high priest who offers the church’s fruits.²⁶ The underlying logic of Origen’s theology in this section is that Christ’s life and work summon a christoform imitation from his followers. Christ’s sacrifice inaugurates a new reality in which those who follow him are similarly considered to be sacrificial offerings worthy of the Father. As Origen exhorts his audience, the goal of this movement is the overcoming of death through participation in the life that Christ makes possible, a life where “we who follow Jesus within the veil of the inner sanctuary may no longer be as mortal humans but as immortal angels when our Lord Jesus who is ‘the way, the truth, and the life’ ‘will have destroyed death, the last enemy.’”²⁷

²⁵ Origen, *Homilies on Leviticus*, 198. In this probing section, Origen asks his audience to consider the question, “From where do you glow?” In the absence of divine fire that fosters faith, love, and mercy, one is engulfed by false loves that lead to destruction.

²⁶ Origen discusses how Christ is a sin offering in Homily 5. Because the ritual procedure in Leviticus 6 describes priests as eating the sin offering, Origen concludes that in his offering, Jesus “eats the sins of the people,” and in this process, God consumes and thereby eliminates sin. Origen does not develop how this occurs through Jesus’ death. Instead, he focusses on the end achieved, and he compares Jesus’ purgation of sin with those who remain in sin and therefore are subject to death’s dominion. The contrast is stark: either one participates in Jesus’ swallowing of sin, or one is destined to being swallowed by death (93-94).

²⁷ Origen, *Homilies on Leviticus*, 201. Origen holds that one who has attained the glory of the Resurrection achieves angelic status and is no longer properly a person (200).

Origen's account of the cult emphasizes how the Christian life possesses a sacrificial form. Jesus defeats death and offers not only his perfected humanity but also the redeemed lives of his followers. For Origen, sacrifice is not itself an optional, discrete set of practices but a formation constituted by love and desire for God. Origen conceives of Christian discipleship as sacrificial, not because it primarily involves "giving something up," but because it is oriented at a life with God made possible through the life, death, and resurrection of the Son. What Origen does not develop, and what the display of sacrifice in Leviticus reveals, is the way in which the Israelite sacrificial system cultivates such habits as offering, restraint, and respect for life that lead toward Israel's sanctification. The material practices of the cult are instrumental to the restoration of humanity God intends.

Like Origen, Athanasius attends to sacrifice as recapitulative in his work *On the Incarnation*, but Athanasius emphasizes God's purposes for creation in a more systematic way. Athanasius begins his discussion about Christ's incarnation by describing the grace given to humanity in being created in the image of God, and how humanity forfeited this grace through disobedience.²⁸ As a result, humanity became subject to death and corruption. The incarnation is necessary because it is only Christ, "the Image of the

²⁸ Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, 28-29.

Father, Who could recreate man made after the Image.”²⁹ Athanasius thus sets up what he considers to be a divine dilemma: “Man, who was created in God’s image and in his possession of reason reflected in the very Word Himself, was disappearing, and the work of God was being undone. The law of death, which followed from the Transgression, prevailed upon us, and from it there was no escape. The thing that was happening was in truth both monstrous and unfitting.”³⁰ Athanasius contends that God could not go against his word regarding the punishment of death, but that it would be unfitting and unworthy of God to let humanity dissipate into nothingness.³¹ Christ solves this problem through his incarnation and sacrifice:

Thus, taking a body like our own, because all our bodies were liable to the corruption of death, He surrendered His body to death in place of all, and offered it to the Father. This He did out of sheer love for us, so that in His death all might die, and the law of death thereby be abolished because, when He had fulfilled in His body that for which it was appointed, it was thereafter voided of its power for men. This He did that He might turn again to incorruption men who had turned back to corruption, and make them alive through death by the appropriation of His body and by the grace of his resurrection.³²

Christ’s work accomplishes two goals: through his death he destroys death’s reign, and in doing so he restores humanity’s immortality. In this depiction the accent falls on the

²⁹ Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, 41.

³⁰ Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, 31-32.

³¹ Athanasius emphasizes that corruption “was the penalty for the Transgression” (*On the Incarnation*, 34; cf. 31).

³² Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, 34.

transformation of humanity made possible by the resurrection. Athanasius summarizes, "By man death has gained its power over men; by the Word made Man death has been destroyed and life raised up anew."³³ Christ's sacrifice enables God's recapitulative purposes, for humanity has been re-created and the image of God restored.

Athanasius does not end his account here; he goes on to reflect more deeply on Christ's death, and he does so in a way that begins to shift the accent on sacrifice and death in some significant ways. He contends that Jesus offers his body *to death* as a sacrifice. He writes, "It was by surrendering to death the body which He had taken, as an offering and sacrifice free from every stain, that He forthwith abolished death for His human brethren by the offering of the equivalent."³⁴ This differs from the prior passage where Athanasius states that Christ surrenders his body to death and offers it to the Father. By identifying *death* as the recipient of Christ's sacrifice, Athanasius departs from the portrayal of Levitical sacrifice within Scripture. As argued in chapters three and four of this dissertation, the death of the sacrificial victim in the cult is a necessary step, but it is the manipulation of blood and the focus on the presentation of life that is the locus of atonement.

³³ Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, 37.

³⁴ Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, 35.

In exploring how Christ offers a sacrifice to death, he introduces concepts that differ from the depiction of sacrifice in Leviticus and Hebrews. Consider how he develops his idea that Christ offers a sacrifice to death:

there was a debt owing which must needs be paid; for, as I said before, all men were due to die. Hence, then, is the second reason why the Word dwelt among us, namely that having proved His Godhead by His works, He might offer the sacrifice on behalf of all, surrendering His own temple to death in place of all, to settle man's account with death and free him from the primal transgression. In the same act also he showed Himself mightier than death, displaying His own body incorruptible as the first-fruits of the resurrection.³⁵

In this passage, Athanasius employs language of debt to underscore death's agency. Christ's sacrifice is now located in a novel, economic context. Athanasius is careful to maintain the link between sacrifice and resurrection, but he portrays resurrection as a separate, additional end accomplished in Christ's sacrifice to death on account of humanity's debt. While this move to locate sacrifice within a new conceptual paradigm may bear theological fruit and relate Christ's sacrifice to other depictions of Christ's salvific work described in the New Testament, it risks turning Christ's sacrifice into an abstraction that can easily lead to an association of sacrifice primarily with death. The logic of recapitulation that Athanasius develops in *On the Incarnation*, which emphasizes God's renewal of humanity through Christ's life, death, and resurrection, continues to play a role in Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo*, but it drops out in Calvin's portrayal of Christ's

³⁵ Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, 49.

priestly work.³⁶ Unhinged from the biblical narrative, sacrifice too easily gets assimilated into frameworks that decouple sacrifice from restoration and resurrection. At stake is a conceptualization of sacrifice predominately understood as a form of negation.

Irenaeus, Origen, and Athanasius portray salvation in terms of recapitulation in ways that resonate with my theological interpretation of the cult based upon the biblical narratives found in Torah and Hebrews. This approach is significant, because its scope holds together creation with reconciliation. Penal formulations that focus almost exclusively on God's punishment of Jesus risk ignoring the larger theological framework of God's saving action that recapitulation so helpfully maintains. As Athanasius attests,

³⁶ David Bentley Hart contends that this logic of recapitulation present in the early Church Fathers also underwrites Anselm's account in *Cur Deus Homo*, and he offers a reevaluation of the term "honor" as that which is satisfied by Christ's work:

what Anselm takes [honor] to mean is susceptible of debate, but it certainly does not refer to an infinite reserve of divine pride that prevents God from forgiving unreservedly. If Anselm's usage in any way reflects the jurisprudence and ethos of early medieval feudalism, it is as well to observe that in that context "honor" certainly signified more than a sense either of one's personal dignity or of one's social position, but referred also (and more fundamentally perhaps) to the principle underlying the rather fragile governance of an entire social and economic order.... In any event, one need not look beyond the text to see that, for Anselm, God's honor is inseparable from his goodness, which imparts life and harmonious order to creation, the rejection of which is necessarily death; as the source of all creation's beauty and order, it is the righteousness that cannot contradict itself or will anything amiss; it is justice, not wrath, and its manifestation is the *rectitudo* of God's universal governance, its rightness and moral beauty (*The Beauty of the Infinite*, 369, 371).

Daniel Bell similarly understands honor and satisfaction in *Cur Deus Homo* to be best understood in terms of recapitulation. He writes that God is not "collecting on accounts receivable, but rather making good on God's intention in creating humanity. This is the key to understanding the claim that sin is an offense against God's honor. Anselm argues that sin is indeed an offense against God's honor in the particular sense that it is not fitting that God's will or intention for humanity be thwarted." Bell, *The Economy of Desire*, 150. Such evaluations of Anselm are necessary given how Anselm's rhetoric makes him vulnerable to misunderstanding.

death is a form of punishment that humankind must endure as a result of its primal disobedience. Death is a penalty because it estranges us from God: it denies our created purpose to bear God's image and to share in God's life. Levitical sacrifice is grounded in a particular anthropology that is oriented to a clear end: communion with God. Christ achieves this end through the sacrificial offering of his resurrected body.

Sacrifice-as-life keeps death in proper perspective, for it places greater value on God's purposes than on that which stands in opposition to them. As a result, this interpretation of sacrifice facilitates a shift in imagination, for sacrifice-as-life emphasizes our renewal manifest in Jesus' resurrection. Rather than pointing to our own demise, sacrifice framed in these terms summons forth praise and a change of heart. God has conquered death and allows us to participate in a renewed reality through Christ's sacrificial reordering. We are called to share in Christ's life in which the image of God and right dominion have been restored. In doing so, we engage in practices that are life-promoting.

5.1.2 Atonement and Creation

Salvation history anchors sacrifice to God's work of redeeming creation. Christ's role as high priest, as explored by the book of Hebrews, continues and perfects the work of the cult depicted in Leviticus. Jesus' sacrifice is therefore grounded in particularity. To divorce it from its context in Hebrews and Leviticus is to distort its theological significance. Given the reliance of Hebrews on Leviticus, it is not sufficient to attend to

portrayals of sacrifice in Hebrews alone. Neither is it theologically sound to consider sacrifice in the abstract. Torah's vision of restoration that occurs on the Day of Atonement provides the substrate for a leading understanding of Christ's sacrifice as redemptive.

The fullness of the cult detailed in Leviticus provides a specific display of *how* the cult is redemptive for creation. Contemporary theologians might gain valuable insights from this display about how reconciliation with God involves caring for creation. The adoption and habituation of the cult's practices trains Israel in drawing near to God through material offerings. In regularly offering such valuable commodities as domesticated herd animals, Israel counters humanity's withdrawal from God when Eve and Adam took the forbidden fruit. At the same time, Israel learns to trust God's providential care and thus to abstain from the human temptation to hoard that characterizes the ways of Egypt and plagues Israel amidst its liberation in the wilderness. The taming of human acquisitiveness along with God's disciplining of bloodshed inculcates a respect for life. Blood is not to be shed indiscriminately. Through the cult, God seeks to free Israel from the power of death that otherwise ensnares humanity. Israel is formed to be a peaceful people who therefore exercise dominion rightly. They are trained to refrain from practices of death.

Israel's sacrificial practices are aimed at renewing God's purposes for creation. The reordering that occurs on the Day of Atonement when death is provisionally

“undone” results in a realization of God’s Sabbath. Restoration comes for the entire created community as human wholeness begets a right ordering for the rest of creation. Through the practices of sacrifice and the purity regulations, Israel rejects death. Sacrifice heals the fall’s ruptures as it reconstitutes the individual and corporate body. Jesus’ recapitulation of Adam and the cult includes humanity’s proper dominion relative to its fellow creatures. The bodily dimensions of Israel’s –and thus Jesus’ – sacrificial work necessarily includes the entire created order in its salvific scope. Far from an “ornament of theology” as some contend, caring for creation is at the heart of what it means to be reconciled to God through Christ.

This vision of sacrifice is particularly helpful in our current North American context where disregard for limits threatens ecological collapse. Consumer capitalism feeds upon the wanton taking of resources. While the idea of sacrifice is offered by some environmentalists as a means to curb our current addiction to consumption, Christians are called not to a generic form of sacrifice. Instead, Christians are to embody a christoform discipleship in which our habits and practices are rightly oriented to God in all that we do. Augustine notes that “true sacrifice is offered in every act which is designated to unite us to God in a holy fellowship, every act, that is, which is directed to that final Good which makes possible our true felicity.”³⁷ As the Levitical cult displays,

³⁷ Augustine, *City of God*, 10.6 (379).

this orientation described by Augustine is bound to our engagement with the material world.

When faced with environmental destruction, Christians should embrace conservation, limitation, and modest consumption, because these actions align with our vocation to exercise dominion as beings made in the image of God. These practices are sacrificial, not because they appear to be constituted by lack, but because they are a performance of right ordering, informed and empowered by God's grace. This formation means that Christians do not need the science of climate change to be convincing in order to adopt practices aimed at sustainability. Even apart from global warming, the environmental ravages of fossil fuels, as seen clearly by the degradation of Gulf of Mexico, should be sufficient cause for Christian communities to advocate for both different and less energy use. Christians do not need dire projections in order to be motivated to protect ecosystems against rampant human exploitation. A sacrificial vocation means that Christians will act in ways that promote the health of the entire created order through the disciplining of their consumptive habits. True sacrifice is nothing less than discipleship.

5.2 *Sacrifice and Discipleship*

Through him, then, let us continually offer a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that confess his name. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

– Hebrews 13:15-16

The letter to the Hebrews famously contends that Christ has “offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins” (Heb 10:12). When many Christians read this verse, they conclude that their own sacrifice is not a constitutive part of Christian discipleship. Hebrews affirms that Christ’s offering of himself indeed completes God’s purposes for healing the cosmos, thus making obsolete any other sacrificial practices aimed at affecting this end. However, as the homily emphasizes, Jesus’ brothers and sisters remain pilgrims on their way toward the eschatological reality already assured by Christ’s priestly work. In this time between the times, his siblings are encouraged to look “to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb 12:2). Jesus’ sacrificial work, though complete in itself, nevertheless persists as a calling for those who participate in him. Discipleship, according to Hebrews, possesses a sacrificial shape. The types of sacrifice that should constitute Christian living are not like those of our current capitalist economy that involve violence and death. Instead, Christian sacrificial practices are ways of engaging

the world that are oriented toward fellowship with God. They aim at right dominion. Based on the displays of sacrifice in Leviticus and Hebrews, at least two observations emerge that inform how the practices of the cult embodied by Jesus can influence Christian formation.

First, Hebrews celebrates that Jesus is “a great priest over the house of God” (Heb 10: 21). Like Moses, who also “was faithful in all God’s house” (Heb 3:2), Jesus’ leadership involves both God’s people and God’s Tabernacle. Just as the cult is a constitutive element of Israel’s existence, so too does Jesus’ work restoring creation form the bedrock of the church. The renewed reality that Jesus makes possible through his offering becomes the substrate for our bodies joined to his in the church. Our participation in Christ will necessarily be sacrificial in nature.

Since the church is a community constituted and formed by sacrifice, it is not surprising to find that Hebrews follows its description of Christ’s priestly office with exhortations of a communal nature: “Let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching” (Heb 10:24-25). Just as the proper functioning of the cult displayed in Leviticus depends upon a communal awareness of sin and practices of truth-telling and confession, so too does the church need its members to discern together how best to embody “love and good deeds [ἔργων].” This calling has been made possible and given shape by Jesus’ bodily offering,

for through it he is able to “purify our conscience from dead works [ἐργων] to worship the living God” (Heb 9:14). Love and good deeds possess a sacrificial quality, providing a bodily witness to the perfection that has been accomplished by Christ’s defeat of sin and death in his resurrection. Through communal discernment and encouragement, the church participates in and enacts the wholeness that Jesus has made possible. The homilist contrasts this calling with “willfully persist[ing] in sin,” the consequences of which consign its practitioners to the realm of death (Heb 10:26-29). Death’s power is only overcome in the reality made present through Christ’s resurrected body.

Second, Hebrews powerfully frames discipleship in terms of imitation, drawing upon the ancestors of the faith who comprise the great cloud of witnesses, concluding with the preeminent example of Jesus (Heb 11:1-12:2). The homilist points to this catalogue of faithfulness not only to encourage his audience to persevere in the face of trials, but also to provide some shape to Christian living as God’s people await the entirety of God’s restoration. The varied examples of faithfulness by Israel’s ancestors provisionally witness to God’s desire for a body that will do God’s will (Heb 10:5-7). Abel’s and Abraham’s sacrifices offer two prominent examples of faithfulness detailed in this list, and many others feature bodies that are threatened, tortured, oppressed or killed for God’s sake.

Jesus’ obedience to God’s will enacts God’s purposes for humankind, for through his life and death he offers his perfected body to God, thereby recapitulating Adam and

the Levitical cult. Imitation of and participation in Christ assumes a sacrificial shape, for Christians are called similarly to offer their bodies to God regardless of the cost. Hence the author of Hebrews highlights that “in your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood” (Heb 12:4). That Christians might be called to shed their own blood accords not only with the witness of many of the faithful among God’s people, but it also harkens to Jesus’ perfection of the sacrificial system in his own body, where his blood is shed for the purposes of countering and undoing the forces of death. Thus rather than capitulating to the power of sin that ultimately leads to bloodshed and a profanation of creation, as vividly portrayed in the example of Cain’s murder of Abel and ensuing history, Christians are called to imitate Christ and trust that the loss of their own blood will be aligned with the power of life, ultimately realized in their own perfection in the resurrection.

In addition to being willing to offer their own lives in obedience to God, the homilist details other ways that the sacrificial shape of Jesus’ life informs Christian discipleship. He writes,

Let mutual love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it. Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them; those who are being tortured, as though you yourselves were being tortured. Let marriage be held in honor by all, and let the marriage bed be kept undefiled... Keep your lives free from the love of money, and be content with what you have; for he has said, “I will never leave you or forsake you.” So we can say with confidence, “The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can anyone do to me?” Remember your leaders, those who spoke the word of God to you; consider the outcome of their

way of life, and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. (Heb 13:1-8)

Jesus' redemption of Adam, the realization of wholeness in his body, leads to such practices as hospitality, compassion for prisoners, marital fidelity, and financial restraint. Christ's salvation of humankind grounds these discipleship practices. Christ enables humans to assume their rightful place in creation, where their lives are constituted by the call in Genesis to embody God's image and exercise right dominion in their relations with one another and the rest of the created order for the purposes of blessing and fruitfulness. Adam and Eve's violation of this vocation by their abandonment of God in their wrongful taking of the fruit unleashed death-dealing habits, manifest in intra-human violence, hoarding of material resources, and various forms of illicit taking, many of which emerge in service of establishing or maintaining one's own sense of security. As Wendell Berry observes, brokenness radiates throughout the social and ecological ecosystems, affecting both individuals and communities alike.³⁸

Jesus' healing of the fall in the sacrifice of his own body thus offers those who participate in him an opportunity to embody a right ordering when confronted with the

³⁸ Berry emphasizes that wholeness is simultaneously an individual and corporate matter, for our health is dependent on the wellbeing of the rest of creation. He observes how communities disintegrate when its economic system becomes unhinged from its values and norms. He asks, "If we are dismembered in our economic life, how can we be members in our communal and spiritual life? We assume that we can have an exploitive, ruthlessly competitive profit-for-profit's sake economy, and yet remain a decent and democratic nation." Wendell Berry, "A Defense of the Family Farm" in *Home Economics: Fourteen Essays* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1987), 169.

disorder that temporarily remains. Christians can trust in God's provision and share resources with others instead of fearing for their own safety or sufficiency. God's institution of sacrifice aims at wholeness for humans and the rest of creation; therefore Christians will oppose actions like torture or infidelity that degrade bodies or relationships. The practices enumerated at the end of Hebrews – mutual love, hospitality, care for the vulnerable, dependence on God instead of on money – reflect the formation given by the cult. It is fitting to see them enumerated in detail, both at the conclusion of Hebrews' reflection on Christ's priestly work and in similar exhortations found in the Holiness Code of Leviticus (Lev 17-26), which follows the description of the sacrificial system of the Tabernacle.³⁹

The homilist both posits that Christ's priestly work has made sacrifices for sin obsolete and maintains that forms of sacrifice remain for the church, proclaiming, "Through him, then, let us continually offer a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that confess his name. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God" (Heb 13:15-16). This concluding exhortation not only reinforces the claim that the bodily practices encouraged earlier in the letter are of a

³⁹ Cf. various injunctions in Lev 19: "You shall not defraud your neighbor; you shall not steal; and you shall not keep for yourself the wages of a laborer until morning" (19:13); "The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself" (19:34). Attridge notes the importance of the Holiness Code of Leviticus for early Christians in their appraisal of lust and greed. Attridge, *Hebrews*, 387.

sacrificial nature, it also reiterates that Christian sacrifice occurs through participation in Christ. Jesus offers his perfected body for the full redemption of humanity and the created order. Praise is the fitting response in our drawing near to God out of gratitude for the glorious end that has already been secured. Indeed praise is all that remains in the face of the restoration of creation achieved in Christ's life, death, and resurrection.

We have nothing to give but lives of praise constituted by discipleship practices of charity. These practices are performances of our redeemed human nature that dwells once again with God; for, through Christ's recapitulation of Adam, humans are no longer ensnared by evil and greed. Thus, the church is called to a sacrificial vocation that entails the conforming of its bodies to the One whose body has been made perfect. Accepting that vocation, the church will become more whole, thereby enabling the healing of bodies throughout the created order. This wholeness accords with the right ordering of creation that God enjoys on the seventh day, which Christ makes possible through his resurrection.

5.3 *Sacrifice and New Creation*

A new creation comes to life and grows
As Christ's new body takes on flesh and blood.
The universe, restored and whole, will sing: Alleluia!⁴⁰

Christian sacrifices enable a new economy where all of creation can flourish.

Paul's exhortation in Romans 12:1 to "present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God" reinforces the message of Hebrews that Christian sacrifice is necessarily a bodily performance. How might the practices of sacrifice as displayed in Leviticus and Hebrews facilitate Christian discipleship in offering a witness to the calls for sacrifice in face of environmental degradation?

First, the sacrificial cult instructs Israel to see sin and death in order to avoid or make amends for it. Christian disciples today should pay attention to and tell the truth about the harm caused by corporate externalities produced in pursuit of short-term profits. Forces of death pollute the Tabernacle, the created order it represents, and, by extension, Christ's body. Just as Israel confesses its sin in the process of purifying the Tabernacle, so too must Christians engage in practices of confession and repentance in order to participate in the body of Christ. Both instances rely on communal discernment of sin and commitment to its rectification. The community's confession, repentance, and

⁴⁰ John Brownlow Geyer, "We Know That Christ is Raised," #495 in *The Presbyterian Hymnal: Hymns, Psalms, and Spiritual Songs* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1990).

the awareness of sin should extend to all aspects of the community's life, especially its consumptive practices: from the food one eats, the products one buys, and the fossil fuels one burns. Sacrificial formation challenges ignorance about and indifference toward one's engagement with the material world.

Sacrificial formation should cause Christians currently enmeshed in our death-dealing economy to ask, "Whom and what are we killing?" and "What are we killing for?" According to the regulations of the Levitical cult, the killing of domesticated animals apart from sacrifice in the Tabernacle is murder (Lev 17:4). Such slaughter is reckoned as a perverse form of sacrifice, as its practice is a sacrifice to goat-demons "to whom [the offerers] prostitute themselves" (v. 7). The distortion of this sacrifice is totalizing in its corruption. Illicit sacrifice begets further degradation. This dynamic is manifest in our current sacrificial economy where we sacrifice people and habitats for natural resources to power our financial system, the *telos* of which is abstract wealth.

The logic of sacrifice displayed in Leviticus and Hebrews puts killing and other forms of destruction in relief for Christians. Like Israel, we are called to be disciplined in our consumptive practices, engaging other creatures in ways that promote life according to the contours of God's kingdom. Use of creation's goods that do result in death or forms of harm thus need to be considered in ways analogous to Israel's sacrificial display in Leviticus and Christ's priestly work. They should be for the purposes of

drawing near to God. They are for communion, not commodification.⁴¹ Christ's sacrifice should be determinative for our offerings.

Second, the sacrificial life of God's people enables Jubilee, praise, and charity, while the industrial economy facilitates greed, ingratitude, and sloth through the manufacturing of desire and breeding of disordered dependence. The habitual practice of offering resources to God reminds Israel and the church of their roots in creation and in God's economy. Israel's offerings are to be תמיים (Lev 1:3) – unblemished, whole – necessitating that Israel exercise special care in their animal husbandry. Israel's stewardship of its flock thus performs the right ordering humanity is called to embody in its creation in the image of God. By nurturing a תמיים animal for the purposes of honoring God, Israel becomes תמיים, too. Hebrews celebrates Christ's bodily perfection in his sinless life and resurrection. Participation in Christ therefore includes an understanding of Christian offering in ways analogous to that of Israel's sacrifice of תמיים animals, for Christian offerings should be products of lives similarly rooted in care for and attentiveness to God's creation. Consequently, there are forms of livelihood and economic practices Christians should reject.

⁴¹ For an account of considering meat-eating as sacrificial, see Stanley Hauerwas and John Berkman, "The Chief End of All Flesh," *ThTo* 49, no.2 (July 1992): 196-208. Their suggestion that just war theory provides analogous criteria for "just" meat-eating (208) could be extended to include "just" carbon consumption.

Through the regular practice of offering gifts to God, the church learns to eschew hoarding, to reject insecurity, and – through the gracious offering that is the Lord’s Supper – how to rest in God’s presence with the assurance that God will honor God’s promises. In the Lord’s Supper, God’s people experience an economy constituted by super-abundance. Through the work of the Spirit, offerings of bread and fruit given as part of creation’s blessings generate not waste but incorporation into the resurrected body of Christ, where all things are perfectly ordered. Through Christ’s sacrifice and our participation in it, God’s people are empowered to love and to give, for they are members of a body where they have more than they could ever need or imagine. Their desires have been transformed to be able to resist the temptations of the market, and their trust rests in the One who is in the process of making all things new. Christians should be able to reject short-term profit that comes at the community’s and creation’s expense.

Third, the very material dimensions of sacrifice emphasize the importance of bodies. Through the cult displayed in Leviticus, God heals humanity’s fallen nature through Israel’s material practices. The sacrificial system in Leviticus magnifies the truth manifest on the seventh day of creation: resting with God (at-one-ment) entails a right ordering of the whole, a key member of which is humankind. In Adam and Eve’s abandonment of God by their taking of the fruit, the whole of creation suffers, and thus creation’s repair comes through their drawing near to God by means of right

engagement with the created order. God's work of restoration through a recapitulation of humanity in the cult and in Christ means that Christians should see their bodily practices as the site at which redemption is displayed. Paul's exhortation for Christians to present their bodies as a living sacrifice in Romans 12:1 means that our bodies and our material practices need to be rightly ordered, too. This ordering is rooted in the new reality that is Christ's resurrection and entails God's original purposes for creation. Our bodily witness should include an embrace of self-limitations so that others, human and non-human alike, can flourish. Sacrifice is a means of sanctification.

Participation in Christ entails valuing bodies so that Christians will be able to see and reject the consumptive practices that are wreaking havoc on creation. Christians are not called to sacrifice in the abstract, nor are they being asked to add anything "new" by living sacrificially. Instead, through the Holy Spirit they are empowered to live into their baptism, where, incorporated into Christ's sacrificial body, they joyfully anticipate their resurrection through christoform discipleship. In doing so, Christians will witness to a way of life that facilitates the blessing and nurture of creation intended by God and reflected in the goodness of the Sabbath.

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Biography

Sarah Stokes Musser was born on August 11, 1974, in San Antonio, Texas. In 1996, she graduated from Princeton University with an A.B. in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, with certificates in Environmental Studies and in Princeton's Teacher Preparation Program. After three years of teaching middle school life science, she attended Duke Divinity School, earning the M. Div. degree (*summa cum laude*) in 2003. She began her graduate studies in Christian theology and ethics in the Graduate Program in Religion at Duke University in 2003. From 2003-2008 she was the recipient of the Lilly Endowment Doctoral Fellowship. She is a candidate for ordination in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Her essay, "Comfort in the Whirlwind? Job, Creation, and Environmental Degradation," was a finalist in the 2011-2012 *Word & World* doctoral essay contest and was published in their summer 2012 edition. She published the entry "Killing" in *The Dictionary of Scripture and Ethics* edited by Joel Green and published by Baker Academic. She has presented a paper at both a national and a regional conference of the American Academy of Religion / Society of Biblical Literature.

She is married to Clay Musser, and they have two children: Luke Stokes Musser (born August 5, 2006) and Adam Stokes Musser (born March 11, 2013). In 2012, they received the inaugural Green Building Award from the Historic Preservation Society of Durham for the renovation of their historic bungalow in Durham, NC.