

Christianity and the Use of Blood

(Caveat: This article is subject to being reviewed and edited for grammar, punctuation, spelling and further considerations as are deemed necessary)

INTRO:

Jehovah is undoubtedly the Supreme Owner of all things. As Owner he has placed certain things within man's prerogative, sometimes under certain conditions, such as withholding something for Himself. (Genesis 1:29; 2:16, 17; Psalm 115:16) Scriptures consistently teach that blood is a sacred substance, and one that he has withheld for Himself. (Genesis 9:3-6; Leviticus 17:11, 14; Acts 15:19, 20; cf. Ezekiel 18:4) It is important that we first understand the sacredness of blood and the fact that it is regarded as God's property, for all other considerations must fall under those two guiding principles.

“Abstain from Blood” – Noachian? Jewish? Christian? Or all of the above? The Underlying Principle

As is the case with all laws of God in all time periods, there are principles at work which govern the laws. One would be hard pressed to think of any law at any given time which did not have a principle behind it. Sometimes the principle is ambiguous in the sense that there may be one or more possibilities as to which principle is the governing one, but always, there is a principle, which means there is always a REASON for the law. God does not arbitrarily invent laws for the purpose of having a law, but for the purpose of upholding a principle. And naturally, when it comes to God's principles, they do not change. God's principles are a constant in his dealings with mankind throughout history. Jesus Christ proved this to be true when he isolated the two main “principles” that give cause to all God recorded by means of the prophets and the Law:

Matthew 22:37-40: He said to him: “‘You must love Jehovah your God with your whole heart and with your whole soul and with your whole mind.’ 38 This is the greatest and first commandment. 39 The second, like it, is this, ‘You must love your neighbor as yourself.’ 40 On these two commandments the whole Law hangs, and the Prophets.”

Naturally, life is sacred to God and is ultimately his sacred possession which he shares with others. What about blood? Is it TOO a sacred possession of God?

What can we gather from the evidence available, prior to the Law Covenant (pre-Law), which would inform as to the view that would have been held by the pre-Law society in regard to blood? Also, how does this relate to the Apostolic Decree to “abstain from blood and from things strangled”?

THE PRE-LAW VIEW OF BLOOD

The earliest mention of blood is found in the account of Abel’s death. There we see that God placed the blood of Abel as representative of his soul. Genesis 4:10: “At this he said: ‘What have you done? Listen! Your brother’s blood is crying out to me from the ground.’”

From this earliest recording we can see that God considered Abel’s blood as he would have considered the “soul” of Abel, for surely, in reality, it was the life of Abel that was crying out for justice, not his literal blood.

Does this tell us something about God’s view of blood? Not explicitly, but this certainly implies how God viewed the blood of Abel to be representatively equal to his “soul, or “life as a soul”.

The language of Genesis 9:3-6 also becomes important in this consideration because this is where we see explicit stipulations concerning blood and its relation to the soul.

Genesis 9:

“Every moving animal that is alive may serve as food for YOU. As in the case of green vegetation, I do give it all to YOU. 4 Only flesh with its soul—its blood—YOU must not eat. 5 And, besides that, YOUR blood of YOUR souls shall I ask back. From the hand of every living creature shall I ask it back; and from the hand of man, from the hand of each one who is his brother, shall I ask back the soul of man. 6 Anyone shedding man’s blood, by man will his own blood be shed, for in God’s image he made man.”

Notice the equation of verse 4 where it states “only flesh with its soul—its blood” should not be eaten. This parallel between blood and the soul was drawn in respects to the animal. The blood was to be poured out of the animal because of the fact that it represented the soul/life of the animal.

This same view is explained in more detail in the Law of Moses, not as one of the laws, but the **reason** why blood was not to be eaten. It is stated there in Leviticus 17:11:

“For the soul of the flesh is in the blood, and I myself have put it upon the altar for YOU to make atonement for YOUR souls, because it is the blood that makes atonement by the soul.”

Notice the statement that the “soul” of the flesh is IN the “blood.” This is stated in regard to the living animal and is given as the reason why the blood of a living animal has atoning value because it represents “life”, life that is actually owed to God by the human via sin. One would have to wonder how much more explicit it would have to be stated to show that God here held blood on a par with the soul, with the intelligent life of the being. Blood clearly represented the “soul” of the animal.

The above findings underscore the view that God certainly places a sacredness upon blood through its representational equivalence with the soul, since “life” in general is sacred to God. What do commentators and scholars have to say in regards to blood and the pre-Law society based upon the Noachian decree? Do they concur with the above findings? Yes, many do.

For instance: (all emphasis added) Smith’s Bible Dictionary: Blood **To blood is ascribed in Scripture the mysterious sacredness which belongs to life, and God reserved it to himself** when allowing man the dominion over and the use of the lower animals for food. Thus reserved, it acquires a double power: (1) that of sacrificial atonement; and (2) that of becoming a curse when wantonly shed, unless duly expiated. (Genesis 9:4; Leviticus 7:26; 17:11-13)

John Calvin:

4. But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof Some thus explain this passages ‘Ye may not eat a member cut off from a living animal,’ which is too trifling. However, since there is no copulative conjunction between the two words, blood and life, I do not doubt that Moses, speaking of the life, added the word blood exegetically,²⁸⁸ This is apparent in the English version, where the words, “which is,” are added in Italics, showing that in the judgment of the translators, the word following was explanatory of that which preceded. - Ed. as if he would say, that flesh is in some sense devoured with its life, when it is eaten imbued with its own blood. **Wherefore, the life and the blood are not put for different things, but for the same; not because blood is in itself the life, but inasmuch as the vital spirits chiefly reside in the blood, it is, as far as our feeling is concerned, a token which represents life.**

fn288: This is apparent in the English version, where the words, “which is,” are added in Italics, showing that in the judgment of the translators, the word following was explanatory of that which preceded. — Ed.

New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge-Volume 3:

Dietary Laws of the Hebrews Essentially different in principle is the prohibition against consuming the blood and the fat of (clean or edible) animals. **The blood is not unclean in itself; on the contrary, it is the precious vital fluid which is offered to God as the worthiest portion of the animal creature. Life is from God and belongs to God.** On account of its intimate relation to life, men shall not swallow the blood, but shall consecrate it to God. By this very property, too,

blood is also the appropriate means of atonement, can intercede for men, can be offered to God in their place-” For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls “ (Lev. xvii. 11). For this reason care must be observed in the slaying that the blood may escape. Nothing lacerated or smothered is allowed to be eaten, because in that case the blood has not properly escaped. This practice of avoiding to partake of blood is very ancient (Gen. ix. 4).

The Noahic Covenant—A New Beginning (Genesis 8:20-9:17) By: Bob Deffinbaugh, Th.M.

A New Beginning (9:1-7) Ray Stedman titles these verses (and verses 8-17) “Rules of the Game,”⁹⁷ and I think he has truly caught the significance of this section. A new beginning, with a new set of rules, is evident by the similarity of these verses to Genesis chapter one.

Here (Genesis 9:1) and there (Genesis 1:28) God blessed His creatures and told them to be fruitful and multiply. Here (Genesis 9:3) and there (Genesis 1:29-30) God prescribed the food man could eat.

There are differences, however, which indicate that the new beginning is to be different from the old. God pronounced the original creation ‘good’ (cf. 1:21, 31). The world of Noah’s day received no such commendation, for the men who possessed it were sinful (8:21).

Adam was charged to subdue the earth and to rule over the animal kingdom (1:28). Noah was given no such command. Instead, God placed in the animals a fear of man by which man could achieve a measure of control over them. (The reason my dog obeys me—when he does—is because he fears me.)

While Adam and his contemporaries seem to have been vegetarians (Genesis 1:29-30; cf. 9:3), Noah and his descendants could eat flesh (9:3-4). There was, however, one stipulation. **They could not eat the blood of the animal, for the life of the animal was in its blood. This was to teach man not only that God values life, but that He owns it.** God allows man to take the life of animals in order to survive, but they must not eat the blood.

One may puzzle that flesh could be eaten after the flood, but not before (or so it seems). It may be that conditions on the earth so changed that protein was now necessary for life. More likely, man must be brought to the realization that, because of his sin, he could only live by the death of another. Man lives by the death of animals.

Most important of all, man is taught to reverence life. Men before the fall were obviously men of violence (cf. Genesis 6:11) who, like Cain (Genesis 4:8), and Lamech (Genesis 4:23-24), had no regard for human life. This is more emphatically stated in verses 5 and 6 of chapter 9: And surely I will require your lifeblood; from every beast I will require it. And from every man, from every man’s brother I will require the life of man. Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God He made man.

The life of man was precious and belonged to God. It was God’s to give and His alone to take. Animals which shed man’s blood must be put to death (verse 5, cf. Exodus 21:28,29). Men who willfully take the life of another must be put to death ‘by man’ (verse 6; cf. Numbers 35:33). 98

In addition to murder, suicide is prohibited by God’s command in these verses. **Life belongs to God—not only the life of animals and of others, but our own as well.** We must realize that suicide is taking our life into our own hands when God says it belongs to Him. In the words of Job, “The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away” (Job 1:21).

This passage seems to shed light on the controversial subject of abortion also. Man is not to shed the blood of man. The life of man is in the blood (Genesis 9:4; Leviticus 17:11). Aside from many other considerations, must we not conclude that at the time a fetus has blood, it has life? Must we not also acknowledge that to shed this blood, to destroy this fetus, is to violate God’s command and to be subject to the death penalty?

Because a living being dies when it loses most of its blood, the ancients regarded blood as the seat of life, and therefore as sacred. Although in itself the prohibition against eating meat with blood in it is comparable to the ritual laws of the Mosaic Code, the Jews considered it binding on all men, because it was given by God to Noah, the new ancestor of all mankind; therefore the Christian Church retained it for a time. (Acts 15:20, 29)

The Jerusalem Bible: footnote Genesis 9b:

b. cf. Lv. 1:5+, but man's in particular because man was made to God's likeness, God will avenge human blood.

The New International Dictionary of New testament Theology:

Blood:

OT For the OT, as in the classical world, blood was the seat of life. The "soul," i.e. life, life force, is in the blood (Gen.9:4; Lev. 17:11,14; Deut. 12:23) **God is the sole Lord of all life. He is the sovereign over the blood and life of men (Ezek. 18:4)...Animal blood also belongs to God. It is holy, and consumption of blood is forbidden on pain of death.**

Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament Words:

Blood:

Dam is used to denote the blood of animals, birds and men, (never of fish). **In Gen. 9:4 it is synonymous with "life":** But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat." **The high value of life as a gift of God led to the prohibition against eating "blood."**

Gray's Home Bible Commentary: Citation: – GENESIS CHAPTERS 6-9 Chapter
Heading: – THE FIRST CLIMAX OF SIN Headings: – God's Covenant with Noah

Text: - 8:20 to 9:19 What did Noah do on leaving the ark (v. 20)? How does this verse bear on 7:2? What indicates the acceptance of his offering, and by its acceptance that of himself (v. 21)? What divine promise was associated with this acceptance? Of course, this does not mean that no further judgment is to be visited on the earth, as may be seen by 2 Thess. 1:7-10; 2 Peter 3:10-13, and Rev. 14 to 22. Where, earlier, have we met the blessing now bestowed on Noah and his family (9:1)? What new power over the brute creation is now put into man's hands (v. 2)? If his dominion previously was that of love, of what was its nature to be henceforth? If his food previously was limited to herbs, to what is it now extended (v. 3)? But what limitation is put upon it, and why (v. 4)? To quote Pratt at this point: **"We see here that from the times of the deluge the blood was constituted a most sacred thing, devoted exclusively to God, to make expiation on the altar of sacrifice for the sins of men (see Lev. 17:11-14).**

The New Unger's Bible Dictionary:

(Heb. Dam; Gk. Haima, "the circulatory life fluid of the body"). **A peculiar sacredness was attached to the blood** because of the idea that prevailed **of its unity with the soul.** We find this **distinctively stated** (Gen. 9:4): "Only you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood."...

As food. When permission was given to Noah to partake of animal food (Gen. 9:4), use of blood was strictly forbidden... The prohibition of the use of blood has a twofold ground: **blood has the soul in itself,** and in accordance with the gracious ordinance of God it is the means of expiation for human souls, because of the soul contained in it. The one ground is in the nature of blood and the other **in its destination to a holy purpose,** which, even apart from that other reason, **withdraws it from a common use.**

From the above scriptures and comments of numerous scholars it is easy to see why one would view blood to be sacred fluid and in the ownership and jurisdiction of God. It is the view which best performs justice to the written word of the scriptures as is testified by the consensus of the above scholars, regardless of what other agreements or disagreements that they may have in other areas. To miss the "sacred" connection that is attached to blood is to surely miss a great deal as is witnessed by the expressed views.

As regards the idea that is sometimes promoted that Noah was not forbidden to eat animals found dead, the promoters of this view pose Deuteronomy 14:21 as proof that the nations outside the Law-covenant were given specific provision to eat carcasses.

Deuteronomy 14:21:

“YOU must not eat any body dead. To the alien resident who is inside your gates you may give it, and he must eat it; or there may be a selling of it to a foreigner, because you are a holy people to Jehovah your God.”

True, it cannot be denied that Jehovah made specific provision for nations outside the Law covenant to eat what would be regarded as carcass. Must we therefore conclude that Jehovah also permitted Noah to eat carcass as well and that he approved of such consumption as well and good? A closer look reveals the contrary.

Let us return to Genesis 9:3 and see what the scripture specifically says as to what man could consider food in regard to animals.

Genesis 9:3:

“**Every moving animal that is alive** may serve as food for YOU. As in the case of green vegetation, I do give it all to YOU.”

It is clear that God only granted permission here to eat that which was alive, of course only after it had been slaughtered and the blood drained from the flesh. There is no permission at all in regard to animals found dead as the language says they were allowed to eat that which was “alive.” It is therefore a great puzzlement how one would think that eating an animal “found dead” could be in harmony with this permission to eat only animals that were “alive.” Otherwise, why even mention the fact that they had to be alive? There would be no reason or call to do so. Surely, anyone who would hold that Noah was not allowed to eat animals found dead has valid cause to do so in regard to this scripture. To show otherwise, after such plain language, the burden of proof would be entirely in their camp and would seem to flatly contradict the permission given to Noah.

Proof of how one should understand this verse is demonstrated when we substitute another word for “alive.” If we were to substitute the word “flying” in its place, what would happen? What would the meaning of that sentence therefore be? Clearly then, man would only be allowed to eat “flying” animals, once the blood was removed. It would have naturally ruled out other animals that do not fly. Therefore, to argue that “dead” animals could be eaten violates the structure of the sentence as presented at Genesis 9:3, regardless of what follows in the following sentences dealing with the blood.

Please note the interesting comment of John Gill in regard to the language of verse three:

John Gill:

Verse 3. Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you,.... That is, every beast, fowl, and fish, without exception; for though there was a difference at this time of clean and unclean creatures with respect to sacrifice, yet not with respect to food; every creature of God was good then, as it is now, and it was left to man's reason and judgment what to make use of, as would be most conducive to his health, and agreeable to his taste: and though there was a distinction afterwards made under the Levitical dispensation among the Jews, who were forbid the use of some creatures; yet they themselves say {k}, that all unclean beasts will be clean in the world to come, in the times of the Messiah, as they were to the sons of Noah, and refer to this text in proof of it; **the only exception in the text is, that *they must be living creatures which are taken, and used for food; not such as die of themselves, or are torn to pieces by wild beasts, but such as are taken alive, and killed in a proper manner:*** even as the green herb have I given you all things; as every green herb was given for meat to Adam originally, without any exception, Genesis 1:29 so every living creature, without exception, was given to Noah and his sons for food.

Nearly all scholars agree that mankind prior to the Flood was not permitted to eat animals and there is absolutely no scriptural indication that they did. God told Adam initially that he was given the vegetation of the field to eat. There was no mention of animals for food. To see that anywhere before the Flood is truly seeing something that is not there. Again, the burden of proof for such a view would lie heavily in their camp. Nearly all scholars across the board agree as can be seen from the following quotes.

Wesley:

9:3 Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you – **Hitherto man had been confined to feed only upon the products of the earth,** fruits, herbs and roots, and all sorts of corn and milk; so was the first grant, Genesis 1:29. But the flood having perhaps washed away much of the virtue of the earth, and so rendered its fruits less pleasing, and less nourishing, God now enlarged the grant, and allowed man to eat flesh, which perhaps man himself never thought of ‘till now.

Matthew Henry:

3. A grant of maintenance and subsistence: Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you, v. 3. **Hitherto, most think, man had been confined to feed only upon the products of the earth, fruits, herbs, and roots, and all sorts of corn and milk; so was the first grant, ch. 1:29. But the flood having perhaps washed away much of the virtue of the earth, and so rendered its fruits less pleasing and less nourishing, God now enlarged the grant, and allowed man to eat flesh, which perhaps man himself never thought of, till now that God directed him to it, nor had any more desire to than a sheep has to suck blood like a wolf. But now man is allowed to feed upon flesh, as freely and safely as upon the green herb.** Now here see, (1.) That God is a good master, and provides, not only that we may live, but that we may live comfortably, in his service; not for necessity only, but for delight. (2.) That every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, 1 Tim. 4:4. Afterwards some meats that were proper enough for food were prohibited by the ceremonial law; but from the beginning, it seems, it was not so, and therefore is not so under the gospel.

Easton's Dictionary:

Topics: Blood Text: (1.) As food, prohibited in Gen. 9:4, **where the use of animal food is first allowed.** Comp. Deut. 12:23; Lev. 3:17; 7:26; 17:10-14. The injunction to abstain from blood is renewed in the decree of the council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:29). It has been held by some, and we think correctly, that this

law of prohibition was only ceremonial and temporary; while others regard it as still binding on all. Blood was eaten by the Israelites after the battle of Gilboa (1 Sam. 14:32-34).

Revisiting the Gray's Home Bible Commentary quotation above, another point may be highlighted: Citation: – GENESIS CHAPTERS 6-9 Chapter Heading: – THE FIRST CLIMAX OF SIN Headings: – God's Covenant with Noah

Text: - 8:20 to 9:19 What did Noah do on leaving the ark (v. 20)? How does this verse bear on 7:2? What indicates the acceptance of his offering, and by its acceptance that of himself (v. 21)? What divine promise was associated with this acceptance? Of course, this does not mean that no further judgment is to be visited on the earth, as may be seen by 2 Thess. 1:7-10; 2 Peter 3:10-13, and Rev. 14 to 22. Where, earlier, have we met the blessing now bestowed on Noah and his family (9:1)? What new power over the brute creation is now put into man's hands (v. 2)? **If his dominion previously was that of love, of what was its nature to be henceforth? If his food previously was limited to herbs, to what is it now extended (v. 3)? But what limitation is put upon it, and why (v. 4)?** To quote Pratt at this point: "We see here that from the times of the deluge the blood was constituted a most sacred thing, devoted exclusively to God, to make expiation on the altar of sacrifice for the sins of men (see Lev. 17:11-14).

The Liberty Bible Commentary (prepared by 13 Baptists scholars) footnote Gen. 9:1-7.

Prior to this time, God had said that every herb bearing seed...and every tree...to you it shall be for meat (1:29). Although the sinful race undoubtedly violated this prescription many times, **it was not until this period of new beginnings that God actually sanctioned the eating of meat.**

The Bible Reader's Companion:

“Food for you” (9:1-4). In the original Creation man and animals were given green plants for food. (cf. 1:29-30). **Only now, after the Flood, are living creatures given for food**, with the single condition that the blood not be eaten with the flesh.

Adam Clarke:

3. Every moving animal...shall be meat. **There is no positive evidence that animal food was ever used before the flood. Noah had the first grant of this kind**, and it has continued to all his posterity ever since.

The above helps us to see that the view that Noah and those before him could eat animals that were found dead has no foundation and is in not in harmony with the comments and views of many respected scholars, regardless of what other agreements or disagreements that they may have in other areas.

Since Noah was not given permission to eat animals prior to the Flood it should be easy to see that once he was given permission, it only was in regard to animals “alive” as explained well by Gill above. In fact, it could be argued that even if they were allowed to eat dead animals before this decree, the decree would have changed all of that by stating that only animals “alive” could serve for food. Therefore, to teach that Noah could eat dead flesh is in direct contrast to what God said he could eat at Genesis 9:3. To teach otherwise presents those teachers once again with not only but with a contradiction to what was stated to Noah. But there is even more to consider about this objection.

At this point let us introduce the Apostolic Decree in regard to blood and examine it in the light of what we have already covered and with some further considerations. Will it shed light upon what was allowed to the Noachian society as well? Since it is generally agreed that the Apostolic Decree was a reiteration of laws and principles already established by the Noachian society of worshippers, it certainly should shed some clarification upon what was practiced by the Noachian society, and that it does. For those who believe it was only in relation to the Law Covenant stipulations and therefore a conciliatory requirement and not Christian Law, information covered below will address that claim under the section entitled: “Abstain from Blood – A Command or a Concession for Jewish Sensitivities?”.

In regards to blood the Apostolic Decree says to “abstain from blood and from things strangled.” We are going to take a look at the phrase “things strangled” and what it tells us. Since it is agreed within the scope of this section of the article that this is a binding Christian Law which expresses a binding law or principle upon the Noachian society, one must immediately ask, where is this abstention from things strangled “stipulated” within the Noachian society of laws and principles? Search as one may, the only relevant scripture that one will find that resembles this portion of the Apostolic Decree is Genesis 9:3 where God stipulated that you had to eat only animals that were initially “alive,” not dead, as “strangled” animals would represent animals that were NOT properly bled due to the manner in which they died, either at the hands of humans or through natural death or untimely death at the hand of another wild beast or through accidental death such as drowning. There is no way to limit the phrase “things strangled” to animals strangled by a human for food without draining the blood, for as we know animals can suffer “strangulation, suffocation, drowning etc.” at the hands of nature or other animals. To limit it to just animals strangled for food is again to see something that is not in the text and gives us no prior example within the law stated to Noah.

How do many commentators, scholars view the phrase “things strangled”? How did the early Christian writers view the phrase “things strangled”? In what context did they speak of it? Such comments will be beneficial in helping us to understand how they viewed the phrase and therefore the Apostolic Decree.

Please note the comments that we have available from the Ante Nicene church fathers and take notice of the context in which they speak of “things strangled.” (all emphasis added)

The Clementine Homilies Homily VII

Chapter VIII.-The Service of God’s Appointment. “And this is the service He has appointed: To worship Him only, and trust only in the Prophet of truth, and to be baptized for the remission of sins, and thus by this pure baptism to be born again unto God by saving water; **to abstain from the table of devils, that is, from food offered to idols, from dead carcasses, from animals which have been suffocated or caught by wild beasts, and from blood;** 5 not to live any longer

impurely; to wash after intercourse; that the women on their part should keep the law of purification; that all should be sober-minded, given to good works, refraining from wrongdoing, looking for eternal life from the all-powerful God, and asking with prayer and continual supplication that they may win it.” Such was Peter’s counsel to the men of Sidon also. And in few days many repented and believed, and were healed. And Peter having founded a church, and set over it as bishop one of the elders who were with him, left Sidon.

Tertullian: THE BOOK OF APOLOGY AGAINST THE HEATHEN.

Let your sin blush before us Christians, who do not reckon the blood even of animals among meats to be eaten 118, **who for this cause also abstain from things strangled, and such as die of themselves**, 119 that we may not be defiled by any blood even buried within their entrails. Finally, among the trials of the Christians, ye offer them also pudding-skins stuffed with blood, as being well assured that that, whereby ye would have them transgress, is unlawful among them. Moreover what manner of thing is it to believe that they, who ye are assured abhor the blood of beasts, pant for human blood? unless perchance ye have found it sweeter!

Pseudo-clementine

CHAPTER 19 THE LAW TO THE GIANTS OR DEMONS ““These things seem good to the all-seeing God, that you Lord it over no man; that you trouble no one, unless any one of his own accord subject himself to you, worshipping you, and sacrificing and pouring libations, and partaking of your table, **or accomplishing aught else that they ought not, or shedding blood, or tasting dead flesh, or filling themselves with that which is torn of beasts, or that which is cut, or that which is strangled, or aught else that is unclean.** But those who betake themselves to my law, you not only shall not touch, but shall also do honor to, and shall flee from, their presence. For whatsoever shall please them, being just, respecting you, that you shall be constrained to suffer. But if any of those who worship me go astray, either committing adultery, or practicing magic, or living impurely, or doing any other of the things which are not well-pleasing to me, then they will have to suffer something at your hands or those of others, according to my order. But upon them, when they repent, I, judging of their repentance, whether it be worthy of pardon or not, shall give sentence. These things, therefore, ye ought to remember and to do, well knowing that not even your thoughts shall be able to be concealed from Him.’

It is clear from these early century comments that these “fathers” associated “things strangled” with dead carcasses, animals which have been suffocated or caught by wild beasts and those which die of themselves.

In the next few centuries we find comments and observations such as these as compiled by C. Dodgson:

C. Dodgson, Tertullian Vol. 1. Apologetic and Practical Treatises. (1842). pp.107-130.
Notes A, B, C, D

NOTES TO THE APOLOGY. Note A, p. 23. chap. ix.

THE use of blood as food, is spoken of as prohibited to Christians, in all Churches, from the earliest to the latest times. The early authorities are, Ep. Lugd. et Vienn. l. c. Clem. Paedag. iii. 3. fin. Strom. iv. 15. Tert. here and de Monogam. c. 5. Orig. c. Cels. viii. 30. p. 763. ed. de la Rue in Num. Hom. 16. v. fin. p. 334. Can. Ap. 63. Minut. F. p. 300. Cyril Jer. iv. 28. xvii. 29. S. Ambrose, (apparently) in Ps. 118. Sermon. 13. §. 6. Gaudentius (de Maccab. Tr. 15. Bibl. Patr. Max. t. v. p. 967.) Ambrosiaster (ad Gal. ii. 3.) even while arguing against the Greeks, as if tw~n pnktw~n had been interpolated by them, “it having,” he says, “been already expressed,” things strangled were virtually comprised in the prohibition of blood; quia jam supra dictum erat, quod addiderunt.]...

In the second Council of Orleans (A. D. 533.) Catholics are excommunicated, “who should use food offered to idols, **or feed on what had been slain by beasts, or died of any disease or accident.**” Can. 20. (Conc. t. xi. p. 164.) The Council of Trullo, (Quini-Sext.) A. D. 692. Can. 67. rehearses, “Divine Scripture hath commanded to abstain from blood, and strangled, and fornication, wherefore **we punish proportionably** [*sic*]108 those who for appetite’s sake, **by any act prepare the blood of any animal whatsoever, so as to be eatable. If then henceforth any essay to eat the blood of an animal in any way so ever, if a clerk, let him be deposed, if lay, excommunicated.**” Balsamon (ad Can. 67. p. 444.) notes that this Canon was directed against such as maintained that they

observed the injunction of Holy Scripture in that they did not eat mere blood, but food prepared of other things with it; against which he says the Novell. 58. of the Emperor Leo, the philosopher, (A.D. 886.) was also directed, severely punishing all such.

“Things strangled” are either mentioned with blood, (as in Clem. Strom. l. c. Orig. c. Cels. l. c. Minut. F. l. c. Cyril J. l. c. &c.) **or are counted as included in it,** (as in Ambrosiaster l. c. and Aug. c. Faust. 32. 13) **“and from blood,” i. e. that they should not eat any flesh, the blood whereof was not poured out.”** There would however be the difference, **that blood was forbidden by a law antecedent to the Mosaic** (which ground is given in the Const. Ap. vi. 22.) **and it may have an inherent sacredness, or there may be an inherent impropriety in eating it.** Some distinction, accordingly, seems to be made; as when S. Augustine, controverting Faustus, maintains the Apostolic decree to be temporary only, and appeals to the practice of Christians, he instances “things strangled” only, and of these the smaller animals, in which the blood would not be perceptible. “Who among Christians now observes this, as not to touch thrushes, or other birds however small, (*minutiores aviculas*,) unless their blood had been poured out, or a hare, had it been struck on the back of the neck with the hand, not killed so as to let out blood?” (l. c.) S. Augustine’s principles go further, but he seems to have been restrained by a sort of instinct: the instances, which he gives of the violation of the Apostolic decree, are such as scarcely touch upon the use of “blood;” in which there would be the least possible blood, and that unknown to those who used the food. ...

In the West, it is noticed that Zacharia, Bishop of Rome, (A.D. 741.) in a letter to Boniface, the Abp. of Germany, (Conc. t. xvii. p. 413.) forbids several animals, probably on the ground of their being things strangled. 109 Humbert, Cardinal under Leo IX. (A. D. 1054.) in answering the charge of the Greeks, that they ate “things strangled,” limits the defence to cases of necessity. **“Nor, so saying, do we claim to ourselves, against you, the use of blood and things strangled. For, diligently following the ancient practice or tradition of our ancestors, we also abhor these things, so that a heavy penance is, among us, from time to time, imposed upon such as, without extreme risk of this life, eat blood, or any thing which hath died of itself, or been strangled in water, or by any carelessness of man; chiefly, because, in things not against the faith, we deem ancient customs, and the traditions of ancestors, to be Apostolic rules.** For as to the rest, which die either by hawking, or by dogs or snares, we follow the Apostle’s precept, 1 Cor. x. (cont. Graec. Calumn. Bibl. P. t. xviii. p. 403.) In A.D. 1124, Otto, with the sanction of Callistus II. among other rules delivered to the newly converted Pomeranians, **ordains “that they should not eat any thing unclean, or which died of itself, or was strangled, or sacrificed to idols, or the blood of animals,”** (Urspergensis Abbas ap. Baron. A. E. t. xii. p. 156. who adds, “more after the Greek, than the Roman, practice.”) The imposition of

penance is mentioned in Greg. 3. Can. poenit. c. 30. Bede de Remed. Pecc. 4. (ap. Bev. Vindic. Can. Ap. 63. p. 342. ed Cotel.) the Capitula Theodori, xv-xix. and others there quoted, Poenitentiale Theodori, t. i. p. 26. Richard Wormaciensis, Ep. Decret. l. 19. cap. 85. &c. (ap. Elmenhorst. ad Minut. F. l. c.) and the Concil. Wormac. c. 64, 65. (though not accounted genuine). Beveridge sums up the account, “so that what is sanctioned by this Canon, the Western Church also very long observed, the Eastern ever,” (Cod. Can. Vind. ii. 6.) see further his notes on the Ap. Can.; Curcellaeus, l. c. Leo Allât. l. c. Natalis Alex. H. E. t. i. Diss. xi. Suicer, v. ai]ma Elmenhorst l. c.

Please note these comments found at the following website, available on the Internet Archive:

“The Jerusalem Decree: Acts 15:23-29” by Darrell J. Pursiful
(<http://web.archive.org/web/20060301014439/http://members.aol.com/djpursiful/jerusalemdecrees.html>)

The third prohibition deals with pniktav, or “strangled things.” In the present context, this is often understood to be improperly slaughtered animals, even though there is no direct evidence of the use of the word in terms of Jewish slaughtering customs.⁽¹³⁾ **Actually, a distinction is made in the Old Testament between two different kinds of improperly slaughtered animals. If an animal dies of natural causes, it is nebela (LXX qnhsimai'on), but if it is torn to pieces it is terefa⁽¹⁴⁾ (LXX qhriavlwtōn). In either case, the flesh of such animals is prohibited for food (Exod 22:30; Lev 17:15; Deut 14:21). The concern is that all the blood should be drained from the carcass of an animal. If an animal is put to death in any improper way, the life (the blood) remains in the body, and so the beast has been “choked.”⁽¹⁵⁾** Philo also reflects the connection between strangled things and blood in his condemnation of pagan pleasure-seekers:

They devise novel kinds of pleasure and prepare meat unfit for the altar by strangling and throttling (ajpopnivgonte”) the animals, and entomb in the carcass the blood which is the essence of the soul and should be allowed to run freely away. (Spec. IV, 122)

Footnotes:

- ^{13.} Barrett, p. 53. ^{14.} *m.Hul* 3:1 defines as *terefa* any animal which could not continue to live in a similar state. At *b.Hul* 42ab we find enumerated the “eighteen defects” which render an animal *terefa*.^{15.} Hans Bietenhard, “pnivgw, ktl,” *TDNT* VI: 457.

The point is amply demonstrated that “things strangled” was throughout the centuries regarded as including and in the same context as animals which died of themselves, were torn by beasts or were strangled through whatever means.

Please also note the following statements of scholars and commentators. Regardless of the reason they believe that the Apostolic Decree was given, they share a common thought in regard to “things strangled.” (all emphasis added)

Adam Clarke:

...and from things strangled; that is; from eating them, and design **such as die of themselves, or are torn with beasts, or are not killed in a proper way, by letting out their blood;** but their blood is stagnated or congealed in the veins: the Jews might not kill with a reaper’s sickle, nor with a saw, nor with the teeth, or nail; because these (Nynwx) , “strangled” F1: and **what was not slain as it should be, was reckoned all one as what dies of itself;** and whoever ate of either of these was to be beaten.

People’s New Testament:

And from things strangled - That is, **from whatever had been killed, without pouring out the blood.**

New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology:

Page 226. An animal should be so slaughtered that its blood, in which is its life, should be allowed to pour out. **If the animal has been killed in any other way, it has been “strangled.”**

Thayer's lexicon:

pniktos: suffocated, strangled, **an animal deprived of life without shedding its blood**, Acts 15:20,29; Acts 21:25.

New Dictionary of Biblical Theology:

Page 403: In Acts 15 the Jerusalem Council instructs the early church to abstain from blood. While it is possible to interpret the Hebrew text of Genesis 9:4 as prohibiting only the consumption of blood from living animals **the council accepts what is apparently the current Jewish interpretation, seeing the same prohibition in Genesis 9:4 as in Leviticus and therefore making no distinction between what is forbidden to Jews and what is forbidden universally.**

Therefore those who hold to the view that Noah could eat animals found dead have created a catch-22 for themselves. They are on the horns of a dilemma. If they on one horn hold that the Apostolic Decree is a reflection of Noachian societal laws and principles, as we would agree, then the phrase “things strangled” MUST BE one of those Noachian laws or principles. Then on the other horn, “things strangled,” as clarified for us by early Christian writings, is only paralleled by what is stated in Genesis 9:3 where God only allows the eating of animals that were “alive,” therefore, NOT allowing things strangled and/or unbled carcass of any kind. There is therefore a very notable relationship between the two verses Acts 15:20 and “things strangled” and Genesis 9:3 which allows only the eating of live animals.

This is a dilemma for those who wish to promote the idea that Noah could eat animals found dead and therefore blood was not sacred unless it was in the event of the slaughter of the soul involved. “Things strangled,” being a reiteration of an earlier Noachian societal law or principle can only find parallel in the words of Genesis 9:3. Therefore the Apostolic Decree is very instrumental in clarifying for us the fact that Noah would not have consumed flesh already dead, therefore calling into great suspicion their interpretation of Deuteronomy 14:21 as allowing the consumption of an unbled carcass because blood was not sacred unless it was poured out in slaughter of the animal for food.

“Things strangled” as a reflection of Noachian societal laws or principles rules directly against that interpretation.

What then does Deuteronomy 14:21 mean? Why did God give this provision to pagan nations in and around Israel? Again, it reads:

“YOU must not eat any body dead. To the alien resident who is inside your gates you may give it, and he must eat it; or there may be a selling of it to a foreigner, because you are a holy people to Jehovah your God.”

Does this prove that God does not care if people not under the Law ate the blood of an animal already dead? A couple of thoughts should be developed in relation to this question.

First of all, we must ask: Is the fact that God allowed Israelite men to divorce their wives on nearly any ground indicative that God does not care about the practice of divorce? Does he not consider the union of the man and the woman as a sacred union? Why did he allow it? Why did he specifically provide for something that he has stated elsewhere that he hates and that Jesus later clarified as not his intentions from the “beginning”? (Deuteronomy 24:1; Matthew 19:3-9; Mark 10:4-12) He obviously made a concession because of the hard-heartedness of the Israelite people, but one could never use the allowance of divorce in the Israelite setting as proof that God did not “hate” a divorcing. Likewise, with the statement that the non-proselyte foreigner in the land of Israel could purchase a carcass and eat it, this would not prove that God approved of such a practice for mankind in general but merely speaks to a concession.

God, at that point in history, was not forcing his laws and principles upon the pagan nations who were not involved in worship to Him, even those non-proselyte temporary residents within their boundaries. Because he would allow the eating of a carcass or otherwise unbled flesh to these pagan “peoples” outside of the realm of his worshippers in no way can stand as evidence that he allowed it to his worshippers in the pre-Law era. If He was willing to concede “divorce” that he “hated” even unto his own people, how can it be stated that God’s allowing a pagan to do something stands as evidence his worshippers could do it? One would surely be employing the verse in a manner that it was not intended to be employed in order to force that meaning upon the text.

The above serves as a response to the view that Noah would have eaten animals found dead without qualm and without violation of God's laws and principles. Those teachers claim that blood was only sacred in the event of slaughtering an animal for food, therefore promoting the idea that blood could be used in other mundane and common ways at the discretion of the individual, as long as he poured out the blood of an animal he killed for food. As we have seen, there is no support for such a view and is in contradiction to Genesis 9:3 and its connection to the Apostolic Decree.

As we have seen from the above, life and blood were considered to be sacred to God. They were his special property which he would ASK BACK and was not to be treated lightly or indiscreetly and only in harmony with his will. This is readily apparent by what was stated to both Noah and Moses concerning blood being the "soul" which is the "life" of the living animal or human and that he would ask back the blood of both men and animals. Since all laws have an underlying principle to them, a principle that does not change, it should be clear that the underlying principle to the laws on blood is the its sacred nature and the fact that it is a special property of God. Understanding the underlying principle helps us a great deal in understanding exactly what is meant by the phrase "ABSTAIN from blood." This will also help us to see the error of the following claim in regard to the practice of accepting blood via blood transfusions:

The laws on blood found in the scriptures, whether Noachian, Mosaic or Apostolic only forbid the "eating" of blood for food, but did not specifically forbid the taking of the blood into the body as BLOOD, rather than food. Since the scriptures do not differentiate that aspect, this view holds that it should be up to the individual Christian whether or not they could accept blood as "blood," either in its whole state or in regard to its major components, being red cells, white cells, platelets and plasma.

In response to this, let's consider the following: It was certainly not because God viewed blood to be evil that he forbid it to be eaten and commanded it to be abstained from. But rather, as in the case of both Noah and Moses, he put it on an even scale, the blood with LIFE, with the SOUL of the being. He specifically tells Noah that the blood is the soul. He even refers to man's LIFE in verse 5 as man's BLOOD:

Genesis 9:3-7: Every moving animal **that is alive** may serve as food for YOU. As in the case of green vegetation, I do give it all to YOU. 4 Only flesh with **its soul—its blood** —YOU must not eat. 5 And,

besides that, YOUR **blood** of YOUR **souls** shall I ask back. From the hand of every living creature shall I ask it back; and from the hand of man, from the hand of each one who is his brother, **shall I ask back the soul of man**. 6 Anyone shedding **man's blood** , by man will **his own blood be shed** , for in God's image he made man. 7 And as for YOU men, be fruitful and become many, make the earth swarm with YOU and become many in it.”

So rather than evil, he regarded it on a par with life, a most SACRED possession. No one can successfully deny that blood was given an equated status with the soul in the Noachian Decree and in the Mosaic Law:

Leviticus 17:10-14: “As for any man of the house of Israel or some alien resident who is residing as an alien in YOUR midst who eats any sort of blood, I shall certainly set my face against the soul that is eating the blood, and I shall indeed cut him off from among his people. 11 **For the soul of the flesh is in the blood**, and I myself have put it upon the altar for YOU to make atonement for YOUR souls, **because it is the blood that makes atonement by the soul**. 12 That is why I have said to the sons of Israel: “**No soul of YOU must eat blood** and no alien resident who is residing as an alien in YOUR midst should eat blood.” 13 “As for any man of the sons of Israel or some alien resident who is residing as an alien in YOUR midst who in hunting catches a wild beast or a fowl that may be eaten, he must in that case pour its blood out and cover it with dust. 14 **For the soul of every sort of flesh is its blood by the soul in it**. Consequently I said to the sons of Israel: “**YOU must not eat the blood of any sort of flesh, because the soul of every sort of flesh is its blood**. Anyone eating it will be cut off.”

Life is sacred, no one will deny, and God viewed blood as the LIFE and likewise sacred and as belonging to him as he would ask it back. Its sacred value is proven by the fact that it paid the price of LIFE in the atonement of sin. God accepted the “blood” instead of the “life” that was actually owed by the human who had sinned. It was a most sacred fluid and solely within the jurisdiction of God as to its use since he demanded it back according to the Noachian Decree. This sacredness is what established the precedent for the atoning value of Christ's own blood for the sake of all mankind. This is testified to by many, many scholars. So as to whether the Apostolic Decree was based upon Noah's society or the Jewish Law society, in regard to the underlying principle, we would have to say both. Not one or the other but both. Therefore, when the apostles referred to these

abstentions, the underlying principles behind these abstentions were the same underlying principles as were present with both Noah and Moses. Blood is sacred, it is God's special property and not to be used in any way that is not divinely demonstrated or authorized. The only biblical usage for blood ever presented was in regard to atonement and whatever handling of the blood was necessary to facilitate that atonement. Below, we will consider if there is any reason to believe that blood could be used in any other way than what is specified in the scriptures. But as it stands, whether humans would take the blood as blood or the blood as food, or for any other reason, there must be some indication of divine precedent in order to do so. Otherwise, one presumes upon the special property of God that he demands an accounting for without explicit or implicit divine permission to do so.

Therefore, whether Noachian or Mosaic in origination, the true underlying origin of the laws concerning blood are based upon the principle that blood is the sacred symbol of life/soul and belongs only to God and is asked back by him. Therefore, as humans, as is the case with all sacred things of God's special possession, we must not presume upon this property of God, this sacred possession, and take that property for our own use without permission or without some indication of allowance from a divine source.

We can see in the following case of Saul's men who were starving and near death, even then, it was a sin to ignore God's law to pour it onto the ground, rather than allow it to be used to save their life. Saul pronounced a curse upon anyone partaking of food before vengeance was executed on the enemy (1 Samuel 14:24), the Israelites became famished to the point of collapse and did not take time to drain the blood from animals they slaughtered for food. (1 Samuel 14:32-34) Verse 33 states: "Look! The people are sinning against Jehovah by eating along with the blood." An important point to note here with this incident is that these men were in a dangerous situation as to hunger. A thorough reading of that account clearly reveals that they were near fainting from lack of food, yet their eating of the blood was NOT allowed without committing a sin, even in the face of danger to their health or life. Why? They had no divine permission to do so. Blood was God's sacred and special property and he did not permit them to misuse it even in the face of dire circumstances.

Law, Mercy, and the Question of Property

It therefore becomes clear that as the Owner of blood and the One who demands an accounting for it, Jehovah God is the authority to whom we look toward for setting the

conditions in which blood may be used by humans. One thing that is helpful is examining how Jehovah delineates the use of things that are owned by his faithful servants, as these examples can demonstrate how he feels about ownership and property. This is helpful because it may establish a precedent for certain allowances when viewing things that are owned and withheld by Jehovah, if it becomes clear that he has set a condition of usability for the thing generally withheld.

What do the scriptures reveal God's thinking to be in relation to his property and the property of others? A lesson of mercy can be learned by observing how God commanded the property of others to be handled.

Deuteronomy 23 tells us:

24 "In case you go into the vineyard of your fellowman, you must eat only enough grapes for you to satisfy your soul, but you must not put any into a receptacle of yours. 25 "In case you go into the standing grain of your fellowman, you must pluck off only the ripe ears with your hand, but the sickle you must not swing to and fro upon the standing grain of your fellowman.

This was a "general" legal provision that did not involve a specific day or time period as to its application. Why though, was this provision made? It was out of mercy for those who might find themselves in need of food such as the widow or the poor one in their midst or simply the one who found himself hungry while passing through his neighbor's field.

What does this teach us about God and his view of property under certain circumstances, His or otherwise in connection with human need? It clearly shows that in a time of need, a person could be shown mercy by a sharing of what we have, that is rightfully ours, with them for their benefit. How far though would this provision of generosity and mercy go? Would it be extended to the point that our own crop would be significantly depleted? No, such an abuse was not what God wanted out of that provision, either at the hand of one individual or at the hand of many individuals partaking of the provision. It was not a promotion of laziness or gluttony, but was based upon human need. This provision only allowed for the "ripe" grains to be plucked and only allowed for what their need was at the time. It was therefore limited to "amount" and "kind." It was not open-ended.

One must remember that if they abused the privilege that was given, they would be guilty of stealing, not only from the individual Israelite, but sinning against God himself. But, if he limited himself within the legal provision, he would not be considered stealing

anything. It was his to take but only to a degree. Interesting are the words of Matthew Henry at this verse:

“It provided for the support of poor travelers, and teaches us to be kind to such, teaches us to be ready to distribute, and not to think every thing lost that is given away. Yet it forbids us to abuse the kindness of friends, or to take advantage of what is allowed. Faithfulness to their engagements should mark the people of God; and they should never encroach upon others.”

The same mercy and compassion is shown in God’s law to Israel specifically directing

“his people not to reap the edges of their fields completely, not to go over the boughs of the olive tree after having harvested the crop by beating the tree, nor to gather the leftovers of their vineyards. Even if a sheaf of grain was inadvertently left in the field, this was not to be retrieved. Gleaning was the God-given right of the poor in the land, the afflicted one, the alien resident, the fatherless boy, and the widow.—Le 19:9, 10; De 24:19-21....It is evident that this arrangement for the poor of the land, while encouraging generosity, unselfishness and a willingness to share one’s property to those in need in no way fostered laziness. It throws light on David’s statement: ‘I have not seen anyone righteous left entirely, nor his offspring looking for bread.’ (Ps 37:25) By availing themselves of the provision made for them by the Law, even the poor, by virtue of their hard work, would not go hungry, and neither they nor their children would have to beg for bread.” (“Gleaning.” Insight on the Scriptures. Published by Jehovah’s Witnesses.)

Another example of how God makes certain provisions for things that are otherwise forbidden due to their belonging to him is in regard to the Sabbath laws and provisions for “some” work on the Sabbath. First, let’s look at what the scriptures clearly say about the Sabbath day and “work”.

Exodus 31:14-15 14 And YOU must keep the sabbath, for it is something holy to YOU. A profaner of it will positively be put to death. IN CASE THERE IS ANYONE DOING WORK ON IT, THEN THAT SOUL MUST BE CUT OFF FROM THE MIDST OF HIS PEOPLE. 15 Six days may work be done, but on the seventh day is A sabbath OF COMPLETE REST. It is something holy to Jehovah. ANYONE DOING WORK ON THE sabbath DAY WILL POSITIVELY BE PUT TO DEATH.

Exodus 16:22-30 22 And it came about on the sixth day that they picked up twice as much bread, two omer measures for one person. So all the chieftains of the assembly came and reported it to Moses. 23 At that he said to them: “It is what Jehovah has

spoken. Tomorrow there will be a sabbath observance of a holy sabbath to Jehovah. What YOU can bake, bake, and what YOU can boil, boil, and all the surplus that there is save it up for YOU as something to be kept until the morning.” 24 Accordingly they saved it up until the morning, just as Moses had commanded; and it did not stink nor did maggots develop in it. 25 Then Moses said: “Eat it today, because today is a sabbath to Jehovah. Today YOU will not find it in the field. 26 Six days YOU will pick it up, but on the seventh day is a sabbath. On it none will form.” 27 HOWEVER, IT CAME ABOUT ON THE SEVENTH DAY THAT SOME OF THE PEOPLE DID GO OUT TO PICK UP, BUT THEY FOUND NONE. 28 Consequently Jehovah said to Moses: “HOW LONG MUST YOU PEOPLE REFUSE TO KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS AND MY LAWS? 29 Mark the fact that Jehovah has given YOU the sabbath. That is why he is giving YOU on the sixth day the bread of two days. Keep sitting each one in his own place. Let nobody go out from his locality on the seventh day.” 30 And the people proceeded to observe the sabbath on the seventh day.

Exodus 20:8-11 8 “Remembering the sabbath day to hold it sacred, 9 you are to render service and you must do all your work six days. 10 But the seventh day is a sabbath to Jehovah your God. YOU MUST NOT DO ANY WORK, you nor your son nor your daughter, your slave man nor your slave girl nor your domestic animal nor your alien resident who is inside your gates. 11 For in six days Jehovah made the heavens and the earth, the sea and everything that is in them, and he proceeded to rest on the seventh day. That is why Jehovah blessed the sabbath day and proceeded to make it sacred.

Exodus 34:21 21 “Six days you are to labor, but on the seventh day you will keep sabbath. IN PLOWING TIME AND IN HARVEST YOU WILL KEEP sabbath.

(Plucking and threshing are a natural part of the work done by the poor in order to glean and harvest the unrealed edges of the field.)

Deuteronomy 5:12-15 12 “Keeping the sabbath day to hold it sacred, just as Jehovah your God commanded you, 13 you are to render service and you must do all your work six days. 14 But the seventh day is a sabbath to Jehovah your God. YOU MUST NOT DO ANY WORK, YOU NOR YOUR SON NOR YOUR DAUGHTER NOR YOUR SLAVE MAN NOR YOUR SLAVE GIRL NOR YOUR BULL NOR YOUR ASS NOR ANY DOMESTIC ANIMAL OF YOURS NOR YOUR ALIEN RESIDENT WHO IS INSIDE YOUR GATES, IN ORDER THAT YOUR SLAVE MAN AND YOUR SLAVE GIRL MAY REST THE SAME AS YOU. 15 And you must remember that you became a slave in the land of Egypt and Jehovah your God proceeded to bring you out from there with a strong hand and an outstretched arm. That is why Jehovah your God commanded you to carry on the sabbath day.

Jeremiah 17:22-23 22 AND YOU MUST BRING NO LOAD OUT OF YOUR HOMES ON THE sabbath DAY; AND NO WORK AT ALL MUST YOU DO. And YOU

must sanctify the sabbath day, just as I commanded YOUR forefathers; 23 but they did not listen or incline their ear, and they proceeded to harden their neck in order not to hear and in order to receive no discipline.”“

It is amply clear that there was no “legal” provision for work of ANY kind on the Sabbath day. However, is it actually true that everything that could be considered WORK was forbidden? Were there provisions in the Law that allowed for a certain “kind” and “amount” of work, just as there was provision for someone else’s property in relation to “kind” and “amount”?

An account which sheds a good deal of light on the above question is the incident of Jesus’ disciples plucking, threshing and eating a small amount of grain on the Sabbath day. Was there legal provision to do such on the Sabbath day? Since we know that there was indeed legal provision to pluck a handful of grain as you passed through another’s field there was certainly reason to think they were well within their rights to do so even on the Sabbath. Otherwise, Jesus would not have said that they were “guiltless.” They did nothing wrong because the Law allowed for that to happen even on the Sabbath.

Jesus explains exactly how we can understand why this small thing that the disciples did was not a violation of the Sabbath. He did so by cleverly trapping the Pharisees in their own teachings and views. He appealed to a case where David performed something that was technically unlawful for him to do. Jesus even stated what the technical law was as recorded at Luke 6:2-4:

At this some of the Pharisees said: “Why are YOU doing what is not lawful on the sabbath?” 3 But Jesus said in reply to them: “Have YOU never read the very thing David did when he and the men with him got hungry? 4 How he entered into the house of God and received the loaves of presentation and ate and gave some to the men with him, which it is LAWFUL for NO ONE TO EAT BUT FOR THE PRIESTS ONLY?”

Surely Jesus did not misrepresent what the truth was in this scenario. He obviously evaluated it correctly. Therefore, first, according to Jesus, it WAS technically unlawful for David to eat the showbread. There was NO LEGAL provision for him to do so, yet it was NOT WRONG for him to do so. How can we harmonize such things? Really, it becomes simpler when you understand the phrase, “I want mercy and not sacrifice.” In fact, that is how Jesus summed up his lesson to the Pharisees. (Matthew 12:7) What

David did was technically against the law, which cannot be denied. Jesus even stated it was technically against the law, but there was more at work here than just the narrow view as held by the Pharisees.

Due to the mercy of God, as displayed in all of the legal provisions of his property and the property of the Israelites in general, what David did was not “wrong” in God’s eyes, even though “technically” unlawful. God is merciful when there is a human “need” involved, and on that occasion there was a human need involved. But it is apparent that God specifically “allowed” for David to take the bread because the account reveals that Ahimelech made an inquiry of Jehovah to be able to do so on David’s account. It was after this inquiry that Ahimelech then gave David the bread. What this demonstrates is that unless there is indication of divine permission, that which is HOLY, that which is SACRED and the special property of God, is not to be taken for one’s own use. In this case, although technically unlawful, God gave permission to the high priest to give David the bread.

In regard to what David did, there was no robbing of Jehovah by this act. If Ahimelech had gone into the holy and taken the fresh bread that was to stay there for a whole week and used that to feed David and his men without inquiring of Jehovah, then that would have been a sin against the institution of the bread; but as it had been taken out in the ordinary course of things, it was no robbing of Jehovah, and an inquiry was made of Jehovah involving the situation. So there was no indiscriminate entitlement to David because he had a need, but that which was allowed had a particular status which contributed to its allowance. There was divine permission granted.

Otherwise, to think that he could indiscriminately take the bread because he was hungry, and break a law in so doing, would mean that mere hunger would be all that would be necessary to break the laws of God. Such a stance would be ridiculous to anyone who understands integrity, even to the point of death, to God in all his commands.

Also, in regard to what the disciples did, there was no indiscriminate amount of work on the Sabbath that was allowed to them. They had been given divine permission to use this “property” that was not their own, but only in regard to what was needed, nothing more. They broke no law. Jesus said they were guiltless and also showed that **BY DIVINE PERMISSION**, even David could break an established law. He basically argued using a literary device called by some, “from greater to less.” If what their beloved David did was OK by God, even when there was a Law in place, how could what the disciples did be wrong when there was specific provision given by God to do so?

Whereas the Law stated that on the WEEKLY Sabbath they must not do ANY work of ANY kind without qualification, none was mentioned, there were obviously allowances because of the mercy of God to do “certain” NECESSARY things and only “certain” NECESSARY things. That is what the case of Jesus’ apostles demonstrates. Although, “technically” work, it was not something God forbid on the Sabbath. He drew from an example that demonstrated a clear “bending” of the law to allow David to do something he was ordinarily forbidden to do. David remained guiltless. Jesus point was that although what the Apostles did was “technically” work, it was not the kind of work God forbid on the Sabbath, just like David did something that was technically forbidden to him but was allowed to do so by the mercy of God. God allowed “certain” kinds of work to be done on the Sabbath, even though it was technically work, because he is a merciful and reasonable God. That is the very same reason that he allowed the priests to perform a great deal of work on the Sabbath and to rescue an animal from death on the Sabbath. Not because it wasn’t “work,” but because it was allowed by him as it was, in the case of the high priest, necessary for the atonement to take place for God’s people and it demonstrated God’s mercy in the other case. Therefore, it is clear that God does not always restrict “everything” that a law, from a strict, legalistic view, would call for.

What Jesus did was cut the Pharisees off from both angles. He first appealed to a case where God clearly bent the law to accommodate David. Why, because David was hungry and met certain criteria to be allowed to eat the showbread. David was NOT a PRIEST. This was offered, not as a statement that his disciples broke a command of God but to help them appreciate that even in the case where there IS a law, God is willing to bend at times, UNDER CERTAIN CONDITIONS, that law to a DEGREE, not carte blanc, but to a degree to accommodate the NEEDS of man. Then, he hit them from the other side by relating what the priest does EVERY Sabbath. He WORKS. Yet HIS work was not FORBIDDEN. Why? Because God allowed CERTAIN kinds of WORK of NECESSITY on the weekly Sabbath. These two sides of the argument completely disarmed the Pharisees because they had no where to turn to condemn the disciples. They knew what Jesus said about David was true, God did bend the law for David there is no doubt, and they were not about to condemn David in the same breath along with the disciples, EVEN IF THEY DID FEEL THEY BROKE Sabbath LAW, because then their beloved David would be condemned along with them. They also knew that because of the work the priest does, Jesus was right in indicating that works of NECESSITY were allowed, because of the reasonableness and mercy of God. They had no way to come back to him because he covered the bases of their strict, legalistic view of the Law. They could not condemn the disciples because they were in effect guiltless from both standpoints. What an amazing stroke of genius on behalf of Jesus.

Further allowance of “work” on the Sabbath is when Jesus taught his disciples that it was well and proper to rescue an animal on the Sabbath and of course to heal a human being as well. This demonstrates by example that even though there was no stated provision to do certain works of mercy on the Sabbath, they were clearly allowed to do so, but as before, it was based upon amount and kind. So, in the case of the Sabbath, it is true that one could actually do SOME kinds of work and STILL abide by the command to abstain from work on the Sabbath without contradiction, based upon the mercy of God and the allowances he afforded to man due to that mercy.

What bearing however, does this have on the command to abstain from blood? In answer, the parallel that can be drawn to this in relation to blood is that first, blood is the special property of God and he demands an accounting for it according to his words to Noah which were intended for all mankind, not just those under the Law covenant. Secondly, is there any indication that God may view a small allowance of blood to be used by humans without technically breaking the command to abstain from blood? Is there a legal provision in the area of blood of this nature; one that is limited by “amount” and “kind” as in the case of the gleaner in the field and as in the case of certain kinds of work on the Sabbath? From the standpoint of the Bible, there is no legal provision spelled out in the area of blood, but is that all there is to consider?

It is a scriptural axiom that God is not partial in his judicious dealings with humans. For all humans who have the SAME ASSIGNMENT AND RESPONSIBILITIES before Him, he deals with them judiciously the same. What is sin for one is sin for the other. That which he purposely does or gives to one, he does not forbid to others. Such would be a display of partiality. In other words, if one person with the same assignment and responsibility before him was forbidden to do something as a deadly sin, yet another person of equal status was allowed to do such without consequence and even blessing, God could not escape the charge of judicious partiality being exhibited.

While it is true that God can do with what is His any way he pleases, that would not satisfy the charge of partiality in the above scenario, and, as we believe, God is not partial. Is this pertinent to the topic of being able to use from blood certain things, while at the same time respecting the law to abstain from blood? Consider this:

Some would say in regard to what is seen in the womb, that we have a divine precedent of allowance expressed by that divinely ordained arena.

If it is observed that God has ordained the passing of certain fractions of blood from the blood of the mother, through the placenta, to the fetus, is that tantamount to a legal provision for others to receive like fractions? Keep in mind that the reason the legal provision was given was ultimately because of the mercy of God and his caring for the needy among his people. Is such thinking divorced from his view of blood? Do we need a law in each and every case to demonstrate that God may be merciful and have the same attitude toward other things that are ultimately his property, in a time of need? Do we need a law to state that God may be merciful in the area of blood and allow the same thing for other humans that he has provided for the fetus, ESPECIALLY in view of the fact that he has ordained and even designed as well and good and proper for the fetus, a human being, to receive those fractions? Has God allowed the fetus fractions below the cellular and whole plasma level without consequence of sin, and then made the same level of fractions forbidden to us with the consequence of a deadly sin? Such would not seem reasonable and would lack spiritual discernment. It would not be in keeping with a God who expressed: "I want MERCY and not sacrifice."

Divine revelation comes to us not only through his inspired words but also through what is revealed by means of his own creation. Such revelation through his own creation is so strong that it leaves the unbeliever without excuse, according to Romans 1:20:

"For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse." (*KJV*)

What is seen in the arena of the womb? What is seen is the allowance of fractions derived from blood that exist below the cellular and whole plasma level. When that is observed, one also considers that God is not partial and He is judiciously consistent. From that they may decide for themselves, with prayerful consideration, whether they will avail themselves of the same kind of fractions, or at the same level that is observed in the womb, that is, fractions from blood below the cellular and whole plasma level.

A parallel then is seen between the command to abstain from work and the command to abstain from blood.

God allowed certain physical exertions which he either considered not work, and therefore not in violation of the Sabbath Law, or He allowed such "work" out of mercy for mankind. There was precedent to establish such due to the incident of the disciples

plucking and threshing grain on the Sabbath in order to grab a handful of food. It was a small fraction of work that was performed that God did not hold them accountable for in regard to the Law of the Sabbath to abstain from ALL work. It was permitted by divine grant which otherwise would have been stealing and working on the Sabbath.

Might God allow certain things from blood that he either considers small enough to not constitute blood or could He allow such “blood” out of mercy for mankind? Some see what transpires in the womb as evidence for such an understanding and an allowance. Unless due cause can be shown to overturn this reasoning, no one should fault their decision to do so. To insist they must have a specific legal provision to do so smacks of a Pharisaical mindset. Although there was legal provision for what the disciples and high priest did, there was no legal provision for what David received. It was only upon divine permission against an established law that he was allowed to do so. Based upon the mercy and permission of God, there was no guilt to the disciples, to David or the high priest.

Does that mean that we therefore have the right to indiscriminately use blood if a need is established? No. To make that claim would mean that the disciples could have indiscriminately depleted the man’s field on the Sabbath as long as they could have claimed a need to do so, or that David could have violated the law of God based on mere hunger. Such an action would be a deliberate misuse of the mercy of God. Never would anyone want to be presumptuous when relying upon the mercy of God.

For instance, as mentioned before, in proof that human need and God’s subsequent mercy do NOT overturn the “complete” law on any matter, is an observation offered in the July 15, 1982 *Watchtower* published by Jehovah’s Witnesses. It has this to say on page 31:

“Contrast this with the incident when Israelite soldiers in Saul’s army violated God’s law on blood, as related at 1 Samuel 14:32-35. They had been in battle with the Philistines, enemies of Jehovah’s people. Tired and hungry from the fight, some Israelites slaughtered animals and “fell to eating along with the blood.” Whether it is claimed that this was a case of satisfying a powerful hunger or that it was an emergency situation, breaking the law on blood was not excusable. It was ‘sinning against Jehovah’ and it called for special sacrifices in behalf of those who ‘sinned against Jehovah by eating along with the blood.’”

Therefore, we should not move past what we have precedent to do, that being which we see demonstrated in the womb. To do that would be to presume without precedent to do

so. We must obey the command to “abstain from blood” even in the case of need, yet, some may decide to avail themselves of the same kind of allowance that is demonstrated in the womb, which is the allowance of fractions below the whole plasma and cellular level.

In an attempt to confound this particular view of blood in regard to Christianity some have offered the following:

“If every part of blood could therefore be used, theoretically leaving nothing behind once fractionated, how can it be said that we are abstaining from blood?”

In answer let us first note this: No one has ever taken in a medical context, a volume of blood and used every last piece of that blood in a fractionated form nor will such a thing feasibly ever be the case. As far as taking a volume of blood and boiling it down until it is all fractionated, is that what God’s law of mercy dictates that we could do? No, it does not. We must remember that God’s mercy was based upon “kind” and “amount” and the NEED of the human. To do as suggested above would be a deliberate and indiscriminate misuse of that blood because they simply do not NEED it. Even if one would so decide to take the fractions as demonstrated within the womb, we only take what is deemed necessary, nothing more. In effect, the rest is still in the possession of God. We do not presume to use any thing more than what is absolutely needed and preceded for use since blood belongs to God and he has the jurisdiction over it and demands an accounting of it.

It would be much the same when we look at the situation that God allowed in regard to what the disciples did on the Sabbath. God allowed a tiny fraction of that field to be plucked, threshed and eaten on the Sabbath without a violation of the command to abstain from work or without being guilty of stealing. Theoretically though, just as in the above example of blood, if any portion of that field was available, then theoretically it was ALL available in a fractionated form and any portion or all of it in enough fractionated handfuls, by enough different people, could be plucked without ever violating the Sabbath, if they ALL did it in the manner that the disciples did it. The entire field would have been plucked and threshed and no one person would have violated the Sabbath command to abstain from work if they had all performed their handful as did each disciple.

However, is such a thing even plausible and would that not be a blatant misuse of the mercy of God using it as an excuse for virtually stealing someone's crop? Would it not have taken a deliberate and concerted effort to deplete that man's entire field and a deliberate misuse and abuse of God's provision allowing what he did on the Sabbath? Of course it would and the same is true of the blood scenario. The question is a hypothetical conundrum invented for the purpose of trying to find any way possible to negate the validity of this view. It is Pharisaical. It never has and never will happen because it would take a deliberate abuse of the mercy of God to perform such a thing to begin with. To do such would have to be deliberate, just like the depletion of that man's field would have to be deliberate, and therefore punishable by abusing the mercy of God as an excuse to indiscriminately do as you wish for whatever purpose just to show it could be done. God's mercy does not allow for such things.

What of the argument: What happens at the mother's breast is a divinely arranged arena. With a certainty white blood cells are transferred from mother to child by the medium of the mammary gland.

Is this indication that blood at the cellular level should be acceptable in cases of need? To answer this one needs to take a close look at what is happening within the mammary gland and see what it demonstrates for us as regards white blood cells as they are found in blood.

At the start it must be said that I am certainly no scientist, so much of what is presented is based upon that which is stated by those that are, and I will present their statements as I have found them through research.

If man is able to imitate a transference of that which is part of blood, by whatever means, that takes place naturally within a God-ordained system in regards to blood, such as the womb scenario or the arena of the mammary gland, one could feasibly argue for their acceptance through ingesting or through some form of transfusion therapy.

From the outset, it is clear that although we can imitate the process of the womb, that of separating fractions from the primary components, before being introduced to the "other" person, what takes place in the mammary gland before those former blood components are introduced into the "other" person, cannot be duplicated by man. If man could take white blood cells and perform the morphological and essential differences that the body

does before introducing them to the “other” person, then such a process might be argued just as the fractional argument is presented from the standpoint of the womb scenario, but, such is not possible for man to do, at least not yet. Man cannot make milk constituents from white blood cells. He cannot perform the morphological and essential differences that the body performs upon the white blood cells before they enter the “other” person as constituents of milk. Therefore, if the natural process as reflected in the mammary gland cannot be imitated by man, it is hardly valid to use that arena as a basis for invading the blood stream and using white blood cells as they are found in blood because that is not what the body does via the mammary gland. Those cells undergo significant changes for the sole purpose of being inclusive in milk.

These morphological and essential changes are amply clear in the following scientific observations: (all underscore added)

Excerpts from:

HUMAN MILK IMMUNOLOGY IN RELATION TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF COW'S MILK ALLERGY IN THE BREAST-FED

Kirsi-Marjut Järvinen Department of Dermatology, Skin and Allergy Hospital University of Helsinki Helsinki, Finland Mononuclear phagocytic cells. In the milk of healthy women delivered full-term, the predominant cellular component (60 to 90% of milk cells) is the macrophage (Smith and Goldman 1968, Ho et al. 1979, Eglinton et al. 1994), with a morphology resembling that of tissue macrophages (Pitt 1979). Despite expressing the monocyte markers Leu-M 3 and Leu-M 5 , they also appear phenotypically more similar to tissue macrophages (Xanthou 1997). Additionally, occasional monocyte are found (Smith and

(Miler et al. 1990). They have also been demonstrated to kill ingested *Candida Albicans* (Cummings et al. 1985). That they exhibit strongly carbohydrate antigens in addition to peptide ones may be the result of cytokine-mediated stimulation or increased phagocytic activity (Baldus et al. 1995). They also possess the capability of producing toxic oxygen radicals for intracellular killing of microorganisms (Tsuda et al. 1984). Some authors suggest that, as elsewhere in the body, human milk macrophages may provide the first line of defense against pathogens (Waksman 1979). Neutrophils. According to the literature, neutrophils are rare in human milk (8-28%) in breast-feeding mother (Smith and Goldman 1968, Eglinton et al. 1994). However, one author reports a high 40-60% of neutrophils (Ho et al. 1979, Crago et al. 1979). Human milk polymorphonuclear cells are functionally exudate cells with less locomotive, adherence, microbicidal, and stimulated respiratory burst capabilities than those of their counterparts in blood

(Ho and Lawton 1978, Kohl et al. 1980, Weaver et al. 1984, Thorpe et al. 1986, Buescher and McIlheran 1993, Grazioso and Buescher 1996). Goldman 1968, Ho et al. 1979). The structural and functional characteristics of breast milk macrophages are not completely defined. They display unusual morphology, including many lipid-filled vacuoles, milk fat globules, and casein micelles (Smith and Goldman 1968, Smith et al. 1971, Crago et al. 1979, Ho et al. 1979, France et al. 1980, Baldus et al. 1995). Studies of mothers that have delivered preterm and at full term have shown that milk macrophages are a fully mature tissue macrophage population (Rodriguez et al. 1989). They adhere to glass, although less than do their counterparts in peripheral blood (Miler et al. 1990).

They are activated, as indicated by their high motility (Özgaragoz et al. 1988), but their migratory activity and chemotaxis have also been shown to be significantly less than those of less mature blood monocytes (Clemente et al. 1986, Thorpe et al. 1986, Rodriguez et al. 1989). They have been demonstrated to mount a respiratory burst after in vitro stimulation (Tsuda et al. 1984, Cummings et al. 1985, Speer et al. 1985; 1986). Activation, as indicated by induction of the oxidative burst and prostaglandin production, has been suggested to occur through the IgA receptors they contain (Robinson et al. 1991). Moreover, they show high phagocytic activity (Smith and Goldman 1968, Goldman and Smith 1973, Rodriguez et al. 1989), but the number of particles engulfed per cell has been reported to be markedly lower than for blood leucocytes

In the studies using flow cytometry, the mean CD4+ and CD8+ ratio of T cells in human milk has been reported to be 1, meaning that the proportion of CD8+ cells is higher than in peripheral blood (Wirt et al. 1992, Eglinton et al. 1994). However, an older study using indirect immunoperoxidase staining and monoclonal antibodies claimed the ratio was 1.6 (Jain et al. 1991). Further, milk T cells have 2- to 3-fold higher percentages of activated CD8+ (HML-1+ or VLA-1+) cells than does blood (Gibson et al. 1991, Eglinton et al. 1994).

Natural killer (NK) cells. NK cells represent a small proportion of colostral cells and display low cytotoxic activity (Moro et al. 1985, Wirt et al. 1992). In contrast to peripheral blood, the majority of colostral NK cells exhibited a degenerated appearance with many vacuoles and no electron-dense granules (Moro et al. 1985).

Also we have these comments from others:

Representative Immune Factors in Human Milk Whose Production Is Delayed in the Recipient Infant.

The cells in milk, predominantly leukocytes, were initially considered to be the “mother’s gift to the infant,” but most studies examining milk cells have shown their functional inferiority to cells obtained from the blood (Prentice et al, 1987, Oksenberg et al, 1985, Buescher & McIlheran 1993; Thorpe et al, 1986). In addition, examination of the effects of milk exposure on fully functional cells (Grazioso & Buescher, 1996) plus better insight into the physiology and function of leukocytes now suggests precisely the opposite interpretation, i.e., that milk cells are not intended to function in the recipient infant.

Also this:

The Journal of Immunology, Vol 132, Issue 2 684-689, Copyright © 1984 by American Association of Immunologists Secretion of immunoglobulin A by human milk leukocytes initiated by surface membrane stimuli

Thus, IgA is released from human milk leukocytes by secretory mechanisms that are initiated by certain membrane stimuli, some of which are shared by peripheral blood neutrophils and monocytes. Because human milk leukocytes appear to be refractory to C5a or other activated complement components and are blocked by cytochalasin B, it appears that these unusual cells may be uniquely adapted to play a role in the immunologic protection of the neonate.

Cellular Defenses As is true of defensive molecules, immune cells are abundant in human milk. They consist of white blood cells, or leukocytes, that fight infection themselves and activate other defense mechanisms. The most impressive amount is found in colostrum. Most of the cells are neutrophils, a type of phagocyte that normally circulates in the bloodstream. Some evidence suggests that neutrophils continue to act as phagocytes in the infant’s gut. Yet they are less aggressive than blood neutrophils and virtually disappear from breast milk six weeks after birth. So perhaps they serve some other function, such as protecting the breast from infection.

The next most common milk leukocyte is the macrophage, which is phagocytic like neutrophils and performs a number of other protective functions. Macrophages make up some 40 percent of all the leukocytes in colostrum. They are far more active than milk neutrophils, and recent experiments suggest that they are more motile than are their counterparts in blood. Aside from being phagocytic, the macrophages in breast milk manufacture lysozyme, increasing its

amount in the infant's gastrointestinal tract. Lysozyme is an enzyme that destroys bacteria by disrupting their cell walls.

In addition, macrophages in the digestive tract can rally lymphocytes into action against invaders. Lymphocytes constitute the remaining 10 percent of white cells in the milk. About 20 percent of these cells are B lymphocytes, which give rise to antibodies; the rest are T lymphocytes, which kill infected cells directly or send out chemical messages that mobilize still other components of the immune system. Milk lymphocytes seem to behave differently from blood lymphocytes. Those in milk, for example, proliferate in the presence of *Escherichia coli*, a bacterium that can cause life-threatening illness in babies, but they are far less responsive than blood lymphocytes to agents posing less threat to infants. Milk lymphocytes also manufacture several chemicals—including gamma-interferon, migration inhibition factor and monocyte chemotactic factor—that can strengthen an infant's own immune response.

What have we seen from the above?

“their migratory activity and chemotaxis have also been shown to be significantly less than those of less mature blood monocytes”

“They display unusual morphology, including many lipid-filled vacuoles, milk fat globules, and casein micelles”

“but the number of particles engulfed per cell has been reported to be markedly lower than for blood leucocytes”

“milk T cells have 2- to 3-fold higher percentages of activated CD8+ (HML-1+ or VLA-1+) cells than does blood”

“In contrast to peripheral blood, the majority of colostrum NK cells exhibited a degenerated appearance with many vacuoles and no electron-dense granules”

“but most studies examining milk cells have shown their functional inferiority to cells obtained from the blood”

“it appears that these unusual cells may be uniquely adapted to play a role in the immunologic protection of the neonate”

“Yet they are less aggressive than blood neutrophils”

“recent experiments suggest that they are more motile than are their counterparts in blood”

“they are far less responsive than blood lymphocytes to agents posing less threat to infants”

I think it is safe to say that a leukocyte in milk is not the same as a leukocyte in blood. To extract milk leukocytes from the breast as “milk” is entirely different than extracting white blood cells from blood and ingesting them. There are now milk leukocytes, having been altered divinely by that which He created within the mammary. There are essentially different than the blood leukocytes. If one extracted a milk leukocyte and ate it and extracted a blood leukocyte from blood and ate it they would be eating two different things. The only precedent that this might set for the Christian is if there was a way to imitate the natural process that the body performs upon these white cells before introducing them to the “other” person. It surely does not draw a parallel with using white blood cells as they are found in blood since that is not what the body does via the mammary gland.

It has also been argued that because during mastitis, whole plasma or blood cells can pass from mother to child, which this should allow for the use of whole blood or major components in transfusion therapy.

To this it is stated that one could hardly use a scenario that is the result of Adamic sin, resulting in disease and imperfection, as a divinely intended arena for transfer between mother and child. This would be tantamount to saying that because God allows spontaneous abortion, that we should be able to perform abortion at our discretion. If it is argued that abortion could be permissible upon the event of the unavoidable death of either the mother or the child or both, such as a tubal pregnancy, and therefore, the taking of blood would be permissible in the event of possible death, the difference is this. In the event of an abortion made to actually SAVE a life is not the violation of a law of God in allowing one or the other to die. That is surely not tantamount to “killing” one of them when both or one would have naturally died left in their current state. In saving the life of one or the other, no command of God is violated. It’s not the taking of a life but rather the saving of a life that transpires.

In the event of blood it is different, because even in the face of endangered life, as related at 1 Samuel 14:32-35, there would be a violation of God’s law, which would be using God’s sacred property without divine permission. One would violate the law to abstain from blood, whereas in the abortion case, no law would be jeopardized as the efforts are to SAVE life, not take it.

“Abstain from Blood” – A Command or a Concession for Jewish Sensitivities?

Some have presented the notion that the Apostolic Decree to “abstain from blood” and the other abstinences mentioned were not commands for Christians to adhere to indefinitely, but were simply concessions made for the sensitivities of the Jewish populace among them. These ones appeal to 1 Corinthians 8 to prove this claim. We will take a closer look at this to determine the truth of the matter.

The topic in Acts 15 specifically addressed what some JEWISH Christians felt the Gentiles had to do to be saved. That WAS the backdrop of the entire conversation as is clearly spelled out in the first verse and the verses to follow. Follow it through and you will see this clearly demonstrated.

Notice the following that is interspersed throughout this chapter 15:

Verse 1: The supporters of the circumcision claim that Gentile Christians must be circumcised AND observe the Law of Moses in order TO BE SAVED.

Verse 2: The dispute escalates and they decide to take it to the Apostles and older men in Jerusalem.

Verse 5: Again the Jewish faction states it is NECESSARY for Gentiles to be circumcised and follow the Law of Moses. In what sense were they using the word NECESSARY? In keeping with the context as established with verse one they were stating that it was necessary for their SALVATION to get circumcised and follow the Law of Moses.

Verse 11: Peter clarifies the Christian position regarding SALVATION which is through the undeserved kindness (grace) of the Lord Jesus.

Verses 23-29: After a decision is made regarding the issues, a letter is drawn up to inform the Gentiles what would be NECESSARY for them to do that had a bearing on the principles found in the Mosaic Law. Again, in keeping with the context, the word NECESSARY is used in regard to SALVATION as that is the entire backdrop to the dispute as is shown from verses 1, 5 and 11. To deny a connection with salvation is to deny the context.

At this point I would like to address further the claim that this is merely a command given out of regard for Jewish sensitivities. There are a number of things which speak against such a conclusion. First, as I have demonstrated, the backdrop of the discussion was SALVATION. How could it not be in regard to Acts 15:1, 5 and 11 in the immediate context?

Secondly, consider this: If such a command to abstain from things sacrificed to idols and things strangled and from blood was merely for the sensitivities of the Jews one could ask why the Apostles and older men did not recommend “circumcision” for Gentile Christians which was a MUCH MORE burning and divisive issue of that day? The circumcision issue was the CAUSE for the conference of the body at Jerusalem and ***the moving cause for writing the letter!*** There was strong opposition to the decree about circumcision by those Jews who falsely claimed to be Christian and insisted on staying under the Law. Notice the following passages: Galatians 5:3-6, 11, 12; 6:12-15; Romans 2:25-29; 4:9-12; Philippians 3:2-4. If anything should have been considered in regard to Jewish sensitivities it should have been that one, yet, why would the apostles conciliate them on the point of blood and things sacrificed to idols and raise greater opposition to

circumcision, since we know that Paul in the very next chapter was willing to let someone BE CIRCUMCISED out of regard for the JEWISH SENSITIVITIES? (Acts 16:3) Surely, if the list in Acts 15 was merely for their sensitivities, circumcision would have been included since the next chapter shows how they handled circumcision in regard to Jewish sensitivities. With that considered and with the backdrop of the entire council being a connection with salvation, this should dispel the notion in anyone's mind that it was not binding and lasting MORAL LAW. It WAS binding and lasting moral Law. The sensitivity argument does not fit the context and neither does the claim that the issues did not have to do with salvation.

Furthermore, consider the following information in *Insight on the Scriptures* under "Blood" (published by Jehovah's Witnesses):

Noah and his sons were allowed by Jehovah to add animal flesh to their diet after the Flood, but they were strictly commanded not to eat blood. (Ge 9:1, 3, 4) God here set out a regulation that applied, not merely to Noah and his immediate family, but to all mankind from that time on, because all those living since the Flood are descendants of Noah's family.

Concerning the permanence of this prohibition, Joseph Benson noted: "It ought to be observed, that this prohibition of eating blood, given to Noah and all his posterity, and repeated to the Israelites, in a most solemn manner, under the Mosaic dispensation, has never been revoked, but, on the contrary, has been confirmed under the New Testament, Acts xv.; and thereby made of perpetual obligation."—Benson's Notes, 1839, Vol. I, p. 43. ...

[The Apostolic] decree rests, ultimately, on God's command not to eat blood, as given to Noah and his sons and, therefore, to all mankind. In this regard, the following is found in *The Chronology of Ancient Kingdoms Amended*, by Sir Isaac Newton (Dublin, 1728, p. 184): "This law [of abstaining from blood] was ancients [sic] than the days of Moses, being given to Noah and his sons, long before the days of Abraham: and therefore when the Apostles and Elders in the Council at Jerusalem declared that the Gentiles were not obliged to be circumcised and keep the law of Moses, they excepted this law of abstaining from blood, and things strangled, as being an earlier law of God, imposed not on the sons of Abraham only, but on all nations, while they lived together in Shinar under the dominion of Noah: and of the same kind is the law of abstaining from meats offered to Idols or false Gods, and from fornication."—Italics his.

...The Jerusalem council sent its decision to the Christian congregations to be observed. (Ac 16:4) About seven years after the Jerusalem council issued the decree, Christians continued to comply with the "decision that they should keep themselves from what is sacrificed to idols as well as from blood and what is strangled and from fornication." (Ac 21:25) And more than a hundred years later, in 177 C.E., in Lyons (now in France), when religious enemies falsely accused

Christians of eating children, a woman named Biblis said: “How would such men eat children, when they are not allowed to eat the blood even of irrational animals?”—The Ecclesiastical History, by Eusebius, V, I, 26.

Early Christians abstained from eating any sort of blood. In this regard Tertullian (c. 155-a. 220 C.E.) pointed out in his work Apology (IX, 13, 14): “Let your error blush before the Christians, for we do not include even animals’ blood in our natural diet. We abstain on that account from things strangled or that die of themselves, that we may not in any way be polluted by blood, even if it is buried in the meat. Finally, when you are testing Christians, you offer them sausages full of blood; you are thoroughly well aware, of course, that among them it is forbidden; but you want to make them transgress.” Minucius Felix, a Roman lawyer who lived until about 250 C.E., made the same point, writing: “For us it is not permissible either to see or to hear of human slaughter; we have such a shrinking from human blood that at our meals we avoid the blood of animals used for food.”—Octavius, XXX, 6.

Surely “fornication” was not being forbidden for the sake of Jewish sensitivities. It was forbidden absolutely, and the word “necessary” in verse 28 would certainly mean necessary in the same sense. The word “necessary” is applied equally to each thing in the list.

Fornication in ANY form would not only cause offense, but would be a death-dealing sin against God. Likewise with the rest of the list. The word “necessary” would not apply to one item in the list differently then it would apply to the rest.

Therefore, one of those things in the list is unquestionably a sin that if committed without repentance could cost us our salvation. What about the others though that are in that list? Do we see indication that those things are “sin” as well, or are they simply issues of sensitivity?

Let’s take a look at the very word that others use to establish that what was really spoken of was just a sensitivity issue and not a sin that could cost us our salvation. That word used is “eidolothuton,” generally translated as “things sacrificed to idols.” Also another very pertinent phrase that we must include in this examination is “alisgema eidolon,” generally translated as things “polluted by idols” or “pollution of idols,” found at Acts 15:20.

We will note first that the phrase “pollution” of idols in verse 20 is equated with the phrase “things sacrificed to idols” in verse 29. So, in this context, whatever was meant by the “pollution” of idols was also meant by what was stated in verse 29. It should also be

noted that the word “meat” as is found in many translations of verse 29 does not occur there, which is a bit misleading to the overall context. The Greek word there used simply means “things sacrificed to idols.” There is no “meat” specified at all. So what was spoken of in verse 29 was a “pollution” of idols as is stated in verse 20, they being parallel statements.

Therefore, we are not just speaking of “things” sacrificed to idols but the “pollution” that those things would create, which seems a clear reference to the fact this is speaking of “idolatry,” and not just items that might serve as idols to the pagan mind. Do we have any other biblical evidence to help us appreciate that even the phrase “things sacrificed to idols” could be understood in a “forbidden” sense to ALL Christians? Not just for sake of sensitivity issues but because of direct idolatrous connection? Yes we do. In fact, one of those occurrences is in the very chapter that most refer to as the passage that supposedly waters down the Apostolic Decree to a mere sensitivity issue. But first, before coming to 1 Corinthians 8, let’s look at another passage which clearly equates the phrase “things sacrificed to idols” with “sin,” not just an issue of sensitivity.

In Revelation 2:14 and 2:20, it states in regard to the Pergamum congregation and the Thyatiran congregation that they were tolerating that woman Jezebel (obviously a symbolism for a Jezebel-like woman) and holding fast to the teaching of Balaam who leads them to “commit fornication” and to “eat things sacrificed to idols.” Both times the “eating of things sacrificed to idols” is listed with the undeniably deadly sin of fornication. Clearly, in these passages, the “eating of things sacrificed to idols” was the sin of “idolatry” that brought God’s condemnation to those congregations. This is undeniable when one looks up what happened in the incidents that are referred to in Revelation in connection with the teaching of Balaam. (Numbers 25:1-3, 31:15,16) With it established that the phrase “things sacrificed to idols” and “eating things sacrificed to idols” can be a clear reference to “idolatrous practices”, it would be no wonder then that Acts 15:20 parallels “pollution” of idols with “things sacrificed to idols,” which both could clearly refer to idolatrous practices, especially the phrase involving the word “pollution.”

Now, what about then the 8th chapter of 1 Corinthians? Is the phrase “things sacrificed to idols” or “eating” things sacrificed to idols ever presented as a clear “sin”? Let’s go through each verse and then we can see of course that it is.

Quote]“4 Now concerning the eating of foods offered to idols,”

This use of the phrase is obviously referring to the non-idolatrous connection of eating something that had been sacrificed to an idol, as the argument that follows conclusively

shows. To a Christian, an idol should mean nothing, and therefore eating something sacrificed to an idol should mean nothing.

“...we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is no God but one. 5 For even though there are those who are called “gods,” whether in heaven or on earth, just as there are many “gods” and many “lords,” 6 there is actually to us one God the Father, out of whom all things are, and we for him; and there is one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things are, and we through him. 7 Nevertheless, there is not this knowledge in all persons; but some, being accustomed until now to the idol, eat food as something sacrificed to an idol, and their conscience, being weak, is defiled.”

Here, it is clear that the phrase “eating something sacrificed to an idol” has direct idolatrous connection in the mind of the one eating, as the contrast that is brought out by stating, “there is not this knowledge in all persons.” So far then, twice the phrase “eating things sacrificed to idols” is used and once it refers to the “non-idolatrous connection” and the other time it refers to the “idolatrous connection” which would surely serve as a “pollution” of idols to a Christian, that which the Apostolic Decree forbids.

“8 But food will not commend us to God; if we do not eat, we do not fall short, and, if we eat, we have no credit to ourselves. 9 But keep watching that this authority of YOURS does not somehow become a stumbling block to those who are weak. 10 For if anyone should see you, the one having knowledge, reclining at a meal in an idol temple, will not the conscience of that one who is weak be built up to the point of eating foods offered to idols?”

Again the phrase “eating foods sacrificed to idols” is used in the sense of an “idolatrous connection” because this is what the “weak conscientized” brother would be “emboldened” to do. Surely, there would be nothing wrong with him being emboldened to eat WITHOUT the idolatrous connection, in fact, that would be fine, but here, it is the “idolatrous” POLLUTION that is spoken of again, something that the Apostles clearly condemned as it was listed with fornication which is clearly condemned in ANY context, surely not just in the context of protecting a weak person’s conscience.

“11 Really, by your knowledge, the man that is weak is being ruined, brother for whose sake Christ died.”

Ruined because he has committed an act of idolatry in his mind.

So, it is clear beyond any doubt that the phrase “eating things sacrificed to idols” can be equated, and predominantly so, with the idea of “idolatry.” Therefore, there is no real reason for anyone to insist that what the Apostolic Decree was speaking of was not idolatry. In fact, there are many reasons to insist the opposite because of the inclusion of fornication in the list mentioned in Acts 15. To insist otherwise surely strains the context to the breaking point since the backdrop of the council was “salvational” and what was necessary in that regard. Obviously idolatry and fornication are salvationally necessary abstentions. Likewise therefore, that would be the case with the references to blood and things strangled. Frankly, we can see no other option without destroying the context of what is stated there.

So, what happens is this: they misunderstand the point Paul was making in 1 Corinthians 8. The point is that if you emboldened your brother’s conscience to the point of eating meat sacrificed to idols with that ceremonial attachment in his mind, he not only would have violated his conscience but he would have violated God’s Law against “ceremonially” eating things sacrificed to idols, for it would have then been a form of idolatry, would it not? How could it not be? It is this understanding that keeps perfect harmony between 1 Corinthians 8 and Acts 15. Acts 15 was decided upon in the context of salvational issues, abstaining from things that could cost you your salvation, such as the “fornication” that was mentioned, and of course the “idolatry.” Abstaining from “blood” would have therefore been in the same category.

The point of departure comes in not realizing that what the Apostles forbid in Acts was the “ceremonial” attachment to the idol. What Paul allowed in 1 Corinthians was not the “ceremonial” eating of meat in regard for the idol, which would be idolatry, but what Paul was talking about being acceptable was the incidental eating of the meat that had been sacrificed to the idol without the ceremonial attachment in the mind of the Christian. It is important to clearly understand this as it is crucial to the harmony and the differences between Acts the 15th chapter and 1 Corinthians the 8th.

1 Corinthians 8 just wasn’t about Paul’s view. It was the view of those “brothers” weak in conscience who might sin by “being emboldened to eat what has been sacrificed to idols.” (Verse 10) If it was okay to do so, then why did Paul present this act as a sin in verses 9-13? One must discern the difference between incidental eating of something sacrificed to an idol and the ceremonial attachment of such in the conscience of a weak brother.

SUMMARY:

From what has been considered it should be apparent beyond doubt that blood is considered God’s special property and he demands an accounting for it because of its sacred life equivalent status. Due to that, Christians must not violate that sacred property

of God. They must not use it or partake of it without some divine indication that they can do so. As we considered a similar law involving the observance of the weekly Sabbath, where certain kinds and a certain amount of work was allowed without violation, we have seen that within the divine arena of the womb, certain kinds of elements from blood are divinely arranged to be used between mother and child. These are indications that it may be possible for all humans to use those similar elements as found in that God ordained and God designed arena. It is a decision for the individual Christian to make.

We have also seen that the Apostolic Decree involving the abstinence of blood was indeed a Christian law, not a temporary concession for the Jews.

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