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LEVITICUS 17:1 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

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The people are commanded to bring all the cattle they intend to kill to the door of the tabernacle, where they are to be made an offering to the Lord; and those who disobey are to be cut off, Lev 17:1-5. The priest is to sprinkle the blood, Lev 17:6. They are forbidden to offer sacrifices to devils, Lev 17:7. The injunction to bring their offerings to the door of the tabernacle is repeated, Lev 17:8, Lev 17:9. The eating of blood is solemnly forbidden, Lev 17:10. It is the life of the beast, and is given to make an atonement for their souls, Lev 17:11, Lev 17:12. If a bird or beast be taken in hunting, its blood must be poured out and covered with dust, for the reasons before assigned, Lev 17:13, Lev 17:14. None shall eat an animal that dies of itself, or is torn by beasts; if any act otherwise he must bathe his clothes and his flesh, or bear his iniquity, Lev 17:15, Lev 17:16.

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LEVITICUS 17:2 "Speak to Aaron, and to his sons, and to all the children of Israel, and say to them: 'This is the thing which the LORD has commanded,

LEVITICUS 17:3 Whatever man there is of the house of Israel, who kills a bull, or lamb, or goat, in the camp, or who kills it outside the camp,

LEVITICUS 17:4 and hasn't brought it to the door of the Tent of Meeting, to offer it as an offering to the LORD before the LORD's tabernacle: blood shall be imputed to that man. He has shed blood; and that man shall be cut off from among his people.

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Verse 4

And bringeth it not unto the door - As sacrifice was ever deemed essential to true religion, it was necessary that it should be performed in such a way as to secure the great purpose of its institution. God alone could show how this should be done so as to be pleasing in his sight, and therefore he has given the most plain and particular directions concerning it. The Israelites, from their long residence in Egypt, an idolatrous country, had doubtless adopted many of their usages; and many portions of the Pentateuch seem to have been written merely to correct and bring them back to the purity of the Divine worship. That no blood should be offered to idols, God commands every animal used for food or sacrifice to be slain at the door of the tabernacle. While every animal was slain in this sacrificial way, even the daily food of the people must put them in mind of the necessity of a sacrifice for sin. Perhaps St. Paul had this circumstance in view when he said, Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God, 1Cor 10:31; and, Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him. While the Israelites were encamped in the wilderness, it was comparatively easy to prevent all abuses of this Divine institution; and therefore they were all commanded to bring the oxen, sheep, and goats to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, that they might be slain there, and their blood sprinkled upon the altar of the Lord. But when they became settled in the promised land, and the distance, in many cases, rendered it impossible for them to bring the animals to be slain for domestic uses to the temple, they were permitted to pour out the blood in a sacrificial way unto God at their respective dwellings, and to cover it with the dust; see Lev 17:13, and Deu 12:20, Deu 12:21.

Blood shall be imputed unto that man - Having poured out the blood improperly, he shall be considered as guilty of murder, because that blood, had it been properly and sacrificially employed, might have made atonement for the life of a man.

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LEVITICUS 17:5 This is to the end that the children of Israel may bring their sacrifices, which they sacrifice in the open field, that they may bring them to the LORD, to the door of the Tent of Meeting, to the priest, and sacrifice them for sacrifices of peace offerings to the LORD.

LEVITICUS 17:6 The priest shall sprinkle the blood on the altar of the LORD at the door of the Tent of Meeting, and burn the fat for a pleasant aroma to the LORD.

LEVITICUS 17:7 They shall no more sacrifice their sacrifices to the goat idols, after which they play the prostitute. This shall be a statute forever to them throughout their generations.'

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#### Verse 7

They shall no more offer their sacrifices unto devils - They shall not sacrifice לַשֵּׁעִירִים *lasseirim*, to the hairy ones, to goats. The famous heathen god, Pan, was represented as having the posteriors, horns, and ears of a goat; and the Mendesians, a people of Egypt, had a deity which they worshipped under this form. Herodotus says that all goats were worshipped in Egypt, but the he-goat particularly. It appears also that the different ape and monkey species were objects of superstitious worship; and from these sprang, not only Mendes and Jupiter Ammon, who was worshipped under the figure of a ram, but also Pan and the Sileni, with the innumerable herd of those imaginary beings, satyrs, dryads, hamadryads, etc. etc., all woodland gods, and held in veneration among the Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans.

After whom they have gone a whoring - Though this term is frequently used to express idolatry, yet we are not to suppose that it is not to be taken in a literal sense in many places in Scripture, even where it is used in connection with idolatrous acts of worship. It is well known that Baal-Peor and Ashtaroth were worshipped with unclean rites; and that public prostitution formed a grand part of the worship of many deities among the Egyptians, Moabites, Canaanites, Greeks, and Romans. The great god of the two latter nations, Jupiter, was represented as the general corrupter of women; and of Venus, Flora, Priapus, and others, it is needless to speak. That there was public prostitution in the patriarchal times, see Clarke on Gen 38:21 (note). And that there was public prostitution of women to goats in Egypt, see Herodotus, lib. ii., c. 46, p. 108, edit. Gale, who gives a case of this abominable kind that took place in Egypt while he was in that country. See also many examples in Bochart, vol. ii., col. 641; and see Clarke's note on Lev 20:16.

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LEVITICUS 17:8 "You shall say to them, 'Any man there is of the house of Israel, or of the strangers who live as foreigners among them, who offers a burnt offering or sacrifice,

LEVITICUS 17:9 and doesn't bring it to the door of the Tent of Meeting, to sacrifice it to the LORD; that man shall be cut off from his people.

LEVITICUS 17:10 "'Any man of the house of Israel, or of the strangers who live as foreigners among them, who eats any kind of blood, I will set my face against that soul who eats blood, and will cut him off from among his people.

LEVITICUS 17:11 For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that makes atonement by reason of the life.

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#### Verse 11

For the life of the flesh is in the blood - This sentence, which contains a most important truth, had existed in the Mosaic writings for 3600 years before the attention of any philosopher was drawn to the subject. This is the more surprising, as the nations in which philosophy flourished were those which especially enjoyed the Divine oracles in their respective languages. That the blood actually possesses a living principle, and that the life of the whole body is derived from it, is a doctrine of Divine revelation, and a doctrine which the observations and experiments of the most accurate anatomists have served strongly to confirm. The proper circulation of this important fluid through the whole human system was first taught by Solomon in figurative language, Ecc 12:6; and discovered, as it is called, and demonstrated, by Dr. Harvey in 1628; though some Italian philosophers had the same notion a little before. This accurate anatomist was the first who fully revived the Mosaic notion of the vitality of the blood; which notion was afterward adopted by the justly celebrated Dr. John Hunter, professor of anatomy in London, and fully established by him by a great variety of strong reasoning and accurate experiments. To support this opinion Dr. Hunter proves: -

1. That the blood unites living parts in some circumstances as certainly as the yet recent juices of the branch of one tree unite with that of another; and he thinks that if either of these fluids were dead matter, they would act as stimuli, and no union would take place in the animal or vegetable kingdom; and he shows that in the nature of things there is not a more intimate connection between life and a solid than between life and a fluid.
2. He shows that the blood becomes vascular, like other living parts of the body; and he demonstrated this by a preparation in which vessels were clearly seen to arise from what had been a coagulum of blood; for those vessels opened into the stream of the circulating blood, which was in contiguity with this coagulated mass.
3. He proves that if blood be taken from the arm in the most intense cold that the human body can suffer, it will raise the thermometer to the same height as blood taken in the most sultry heat. This is a very powerful argument for the vitality of the blood, as it is well known that living bodies alone have the power of resisting great degrees of heat and cold, and of maintaining in almost every situation while in health that temperature which we distinguish by the name of animal heat.
4. He proves that blood is capable of being acted upon by a stimulus, as it coagulates on exposure to the air, as certainly as the cavities of the abdomen and thorax become inflamed from the same cause. The more the blood is alive, i. e., the more the animal is in health, the sooner the blood coagulates on exposure; and the more it has lost of the living principle, as in cases of violent inflammation, the less sensible it is to the stimulus produced by being exposed, and coagulates more slowly.
5. He proves that the blood preserves life in different parts of the body. When the nerves going to any part are tied or cut, the part becomes paralytic, and loses all power of motion, but it does not mortify. But let the artery be cut, and then the part dies and mortification ensues. It must therefore be the vital principle of the blood that keeps the part alive; nor does it appear that this fact can be accounted for on any other principle.

6. He thinks this vitality farther proved from the case of a person who was brought to St. George's hospital for a simple fracture of the os humeri, and who died about a month after. As the bones had not united, he injected the arm, and thus found that the coagulated blood which filled the cavity between the extremities of the fractured bones was become vascular, and in some places very much so, which vessels, had it been dead matter, it never could have produced.

This system has been opposed, and arguments have been adduced to prove that the principle of vitality exists not in the blood but in the nervous system. But every argument on this ground appears to be done away by the simple consideration that the whole nervous system, as well as every other part of the body, is originally derived from the blood; for is it not from the blood of the mother that the fetus has its being and nourishment in the womb? Do not all the nerves, as well as the brain, etc., originate from that alone? And if it be not vital can it give the principle of vitality to something else, which then exclusively (though the effect of a cause) becomes the principle of vitality to all the solids and fluids of the body? This seems absurd. That the human being proceeded originally from the blood admits of no doubt; and it is natural and reasonable to suppose that as it was the cause under God which generated all the other parts of the body, so it still continues to be the principle of life, and by it alone all the wastes of the system are repaired. Two points relative to this subject are strongly asserted in Divine revelation, one by Moses, the other by St. Paul.

1. Moses says, The Life of the flesh is in the Blood, Lev 17:11. This has been proved by the most indisputable facts.

2. St. Paul says, God hath made of One Blood all nations of men, Act 17:26. And this is demonstrated, not only from there being only one pair from whom all the nations of men have been derived, but also from the fact that every human being, from the first-born of Eve to the present hour, has been formed out of and supported by the mother's blood; and that from the agency of this fluid the human body, after being born into the world, has its increment and support.

The reason given by God for the law against eating blood is perfectly conclusive: I will set my face against that soul that eateth blood - for the Life (נפש nephesh) of the flesh is in the Blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar, to make an atonement for your souls (נפשתיכם naphshotheychem, your Lives): for it is the blood (because it is the Life, נפש nephesh) that maketh an atonement for the soul (בנפש bannephesh, for the life; for the word is the same in all these cases). By transgression a man forfeits his Life to Divine justice, and he must die, did not mercy provide him a substitute. The life of a beast is appointed and accepted by God as a substitute for the sinner's life (in reference to the life of Christ, which was to be given for the life of the world); but as this life is in the Blood, and as the blood is the grand principle of vitality, therefore the blood is to be poured out upon the altar: and thus the life of the beast becomes a substitute for the life of the man.

And it is well worthy of being remarked, that Christ not only died for sinners, but our redemption is everywhere attributed to his Blood, and the shedding of that blood; and that on the altar of the cross, this might make an atonement for the lives and souls of men, he not only bowed his head, and gave up the ghost, but his side was opened, the pericardium and the heart evidently pierced, that the vital fluid might be poured out from the very seat of life, and that thus the blood, which is the life, should be poured out to make an atonement for the life of the soul. The doctrine of Moses and Paul proves the truth of the doctrine of Harvey and Hunter; and the reasonings and experiments of Harvey and Hunter illustrate and confirm the doctrine of Moses and Paul - Here then is a farther proof of the truth and authority of Divine revelation. See Clarke's note on Gen 9:4; Dr. J. Corrie's Essay on the Vitality of the Blood; and the article Blood, in the Encyclopaedias.

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LEVITICUS 17:12 Therefore I have said to the children of Israel, "No person among you shall eat blood, neither shall any stranger who lives as a foreigner among you eat blood."

LEVITICUS 17:13 "Whatever man there is of the children of Israel, or of the strangers who live as foreigners among them, who takes in hunting any animal or bird that may be eaten; he shall pour out its blood, and cover it with dust.

LEVITICUS 17:14 For as to the life of all flesh, its blood is with its life: therefore I said to the children of Israel, "You shall not eat the blood of any kind of flesh; for the life of all flesh is its blood. Whoever eats it shall be cut off."

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#### Verse 14

Ye shall eat the blood of no manner of flesh - Independently of the moral reasons given above, we may add,

1. That blood, being highly alkaliescent, especially in hot climates, is subject to speedy putrefaction.
  2. That it affords a gross nutriment, being very difficult of digestion, so much so that bull's blood was used in ancient times as poison, "Its extreme viscosity rendering it totally indigestible by the powers of the human stomach."
  3. It is allowed that when blood was used in this country in great quantities, the scurvy was more frequent than at other times.
  4. It appears from history that those nations who lived most on it were very fierce, savage, and barbarous, such as the Scythians, Tartars, Arabs of the desert, the Scandinavians, etc., etc., some of whom drank the blood of their enemies, making cups of their skulls!
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LEVITICUS 17:15 "Every person that eats what dies of itself, or that which is torn by animals, whether he is native-born or a foreigner, he shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the evening: then he shall be clean.

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#### Verse 15

That which died of itself, or that which was torn - Because, in both cases, the blood was retained in the body; hence the council at Jerusalem forbade things strangled as well as blood, because in such beasts the blood was coagulated in the veins and arteries. See Act 15:28-29. Every thing considered, surely there is as little propriety in eating of blood as there is necessity to do it. They who will do otherwise must bear their iniquity. If blood eating be no offense, then they have no sin to answer for. The principal subjects of this chapter have been already so amply handled in the notes, that there is no need to add any thing by way of reflection or improvement.

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LEVITICUS 17:16 But if he doesn't wash them, or bathe his flesh, then he shall bear his iniquity."

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