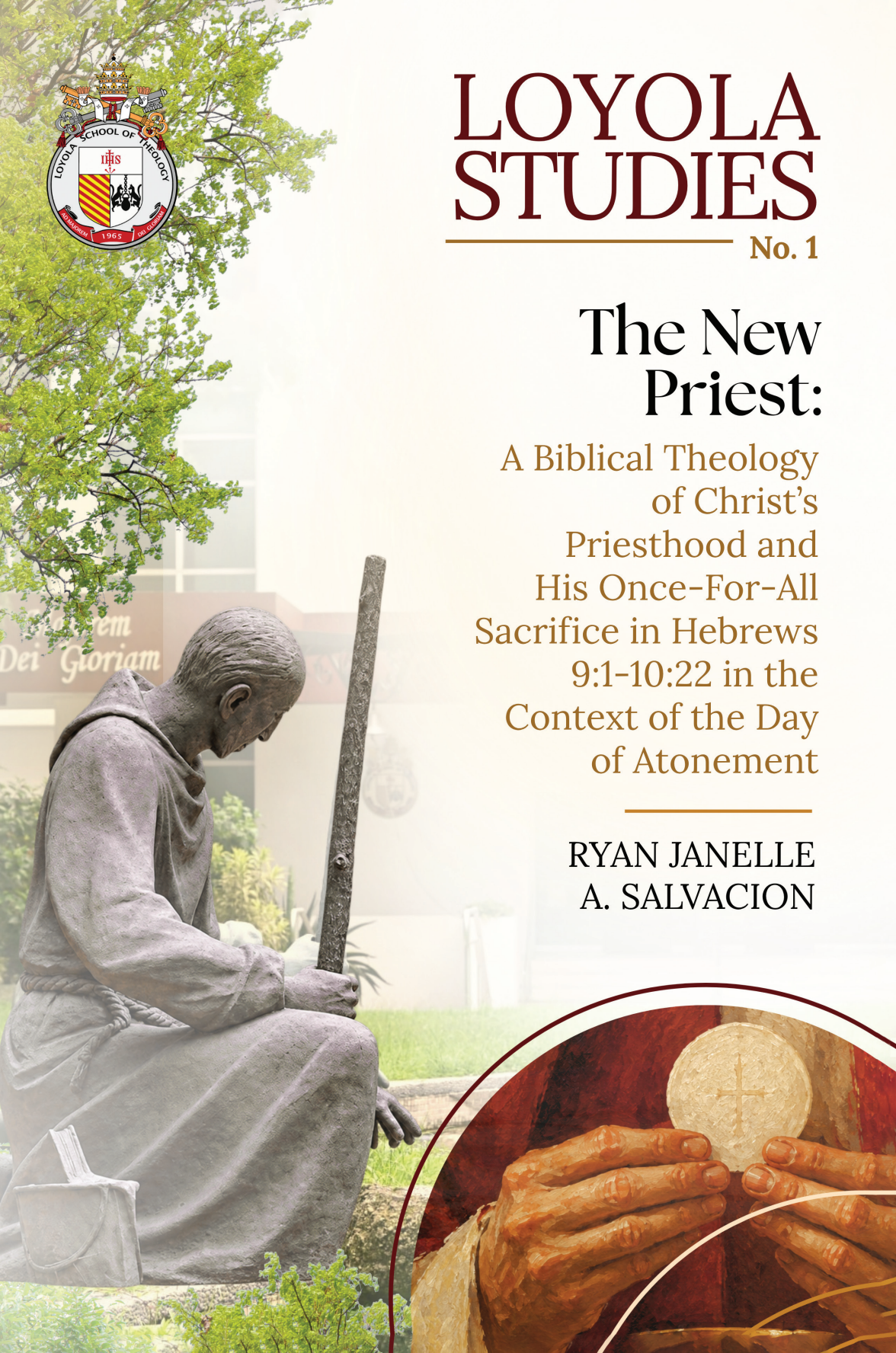
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The New Priest:

A Biblical Theology of Christ's Priesthood and His Once-For-All Sacrifice in Hebrews 9:1-10:22 in the Context of the Day of Atonement

RYAN JANELLE A. SALVACION



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Ryan Janelle A. Salvacion

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Archdiocese of Palo

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Theology and Ministry Program
Loyola School of Theology
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A dissertation presented to the Graduate Faculty of the School of Humanities in candidacy for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Major in Theology

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is a study that explicates the novelty of Christ's priesthood and the meaning of His once-for-all sacrifice as contained in Heb 9:1-10:22 by interpreting the said pericope in the context of the Day of Atonement. When Heb 9:1-10:22 is interpreted in the said context, what emerges is the figure of Christ, the eternal high priest and the perfect sacrifice, who is the fulfillment and perfection of the cultic actions of the OT high priest during the Day of Atonement. What the rituals of Yom Kippur prefigured and foreshadowed in the OT are now fulfilled in the Paschal Mystery of Jesus. Hence, this study seeks to demonstrate how the priesthood of Christ and His once-for-all sacrifice found in Heb can be amply described and understood through the context of the Day of Atonement.The other contexts in Heb 9:1-10:22 are not being denied of their importance, rather what is being argued is their existence in Heb is dependent on the Day of Atonement being the primary context. When subsidiary contexts are misunderstood as the primary context, the reader or interpreter fails to fully understand the depth, the breadth, and the height of the Auct Heb's theological arguments. This study utilizes what Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI calls the *Method C exegesis* leading towards a biblical theology of Christ's new priesthood and His once-for-all sacrifice. *Method C exegesis* is the kind of interpretation of the sacred text that employs both the historical-critical exegesis of the 20th century and the traditional patristic-medieval exegesis.

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Solemnity of St. Joseph,
the Husband of Mary

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ABBREVIATIONS

AAS	*Acta Apostolicae Sedis*
ACCS Heb	*Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: Hebrews*
AI	*Ancient Israel*
Auct Heb	*The Author of the Letter to the Hebrews*
AUSS	*Andrews University Seminary Studies*
BBR	*Bulletin for Biblical Research*
BHS	*Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*
BW1	*Bibeltheologisches Wörterbuch, Erster Band: Abraham – Herr*
BW2	*Bibeltheologisches Wörterbuch, Zweiter Band: Herrentag – Zucht*
CBD	*Catholic Bible Dictionary*
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CCC	*Catechism of the Catholic Church*
CIBOT	*A Catholic Introduction to the Bible: The Old Testament*
CPDBT	*The Collegeville Pastoral Dictionary of Biblical Theology*
CSEL	*Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*
DARCOM	*Daniel and Revelation Committee Series*
DBSJ	*Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal*
DBT	*Dictionary of Biblical Theology*
DBWC	*Dictionary of the Bible and Western Culture*

DSS	*The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*
ET_{CSM}	*Encyclopedia of Theology, A Concise Sacramentum Mundi*
FTP^{1}	*A Fundamental Theology of the Priesthood: Proceedings of the Symposium by the Centre for Research and Anthropology of Vocations*, *vol. 1*
FTP^{2}	*A Fundamental Theology of the Priesthood: Additional Perspective, vol. 2*
GAGNT	*A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament*
HJRCF	*A Handbook on the Jewish Roots of the Christian Faith*
HUCA	*Hebrew Union College Annual*
IBC	*The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*
ICSBONT	*The Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: Old and New Testament*
IntBC	*The International Bible Commentary, A Catholic and Ecumenical Commentary for the Twenty-First Century*
JAAS	*Journal of Asia Adventist Seminary*
JANT	*The Jewish Annotated New Testament*
JBC^{21C}	*The Jerome Biblical Commentary for the Twenty-First Century, Third Fully Revised Edition*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JBQ	*Jewish Bible Quarterly*
JECH	*Journal of Early Christian History*
JOTRP	*Jesus and the Old Testament Roots of the Priesthood*
JSNT	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
JTI	*Journal of Theological Interpretation*
LJCTC	*Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture*
LXX	*Septuagint*
MT	*Masoretic Text*

NA[28]	*Nestle-Aland: Novum Testamentum Graece, 28th Edition*
NCBC	*New Collegeville Bible Commentary*
NJBC	*New Jerome Biblical Commentary*
NT	*New Testament*
NTA 15	*Neues Testament Abhandlungen 15*
NTS	*New Testament Studies*
OT	*Old Testament*
PCAI	*Priesthood and Cult in Ancient Israel*
PCB	*Peake's Commentary on the Bible*
PG	*Patrologia Graeca*
RCRV	*Revised Challoner-Rheims Version*
RSV2CE	*Revised Standard Version, 2nd Catholic Edition*
SCAEJC	*Sacrifice, Cult, and Atonement in Early Judaism and Christianity*
SCJ	*Stone-Campbell Journal*
SJSJ	*Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism*
SPCK	*Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge*
TJTS	*The Journal of Theological Studies*
TMSJ	*The Master's Seminary Journal*
VD	*Verbum Domini*
Vine AEDNTW	*W. E. Vine's An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*
WTJ	*Wesleyan Theological Journal*
ZNW	*Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche*

AUTHOR'S NOTE

For scriptural citations found in the text, the RSV2CE is the preferred translation. In many cases, however, it has been necessary to translate straight from the original biblical text in order to capture as accurately as possible the word correlations highlighted by the author. Moreover, if a translation other than the RSV2CE is used, it will be noted following the scriptural quote.

The Hebrew OT text is based on the BHS, and the Greek NT text is based on the NA[28]. With the exception of citations where the authors have either used the original Hebrew or Greek terms or only their transliteration, terms and phrases in Hebrew or Greek that are used in this research are given their transliteration in the footnotes.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. *Exordium*

The Paschal Mystery of Jesus[1] from the point of view of a 1st century AD Jew, a devout follower of the Torah does not appear a "sacrifice" in the cultic or liturgical sense of the word. According to Mary Healy, a sacrifice is a liturgical celebration that happens in an altar located in a sacred place.[2] Margaret Barker, in her book, *The Gate of Heaven: The History and Symbolism of the Temple of Jerusalem*, explains that offering a sacrifice is the principal act in Israel's cult.[3] For the Jews, it can only be performed in the Temple of Jerusalem.[4] It is a ritual that can only take place through the mediation of high priests and priests (the sons of Aaron) who belong to the tribe of Levi.[5] The

[1] Jesus' Passion, Death, Resurrection, Ascension into heaven, and His Enthronement at the right hand of the Father.

[2] See Mary Healy, *Hebrews* (Michigan: Baker Academics, 2016), 182.

[3] See Margaret Barker, *The Gate of Heaven: The History and Symbolism of the Temple of Jerusalem* (London: SPCK, 1991), 32-33. See also *AI*, 415.

[4] See Robert Daly, S.J., *Sacrifice Unveiled: The True Meaning of Christian Sacrifice* (New York: T&T Clark International, 2009), 3. See also N. T. Wright, *Christian Origins and the Question of God,* vol. 2, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 407. See also N. T. Wright, *Christian Origins and the Question of God,* vol. 4, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 96.

[5] See *CBD*, 792.

essential relationship between the priest and the sacrifice in ancient Israel is stressed by Roland De Vaux, O.P. by pointing out the fact that "every priest was chosen and installed to serve in a sanctuary."[6] Hence, the priest serving or ministering in a sanctuary meant that he is offering sacrifices to God. The apostasy of the Israelites in the wilderness, the golden calf incident (Exod 32), according to Steven C. Smith, has "brought about 'a change in the priesthood' from the earlier father-son model to the Levitical priesthood."[7] It means to say that the priesthood is an essential institution in the life of ancient Israel. Therefore, the death of a Jew from the tribe of Judah (Heb 7:14) by way of crucifixion, His Resurrection, and His Ascension are far from being seen as a sacrifice.[8] According to Albert Vanhoye, S.J., "It was in fact the very opposite of sacrifice. Indeed, sacrifice did not consist in the putting to death of a living person, still less in his sufferings, but in rites of offering performed by the priest in the holy place."[9] Ole Jakob Filtvedt and Martin Wessbrandt made the same argument, "It is by no means self-evident that reflection on Jesus' sacrificial death would encourage anyone to think of Jesus as a *high priest*."[10] But how come today, it is part of the common

---

[6] *AI,* 348.

[7] Steven C. Smith, *The House of the Lord: A Catholic Biblical Theology of God's Temple Presence in the Old and New Testaments* (Steubenville, Ohio: Franciscan University Press, 2017), 352.

[8] See Albert Vanhoye, S.J., "Hebrews," in IntBC, 1769.

[9] Albert Vanhoye, S.J., *Old Testament Priests and the New Priest According to the New Testament*, trans. J. Bernard Orchard, OSB (Massachusetts: St. Bede's Publications, 1986), 50.

[10] Ole Jakob Filtvedt and Martin Wessbrandt, "Exploring the High Priesthood of Jesus in Early Christian Sources," *ZNW* 106, 1 (2015): 100.

theological parlance to call what happened at Calvary as *the sacrifice*,[11] and to see Jesus as *the priest, the victim,* and *the altar* of sacrifice? More than that, the two millennia history of the Church is a witness to the significant growth and development of the theology of the Holy Mass as the definitive sacrifice[12] – the sacramental expression of the Paschal Mystery;[13] and Jesus – the eternal high priest.

How did this happen? These theological milestones were achieved, thanks to a very significant book in the NT, *The Letter to the Hebrews* (Heb). This *magnum opus* is the only book in the NT that explicitly gives to Christ the titles priest,[14] and high priest,[15] and considers his Paschal Mystery as the definitive fulfillment, zenith, and ending of the sacrifices in the OT,[16] and makes significant allusions to the

---

[11] See CCC, nos. 613-614. As will be explained later, there is a need for some caution in solely equating Jesus' sacrifice to His passion and death at Calvary. If death does not essentially constitute a sacrifice in the biblical sense of the word, then it is theologically shortsighted to consider the event that took place at Calvary as the sole constituent of Christ's sacrifice.

[12] See Lawrence Feingold, *The Eucharist: Mystery of Presence, Sacrifice, and Communion* (Steubenville, Ohio: Emmaus Academic, 2018), 323-373.

[13] See Donald Wuerl and Mike Aquilina, *The Mass: The Glory, the Mystery, the Tradition* (New York: Doubleday, 2011), 27-33.

[14] See Jean Galot, S.J., *Theology of the Priesthood*, trans. Roger Balducelli, O.S.F.S. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1985), 63.

[15] See Albert Vanhoye, S.J., *Structure and Message of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, trans. James Swetnam, S.J. (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1989), 1. See also Albert Vanhoye, S.J., *A Different Priest: The Epistle to the Hebrews*, trans. Leo Arnold, S.J. (Miami, Florida: Convivium Press, 2011), 28. See also Ross E. Winkle, "You Are What You Wear:" The Dress and Identity of Jesus as High Priest in John's Apocalypse," in *SCAEJC*, 327. See also Gerald O'Collins and Michael Keenan Jones, *Jesus Our Priest: A Christian Approach to the Priesthood of Christ* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 45.

[16] See Ernst Niermann, "Priest," ET_{CSM}, 1281.

priestly sacrifice on the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*).[17] This is quite significant since the Day of Atonement was Israel's "definitive ritual that both *cleansed* and *reconsecrated* (made holy) the priests, the people, and the sanctuary."[18] John Bergsma and Brant Pitre described the Day of Atonement in this manner, "It is the most solemn day of the Israelite liturgical calendar." [19]

The theological creativity and innovation of the *Author of the Letter to the Hebrews* (Auct Heb[20]) to present Christ, not a *rupture* but a *continuity* and *fulfillment* of the OT cult and priesthood contributed to a deeper understanding of the person and role of Jesus in salvation history. According to Kenneth Baker, S.J., "Hebrews is a theological interpretation of the Old Testament… [it] is primarily a treatise on Christology, for Christ is the heart and center of the book."[21] Wilfrid J. Harrington, O.P. is in total agreement with Baker's description of Heb, by saying that it is a "Christocentric" book in the most literal sense.[22] Judith Hoch Wray explains that Heb is a literary masterpiece. It is a book that possesses a "carefully structured

---

[17] "There is no explicit reference to the Day of Atonement in the NT. However, the annual atonement rituals are certainly the presumed background of Heb 9:6-12" (Kathleen S. Nash, "Day of Atonement," in *CPDBT*, 62).

[18] CIBOT, 215. See also Roch A. Kereszty, OCist, *Wedding Feast of the Lamb: Eucharistic Theology from a Historical, Biblical and Systematic Perspective* (Mundelein, Illinois: Hillenbrand Books, 2004), 10.

[19] *CIBOT*, 215.

[20] *Auctor Epistolae ad Hebraeos.*

[21] Kenneth Baker, S.J., *Inside the Bible: An Introduction to Each Book of the Bible* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1998), 333.

[22] See Wilfrid J. Harrington, O.P., *Record of the Fulfillment: The New Testament* (Chicago, Illinois: The Priory Press, 1965), 337.

rhetoric."[23] Albert Vanhoye, S.J. described Heb as one of the most original and distinct writings of the NT.[24] For Daniel J. Harrington, S.J., Heb "is arguably the greatest Christian sermon ever preached or written."[25] Furthermore, Jean Galot, S.J. explains the theological significance of Heb by pointing out how this NT book stressed the uniqueness of Christ's priesthood and His sacrifice which secures once and for all the remission of sins of mankind.[26] Because of this weighty and lapidary theological contribution, the Auct Heb, according to Barnabas Lindars, S.S.F., "ranks with Paul and the Fourth Evangelist as one of the three great theologians of the New Testament."[27] Finally, for Daniel J. Harrington, S.J., the Auct Heb "deserves to be revered as the patron saint of preachers" because of Heb's "rhetorical and theological brilliance."[28]

1.2. Statement of the Problem

The present study is entitled, "The New Priest: A Biblical Theology of Christ's Priesthood and His Once-For-All Sacrifice in Heb 9:1-10:22 in the Context of the Day of Atonement." The main title "The New Priest" is inspired and borrowed from the title of a book written by Albert Vanhoye, S.J., *Old Testament Priests and the New Priest According to the New Testament*. In the state of investigation below, it will be shown that there is a gap or lacuna that needs to be

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[23] Judith Hoch Wray, *Rest as a Theological Metaphor in the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Gospel of Truth: Early Christian Homiletics of Rest* (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1998), 52.

[24] See Albert Vanhoye, S.J., *Situation du Christ: Hébreux 1 – 2* (Paris: Les Éditions Du Cerf, 1969), 24.

[25] Daniel J. Harrington, S.J., "The Letter to the Hebrews," in *NCBC*, 1416.

[26] See Galot, *Theology of the Priesthood*, 65.

[27] Barnabas Lindars, S.S.F., *The Theology of the Letter to the Hebrews* (Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 1.

[28] Harrington, "Hebrews," 1416.

addressed regarding the lack of studies or research on the contextual utility of the Day of Atonement allusions in Heb to better explain why the priesthood of Christ is *new,* and how His sacrifice, in the language of the Auct Heb is ἐφάπαξ – *once-for-all*. What is meant by "allusions" here is the implied, implicit or indirect reference of the Auct Heb to the Day of Atonement ritual in his Christological and soteriological arguments. "Context" here is construed as the theological, historical, cultural, and rhetorical background which aids to a better understanding and assessment of the sacred text. It is quite evident that the Auct Heb did not explicitly mention the term, "the Day of Atonement" in his work. יוֹם כִּפּוּר[29] is translated in Greek as (ἡ) ἡμέρα (τοῦ) ἐξιλασμοῦ[30] (Lev 23:27, 28, LXX).[31] The term (ἡ) ἡμέρα (τοῦ) ἐξιλασμοῦ is nowhere to be found in the NT. But allusions to it are found in the NT. Recent studies have shown that some of the NT writers' theology was shaped and influenced by the Day of Atonement.[32]

The present study would attempt to answer the following queries concerning the topic:

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[29] *Yom kippur*.

[30] *hē hēmera tou exilasmou*.

[31] See *The Septuagint with Apocrypha*, 160. See also Daniel Stökl Ben Ezra, *The Impact of Yom Kippur on Early Christianity: The Day of Atonement from Second Temple Judaism to the Fifth Century* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 15.

[32] See Hans M. Moscicke, *Goat for Yahweh, Goat for Azazel: The Impact of Yom Kippur on the Gospels* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books/Fortress Academic, 2021). See also André Reis, *Echoes of the Most Holy: The Day of Atonement in the Book of Revelation* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2022).

1. What makes the priesthood (ἱερωσύνη[33]) of Christ and His once-for-all (ἐφάπαξ) sacrifice *new vis-à-vis* the OT priesthood (Λευιτική ἱερωσύνη[34]) and sacrifices (πολλάκις[35])[36]?

2. How may the context of Yom Kippur (Page 7, (יוֹם כִּפּוּר) help readers of the NT better understand Christ's new priesthood and His once-for-all sacrifice in Heb 9:1-10:22?

3. What Yom Kippuric high-priestly actions of Jesus contained in Heb 9:1-10:22 might support the notion that the Day of Atonement ritual serves as the background for a more substantial and perceptive interpretation of the passage, resulting in a biblical theology of Christ's priesthood and His sacrifice?

4. What is the apt and the correct way to understand the once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus? Is it simply synonymous to His Passion and Death on Good Friday as often construed by many people? Or does it have a wider scope, i.e., His Paschal Mystery (Jesus' Passion, Death, Resurrection, Ascension, and Enthronement in heaven)?

The main aim of this study is to explain the novelty of Christ's priesthood and the meaning of His once-for-all sacrifice as contained in Heb 9:1-10:22 *vis-à-vis* the priesthood and sacrifices of the Old Covenant. Furthermore, this study aims to expose that the Day of Atonement ritual is not only possible, but *the* fitting and plausible contextual key to better understand and explain the truth that Christ

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[33] *hierōsynē*.

[34] *Leuitikē hierōsynē*.

[35] *pollakis*.

[36] πολλάκις is a Greek adverb which means "many times, again and again, often, constantly." It expresses the fact how the sacrifices of the OT were repeated again and again in comparison to the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ.

is the new and definitive high priest who offered His once-for-all sacrifice for the salvation of humanity.

It is "A Biblical Theology of Christ's Priesthood and His Once-For-All Sacrifice," because it aims, borrowing the words of Wilfrid J. Harrington, O.P., "to bear witness to God."[37] It is a theology based on the sacred texts. As Harrington further explains, "This theology bears the character of witness because it is 'confessional,' a theology of recital in which the men and women of the Bible confess their faith in God's redemptive acts."[38] For the Auct Heb, this witnessing is shown by arguing for Christ's priesthood and His sacrifice as the way to salvation not by excluding the historical and theological importance of the OT cult and priesthood, but by actually evaluating and judging them in light of the Christ event.[39]

1.3. Scope and Limitation

This study is an undertaking towards a biblical theology of Christ's priesthood and His once-for-all sacrifice in Heb 9:1-10:22 in the context of the Day of Atonement. Four important things have to be noted here regarding this study:

1. This work is first and foremost a study on a NT book, the Letter to the Hebrews.

2. This work's main concern is to explain and elucidate the novelty of Christ's priesthood and His once-for-all sacrifice as presented in Heb 9:1-10:22 in the context of the Day of Atonement.

3. And since the Day of Atonement can only be properly and correctly understood by studying first the ancient cult and

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[37] Wilfrid J. Harrington, O.P., *The Path of Biblical Theology* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1973), 1.

[38] Harrington, *The Path*, 2.

[39] See Vanhoye, *Structure and Message*, 16.

priesthood, it is therefore necessary for this research not to bypass such topics that are central in the OT and are essential to the theological arguments of Heb.

4. For the following reasons, the author of this study primarily relied on the biblical commentary of these three Church Fathers and of one medieval theologian:

    a. Origen of Alexandria (185 – 253). His work, *In Leviticum Homiliae* is used in this study because of its significant allegorical commentary on Leviticus 16, the OT narrative on the Day of Atonement.

    b. St. John Chrysostom (347 – 407). Of all the Church Fathers, it was Chrysostom who wrote an extensive commentary on Heb, *Enarratio in Ep. Ad Hebraeos.*

    c. St. Augustine of Hippo (354 – 430). His theological exegesis of the Bible exemplifies the interpretative approaches of the Church Fathers, and his writings continue to exert considerable impact on contemporary Christian theology.

    d. St. Thomas Aquinas (1225 – 1274). His *Super Epistolam B. Pauli ad Hebraeos Lectura* is among the most notable commentaries on Heb from the medieval era. The author of this study deemed him as a suitable representative of the medieval biblical commentators.

As a further clarification, this study will not deal with the biblical theology of the ministerial priesthood of the ordained ministers[40] and the royal/common priesthood of the lay faithful.[41] Though these are important themes that are contained in Scripture, and in varied ways essentially connected with the present work, these topics are

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[40] See Alan Richardson, *An Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1958), 325-329.

[41] See Richardson, *Theology of the New Testament*, 295-297.

beyond the scope and limitation of this study. In recent years, a lot of studies on the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial priesthood were published by contemporary Bible scholars and systematic theologians like the ones written by Raymond E. Brown, S.S.,[42] Matthew Levering,[43] Thomas J. Lane,[44] John Bergsma,[45] Anthony Giambrone, O.P.,[46] the two volume *A Fundamental Theology of the Priesthood* edited by Cardinal Marc Ouellet,[47] and a recently published one by Benedict XVI.[48] Assiduous students interested in exploring these topics are advised to consult these pieces of literature about them. Moreover, it is not part of the scope of this research to examine and study the passages in the NT where Christ's priesthood and His sacrifice are implicitly mentioned.[49]

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[42] See Raymond E. Brown, S.S., *Priest and Bishop: Biblical Reflections* (New York: Paulist Press, 1970).

[43] See Matthew Levering, *Christ and the Catholic Priesthood: Ecclesial Hierarchy and the Pattern of the Trinity* (Chicago: Hillenbrand Books, 2010).

[44] See Thomas J. Lane, *The Catholic Priesthood: Biblical Foundations* (Steubenville, Ohio: Emmaus Road Publishing, 2016).

[45] See JOTRP.

[46] See Anthony Giambrone, O.P., *The Bible and the Priesthood: Priestly Participation in the One Sacrifice for Sins* (Michigan: Baker Academics, 2022).

[47] See FTP[1] and FTP[2]

[48] See Benedict XVI, "The Catholic Priesthood," in Benedict XVI, *What is Christianity? The Last Writings*, ed. Elio Guerriero and Georg Gänswein, trans. Michael J. Miller (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2023), 122-154.

[49] There are several passages in the NT, outside Heb that implicitly mention Christ's priesthood and His sacrifice: see Matt 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:14-23; John 17; 19:23-24; Rom 3:25; 1 Cor 11:23-26; 1 John 4:10; Rev 1:13.

1.4. Significance of the Study

The significance of this study will be exhibited in two ways: first, by means of the *status quaestionis* or state of investigation, wherein studies or research on Heb will be presented in an orderly manner to show that there is no existing study yet on the pericope of Heb 9:1-10:22 that explores how the context of the Day of Atonement aids the reader or the interpreter in perceiving the high priesthood of Christ and His once-for-all sacrifice in the central theological argumentation of the Auct Heb. Second, the importance and relevance of studying Heb in general will be discussed, along with how the current work is a humble contribution to the ongoing resurgence of Heb studies and research.

1.4.1. *Status Quaestionis*

The use of the Day of Atonement allusions in the theological arguments of the Auct Heb is a fact recognized by biblical scholars.[50] But whether it is of primary or secondary importance is still an ongoing debate among experts. In this state of investigation, those scholars that support the *primary* importance of the OT Day of

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[50] See Donald Guthrie, *The Letter to the Hebrews: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan): William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983), 182-183. See also F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), 205-218. See also Ray C. Stedman, *Hebrews* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 94-96. See also David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance, eds., *Calvin's Commentaries: The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews and The First and Second Epistles of St. Peter*, trans. William B. Johnston (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994), 117; 119-120. See also Victor C. Pfitzner, *Hebrews* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997), 125-127. See also Luke Timothy Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 222-223. Alan C. Mitchell, *Hebrews*, Sacra Pagina, vol. 2, ed. Daniel J. Harrington, S.J. (Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2009), 176; 179-180. See also Vanhoye, *A Different Priest*, 266. See also Gareth Lee Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012), 380-403. See also Healy, *Hebrews* (2016), 168-169; 174-177; 182.

Atonement allusions, i.e., consider it as a principal contextual key to better understand the theological arguments of the Auct Heb will be first presented. Then, it will be followed by those scholars who say that it is only of *secondary* or of lesser importance, or there are other OT backgrounds or ancient philosophical systems used predominantly in Heb instead of the Day of Atonement. The arguments will be presented based on the year of publication of the books/articles, i.e., from the latest to the oldest one.

Richard J. Barry IV presents a new Christian Yom Kippur Soteriology based on the Bible and the works of two contemporary theologians in his doctoral dissertation, *Jewish Temple Theology and the Mystery of the Cross: Atonement and the Two Goats of Yom Kippur* (2024). This work is published as a monograph by the Catholic University of America Press. The primary thesis of his entire work is that the single atoning sacrifice of the incarnate Christ on the cross fulfills the movement of the two goats of the Day of Atonement, namely, the goat for YHWH and the goat for Azazel.[51] "Jesus Christ, in his single passion, fulfills the work of both goats."[52] Christ, dying on the cross, is the goat for YHWH, the sin/purification offering that guarantees humanity's communion with God through the offering and sprinkling of its blood in the Holy of Holies. He developed the said theological concept by carefully examining and interpreting the biblical passages pertaining to the Day of Atonement, and by using the YHWH-goat soteriology found in the writings of David Bentley Hart.[53] Christ is, at the same time, the goat for Azazel, the sin-bearing vehicle led away to the wilderness so that the community may be freed from the power of sin and its deadly consequences. He developed this latter concept, again by using the same biblical hermeneutic, and by utilizing the Azazel-goat soteriology found in the writings of Hans

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[51] See Richard J. Barry IV, *Jewish Temple Theology and the Mystery of the Cross: Atonement and the Two Goats of Yom Kippur* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2024), 325.

[52] Barry, *Jewish Temple Theology*, 345.

[53] See Barry, *Jewish Temple Theology*, 265-289.

Urs von Balthasar.[54] For Barry, a Christian Soteriology which is based on the context of the Day of Atonement must be very careful not to confuse the roles of the two goats of Yom Kippur. When the two goats and their roles are not properly identified, "they inevitably generate a mix of positive affirmations and unfortunate confusions."[55]

In chapter eight of his book, in a section entitled, "The Book of Hebrews," Barry made an important claim that the Day of Atonement ritual is a primary imagery used in the theological arguments of the Auct Heb especially in Heb 9-10:

> The New Testament text with the most explicit and sustained use of priestly temple imagery generally, and Yom Kippur imagery specifically, is the ninth and tenth chapters of the book of Hebrews. These chapters focus on how Christ fulfills the pattern set by the high priest's YHWH-goat offering on the Day of Atonement. From the start, one notices that the author of Hebrews, even as he builds his argument for the perfection of Christ's sacrifice, nevertheless affirms the value *and* effectiveness of the ancient Jewish cult.[56]

David M. Moffitt, in his article, *Jesus as Interceding High Priest and Sacrifice in Hebrews: A Response to Nicholas Moore* (2020), articulates his disagreement with Nicholas J. Moore[57] regarding the extent to which the Day of Atonement is determinative for the Auct Heb's understanding of the high-priestly ministry of Jesus. He explains in this article why he thinks that the Day of Atonement "is by far

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[54] See Barry, *Jewish Temple Theology*, 291-328.

[55] Barry, *Jewish Temple Theology*, 368.

[56] Barry, *Jewish Temple Theology*, 232.

[57] David Moffitt is responding to an article written by Nicholas J. Moore, "Sacrifice, Session and Intercession: The End of Christ's Offering in Hebrews," *JSNT* 42, 2 (2020): 521-541, see below.

the most dominant and pervasive cultic motif for the author[58] as he reflects on Jesus' role and work in the heavenly holy of holies."[59] When Moore argues that Jesus' priestly intercession in Hebrews was more based on the *Tāmīd*,[60] than on the Day of Atonement, Moffitt makes a counter-argument:

> Even if Moore is correct that Hebrews' claim that Jesus intercedes for his people is an innovation based on the *Tāmīd*, this innovation would continue to be heavily marked in Hebrews by the Day of Atonement precisely because of who Jesus is and where Jesus ministers. Jesus is the high priest (and sacrifice) in the heavenly holy of holies. There he now performs his high-priestly ministry (Heb 8:1-4). It seems to me almost inconceivable that the collocation of this office (high priest) and ministry in this space (the holy of holies) would not evoke the Day of Atonement for Second Temple Jews.[61]

Mary Healy in her commentary on Heb (2016) argues that Heb 9-10 presents "God's answer to the problem of sin."[62] "Hebrew 9 shows, first, why those rites[63] could never fully resolve the problem of sin (9:1-10). It then explains how Christ's blood, in contrast, is totally efficacious (9:11-14); how the covenant has been renewed and fulfilled (9:15-22); and how Christ's work of atonement has

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[58] Referring to the Auct Heb.

[59] David M. Moffitt, "Jesus as Interceding High Priest and Sacrifice in Hebrews: A Response to Nicholas Moore," *JSNT* 42, 4 (2020): 546.

[60] *Tāmīd* is "the regular daily offerings. We know that the high priest was involved in this service and that when he served in this way he wore the ephod and breast piece, bearing the names of Israel as a memorial before the Lord" (Nicholas J. Moore, "Sacrifice, Session and Intercession," 534).

[61] Moffitt, "Jesus as Interceding High Priest," 549.

[62] Healy, *Hebrews,* 161.

[63] Referring to the priestly cult and rites of the Old Covenant.

been accomplished in the true, heavenly sanctuary (9:23-28)."[64] In Heb 10 especially in verses 1-18, "the main theological argument of Hebrews comes to its conclusion:"[65] The Old Covenant is surpassed and fulfilled by Christ's work of redemption i.e. His priesthood and His once-for-all sacrifice.[66]

R. B. Jamieson, in his article, *Hebrews 9.23: Cult Inauguration, Yom Kippur and the Cleansing of the Heavenly Tabernacle* (2016), underscores the decisive significance of the Day of Atonement in the theological argument of the Auct Heb especially in forwarding the argument that the heavenly sanctuary, just like the earthly one, needed cleansing. He explains that there are two features of Heb 9:23-26 that can only be understood if they are seen in the context of the Day of Atonement. "First, 9:23 itself already invokes Yom Kippur with its assertion that God's tabernacle – in this case, the heavenly one – required cleansing by sacrifice."[67] "Second, the two contrasts of 9:24 and 9:25-26 elaborate two senses in which Christ's sacrifice is 'better' than those of the earthly cult, and these contrasts draw heavily on Yom Kippur."[68] He concluded his article by saying that one has to believe that the heavenly tabernacle was in need of cleansing from defilement because "it agrees and advances the letter's central hortatory motif."[69]

Fleming Rutledge in her discussion on "The Theme of Sacrifice in the Letter to the Hebrews" (2015) explains that the role assigned

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[64] Healy, *Hebrews*, 161-162.

[65] Healy, *Hebrews*,192.

[66] See Healy, *Hebrews,* 192.

[67] R. B. Jamieson, "Hebrews 9.23: Cult Inauguration, Yom Kippur and the Cleansing of the Heavenly Tabernacle," *NTS* 62 (2016): 577.

[68] Jamieson, "Hebrews 9.23," 578.

[69] Jamieson, "Hebrews 9.23," 587.

to Christ by the Auct Heb is that of the high priest[70] and "the death of Christ is identified as a sacrifice squarely in the line of the Old Testament sacrifices."[71] By way of *contrast*, the Auct Heb was able to show the superiority of Christ's priesthood and His sacrifice with those of the OT.[72] Since Christ, the high priest who offered the sacrifice is the Son of God, then his action "has dramatically altered our situation before God; there is now no barrier (curtain) between us and him, since Jesus himself is our High Priest."[73]

David M. Moffitt, in his doctoral dissertation, *Atonement and the Logic of Resurrection in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (2011), surveys the different views of scholars on the presence of Jesus' resurrection in Heb.[74] Amid these scholars' disagreements, Moffitt identified one point of unanimity that gives a primary rationale on their writings, i.e., the Auct Heb's "portrayal of Jesus as the great high priest intends to identify how it is that Jesus' death on the cross functions as *the* act of sacrifice that ultimately atones for sin, the resurrection of Jesus, as a discrete event, is secondary or even unnecessary."[75] The primary thesis of Moffitt is to contradict this common consensus among scholars that the Resurrection of Jesus is only of secondary importance in Heb. He argues that "the resurrection of Jesus is *the* event that qualifies him

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[70] See Fleming Rutledge, *The Crucifixion: Understanding the Death of Jesus Christ* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2015), 251.

[71] Rutledge, *The Crucifixion*, 251.

[72] See Rutledge, *The Crucifixion,* 251-252.

[73] Rutledge, *The Crucifixion,* 252.

[74] See David M. Moffitt, *Atonement and the Logic of Resurrection in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2011), 3-40.

[75] Moffitt, *Atonement and the Logic of Resurrection*, 41, emphasis in the original.

to become the high priest he now is."[76] Instead of simply identifying Jesus' act of sacrifice to His crucifixion, a careful rereading of Heb proves otherwise, i.e., His Passion, Death, Resurrection, Ascension and Enthronement at God's right hand are the ones that give a full scope or depiction of His sacrifice. Furthermore, Moffitt explains that the context of the Day of Atonement in Heb is often used by scholars to simply explain the crucifixion of Jesus. They argue that the Auct Heb

> maps the Yom Kippur's two great moments – the slaughter of the victim and the presentation of its blood in the holy of holies – on to the two great Christological foci of the Son's humiliation (epitomized by his death) and exaltation (epitomized by his enthronement in heaven). As the great high priest, Jesus is both the sacrificial victim and the high-priestly officiant when he dies on the cross.[77]

Moffitt argues that this incorrect view of these experts that Jesus' sacrifice consists only of His death and exaltation is coming from a flawed analysis that the OT sacrifice is synonymous to slaughter and death.[78] But when this erroneous view is corrected, and sacrifice is understood based on what the OT really says about it, the logic of Jesus' resurrection is clearly perceived in the narratives of Heb. If sacrifice is an offering of life to God, an expression of a person's total self-oblation to God, then Jesus' sacrifice cannot simply be identified with His death. Jesus came to possess an indestructible life after the crucifixion, i.e., in His resurrection from the dead. Therefore this indestructible life is what Jesus "brings into God's presence and offers as his sacrifice."[79]

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[76] Moffitt, *Atonement and the Logic of Resurrection*, 43, emphasis in the original.

[77] Moffitt, *Atonement and the Logic of Resurrection*, 215.

[78] See Moffitt, *Atonement and the Logic of Resurrection*, 216.

[79] Moffitt, *Atonement and the Logic of Resurrection*, 218.

Hanno Langenhoven, Eliska Nortje, Annette Potgieter and Yolande Steenkamp, in their article, *The Day of Atonement as a Hermeneutical Key to the Understanding of Christology in Hebrews* (2011), argue that Heb's "Christology acts out a new, supreme story of atonement."[80] They "propose that references to the Day of Atonement offer an interpreted religious and liturgical space for Christ to function as the superior High Priest."[81] They argue that the Auct Heb employs the Middle Platonic worldview to make a contrast between the superiority of Christ's sacrifice to that of the Levitical system especially in the rite of the Day of Atonement.[82]

David A. Ackerman, in his article, *The High Priesthood of Jesus and the Sanctification of Believers in Hebrews 7 – 10* (2010), highlights the importance of the Day of Atonement motif in Heb. He explains that the Auct Heb "further explains the 'full salvation' offered through Jesus, the great high priest, by interpreting several key components of the first covenant, especially the Day of Atonement described in Leviticus 16."[83] Through the context of the Day of Atonement, the Auct Heb was able to show that "the priestly ministry of Jesus solved the problem of sin once and for all. His ministry was similar in purpose to the earthly priests, to open the way to God, but where they could only partially and temporarily succeed by making annual atonement for their sins and the sins of the people, Jesus succeeded completely and eternally."[84]

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[80] Hanno Langenhoven, Eliska Nortje, Annette Potgieter and Yolande Steenkamp, "The Day of Atonement as a Hermeneutical Key to the Understanding of Christology in Hebrews," *JECH* vol. 1, 1 (2011): 85.

[81] Langenhoven, et al., "The Day of Atonement as a Hermeneutical Key," 93.

[82] Langenhoven, et al., "The Day of Atonement as a Hermeneutical Key," 92.

[83] David A. Ackerman, "The High Priesthood of Jesus and the Sanctification of Believers in Hebrews 7-10," *WTJ* 45 (Spring 2010): 241.

[84] Ackerman, "The High Priesthood of Jesus," 242.

Raymond E. Brown, in his book, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (2009), states that the Auct Heb

> presents a prolonged comparison between Jesus' death and the ritual of the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) carried out in the transportable sacred edifice of Israel's desert wanderings, the Tabernacle or Tent with its divisions, curtains, and altars.[85]

Brown gives primary importance to the comparison made in Heb between the cultic rite in the OT Day of Atonement and Jesus' Paschal Mystery.

Christian Eberhart, in his article, *Characteristics of Sacrificial Metaphors in Hebrews* (2005), details the OT background of the sacrificial metaphors of Heb to show its development and characteristics.[86] According to him, the imagery of the Day of Atonement in Heb 9:1-10 answers the question on how the self-sacrifice of Christ accomplished humanity's salvation;[87] while in Heb 9:12 what is being emphasized is "through his death, Christ left the earth in order to serve as high priest in the heavenly sanctuary,"[88] and the effect of his sacrifice for the community is explained in Heb 10:19, 22, and that is for humanity to worthily "approach" God through his "blood" that purifies.[89] "Christ's sacrifice grants this purity and therefore guarantees eternal access to God for humans."[90]

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[85] Raymond E. Brown, S.S., *An Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: Doubleday, 2009), 687-688.

[86] See Christian A. Eberhart, "Characteristics of Sacrificial Metaphors in Hebrews," in *Hebrews: Contemporary Methods – New Insights*, ed. Gabriella Gelardini with a foreword by Harold W. Attridge (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 55-64.

[87] See Eberhart, "Metaphors in Hebrews," 57.

[88] Eberhart, "Metaphors in Hebrews," 62.

[89] See Eberhart, "Metaphors in Hebrews," 62.

[90] Eberhart, "Metaphors in Hebrews," 62.

The composite Christological image created by Heb is Jesus (the high priest and His self-sacrifice) the only way for Christians to approach the heavenly sanctuary, to approach God.[91]

Daniel Stökl Ben Ezra, in his book, *The Impact of Yom Kippur on Early Christianity* (2003), stated that Heb described Jesus as a high priest who performed five actions that can be associated with the Day of Atonement. The paragraph where he made mention of these five acts is worth quoting in full:

> Hebrews describes this high priest as performing five acts that can be associated with Yom Kippur: (1) victory over the forces of evil, (2) the confession, (3) the one-time atoning and purifying offering of his own blood and its sprinkling, (4) the entry into the heavenly holy of holies and (5) the permanent intercession for his followers. Acts 3 and 4 appear in all commentaries as high-priestly works, and acts 2 and 5 in some, and act 1 is my addition.[92]

These five actions of Jesus as described by Ben Ezra became the starting point for the author of this study to examine carefully the pericope of Heb 9:1-10:22 for the high probability that these high priestly actions are all contained in the said pericope. This is essentially the difference between the present study and that of Ben Ezra. For him, the five high priestly actions associated with Yom Kippur in Heb do not necessarily need to be found exclusively in the pericope of Heb 9:1-10:22. Such actions can be discerned in the different parts of Heb.[93] This is where the uniqueness and the novelty of the present study is being exhibited, since it argues that all of the five high priestly actions mentioned by Ben Ezra can all be found in the pericope of Heb 9:1-10:22, but it does not claim that these actions cannot also be found in the other parts of Heb. This research argues that a careful study and interpretation of the said pericope will show that it is a

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[91] See Eberhart, "Metaphors in Hebrews," 63-64.

[92] Ben Ezra, *The Impact of Yom Kippur*, 185.

[93] Ben Ezra, *The Impact of Yom Kippur*, 185-190.

passage that truly contains or conveys in a subtle way all of the five Yom Kippuric high priestly actions of Jesus.

Norman H. Young, in his article, *The Day of Dedication or the Day of Atonement? The Old Testament Background to Hebrews 6:19-20 Revisited* (2002), argues against the position of Richard M. Davidson that the primary background for the theological arguments of the Auct Heb is not the Day of Atonement but the Day of Dedication of the Tabernacle (Exod 40).[94] He explains that Heb "uses the OT language of the Day of Atonement and other sacrifices as a means of conveying a profound theology about the achievement of the death of Jesus."[95] He pointed out that Davidson's mistake of asserting that the Day of Dedication is the primary background of Heb is due to his treatment of Heb "as though it were a literalistic commentary on the OT types."[96] Moreover, Young explains that the inconsistency of Davidson in his arguments against the Day of Atonement is evident in the way he "accepts the presence of the Day of Atonement imagery in Heb 9:7, 25, but rejects it in 9:11-12 despite the nearly identical language used in all three texts, allowing for the contrast between the earthly high priest and Jesus."[97]

Marie E. Isaacs, in her article, *Priesthood and the Epistle to the Hebrews* (1997), argues that the principal cultic model used in Heb is the ceremony of the Day of Atonement. She explains that the Auct Heb did not see Christ in the context of the Yom Kippur as the new 'scapegoat,' rather as the goat for YHWH, the goat without blemish

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[94] See Norman H. Young, "The Day of Dedication or the Day of Atonement? The Old Testament Background to Hebrews 6:19-20 Revisited," *AUSS* vol. 40, no. 1 (Spring 2002): 61-62.

[95] Young, "The Day of Dedication or the Day of Atonement?" 68.

[96] Young, "The Day of Dedication or the Day of Atonement?" 68.

[97] Young, "The Day of Dedication or the Day of Atonement?" 64.

that was offered as an expiatory sacrifice.[98] She asserts that Heb's focus is primarily the role of the high priest on the Day of Atonement *vis-à-vis* Christ's priesthood and His sacrifice:

> It is not to priests in general, but to ancient Judaism's high priest in particular, and even more particularly, to his part in the Day of Atonement ritual, that our author turns his thought.[99]

She further explains that the Auct Heb cannot resist an appeal to the Day of Atonement in his concluding exhortation to holiness that "Christians do indeed have a sacrifice; one which like that offered on the Day of Atonement alone, is consumed neither by priest nor people, nor burned on the altar of sacrifice, but disposed of 'outside the camp' (Heb 13:10-12; See Lev. 16:27)."[100]

N.T. Wright, in his discussion, "The Narrative World of the Letter to the Hebrews" (1992), emphasized the importance of correctly understanding the literary structure of Heb. He pointed out that the apparent disconnection between the third part (8 – 10) of Heb which is the letter's main argument on Christ's priesthood and sacrifice, and the fourth part (11 –12) which is a list of heroes from Abel to the Christian martyrs that culminates on Jesus, "the leader and fulfiller of the faith" (Heb 12:2) results from a lack of understanding of the literary structure of Heb that always points to its unifying theme – *Christ, high priest*. Wright argues that there is a parallel between the fourth part of Heb and the climactic final section of the book of Sirach.[101] In Sir 44:1-50:21, there is "the list of heroes that brings the history of the world, and of Israel, to a climax with the worship of

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[98] Marie E. Isaacs, "Priesthood and the Epistle to the Hebrews," *Heythrop Journal* 38 (1997): 54.

[99] Isaacs, "Priesthood and the Epistle to the Hebrews," 55.

[100] Isaacs, "Priesthood and the Epistle to the Hebrews," 55.

[101] See N.T. Wright, *Christian Origins and the Question of God*, vol. 1, The New Testament and the People of God (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 409-410.

YHWH in the Jerusalem Temple, especially the spectacular ministry of the high priest, Simon ben Onias."[102] When Heb 11 is read against the background of Sir 44:1-50:21,[103] one realizes that it "is designed to make the same point, by means of its clear subversion of the story of Ben-Sirach 44-50. Instead of the present high priest in the Temple being the point towards which all Israel's history was tending, it is Jesus, the true High Priest."[104]

Albert Vanhoye, S.J., the foremost biblical expert on Heb, in his book *Structure and Message of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (1989), explains that a careful study of the literary structure of Heb allows the reader to enter into the very heart of its message.[105] He further explains that "each part receives its precise meaning only when it is situated in its place in the whole."[106] Each part points to the keystone of the entire structure of the letter which is the name of *Christ, high priest*.[107] What the Auct Heb did to successfully explain this keystone or unifying theme was to make a "double effort of reflection, on the ancient cult and on Christ" which he did not start from scratch but something which was already present "in the gospel catechesis, in the apostolic preaching, and in the life of the Christian community." All of these elements prepared the way for his masterly exposition on Christ's priesthood and His sacrifice.[108]

Walter Edward Brooks, in his article, *The Perpetuity of Christ's Sacrifice in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (1970), argues that in order

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[102] Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, 409.

[103] See Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 106.

[104] Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, 410.

[105] See Vanhoye, *Structure and Message*, 18.

[106] Vanhoye, *Structure and Message,* 18.

[107] See Vanhoye, *Structure and Message,* 36. See also Vanhoye, *A Different Priest,* 29.

[108] See Vanhoye, *Structure and Message*, 16.

for the Auct Heb to describe accordingly the priestly sacrifice of Christ, he draws an analogy between it and the Day of Atonement.[109] What makes Christ different from the high priest during the Day of Atonement is that He entered the heavenly Holy of Holies not with the blood of sacrificial animals, but with his own blood.[110] "The blood is Christ's ticket of admission into the holy of holies as it was for the priests of the law."[111]

Aelred Cody, in his book, *Heavenly Sanctuary and Liturgy in the Epistle to the Hebrews: The Achievement of Salvation in the Epistle's Perspective* (1960), argues for the primary importance of the OT Day of Atonement allusions in Heb. According to him, upon careful examination of the central section of the third part of Heb (8:1-9:28), one can notice that the Auct Heb is making a *correspondence* or parallelism between Jesus' Passion, Death, Resurrection and Ascension and the ritual of the OT Day of Atonement. He explains that Jesus' Passion and Death correspond to the victim's immolation on the Day of Atonement (Heb 9:13-14),[112] His Ascension to heaven to the entrance of the high priest into the Holy of Holies (9:11-12)[113] and His purification of believers to the purification of the heavenly sanctuary (9:23).[114]

Three key similarities among the aforementioned studies attest to the lack of a study specifically focused on interpreting Heb 9:1–10:22 in the context of the Day of Atonement:

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[109] Walter Edward Brooks, "The Perpetuity of Christ's Sacrifice in the Epistle to the Hebrews," *JBL* vol. 89, no. 2 (June 1970): 208.

[110] Brooks, "The Perpetuity of Christ's Sacrifice," 209.

[111] Brooks, "The Perpetuity of Christ's Sacrifice," 210.

[112] See Aelred Cody, *Heavenly Sanctuary and Liturgy in the Epistle to the Hebrews: The Achievement of Salvation in the Epistle's Perspective* (St. Meinrad, Indiana: Grail Publications, 1960), 170-172.

[113] See Cody, *Heavenly Sanctuary*, 172-180.

[114] See Cody, *Heavenly Sanctuary*, 180-202.

1. Though these studies share the conviction that the Day of Atonement is a primary context in Heb, none of them have ventured in producing a work or research on Heb 9:1-10:22 wherein this pericope is exclusively and consistently interpreted in the context of the Day of Atonement.

2. The aforementioned authors disagree to what extent the context of the Day of Atonement is influential to the theological arguments of the Auct Heb. In other words, they differ in their scholarly opinion on what passages in Heb were possibly written having the Day of Atonement as their contextual background.

3. None of these studies have ever argued that the pericope of Heb 9:1-10:22 has a consistent narrative on the five Yom Kippuric high-priestly actions of Jesus, i.e. His divine and human actions that can be paralleled with the ritual actions of the OT high priest during the Day of Atonement, hence, actions that logically show that He is both the high priest and the definitive sacrifice of the New Covenant. As shown in the quotation above, Richard J. Barry IV made an important claim that the Day of Atonement ritual is a primary imagery used in the theological arguments of the Auct Heb especially in Heb 9-10, but he never gave a thorough and systematic explanation about this claim. It is quite understandable, since though his dissertation was on the Day of Atonement, it was not all about the context of the Day of Atonement in Heb 9-10.

What follows are the authors who consider the Day of Atonement motif as only secondary or of lesser importance in Heb. In other words, they do not consider the Day of Atonement as a primary contextual key to the theological arguments of the Auct Heb.

Margaret M. Turek, in chapter 2, entitled "Atonement in the New Testament" of her book, *Atonement: Soundings in Biblical, Trinitarian,*

and Spiritual Theology (2022), explains Christ's ἐφάπαξ[115] sacrifice in Heb without having recourse to the context of the Day of Atonement, instead what she used was Hans Urs von Balthasar's Trinitarian soteriology.[116] The sacrifice of Christ is understood in the biblical context of παράδοσις[117] or *tradere* – "handing over" as developed in the writings of Balthasar.[118] Turek explains that for Balthasar, "the primary sense of the 'handing over' of Jesus applies to the Father."[119] Christ's once-for-all sacrifice is understood in the context of the Father's permissive will to allow His Son to be crucified by sinful men.[120] Hence, the Father has "handed over" the Son once-for-all for the salvation of humanity. Christ's sacrifice must be understood as "both the Father's handing over of the Son and the Son's willingness to be handed over."[121]

Nicholas J. Moore, in his article, *Sacrifice, Session and Intercession: The End of Christ's Offering in Hebrews* (2020), admits the importance of the Yom Kippur rite in the theological arguments of Heb. But he argues that the typology of the Day of Atonement alone did not help to explain in a more meaningful and comprehensive way the conflation of the concepts of offering, session, and intercession in Heb.[122] The high-priestly intercession of Christ is better understood, not so much in the context of the Day of Atonement, but that of

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[115] *ephapax*.

[116] See Margaret M. Turek, *Atonement: Soundings in Biblical, Trinitarian and Spiritual Theology* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2022), 110.

[117] *paradosis*.

[118] See Turek, *Atonement*, 111.

[119] Turek, *Atonement*, 111.

[120] See Turek, *Atonement*, 111.

[121] Turek, *Atonement*, 112.

[122] See Moore, "Sacrifice, Session and Intercession," 535-537.

the *Tāmīd,* the daily burnt offering in the Temple.[123] He concluded his article by explicitly stating the insufficiency of having the Day of Atonement background alone in understanding the arguments of the Auct Heb:

> By incorporating royal enthronement and ongoing high-priestly prayer Hebrews breaks the bounds of Yom Kippur, affirming the Christian tradition that Christ's enthronement inaugurates his present royal-priestly reign, and at the same time transforming Christ's session into the climax and close of his sacrifice.[124]

Félix H. Cortez, in his book, *Within the Veil: The Ascension of the Son in the Letter to the Hebrews* (2020), argues that the Day of Atonement provides only secondary imagery to Jesus' sacrifice.[125] He explains that the expression in Heb 9:12, "the blood of goats and calves" (αἵματος τράγων καὶ μόσχων[126]) does not refer particularly to the sacrifices of the Day of Atonement. He compares this expression with the stipulated sacrificial animals for the Day of Atonement in the LXX version of Leviticus 16.[127] Instead of τράγοι[128] for goats, the term used by the LXX is χίμαροι[129] (Lev 16:5, 7-10). To wit, χίμαροι and μόσχοι[130] (young male goats and calves) are the animals used for the sacrifice of the Day of Atonement, and not τράγοι and

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[123] See Moore, "Sacrifice, Session and Intercession," 534-535.

[124] Moore, "Sacrifice, Session and Intercession," 538.

[125] See Félix H. Cortez, *Within the Veil: The Ascension of the Son in the Letter to the Hebrews* (Dallas: Fontes Press, 2020), 19-21.

[126] *haimatos tragōn kai moschōn*.

[127] See *The Septuagint with Apocrypha: Greek and English*, trans. Sir Lancelot C. L. Brenton (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995), 149-151.

[128] *tragoi*.

[129] *chimaroi*.

[130] *moschoi*.

μόσχοι (goats and calves) (Heb 9:13).[131] He further explains that "the sacrifices of τράγοι and μόσχοι refer to the sacrifices for the inauguration of the Mosaic covenant."[132] With this he concluded, "it seems clear that the references to the sacrificial animals in [Heb] 9:12-14 do not have the intention of comparing Jesus' death to the ritual of the Day of Atonement."[133] Furthermore, he argues that the absence of the "affliction of the soul"[134] and the omission of the Azazel ritual in Heb is also a strong position against the use of the Day of Atonement as a primary imagery in the theological arguments of the Auct Heb.[135] He also notes that the sprinkling of Jesus' blood in heaven does not refer to the Day of Atonement ritual.[136] "Instead, it describes this sprinkling as part of the inauguration of the New Covenant (10:19, 29; 12:24; 13:20; cf. 9:15-23)."[137]

James W. Thompson, in his article, *Ephapax: The One and the Many in Hebrews* (2017), argues that the contextual key to understand the central section of Heb (7:1-10:18) is the philosophical distinction of the one and the many in Middle Platonism – the deity is one and eternal, while reality is many and temporal,[138] and Psalm 110:1, 4, an OT passage used by the Auct Heb as reference to two types of priesthood which are contrasted ontologically as heavenly and earthly.[139] Thompson did not make recourse to the ritual of the Day

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[131] See Cortez, *Within the Veil*, 238-240.

[132] Cortez, *Within the Veil*, 239.

[133] Cortez, *Within the Veil*, 240.

[134] See Cortez, *Within the Veil*,13-14.

[135] See Cortez, *Within the Veil*, 15-17.

[136] See Cortez, *Within the Veil,* 17-19.

[137] Cortez, *Within the Veil,* 17.

[138] See James W. Thompson, "*Ephapax*: The One and the Many in Hebrews." NTS 53 (2017): 579.

[139] See Thompson, "*Ephapax*," 569.

of Atonement in explaining the arguments of the Auct Heb, instead he simply interpreted Heb through the context of Middle Platonism. Even his supposed OT background to the arguments of the Auct Heb, Psalm 110:1, 4, is also interpreted based on the tenets of Middle Platonism. His conclusion of the said study is worth quoting in full:

> Although the author[140] is not as consistent in his appeal to Platonic assumptions as Philo and Plutarch, his arguments is internally coherent in its insistence that the work of the exalted Christ is ἐφάπαξ in contrast to the multiple priests and sacrifices of the physical world. This argument for the finality of the work of Christ, therefore, reflects his reliance on the ontological assumptions that he shared with Middle Platonists. Thus, although he departs from Middle Platonism in his conviction that 'God has spoken' (Heb 1:1) in a specific event, he anticipates the work of others who employ Platonic categories to explain their faith.[141]

Michael Kibbe, in his article, *Is It Finished? When Did It Start? Hebrews, Priesthood, and Atonement in Biblical, Systematic, and Historical Perspective* (2014), explains that the imagery of the Day of Atonement may be primary, "but Hebrews does relate the work of Christ to purification rituals, daily sacrifices, and the covenant inauguration ceremony – sometimes all at the same time."[142] The conflation of allusions to OT sacrifices and rituals is quite evident in Heb. In other words, it is not only referring to the ritual of the Day of Atonement, but to the OT sacrifices in general.[143] Kibbe maintains

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[140] Referring to the Auct Heb.

[141] Thompson, "*Ephapax*," 581.

[142] Michael Kibbe, "Is It Finished? When Did It Start? Hebrews, Priesthood, and Atonement in Biblical, Systematic, and Historical Perspective," *TJTS* 65 (April 2014): 45.

[143] See Kibbe, "Is It Finished?" 42-43.

a firm position that "Hebrews is interested in Jesus in relation to all Levitical priests and not only to the high priest."[144]

In an earlier work entitled, *From the Holy to the Most Holy Place: The Period of Hebrews 9:6-10 and the Day of Atonement as a Metaphor of Transition* (2006), Félix H. Cortez forwarded the same argument that the Day of Atonement is only of secondary importance to the theological argument of the Auct Heb especially on Christ's priesthood and sacrifice. He proposes that the period of Heb 9:6-10 "presents the Day of Atonement *primarily* as a 'parable' of the transition from the 'present' to the coming age and not as a typology for Jesus' sacrifice."[145] For him, the Day of Atonement typology cannot be used for Jesus' sacrifice since the blood ritual of the holiest day in the OT is inconsistent with the events of Christ's once-for-all sacrifice as narrated in Heb.[146]

Richard M. Davidson, in his article, *Christ's Entry "Within the Veil" in Hebrews 6:19-20: The Old Testament Background* (2001), argues that instead of the Day of Atonement, the better OT background for the theological arguments of the Auct Heb is the inauguration of the sanctuary. He explains that the parallelism is not really between Jesus and Aaron, the high priest, but between Jesus and Moses: "In the author's very first reference to Christ Jesus as high priest (Heb 3:1-6), the parallel is drawn between Jesus and Moses in being faithful in/over the house of God (see also 10:20, where the motif of 'High Priest over the house of God' is continued). In Heb 9, again the work of Jesus the high priest is compared with the (priestly) actions of Moses (offering sacrifices and manipulating the blood) in inaugurating the sanctuary

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[144] Kibbe, "Is It Finished?" 43.

[145] Félix H. Cortez, "From the Holy to the Most Holy Place: The Period of Hebrews 9:6-10 and the Day of Atonement as a Metaphor of Transition," *JBL* 125 (2006): 547.

[146] See Cortez, "From the Holy to the Most Holy Place," 547.

(vv. 16-24)."[147] He further explains that "on two occasions in the OT, there was an entry 'within the veil' of the Most Holy Place as well as the Holy Place: the Day of Atonement service and the inauguration of the sanctuary. A comparison with the other three sanctuary 'entering' passages of Hebrews provides a consistent picture of the inauguration of the earthly sanctuary as the background OT event-complex, and not the Day of Atonement as commonly assumed."[148]

William G. Johnsson, in his article, *Day of Atonement Allusions* (1989), argues that the allusions to the OT Day of Atonement in Heb can never be primary, but only secondary. He explains that the Day of Atonement motif is not central to the arguments of Heb, because the primary concern of the Auct Heb is not to make a parallel between the rituals of the Day of Atonement and Christ's priesthood and His sacrifice. Instead it is only a part of the larger cultic context of the OT where Christ's sacrifice is compared, and therefore seen as greater and perfect. The allusions to the Day of Atonement were included because it was meant to elucidate the powerlessness of the OT priesthood and sacrifices. Even the most indispensable sacrifice in the most solemn day of the Jewish liturgical calendar was insufficient to reconcile God and humanity.[149]

Robert H. Culpepper, in his article, *The High Priesthood and Sacrifice of Christ in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (1985), perceived the Day of Atonement not as a primary background for the theological arguments of the Auct Heb, but simply a part of the greater contrast between the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifices of the OT.

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[147] Richard M. Davidson, "Christ's Entry 'Within the Veil,' in Hebrews 6:19-20: The Old Testament Background," *AUSS* 39, no. 2 (Autumn 2001): 176.

[148] Davidson, "Christ's Entry," 188.

[149] See William G. Johnsson, "Day of Atonement Allusions," in *Issues in the Book of Hebrews*, vol. 4, *DARCOM*, ed. Frank B. Holbrook (Silver Spring, Maryland: Biblical Research Institute General Conference of Seventh-Day Adventists, 1989), 117-118.

All the sacrifices of the OT, even the ones offered once a year during the Day of Atonement, are repeatable, insufficient, and imperfect. Only the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ is unrepeatable, sufficient, and perfect. The readers have to understand that the parallelism was not so much between the sacrifice of Christ, the new high priest and the annual sacrifice of the OT high priest during the Day of Atonement, but between the new sacrifice and the OT cultic system in general.[150] Culpepper's argument is quite similar to that of William G. Johnsson.

The present study disagrees with the aforementioned studies, especially regarding their position that the Day of Atonement is simply a secondary context in the theological arguments of the Auct Heb for the following reasons:

1. As will be explained later in chapter 2 of this study, the identity of the high priest is essentially connected with his cultic role during the Day of Atonement. If the Auct Heb depicts Christ as the high priest of the New Covenant as shown in the *exordium* above, then the rituals of the Day of Atonement would surely be an indispensable feature of the theological arguments of the Auct Heb. One has only to remember that Heb is the only book in the NT that explicitly applied the title "high priest" to Christ. No other writing in the NT explicitly called Christ a "high priest," not even a "priest."

2. Interpreting the pericope of Heb 9:1-10:22 using other OT contexts or philosophical worldview, instead of the Day of Atonement, does not give justice to what the Auct Heb was essentially saying in his homily. In chapter 4 of this study, it will be shown that Heb 9:1-10:22 is a well-constructed theological argumentation, and when interpreted in the context of the Day of Atonement, what becomes evident is the presence of the five Yom Kippuric high priestly actions of Jesus presented in this pericope in a subtle way.

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[150] Robert H. Culpepper, "The High Priesthood and Sacrifice of Christ in the Epistle to the Hebrews," *The Theological Educator* 32 (Fall 1985):52-53.

1.4.2. Relevance and Contribution

Studies on Heb are not as numerous as the other books of the NT especially in comparison to the Gospels and the Letters of St. Paul. According to N.T. Wright:

> Though Hebrews has of course remained officially in the Church's canon, it has received considerably less attention than Paul or the Gospels in the scholarship of the last generation.[151]

This is understandable since this book is considered a conundrum,[152] anomalous,[153] enigmatic, and difficult for many readers of the NT to understand. This arduous relationship between modern readers and Heb is described best by Mary Healy:

> For readers today, Hebrews presents special challenges. Its vocabulary is difficult, its structure complex, its logic not always easy to follow. The thought world of Hebrews, with its intense interest in priesthood, tabernacle, ritual purity, and blood sacrifice, is foreign to most people of the twenty-first century.[154]

According to Pamela Eisenbaum, Heb is also accused of being anti-Semitic[155] because of its strong emphasis on the New Covenant, the priesthood, and the sacrifice of Christ. Alan C. Mitchell is in total agreement with what Eisenbaum is saying:

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[151] N. T. Wright, foreword to *Rethinking the Atonement: New Perspective on Jesus's Death, Resurrection, and Ascension*, by David M. Moffitt (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2022), xvi.

[152] See Brown, *New Testament*, 683.

[153] See Scott Hahn, "Covenant, Cult, and the Curse-of-Death: διαθήκη in Heb 9:15-22," in *Hebrews: Contemporary Methods – New Insights*, ed. Gabriella Gelardini with a foreword by Harold W. Attridge (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 65.

[154] Healy, *Hebrews*, 15.

[155] Heb "is often perceived as among the New Testament's most anti-Jewish texts" ("The Letter to the Hebrews" in *JANT*, 460).

> The stress in Hebrews on a 'new' and 'better' covenant (7;22; 8:6-13; 9:15; 10:16-17, 29; 12:24; 13:20) has contributed to the view that not only has the priesthood and sacrifice of Christ replaced the sacrifices and the priesthood of the 'old' covenant, but that Christianity has somehow replaced Judaism. If the language and intent of Hebrews are not understood properly in the context of its first-century C.E. setting, it could be seen as contributing, at the very least, to 'anti-Judaism,' if not to 'anti-Semitism.'[156]

But despite these difficulties, studying this book continues to be one of the most important and rewarding tasks that an exegete and a biblical theologian can accomplish for the ecclesial community. Why? Because Heb, according to Luke Timothy Johnson, "is one of the most beautifully written, powerfully argued, and theologically profound writings in the New Testament. Its anonymous author summons readers to a vision of reality and a commitment of faith that is at once distinctive, attractive, and disturbing."[157] Raymond E. Brown described Heb as "one of the most impressive works in the NT. Consciously rhetorical, carefully constructed, ably written in quality Greek, and passionately appreciative of Christ, Heb offers an exceptional number of unforgettable insights that have shaped subsequent Christianity."[158] In other words, if Heb would only be carefully studied, and its message properly explained to modern readers, it will surely help many people to know and appreciate more the word of God, and aid them to better understand and accept the power, grandeur, and effectiveness of Christ's salvific action.

The present study is a contribution to the ongoing revival of studies and research on Heb, and at the same time a contribution to the biblical theology of Christ's priesthood and His sacrifice. A correct understanding of Christ's role as the New Priest and the meaning and efficacy of His sacrifice are indispensable. Even the theology

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[156] Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 25-26.

[157] Johnson, *Hebrews*, 1.

[158] Brown, *New Testament*, 683.

of the ministerial and royal/common priesthood is dependent on a correct and cohesive theology of Christ's priesthood and His sacrifice. If Jesus is not really a priest, then ordained priests are simply man-made functionaries and the Church is not really "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people" (1 Pet 2:9). If Christ is not the high priest, then there is no point of saying that the ministerial priesthood and the royal/common priesthood of the faithful participate in the one priesthood of Christ.[159] The priestly vocation of the ordained ministers and the lay faithful either stands or falls in the priesthood of Christ. Therefore, to correctly understand it based on the sacred text is one of the pressing needs of the Church at the present time.

1.5. Methodology

The close connection between biblical theology and exegesis is an evident fact.[160] To correctly interpret the sacred text is the purpose of exegesis. It wants to establish what the inspired author desires to communicate to his readers. The primary literary sense of the text is the object of exegesis.[161] Here exegesis is understood as "historical-critical."[162] The exegete's task here is threefold – first, to discover the literary meaning of the texts, and the contexts of the authors and their readers. Second, to consider the form and genre of the document.

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[159] See CCC, nos. 1544-1547.

[160] See Heinrich Schlier, *The Relevance of the New Testament*, trans. W. J. O'Hara (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), 22.

[161] See Harrington, *The Path*, 349.

[162] For a comprehensive discussion on the importance of historical-critical exegesis of the Bible especially in Roman Catholicism, see Raymond E. Brown, S.S., *Biblical Exegesis and Church Doctrine* (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 10-25.

Third, to bear in mind the author's historical setting in which the author wrote what he wrote.[163]

Wilfrid J. Harrington, O.P. eloquently illustrates the function of biblical theology and how it is different from but yet presupposes and needs biblical exegesis:

> On the other hand, the purpose of biblical theology is to establish the thought of the Divine Author as it is manifested in the human word of the inspired text. Its object is not only the sense established by exegesis but that deeper level of meaning which follows from the divine authorship of Scripture. It proceeds under the light of faith, which alone assures us that this is indeed the word of God. Its method is to survey and correlate the manifestations of divine thought in the Bible and to work them into a synthesis. Thus understood, biblical theology presupposes and needs exegesis.[164]

After the essential relationship of biblical theology and historical-critical exegesis is clearly pointed out, this study will proceed to explain the methodology it will be utilizing:

1. A canonical approach to biblical theology – Its interpretation of the biblical texts is based on the principle of the canonical unity of the OT and NT as received, collected, and interpreted in the Church which continues to be authoritative until today due to its divine inspiration.[165] It is canonical in as much as this study, borrowing the words of Steven C. Smith, "generally follows the narrative of the Old and New Testaments,

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[163] See Robert M. Grant, *A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible*, rev. ed. (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1965), 152.

[164] Harrington, *The Path*, 349-350.

[165] See Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 71.

respectively."[166] The major task of this approach, according to Brevard S. Childs, is "to reflect on the whole Christian Bible with its two different voices, both of which the Church confesses bear witness to Jesus Christ."[167] In another work, Childs highlighted further the methodical uniqueness and distinction of the canonical approach to biblical theology by saying, "The interpreter is forced to confront the authoritative text of scripture in a continuing theological reflection."[168] In other words, the interpreter must respect first and foremost the final form of the sacred texts as exhibited in the present canon.

2. Historical-critical exegesis – the careful study of the texts, contexts, forms, and history of biblical passages will be utilized to give an adequate support and presupposition to biblical theology. But it will not be dealing with earlier editions of the biblical text, but on the *text in its final form*. According to the Pontifical Biblical Commission, the final stage of the biblical text is the proper object of the historical-critical method, since it is the expression of the word of God.[169] This kind of historical-critical method is the one useful for biblical theology since according to Leslie J. Hoppe, O.F.M., "the substance of authentic biblical theology ought to be the biblical text itself."[170] This study avoids what Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S.J. has identified as the previous mistakes in the field of historical-critical method wherein exegetes are more concerned with "hypothetical documents rather than on the actual biblical text, to be dissecting the biblical text to the

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[166] Smith, *The House of the Lord,* 23.

[167] Childs, *Biblical Theology*, 78.

[168] Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 83.

[169] See IBC, I.A.4.f, (44-50).

[170] Leslie J. Hoppe, O.F.M., "Biblical Theology," in *CPDBT*, liii.

point that its literary unity can no longer be appreciated, and to be lacking all interest in the religious message of the Bible and its contemporary relevance for the spiritual lives of those who would read it today."[171]

3. Patristic-medieval exegesis – since the aim of this study is to arrive at a biblical theology of Christ's priesthood and His once-for-all sacrifice, it is therefore also necessary to utilize the biblical interpretation of the Church Fathers[172] and the medieval writers which follows the principles of (1) inspiration, inerrancy, and the four senses of the Scripture,[173] and (2) the pivotal role of Sacred Tradition and the Magisterium in the correct interpretation of the sacred text.[174] Matthew Levering fittingly describes the patristic-medieval tradition of exegesis in this way:

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[171] Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S.J., *Scripture, the Soul of Theology* (New York: Paulist Press, 1994), 32.

[172] See Joseph Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology: Building Stones for a Fundamental Theology*, trans. Mary Frances McCarthy, S.N.D. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987), 134-137.

[173] For a more thorough and comprehensive discussion on the four senses of the Scripture, see Henri de Lubac's three volume work: *Medieval Exegesis*, vol. 1, *The Four Senses of Scripture*, trans. by Mark Sebanc (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998); *Medieval Exegesis*, vol. 2, *The Four Senses of Scripture*, trans. by E. M. Macierowski (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000); *Medieval Exegesis*, vol. 3, *The Four Senses of Scripture*, trans. by E. M. Macierowski (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009); See also Wilfrid J. Harrington, O.P., *Record of the Revelation: The Bible*, foreword by Roland de Vaux, O.P. (Chicago, Illinois: The Priory Press, 1965), 54-62.

[174] For a more comprehensive discussion on the principles of patristic-medieval exegesis, see Matthew J. Ramage, *Dark Passages of the Bible: Engaging Scripture with Benedict XVI and Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2013), 55-72.

> Whereas modern exegetes, with notable exceptions, tend to focus on the *biblical texts* – the origins of their composition, what seems to have been consciously known and intended by the authors/redactors, and so forth – the patristic-medieval tradition of exegesis reads the texts with a focus on the *Divine Teacher*.[175]

Patristic-medieval exegesis has a varied quality like its literary accommodations and its heavy focus on the spiritual sense of the Scripture. One of its most important aims is to unlock the Christian meaning of the OT.[176] Such an approach has its own share of strengths and weaknesses as shown in its history.[177] But what is truly essential in the interpretation of the Church Fathers is their *hermeneutic of faith*, i.e., their way of interpreting the Bible as a sacred text, God's revelation, and not simply a historical or cultural document.[178] For them, "the Bible is properly understood not by isolating it from the faith community of the Church but by interpreting it in the heart of the Church that collected and compiled it."[179]

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[175] Matthew, Levering, *Participatory Exegesis: A Theology of Biblical Interpretation* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), 63.

[176] See Raymond E. Brown, *The Sensus Plenior of Sacred Scripture* (Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1955), 37.

[177] See Brown, *The Sensus Plenior*, 36-67.

[178] For a scholarly discussion on the influence of the Church Fathers' interpretation of the Scripture to the development of Church's doctrine, see Frances M. Young, *Doctrine and Scripture in Early Christianity*, vol. 1, *Scripture, the Genesis of Doctrine*, foreword by David F. Ford (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2023); *Doctrine and Scripture in Early Christianity*, vol. 2, *Scripture in Doctrinal Dispute*, foreword by David F. Ford (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2024).

[179] Ryan Janelle A. Salvacion, "A New Look at the Marian Dogmas in Sacred Scripture Through the Lens of the Fathers of the Church," *Landas* 36, no. 1 (2024): 134.

The combination of historical-critical exegesis and patristic-medieval exegesis leading towards a canonical biblical theology was proposed by then Cardinal Ratzinger in his 1988 Erasmus Lecture held in St. Peter's Church, New York City:

> I'll put it another way. You can call the patristic-medieval exegetical approach Method A. The historical-critical approach, the modern approach, epitomized by Dibelius and Bultmann, is Method B. What I am calling for is not a return to Method A, but a development of a Method C, taking advantage of the strength of both Method A and Method B, but cognizant of the shortcomings of both.[180]
>
> Certainly texts must first of all be traced back to their historical origins and interpreted in their proper historical context. But then, in a second exegetical operation, one must look at them also in light of the total movement of history and history's central event, Jesus Christ. Only the *combination of both* of these methods will yield a correct understanding of the Bible. If the first exegetical operation by the Fathers and in the Middle Ages is found to be lacking, so, too, is the second, since it easily falls into arbitrariness. Thus, the first was fruitless, but the rejection of any coherence of meaning leads to an opinionated methodology.[181]

In other words, this study utilizes what Ratzinger calls the *Method C exegesis* leading towards a biblical theology of Christ's new priesthood and His once-for-all sacrifice. When Ratzinger became Pope Benedict XVI, he again emphasized this Method C exegesis in his landmark apostolic exhortation on the Word of God, *Verbum*

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[180] Paul T. Stallsworth, "The Story of an Encounter," in *Biblical Interpretation in Crisis: The Ratzinger Conference on Bible and Church*, ed. by Richard John Neuhaus (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), 107-108.

[181] Joseph Ratzinger, "Biblical Interpretation in Crisis: On the Question of the Foundations and Approaches of Exegesis Today," in *The Essential Benedict XVI: His Central Writings and Speeches*, ed. John F. Thorton and Susan B. Varenne (New York: HarperCollins, 2008), 256.

Domini. He explained that the "positive fruit yielded by the use of modern historical-critical research is undeniable,"[182] its "validity and necessity," as well as its "limits" must be acknowledged.[183] The historical-critical method must be continually utilized in the Church, but at the same time, there is a need to have a "renewed attention to the Fathers of the Church and their exegetical approach. The Church Fathers present a theology that still has great value today because at its heart is the study of Sacred Scripture as a whole."[184] To wit, for Ratzinger/Benedict XVI, the use both of the historical-critical exegesis and the patristic-medieval exegesis is indispensable because "the pastoral effectiveness of the Church's activity and the spiritual life of the faithful depend to a great extent on the fruitfulness of the relationship between *exegesis* [biblical interpretation] and *theology*."[185]

In addition to advising Bible scholars and biblical theologians to employ the *Method C Exegesis* when interpreting Scripture, Ratzinger/Benedict XVI himself employed it in his three-volume work *Jesus of Nazareth*,[186] which is regarded as one of his most important and enduring works as a Catholic theologian. In the foreword of the first volume of *Jesus of Nazareth*, Ratzinger gave the reason why he deemed it necessary to use the *Method C Exegesis*, a method that obviously goes beyond purely historical-critical exegesis:

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[182] *VD*, no. 34, *AAS* 102, no. 11: 713.

[183] See *VD*, no. 37, *AAS* 102, no. 11:716.

[184] *VD*, no. 37, *AAS* 102, no. 11:716.

[185] *VD*, no. 31, *AAS* 102, no. 11:711[emphasis added].

[186] See Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth: From Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration*, vol. 1, trans. Adrian J. Walker (New York: Doubleday, 2007); *Jesus of Nazareth: Holy Week: From the Entrance into Jerusalem to the Resurrection*, vol. 2, trans. Vatican Secretariat of State (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011); *Jesus of Nazareth: The Infancy Narratives*, vol. 3, trans. Philip J. Whitmore (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2012).

> It is obvious that the way I look at the figure of Jesus goes beyond what much contemporary exegesis, as represented by someone such as Schnackenburg,[187] has to say. I hope it is clear to the reader, though, that my intention in writing this book is not to counter modern exegesis; rather, I write with profound gratitude for all that it has given and continues to give to us. It has opened up to us a wealth of material and an abundance of findings that enable the figure of Jesus to become present to us with a vitality and depth that we could not have imagined even just a few decades ago. *I have merely tried to go beyond purely historical-critical exegesis so as to apply new methodological insights that allow us to offer a properly theological interpretation of the Bible*. To be sure, this requires faith, but the aim unequivocally is not, nor should be, to give up serious engagement with history.[188]

According to Richard G. Declue, Jr., Ratzinger's usage of the *Method C Exegesis* stems from his conviction that "the Church Fathers' interpretation of Scripture are fundamental for a proper reading of the Bible because they are 'witnesses to the text' and 'members of an age that was relatively close to the origin of the Scriptures.'"[189] Declue goes on to say that for Ratzinger, "patristics is integral to biblical exegesis."[190] The author of this study shares, supports, and uses Ratzinger's hermeneutical principle that the biblical interpretation of the Church Fathers is essential to biblical exegesis.

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[187] Rudolf Schnackenburg (1914 – 2002) was a German Catholic priest and NT scholar who used predominantly the historical-critical method in his works. Benedict XVI described him as "probably the most prominent Catholic exegete in German during the second half of the twentieth century" (Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth*, vol. 1, xii-xiii).

[188] Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth*, vol. 1, xxiii, emphasis added.

[189] Richard G. Declue, Jr., *The Mind of Benedict XVI: A Theology of Communion*, foreword by Fr. Emery De Gaal (Elk Grove Village, Illinois: Word on Fire, 2024), 42.

[190] Declue, *The Mind of Benedict XVI*, 43.

CHAPTER II

THE OT PRIESTHOOD AND SACRIFICE

The primary concern of this chapter is to examine the theological and historical development of the ancient priesthood and sacrifices in the OT. It is imperative to see the essential historical-theological shift from a former priesthood freely exercised by the Hebrew patriarchs or family heads (father-son model)[1] to a latter priesthood that will only be exercised by Aaron and his descendants (Levitical model).[2] The arguments of the Auct Heb for the superiority and novelty of Jesus' priesthood over and above the Levitical one (Heb 7) is better understood and appreciated by examining this reposition. The sacrifices of the ancient cult which are inseparable to the OT priesthood will also be investigated and hopefully be perceived as fulfilled and completed in the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ.

The well-developed theology of Christ's priesthood and His sacrifice in Heb was not a creation from nothing.[3] A careful reading of this NT book shows that its theological argumentation is highly

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[1] See Smith, *The House of the Lord*, 96.

[2] See Smith, *The House of the Lord*, 111.

[3] See John M. Scholer, *Proleptic Priests: Priesthood in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 11.

shaped and influenced by the OT.[4] In Heb, according to Hugh Montefiore, "there are some 37 actual and 70 virtual citations from the books of the old covenant."[5] To approach Heb without carefully examining the theology of the ancient priesthood and cult in the OT is an erroneous and a superficial way to study it. Furthermore, Heb made an affirmation of the relationship of the similarity between the mystery of Christ and the institution of the OT priesthood.[6] Therefore, any serious study of Heb's concept of Christ's priesthood and His sacrifice must always begin with its OT antecedence, background, and presupposition. The Auct Heb is one of the NT writers who was very much familiar with the OT, and who did a productive usage of this know-how to better explain Christ's Person and mission. This truth is explained well by Serge-Thomas Bonino, O.P.:

> God really does speak in human language, and we would be unable to hear the revelation of Jesus Christ's priesthood if it did not rest on (while deeply transforming it though without destroying it) a common notion of priesthood, which was moreover prophetically oriented toward Christ in the form it took in the Old Testament priesthood. The Letter to the Hebrews proceeds along this same line.[7]

2.1. The Meaning of OT Priesthood

The priestly office is one of the religious institutions of Ancient Israel.[8] This is attested first, by the existence of the Pre-Levitical

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[4] See Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation*, rev. ed (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Press, 1999), 467.

[5] Hugh Montefiore, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1964), 4.

[6] See Vanhoye, *OT Priests and the New Priest*, 134.

[7] Serge-Thomas Bonino, O.P., "Religion and Priesthood: A Basic Anthropological Factor," in *FTP[1]*, 5.

[8] For a more thorough discussion about this topic, see *AI*, 345-357.

Priesthood, the one exercised by the heads of the family during the period of the Patriarchs,[9] and second, the Levitical Priesthood, the one that started in the wilderness and continued throughout Israel's history until the fall of the Jerusalem Temple in 70 AD.[10] The priestly act of offering sacrifices by the heads of the family is well attested in the book of Genesis (see 22; 31:54; 46:1); and throughout the Scriptures, the presence of Levitical priests, especially narrations of their cultic roles in the Tabernacle or in the Temple are quite many and evident. The purpose of this section is to present the theological concept of the priesthood in the OT, starting from the etymologies of the Hebrew word for priest, כֹּהֵן, and the role of priests as (1) oracular consultants, (2) teachers, (3) ministers of sacrifices, and (4) mediators of God and the Chosen People.

2.1.1. Etymologies of כֹּהֵן and its Interpretation

The Hebrew word for "priest" in the OT is כֹּהֵן.[11] It is the only name by which the OT refers to priests of YHWH.[12] In the *Dictionary of the Bible and Western Culture*, it was pointed out that the word כֹּהֵן "does not have a feminine form in Hebrew, although it does in other languages."[13] Roland De Vaux, in his classic work, *Ancient Israel*, explained that the word כֹּהֵן is the same word "used for priests of foreign gods, whether Egyptian (Gen 41:45; 47:22), Phoenician (2 Kings 10:19; 11:18), Philistines (1 Sam 5:5; 6:2), Moabite (Jer 48:7) or Ammonite (Jer 49:3). The word has the same form in Hebrew and Phoenician, and is frequently found in Nabatean also."[14] Aelred

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[9] See Brown, *Priest and Bishop,* 6.

[10] See *CBD*, 725-727.

[11] *kōhēn*.

[12] See *AI,* 345.

[13] *DBWC*, 414

[14] *AI*, 345.

Cody in his monumental work, *A History of Old Testament Priesthood* proposed two etymologies for this word:

> 1) from *kwn,* 'to be firm, established, lasting' (not used in the Qal in Hebrew), so that a priest would be one who stands before God at the altar; 2) from a cognate of Akkadian *kânu* (itself, according to this theory, from a hypothetical **kahânu*), which in the Šafᶜel or š-stem has a meaning "to incline before," so that a priest would be one who gives homage to God.[15]

These etymologies are important since they describe the basic idea of what a priest is all about – a man "who stands before God" and "who gives homage to God," in other words, a man who is "holy" or "separated for divine service," a "servant of God." Moreover, Todd Compton explains that the commonly attested Hebrew cognate for *kōhēn* is "*kûn*, which means 'stand (before God),' 'serve,' or 'lay down, set forth (a sacrifice).' Ritual service to God in the sanctuary is emphasized."[16] Having this in mind, it is not surprising that the OT called priests as "ministers" (מְשָׁרְתֵי)[17] of God as attested by the following biblical passages:

> But you shall be called the priests of the LORD, men shall speak of you as the *ministers* of our God (Isa 61:6, emphasis added).

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[15] Aelred Cody, A History of the Old Testament Priesthood (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1969), 26. De Vaux also made a similar explanation on the etymologies of the Hebrew word, *kōhēn*: "The etymology of kohen is not known. It has been suggested that it is related to the Akkadian verb kanu, from the root *k'n*, which, in the Shaphel, means 'to bend down, to do homage.' It is more common, though, to connect it with the root kwn meaning 'to stand upright'; the priest would then be a man who stands before God (cf. Dt 10:8) like a servant. But all this is still uncertain" (*AI*, 346).

[16] Todd Compton, "Kingdom of Priests": Priesthood, Temple, and Women in the Old Testament and in the Restoration," *Dialogue* 36 no. 3 (Fall 2003): 45.

[17] *məšārəṯê*.

> Then also my covenant with David my servant may be broken, so that he shall have a son to reign on his throne, and my covenant with the Levitical priests my *ministers* (Jer 33:21, emphasis added).
>
> The cereal offering and the drink offering are cut off from the house of the LORD. The priests mourn, the *ministers* of the LORD (Joel 1:9, emphasis added).
>
> Put on sackcloth and lament, O priests, wail, O *ministers* of the altar (Joel 1:13, emphasis added).
>
> Between the vestibule and the altar, let the priests, the *ministers* of the LORD, weep and say, "Spare your people, O LORD…" (Joel 2:17, emphasis added).

These passages show that the identity of priests is essentially tied to the service of the altar. They are in the very real sense, the ministers of the altar.[18] Since the altar is in the domain of God, the domain of the sacred, holiness is therefore both essential and necessary for priests. According to John M. Scholer, "Priests were those men who were holy, who had separated themselves or been separated from things profane, and this separation permitted them approach to divine service within the sacred realm and with the holy objects."[19] They were the ones who on behalf of individuals or the assembly dared to approach the Holy, the Other, and they labored for the Holy and protected it.[20] But the concept of holiness for OT priests is not something similar with the way Christianity understands it today. This is a point clearly explained by Thomas J. Lane:

> Holiness for Levitical priests was different from our idea of holiness. For us, holiness is being imbued with supernatural charity compelling to engage the world to make it holy. We see this

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[18] See *AI*, 356.

[19] Scholer, *Proleptic Priests*, 16.

[20] See Scott Hahn, *Holy Is His Name: The Transforming Power of God's Holiness in Scripture* (Steubenville, Ohio: Emmaus Road Publishing, 2022), 130.

> above all in Christ who was a friend of gluttons and drunkards, tax collectors and sinners (Matt 11:19; Luke 7:34). Sinners felt comfortable approaching Christ (Luke 15:1). But for Levitical priests, holiness had much more to do with the externals, and to be holy meant keeping separate from the profane. This is evident in the temple where only priests could enter the Holy Place and only the high priest could enter the Holy of Holies.[21]

Priests can only stand and give homage to God if they are in the state of holiness and purity. Their ministry centers in the sanctuary and its environs, so they must not become ritually defiled or appear bodily unkempt.[22] Leviticus 21-22 gives detailed instruction on how priests can preserve their holiness and how they must deal or use holy things. In this context, what is obvious is the emphasis on holiness as separation from what is profane. Such an idea of separation, according to Robert V. McCabe, must be understood on the part of the priests as "a commitment to follow the detailed commands for holiness as outlined in the Mosaic Covenant [which] reflects a full devotion to God."[23] Lane further explains the laws of ritual cleanness and ritual uncleanness that priests must faithfully follow in order for them to be effective and trustworthy in doing their sacred duties or function:

> The laws concerning ritual cleanness and ritual uncleanness in Leviticus 11-15 are applied to priests in 22:4-9. A priest was rendered impure through emission of seminal fluid (Lev 22:4; all men in Lev 15:16-18), so a priest had to maintain sexual abstinence on the day he officiated at his sacred duties, and the time of continence began at sunset the previous evening. Priests were also to abstain from alcohol before their duties (Lev 10:8-9). Even when ritually pure, priests were also to purify themselves

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[21] Lane, *The Catholic Priesthood*, 10.

[22] See J. Edward Owens, O.SS.T., "The Book of Leviticus," in *NCBC*, 144.

[23] Robert V. McCabe, "The Old Testament Foundation for Separation," *DBSJ* 7 (Fall 2002): 18.

when approaching the altar by washing beforehand (Exod 30:17-21).[24]

Such a concept might be quite remote from modern experience, or intricate and bewildering for many people today. Yet such a concept of holiness, of standing before and giving homage to God by OT priests, is a way of expressing God's tangible power and sovereignty over the world that He created. Anthony Giambrone explains that "holiness (*qdš*) is a force that lays claim to a defined group of objects and persons, called *qodāšîm*, which are appropriated and thought of as the personal property of YHWH."[25] Furthermore, J. Edward Owens made the same point when he explained:

> The intrinsic characteristic of God is being holy (Hebrew *qādôsh*). Holiness in the Scriptures denotes being somehow set apart by nature or by vocation. Thus, a priest is set apart by vocation to serve liturgically in holiness and consecration: 'You are consecrated to the LORD, and the vessels are also consecrated' (Ezra 8:28). God is holy and sinful humanity seeks holiness.[26]

The concept of כֹּהֵן in the OT can never be separated from that of קָדוֹשׁ. It means to say that "the priest is the man of the sanctuary,"[27] a minister God accepts to stand before Him. The things demanded by God from the priest as his sacred minister is well explicated by Albert Vanhoye in this way:

If he is not accepted by God, he is a useless person. To become pleasing to God, he undergoes all the ritual requirements which separate him from the profane world, and he is responsible for seeing that the people maintain themselves in a state of purity or 'cleanness.'[28]

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[24] Lane, *The Catholic Priesthood*, 10.

[25] Giambrone, *The Bible & the Priesthood*, 70.

[26] Owens, "The Book of Leviticus," 126.

[27] *DBT,* 460.

[28] Vanhoye, *OT Priests and the New Priest*, 30-31.

2.1.2. The Priest as an Oracular Consultant

Priests were primarily given the task of delivering oracles, i.e. their passing on an answer from God to the people.[29] According to Roland De Vaux, "It is noteworthy that in Deut 33:8-10 the role played by the sons of Levi in giving oracles is mentioned before the teaching of the Torah and their service of the altar:"[30]

> And of Levi he said, '*Give to Levi your Thummim and your Urim to your godly one*, whom you tested at Massah, with whom you strove at the waters of Meribah; who said of his father and mother, 'I regard them not;' he disowned his brothers and ignored his children. For they observed your word, and kept your covenant. They shall teach Jacob your ordinances, and Israel your law; they shall put incense before you, and whole burnt offering upon your altar' (emphasis added).

The אוּרִים[31] and תֻּמִּים,[32] according to Scott Hahn, are "sacred lots worn on the breast piece of the high priest (Exod 28:30; Lev 8:8). The lots possibly marked the sticks or stones, were cast in order to obtain guidance from God when the people were facing problems (Num 27:21; Deut 33:8)."[33] Shimon Bakon explained that they were used "to determine the decision of the Lord regarding certain important communal matters."[34] He further expounded that "literally, *Urim* is the plural of *ur* ("illumination") while *Tummīm* is the plural form of *tom* ("completion" or "perfection"). TB Yoma 73b explains this

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[29] See *AI*, 357.

[30] *AI,* 349.

[31] *Urim*.

[32] *Thummim* or *Tummīm*. See Barbara Green, O.P., "Exodus," in *JBC*^{21C}, 279. See also Alois Stöger, "*Priestertum*," in BW2, 931.

[33] CBD, 936.

[34] Shimon Bakon, "The Mystery of the *Urim Ve-Tummim*," *JBQ* 43 no. 4 (Oct-Dec 2015): 241.

obscure designation with a cryptic statement: "Why were they called *Urim ve-Tummīm*? *Urim*, because they made their words enlightening; *Tummīm*, because they completed their words."[35] The explicit mentioning of the *Urim ve-Tummīm* happened only seven times in the Bible, i.e. in Exod 28:30; Lev 8:8; Deut 33:8; 1 Sam 14:41; Ezra 2:63; Neh 7:65; and Sir 45:10.[36] An extra-biblical account, according to Mark S. Smith, also made mention of *Urim* and *Thummim* like materials used in divinatory practices:

> A Mesopotamian text describes a 'shining' divinatory stone like the *Urim* ('Light'). A Mesopotamian myth tells of the divinatory stone called 'true word stone,' similar to the *Thummim* ('Truth').[37]

This practice of using the *Urim* and *Thummim* as a way of consulting the will of God for His people might sound atypical or odd to modern ears, but this practice shows that God's will although always mysterious is also marked with clarity and simplicity, that God's will can be expressed in a simple "yes" or "no." Since a divine oracle is coming from God Himself, it is necessary that the consultation can only take place through the mediation of a sacred minister, the priest. The transfer of the role of oracular consultant from the priest to the prophet is well explained by Scholer in this way:

> The priest's role as oracular consultant evolved quite early in Israel, and appears to have been taken over by the prophetic class… Therefore, the priest's role as a mediating spokesman for God was eventually taken over by the prophets who had no use for the ephod and *Urim* and *Thummim*. This resulted in the diminished importance of the priest's function as oracular practitioner.[38]

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[35] Bakon, "*Urim Ve-Tummim*," 241.

[36] See Bakon, "*Urim Ve-Tummim*," 243.

[37] Mark S. Smith, "The Book of Exodus," in *NCBC*, 116.

[38] Scholer, *Proleptic Priests*, 18.

It means to say that as time passed by, intuitive divinizing by the prophets became the standard oracular practice in Israel. The inductive divinizing expressed in the function of priests as oracular consultants of the Israelite community with the use of *Urim* and *Thummim* was slowly forgotten and was removed from the daily consciousness of the people.[39]

2.1.3. The Priest as a Teacher

During the 1st century BC and at the time of Jesus, the synagogue multiplied and the priests were excluded to solely concentrate on their ritual duties. It was noticeable in the growing authority of lay scribes connected for the most part with the Pharisaic sect.[40] As shown in the Gospels, the Pharisees and the scribes were considered as the teachers of the people (Matt 23:2-3). This development, both religious and historical, is quite significant since originally the magisterial role in ancient Israel was assigned to priests and not to lay groups like the scribes and Pharisees. No wonder, the Sadducees, the priestly class during the time of Jesus would accuse the Pharisees as "usurpers," "separatists," and "heretics," a group of people who usurped priests' role as teachers of the law.[41] Roland De Vaux explained that

> in the Blessing of Levi (Deut 33:10), a twofold duty is assigned to the Levites, they are to take charge of the *Urim* and *Thummim*, and instruct the people: 'They shall teach thy decisions (*mishpatîm*) to Jacob, and thy instructions (*tôrôth*: read the plural) to Israel.' The *tôrah* belongs to the priests, as the virtue of judgment belongs to the king, or wisdom to the wise man, or vision and message to the prophet.[42]

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[39] See John W. Miller, *Meet the Prophets: A Beginner's Guide to the Books of the Biblical Prophets* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1987), 23-25.

[40] See *DBT*, 461.

[41] See Ellis Rivkin, "Scribes, Pharisees, Lawyers, Hypocrites: A Study in Synonymity," *HUCA* 49 (1978): 140.

[42] *AI*, 353.

In other words, priests were held responsible to teach the Law to the people.[43] There are four passages in the OT that speak unmistakably about the magisterial role of priests in regard to the Law:

> Then they said, 'Come, let us make plots against Jeremiah, for *the law shall not perish from the priest*, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet. Come, let us strike him with the tongue, and let us not heed any of his words' (Jer 18:18, emphasis added).
>
> Disaster comes upon disaster, rumor follows rumor; they seek vision from the prophet, but *the law perishes from the priest*, and counsel from the elders (Ezek 7:26, emphasis added).
>
> Its heads give judgment for a bribe, its *priests teach for hire*, its prophets divine for money; yet they lean upon the LORD and say, 'Is not the LORD in the midst of us? No evil shall come upon us' (Mic 3:11, emphasis added).
>
> For the lips of *a priest should guard knowledge*, and *men should seek the law from his mouth,* for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts (Mal 2:7, emphasis added).

Wilfrid J. Harrington, O.P. explains that "throughout the Old Testament the Law is everywhere present and it directly or indirectly influences the thought of the sacred writers. The priests are *ex officio* guardians of the Torah and specialists in its interpretation (Hos 5:1; Jer 18:18; Ezek 7:26) and it is their duty to teach the people (Deut 33:10; Hos 4:6; Jer 5:4 f.). Under their authority the Torah developed and was compiled."[44] Furthermore, Roland De Vaux explains that during the pre-exilic period, the priests are simply known as instructors of the Law, and they have the authority to teach it to the people since it was entrusted to them by God. Such duty was really in their sphere of competence:

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[43] See M. Burrows, "The Social Institutions of Israel," in *PCB*, 136.

[44] Wilfrid J. Harrington, OP, *Record of the Promise: The Old Testament* (Chicago, Illinois: The Priory Press, 1965), 141.

> This 'law' came from God, but he entrusted it to the priests (Deut 31:9, 26). According to Deut 33:10, the priests are to teach the *tôrôth* of Yahweh to Israel (cf. Hosea 4:6) and the priest as a teacher is a 'messenger of Yahweh Sabaoth' (Mal 2:7). Naturally enough, this instruction was delivered in the sanctuary to which the priest belonged and where men came on pilgrimage, or to offer sacrifice, or simply to consult the man in charge of the sanctuary; as a result, the teaching of the *tôrah* was, in pre-exilic days, confined to the Temple, and texts like Isa 2:3=Mic 4:2; Deut 31:10-11 reflect a most ancient custom.
>
> The *tôrah* was originally a short instruction on a particular topic, a rule of practical conduct, more especially about how to perform cultic worship, in which the priest was a specialist; he had to decide what was sacred and what was profane, what was clean or unclean, and to instruct the faithful on the point (Lev 10:10-11; 22:26; 44:23).[45]

De Vaux's explanation gives a clear indication that the teaching office of the priest is essentially connected with his role in the sanctuary especially in the offering of sacrifices. The law and the altar cannot be separated from each other. Having this in mind, it makes sense that the NT depicts Jesus both as *the* teacher (Matt 5:2, 7:29, 13:54; Mark 1:21-22, 2:13, 4:2, 10:1, 11:17, 12:35; Luke 4:15, 5:3, 6:6, 40; John 6:59, 7:14, 28, 8:2, 18:20) and *the* high priest (Heb 3:1, 4:14-15, 5:5, 10, 6:20, 7:26, 8:1, 9:11) *par excellence*. Jesus' act of teaching the people and His once-for-all sacrifice are two sides of the same coin, His being a priest.

2.1.4. The Priest and Sacrifice

To offer sacrifice to God is the duty of the Levitical priests.[46] According to Bernhard W. Anderson, priests "performed the sacrifices

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[45] *AI*, 354.

[46] See Lane, *The Catholic Priesthood*, 15.

that displayed Israel's grateful obligation to God."[47] It is within a covenant relationship that such cultic action took place.[48] Moreover, it is necessary that a sacrifice is offered by a priest since a sacrifice according to Augustine is due only to God.[49] It is a sacred act offered by a sacred person to the One who is All-Sacred. De Vaux explained that "from the beginning, the priest's office consisted in the ministry of the altar, and as time went on, his work became more and more restricted to this ministry; sacrifice, the principal rite in public worship, means the offering of a gift upon an altar."[50] According to Leviticus 1-6, all five types of sacrifice or offering must be offered by priests, the sons of Aaron. Later on, in section 2.5. of this study, these five types of sacrifice will be discussed one by one. In cases where blood is involved in a sacrifice like a burnt offering (Lev 1) or a sin offering (Lev 4), what comprises the priestly action, as explained by Scholer, is when the priest approaches "the altar or entering the tent of meeting, pouring or sprinkling blood of the victim upon the altar or curtain, or placing its flesh upon the altar."[51] In the sacrificial act, the owner, while petitioning God, slaughtered the animal, and the priest threw the blood around the altar (Lev 1:1-5, 3:1-2, 7-8, 12-13; 4:13-18, 22-25, 27-30, 32-34).[52] This means to say that the slaying of the victim, according to Joseph Jensen, O.S.B. is *not* the priestly act itself, "but the offering of the blood, which stood for life and was believed to blot

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[47] Bernhard W. Anderson, *Understanding the Old Testament*, 2nd ed. (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc.), 457.

[48] See *JOTRP,* 22.

[49] See *De Civitate Dei*, X, 4, *CSEL* 40, 451: "*Nam, ut alia nunc taceam, quae pertinent ad religionis obsequium, quo colitur Deus, sacrificium certe nullus hominum est qui audeat dicere deberi nisi deo*." See also St. Augustine, *City of God*, trans. Henry Bettenson, intro. G. R. Evans (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 2003), 376-377.

[50] *AI*, 406.

[51] Scholer, *Proleptic Priests*, 19-20.

[52] See Lane, *The Catholic Priesthood*, 15.

out the obstacles to fellowship with God caused by sin."[53] What really makes a sacrifice a priestly act is not the killing of the victim, since not all Levitical sacrifices have something to do with the slaughter of animals, but on the very act of offering which symbolizes a person's total oblation of one's life to God.

"Priests are linked to the idea of sin as persons who mediate between the penitent and the divine through sacrifice"[54] as stated in the *Dictionary of the Bible and the Western Culture*. Offering sacrifices is a way for priests to perform their duties as representatives of humanity before God.[55] All the minute gestures in a sacrifice are charged with a sacred meaning.[56] The priest follows carefully all the rules and regulations to ritual purity and cleanness for him to offer a sacrifice to God that will be effective on behalf of an individual person or the assembly. By offering sacrifices, the priest performs an instrumental role for the reconciliation of God and humanity. Even before the time of the Levitical Priesthood, patriarchs or heads of the family acted as priests for their own families by offering sacrifice to God. Both the Pre-Levitical and Levitical Priesthood attest to the importance of sacrifice in people's relationship with God.

2.1.5. The Priest as Mediator

In his book, *Ancient Israel*, De Vaux stated that "the priesthood is an institution for mediation."[57] A mediator, according to Scott Hahn, is "one who brings together or reconciles separate or opposite parties. A situation that requires a mediator is one characterized by estrangement or alienation, and the purpose of the mediator is to

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[53] Joseph Jensen, O.S.B., *God's Word to Israel*, new & augmented edition (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2021), 114.

[54] *DBWC*, 414.

[55] See *DBWC*, 414.

[56] See *DBT* 461.

[57] *AI*, 357.

effect a full and proper reconciliation."[58] Since God and Israel are not always in reconciliatory terms due to the sinfulness of the people – their incessant disobedience to the will of God, it became necessary that an institution must exist for the sake of the reconciliation between God and His people. Hahn further explained that "the idea of mediation is integral to the religion of Israel. God spoke to the ancient Israelites, but in the accomplishment of his divine plan of salvation he communicated through specifically chosen figures – the priests, prophets, and kings – under the terms of the covenant."[59] Before being given to prophets and kings, the role of mediation was first given to priests. "Priests are mediators between God and men"[60] as succinctly stated by Alois Stöger. All the functions of a priest as mentioned above as oracular consultant, teacher, and minister of sacrifice have something to do with his role as *mediator*. This fact is explained by De Vaux in this manner:

> When the priest delivered an oracle, he was passing on an answer from God; when he gave his instruction, a *tôrah*, and later when he explained the Law, the Torah, he was passing on and interpreting teaching that came from God; when he took the blood and flesh of victims to the altar, or burned incense upon the altar, he was presenting to God the prayers and petitions of the faithful. In the first two roles he represented God before men, and in the third he represented men before God; but he is always an intermediary.[61]

A mediator does not exist for himself, but always for the two parties or cohorts wherein he acts as an intermediary, in the case of a priest – between God and the people. According to Vanhoye, "The role of the priest is to open to the people the possibility of

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[58] *CBD*, 594.

[59] *CBD*, 595.

[60] Stöger, "*Priestertum*," 931: "*Priester sind Mittler zwischen Gott und den Menschen*."

[61] *AI*, 357.

communion with God and communion with all humanity, since the one necessarily involves the other."[62] What the Auct Heb said about the high priest is true of every priest: "For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God" (Heb 5:1).[63] There are two dimensions in a covenant: the first is the vertical dimension of the relationship with God, and the second, the horizontal dimension of the relationship with the brethren.[64] When there is a defect in either one or both of the dimensions, it only means to say that a covenant is broken, and reconciliation is seriously needed. In other words, a bond which is founded in a covenant like the relationship between God and Israel, the priestly mediation is both crucial and necessary.

Priests mediate God's presence to the people. Bergsma explains that "one critical dimension of this role was the forgiveness of sin. The priests facilitated the forgiveness of sin, which permitted one to stay in a covenant relationship with God. When someone offended against the covenant, they either came under divine judgment or had to make atonement and receive forgiveness of sins."[65] This is evident in Lev 5:5-6 wherein, according to Bergsma, "the guilty party must make confession of the sin, and the priest had to offer sacrifice on his behalf. In ancient Israel, one could not go to the *prophet* to receive forgiveness, or seek out the *king* to receive absolution. The power resided in the *priest*."[66] This reality in the OT highlights the great importance of priestly mediation between God and His people. As can be seen later on, the New Covenant, similar to the Old Covenant, will not be established without a priestly mediation. The New will

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[62] Vanhoye, *OT Priests and the New Priest*, 31.

[63] See *AI*, 357.

[64] See Albert Vanhoye, *Let Us Confidently Welcome Christ Our High Priest: Spiritual Exercises with Pope Benedict XVI, Preached in the Vatican February 10-16, 2008*, trans. Joel Wallace (Australia: Modotti Press, 2010), 89.

[65] *JOTRP*, 56-57.

[66] *JOTRP*, 57.

not abolish priestly mediation, rather it will continue to be present, expressed in a more perfect and sublime manner – the priesthood of Jesus Christ.

2.1.6. Summary

In this section, the meaning of the OT Priesthood was explained, first, by examining the etymologies of the Hebrew word for priest, כֹּהֵן; second, by examining the different roles of priests in the OT such as: (1) being oracular consultants, (2) teachers of the Torah, (3) ministers of sacrifices, and (4) mediators. All of these priestly roles are essentially connected to one another. The first three roles are perceptible expressions of the fourth one, since the priestly office is primarily a role of mediation. It is in his role as mediator or intermediary that a priest can deliver the oracles of God to His people, to teach the Torah, and to offer sacrifices to God on behalf of an individual person or the assembly. The priestly office is essential to the religion of the OT; and in the NT, the priestly office was not abolished, instead it was perfected and found its zenith in the priesthood of Jesus Christ.

2.2. Pre-Levitical Priesthood

Pre-Levitical Priesthood refers to the one exercised by the head of the family in the time of the Patriarchs, i.e., before the Levitical Priesthood was formally instituted in the wilderness. Acts of public worship, especially sacrifice; the central act was performed by the head of the family (Gen 22; 31:54; 46:1).[67] Hahn clearly explained this primitive reality by stating that "the foundation of the religion of the patriarchs was the natural family order. In this context, authority passed from father to son, and sacrifices were offered not at designated sites, but at the discretion of the patriarchs, who practiced a form of natural religion. Sacred actions included building altars[68] (Gen

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[67] See *AI*, 345. See also Stöger, "*Priestertum*," 931-932.

[68] See Rainer Albertz, *A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period*, vol. 1, *From the Beginnings to the End of the Monarchy*, trans. John Bowden (Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994), 36.

12:8), planting trees (Gen 21:33), offering sacrifice[69] (Gen 8:20), and erecting pillars (Gen 28:11-22)."[70] The book of Genesis never mentions a professional group of priests except for the Egyptian priests referred to in Gen 41:45; 47:22, and for an individual priest except for Melchizedek, the king-priest of Salem in Gen 14:18.[71]

In this section, the priesthood of (1) Adam, the primordial priest, (2) Melchizedek, the king-priest of Salem, and (3) the other Patriarchs will be explained. Our purpose here is to re-discover the theological importance of the Pre-Levitical Priesthood and to see later, how the Auct Heb used the concept of a Pre-Levitical priestly mediation as a positive argument in support of the priesthood of Christ.

2.2.1. Adam, the Primordial Priest

After God created Adam,[72] the first thing that He did is to place him in the Garden of Eden and gave him a certain mission as stated in Gen 2:15: "The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to *till it* and to *keep it* (לְעָבְדָהּ וּלְשָׁמְרָהּ)[73]" (emphasis added). At first glance, the command to till and keep the garden expresses the reality, according to Stephen K. Ray, that "Adam was a farmer, and agriculture was the oldest profession, contrary to the popular maxim. Work was not a result of the curse of the fall or due to sin, but was part of the unblemished original creation. Man was intended to work the land – to be the royal steward of God's creation."[74] This is the first level of meaning one can perceive in these two words. But there is a second

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[69] See Albertz, *A History of Israelite Religion*, vol. 1, 36-37.

[70] *CBD*, 725.

[71] See *AI*, 345.

[72] For a discussion on the theological importance of the figure of Adam in the Bible, see Othmar Schilling, "Adam," in *BW1*, 28-32.

[73] *lə'āḇəḏāh ūləšāmərāh*.

[74] Stephen K. Ray, *Genesis: A Bible Study Guide and Commentary* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2023), 55.

and more profound level of meaning according to Bergsma and Pitre – *God is assigning a priestly role to Adam*, and this interpretation finds its further confirmation within the OT when these same Hebrew words are used to describe the duties of the Levitical priests in the Tabernacle:[75]

> Adam's mission in the garden, to 'till' and to 'keep', has a double meaning. In Hebrew, the words are literally 'work' (*'ābad*) and 'guard' (*shāmar*). On one level, they refer to horticultural duties: Adam is to tend the garden and make it grow. On the other hand, this combination of verbs –'work' and 'guard' – is not used elsewhere in the Pentateuch until the same words are found in a description of the duties of the Levitical priests in the Tabernacle (Num 3:7-8; 8:26; 18:7). Thus the second level of meaning is that Genesis is also depicting Adam as a *priestly* figure, commissioned to serve in Eden, the primordial-garden-sanctuary.[76]

Furthermore, the Pontifical Biblical Commission also made a similar point on the religious and cultic overtones of the words עבד[77] and שָׁמַר[78] in their recently published document on Biblical Anthropology, *What is Man?* The document emphasizes that these

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[75] See Scott Hahn, *A Father Who Keeps His Promise: God's Covenant Love in Scripture* (Cincinnati, Ohio: Servant Books, 1998), 58-59. See also Jeffrey Morrow, "Work as Worship in the Garden and the Workshop: Genesis 1-3, the Feast of St. Joseph the Worker, and Liturgical Hermeneutics," *LJCTC* vol. 15, no. 4 (Fall 2012): 161. See also Adam D. Hensley, "Redressing the Serpent's Cunning: A Closer Look at Genesis 3:1," *Logia* 27, no. 3 (2018): 43. See also G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (Westmont, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2004), 66-70. See also Robert Barron, *The Great Story of Israel: Election, Freedom, Holiness* (Park Ridge, Illinois: Word on Fire, 2022), 7.

[76] *CIBOT*, 103.

[77] *'ābad*.

[78] *shāmar*.

Hebrew words are being used in the Pentateuch to indicate respectively the worship of God, which leading it is primarily the task of the priest:

> The man's task is also formulated by means of two verbal roots that have as complementary object a feminine pronoun, which refers to the 'earth' (Gen 2:15; cf. also Gen 3:23). The first root (*'ābad*) expresses the duty of work, already evoked in Gen 2:5, with the nuance of fatigue and even a certain servile condition; the second (*shāmar*) belongs to the terminology of 'guarding,' and underlines, on the one hand, the duty of respect for what has been received, and, on the other, the task of defending it from harm. At this stage of the biblical story, there is no sense of punishment or of humiliation for the human being; on the contrary, what is stated here is the privilege bestowed on the creature to be the means responsible for making life flourish. These two roots, moreover, are widely used in religious language to indicate respectively the worship of God (Exod 3:12; 4:23; 7:16; Deut 6:13; 10:12; etc.) and the observance of the commandments (Gen 17:9-10; 18:19; 26:5; Exod 12:17; Deut 4:2; 10:13; etc.).[79]

This means to say that Adam is placed in the garden by God as the primordial priest.[80] Since a priest is essentially connected to a sanctuary, Adam as a priest must have his own sanctuary to perform his priestly duties. But where is this sanctuary? According to Jeffrey Morrow, "Genesis 1–3 depicts the world as a macro-temple, and humanity as created for liturgical worship as cosmic-priests on earth, which suggests a liturgical *Sitz im Leben* (situation or setting in life)."[81] This interpretation is affirmed by Steven C. Smith by explaining that

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[79] The Pontifical Biblical Commission, *What Is Man? A Journey Through Biblical Anthropology*, trans. Fearghus O'Fearghail and Adrian Graffy (London: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd, 2021), 80.

[80] See Scott Hahn, *Understanding the Scriptures: A Complete Course on Bible Study* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Midwest Theological Forum, 2015), 55. See also *JOTRP*, 9.

[81] Morrow, "Work as Worship," 160.

the entire Creation in Genesis is presented as a *threefold cosmological Temple*. First, above the mountain of Eden was the dwelling place of God, the "inner and uppermost" sanctum, the "Holy of Holies" of the cosmological Temple. Second, the "Holy Place" of this cosmological Temple is down upon the mountain itself. The Man and the Woman in perfect communion with God are placed by Him in this sacred space of the Garden.[82] Third, the "Outer Courts" of the cosmological Temple are what is beyond the Garden.[83] Smith further explains that the "identity of Creation as God's holy Temple, with Eden as the Holy Place and Adam as its high priest is at the foundation of temple theology."[84] The Jerusalem Temple is a micro-image and reflection of the threefold cosmological Temple created by God.[85]

Upon careful examination of the Genesis account of the Fall of the Man and the Woman, one realizes, as Scott Hahn has pointed out, is a failure on the part of the Man to be a faithful priest and husband.[86] If God commanded the Man to "guard" the Garden, the "Holy Place," it only means to say that there is a possible intruder that might cause some trouble in the Garden.[87] And who is this intruder? The obvious answer is the serpent. This serpent which is not supposed to be in the Holy Place is now situated in the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Hahn explains the theological significance of this serpent in the narrative of the Fall by pointing out the following:

> The Hebrew word for serpent, *nahash,* is somewhat ambiguous. It has a wide range of meaning. While it is used most commonly to denote snakes (see Num 21:6-9), it is also used with reference

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[82] See Smith, *The House of the Lord*, 39.

[83] See Smith, *The House of the Lord*, 40.

[84] Smith, *The House of the Lord*, 41.

[85] See Smith, *The House of the Lord*, 154.

[86] See Hahn, *A Father Who Keeps His Promise*, 63-64.

[87] See Hahn, *A Father Who Keeps His Promise,* 58.

> to evil dragons like Leviathan (see Isa 27:1) and the legendary sea monster, (see Job 26:13). Across this wide spectrum of usage, the word generally refers to something that bites (see Prov 23:32), often with venom (Ps 58:4). In any event, at minimum, the serpent here is a life-threatening symbol. And it represents mortal danger.[88]

In the narrative of the Fall, Hahn further explains, "the serpent only addressed Eve throughout, but not because Adam was not present. (In fact, the serpent's use of Hebrew verbs in the second person plural indicates that *Adam was right there all along*). By going straight to Eve, Satan deliberately bypassing the familial structure established by God."[89] Adam instead of performing his role as priest of the Garden by protecting his wife, Eve, he simply allowed her to be near the serpent and to disobey the divine mandate not to eat the fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. By not defending his wife from the threats and temptation of the serpent, and also by succumbing to the temptation as well, Adam failed in his role as the priest of the Garden and at the same time as a husband to Eve. The Fall happened primarily due to the failure of the primordial priest to "work" and to "guard" the Garden.

The tasks of the Levitical priests to "work" and to "guard" (Num 18:7) in the Tabernacle or in the Temple are nothing else but a continuation of the priestly role assigned by God to Adam, the primordial priest. The Levitical priests must make sure that the forces of death and evil (represented by the serpent in the Genesis narrative) should not contaminate God's dwelling place among His people. The forces of death and evil are expressed in the dual pollutants that defile God's sanctuary, i.e., physical impurities and sins.[90] To purge the Tabernacle or the Temple from these dual pollutants, to drive the power of death and evil from the midst of Israel is the work of

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[88] Hahn, *A Father Who Keeps His Promise*, 66.

[89] Hahn, *A Father Who Keeps His Promise*, 67.

[90] See Barry, *Jewish Temple Theology*, 161.

the Levitical priests, especially the high priest. This concept is very important in understanding the significance of the Day of Atonement ritual, and why this day is the most solemn and the holiest day in the Jewish liturgical calendar.

Later on, with the coming of the "last Adam" (1 Cor 15:45), one will realize that this last Adam must be a priest also who will fight against the serpent through the shedding of his blood. Where the first Adam failed to do his role as priest by defending his wife, Eve; Jesus, the last Adam became victorious against the serpent by defending His wife, the Church, even to the point of shedding blood and offering His life for her sake.[91] Jesus, in the Gospel of John, explicitly mentions that His crucifixion is an act of casting out the forces of death and evil, of destroying the power of the serpent: "Now the judgement of this world, *now shall the ruler of this world be cast out*; and when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself" [νῦν κρίσις ἐστὶν τοῦ κόσμου τούτου, νῦν ὁ ἄρχων τοῦ κόσμου τούτου ἐκβληθήσεται ἔξω· κἀγὼ ἐὰν ὑψωθῶ ἐκ τῆς γῆς, πάντας ἑλκύσω πρὸς ἐμαυτόν[92]] (12:31-32, emphasis added). According to N. T. Wright, "Jesus succeeded where Adam failed."[93]

2.2.2. Melchizedek, the King-Priest of Salem

In the OT, there are only two references to Melchizedek, the King-Priest of Salem.[94] First, in the book of Genesis, i.e., in the moment when he "brought out bread and wine" (14:18) and when he blessed Abram, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, maker of

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[91] See Lawrence Feingold, *The Mystery of Israel and the Church*, vol. 3, The Messianic Kingdom of Israel (St. Louis, Missouri: The Miriam Press, 2010), 6-7.

[92] *nyn krisis estin tou kosmou toutou, nyn ho archon tou kosmou toutou ekblēthēsetai exō; kagō ean hypsōthō ek tēs gēs, pantas helkysō pros emauton*.

[93] N. T. Wright, *Christian Origins and the Question of God,* vol. 3*, The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 228.

[94] See Bryan Murphy, "Priest According to the Order of Melchizedek," *TMSJ* 33/2 (Fall 2022): 301.

heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, who had delivered your enemies into your hand!" (14:19-20). Genesis simply describes him, aside from the one who "brought out bread and wine" and the one who blessed Abram, as the "King of Salem" and a "priest of God Most High" (14:18). According to Renaud Silly, "In his vocation as 'priest of the most high God,' Melchizedek, who presents a bloodless oblation of bread and wine, floats mysteriously over the origins of sacred history."[95] After the blessing, Abram gave to him the tenth of everything of the spoils (14:20) from his recent victory against a coalition of Mesopotamian invaders who kidnapped Lot (14:17).

The second instance is in Psalm 110, a messianic psalm of David which is an oracle that expresses a divine promise: "The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, 'You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek'" (110:4). The significance of this oracle is left for the Auct Heb to develop.[96] This passage will be a key text to explain a new priesthood which is far more superior than the Levitical priesthood, i.e., the eternal priesthood of Jesus Christ. Psalm 110:4 is a passage that conveys the priesthood as part of the messianic hope. The new king to come must be a priest as well, like the mysterious king-priest Melchizedek of Canaanite antiquity. And his priesthood is to transcend the existing one, for it is eternal.[97] Within the texts

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[95] Renaud Silly, O.P., "Rituals Pertaining to Levitical Ordination," in *FTP*[2]

[96] See Barnabas Lindars, S.S.F., *New Testament Apologetics: The Doctrinal Significance of the Old Testament Quotations* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1961), 51. See also Philip Comfort and Walter A. Elwell, *The Complete Book of Who's Who in the Bible* (New York: Castle Books, 2014), 387.

[97] See Stöger, "*Priestertum*," 933-934: "*Das Priestertum wurde auch in die messianische Hoffnung einbezogen. In Ps 110, 4 begrüßt der Dichter den König, wohl am Krönungstag, als ,,Priester auf ewig nach der Art des Melchisedek." Im vorisraelitischen Jerusalem muß der Stadtkönig priesterliche Tätigkeit ausgeübt haben (Gen 14, 8). Diese Amtswürde wird nun auch auf die israelitischen Stadtkönige übertragen (H. J. Krause, Psalmen 2 [Neunkirchen 1960] 760). Wie der mysteriöse König aus der kanaanäischen Urzeit zugleich König und Priester war, so soll auch der neue König Priester sein; sein Priestertum übertrifft aber das bestehende denn es ist ewig*."

of Gen 14 and Psalm 110:4, according to Bryan Murphy, "a true appreciation for the nature of this new priesthood for the Messiah can be discerned."[98]

There are only eight passages in the NT that explicitly mention Melchizedek, and all of these passages are from Heb (5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:1, 10-11, 15, 17). What is notable in these passages is the use of the Auct Heb of this OT figure in his arguments for the superiority of Christ's Priesthood over and above the Levitical one (Heb 7). The Auct Heb describes Melchizedek as an OT type of Christ: "He is without father or mother or genealogy, and has neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God he continues a priest forever" (Heb 7:3). Due to being an enigmatic figure, Melchizedek was the subject of many speculations in Christian antiquity especially among the Church Fathers.[99] For example, St. Ambrose explains in his book, *De Fide* that Melchizedek is a prefiguration of Christ, the priest:

> *Ergo illum Melchisedech in Christi typo sacerdotem dei accepimus, sed illum in typo, hunc in veritate - typus autem umbra est veritatis -, illum in nomine unius civitatis, hunc regem in reconciliatione totius mundi, quia scriptum est: Deus erat in Christo mundum reconcilians sibi, hoc est sempiterna divinitas. Aut si pater in filio sicut filius in patre, et substantiae utique et operationis unitas non negatur*.[100]

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[98] Murphy, "Priest According to the Order of Melchizedek," 301.

[99] Roger Gryson, "*Melchisédech, type du Christ,selon saint Ambroise*," *Revue théologique de Louvain* 10, no. 2 (1979):176: "*La figure énigmatique de Melchisédech a fait l'objet dans l'antiquité chrétienne de maintes speculations*."

[100] "This Melchizedek, then, have we received as a priest of God made upon the model of Christ, but the one we regard as the type, the other as the original. Now a type is a shadow of the truth, and we have accepted the royalty of the one in the name of a single city, but that of the other as shown in the reconciliation of the whole world; for it is written: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself" (2 Cor 5:19); that is to say, [in Christ was] eternal Godhead: or, if the Father is in the Son, even as the Son is in the Father, then Their unity in both nature and operation is plainly not denied" (*De Fide*, III, 89; *CSEL* 78, 140).

Such interpretation of the Bishop of Milan of perceiving an essential connection between Jesus and Melchizedek is quite unavoidable since this was something warranted by the NT especially by Heb. Furthermore, Melchizedek is the first person in Scripture to be called a priest (כֹּהֵן) (Gen 14:18),[101] and his name is a combination of two Hebrew words מלכי – "king" and צדק – "righteousness."[102] Hence, his name means "king of righteousness."[103] He is also "king of Salem," and according to Erick Ybarra, "one cannot mistake the reference to 'Salem' (שָׁלֵם), which means 'peace' and is certainly a pointer towards Jerusalem."[104]

2.2.3. The Priesthood of the Other Patriarchs

In his dissertation, *Kinship by Covenant: A Canonical Approach to the Fulfillment of God's Saving Promises,* Scott Hahn has highlighted the fact that "canonical evidence points to the existence of a pre-Levitical form of priestly activity before the Mosaic period. In particular, during the patriarchal age the firstborn son was accorded certain privileges and prerogatives which later would belong to the Levites."[105] This is a fact clearly pointed out early on by the *Glossa*

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[101] See Brant Pitre, *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist: Unlocking the Secrets of the Last Supper* (New York: Doubleday, 2011), 126. See also CBD, 598.

[102] See R. Larry Overstreet, "The Superiority of Christ: The Identity of Melchizedek in Hebrews," *Journal for Baptist Theology & Ministry* 6 (Spring 2009): 103.

[103] See Marie E. Isaacs, *Sacred Space: An Approach to the Theology of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 151. See also Comfort and Elwell, Who's Who in the Bible, 386.

[104] Erick Ybarra, *Melchizedek and the Last Supper: Biblical and Patristic Evidence for the Sacrifice of the Mass* (Bolton, Ontario: Classical Christian Thought Publishing CO., 2022), 15.

[105] Scott Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant: A Canonical Approach to the Fulfillment of God's Saving Promises* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 136.

Ordinaria, the commentary notes written in the margins of medieval Bibles:

> The Hebrews claimed that every patriarch from Noah to Aaron was a priest and that the priesthood was passed from father to son.[106]

The data provided by the book of Genesis and other extra-biblical sources, according to Hebert Chanan Brichto, are "ample evidence that the role of priest in the Israelite family had at one time been filled by the firstborn."[107] In this section the priestly activity of the patriarchs Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph will be examined.

a. *Noah*

Noah is known in the OT as the righteous person commissioned by God to build the ark for the survival of his family, the animals, and the birds of the air during the great deluge (Gen 6:11-22).[108] After the deluge, he offered a sacrifice to God: "Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar" (Gen 8:20). His sacrifice was accepted by God, and it is evident by the way Genesis describes God's positive response to his offering: "And when the LORD smelled the pleasing odor, the LORD said in his heart, 'I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I ever again destroy every living creature as I have done" (8:21). As can be seen later on in the book of Leviticus, burnt offering (Lev 1) is one of the five sacrifices that only Levitical priests are authorized to offer on behalf of the people. But in this episode, Noah, the head of the family that survived the great flood is the

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[106] *Glossa Ordinaria*, vol. 1b (The Lollard Society, 1270-1349), http://www.lollardsociety.org/glor/Glossa_vol1b_Genesis.pdf, 204.

[107] Hebert Chanan Brichto, "Kin, Cult, Land, and Afterlife – A Biblical Complex," *HUCA* 44 (1973): 46.

[108] See Hahn, *Understanding the Scriptures*, 74.

one who offered it to God. His priesthood and his sacrifice are valid and effective because they were accepted by God.

After Noah's sacrifice, God's covenant with Adam was renewed with him and his sons: "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth…" (Gen 9:1ff.). This is the same divine mandate given by God to Adam immediately after he was created (Gen 1:28). In Hebrew, it is obvious that the covenant of God with Noah is simply a renewal of His covenant with Adam because the Hebrew word, הֲקִמֵּ֥ים[109] which is usually translated as "establish" in Gen 9:8 is a word, according to Bergsma, "commonly used for *reaffirming, renewing,* or *maintaining* a covenant that is already in existence."[110] The Catechism gives so much weight and importance to the re-establishment of the Adamic Covenant with Noah, because it expresses the principle of God's divine economy toward the 'nations,' in other words, toward all peoples of all walks of life.[111]

b. *Abraham and Isaac*

The priesthood of Abraham and Isaac is unmistakably seen in Genesis 22, the famous הָעֲקֵדָה[112] episode or the "binding" of Isaac.[113] God tested Abraham's covenant faithfulness by asking him to do a priestly act of a rather severe nature:[114]

> After these things God tested Abraham, and said to him, 'Abraham!' And he said, 'Here am I.' He said, 'Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of

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[109] *mêqîm*.

[110] *JOTRP*, 29.

[111] See *CCC* no. 56.

[112] *hā'Aqēdā*.

[113] See Lawrence Feingold, *The Mystery of Israel and the Church*, vol. 1, Figure and Fulfillment (St. Louis, Missouri: The Miriam Press, 2010), 100-102.

[114] See *JOTRP*, 35.

> Moriah and offer him there as a burnt offering upon one of the mountains of which I shall tell you' (Gen 22:1-2).

Bergsma explains the importance of the command of God to Abraham to sacrifice his son, Isaac by highlighting two essential points in the said passage:

> There are two things to notice immediately. First, the phrase 'your only son Isaac' can also be translated 'your only-begotten son Isaac.' This picks up the connection with John 3:16. Many scholars believe that the Hebrew word *yahîd*, 'one and only, unique,' which is translated as *monogenēs* in the Greek of John 3:16, coming out in English as 'only-begotten.' Second, God commands Abraham to perform the priestly act of offering a sacrifice at a sacred place (a mountain). The mountain is in the land of Moriah, which Jewish tradition identified as the precise peak on which Solomon built the Temple years later (2 Chr 3:1).[115]

Bergsma' explanation is quite significant since it makes the essential point that Isaac is an OT type of Christ,[116] and the priesthood and the sacrifices in the Temple of Solomon find both its spiritual and geographical foundation in the priestly sacrifice of Abraham and Isaac in the land of Moriah.

Both Abraham and Isaac exercised their priestly role in the הָעֲקֵידָה episode. First, Abraham, because he willingly offered his son as a sacrifice to God. Though it might seem at first sight an approval of human sacrifice, a careful examination of Gen 22 would prove otherwise.[117] John Bright explains this point so well:

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[115] *JOTRP*, 35-36.

[116] See Stephen B. Clark, *The Old Testament in the Light of the New: The Stages of God's Plan* (Steubenville, Ohio: Emmaus Road Publishing, 2017), 165, 177.

[117] See Hahn, *Understanding the Scriptures*, 101.

> The story of the near sacrifice of Isaac (Ch. 22), whatever it may seek to teach in its present context, reflects the conviction of Israel – a conviction certainly correct– that her ancestors had never indulged in the practice of human sacrifice known among their neighbors. The cult of the patriarchs is depicted as exceedingly simple, as one would expect it to be. At its center was animal sacrifice, as among all the Semites; but this was performed without organized clergy, at whatever place, by the hand of the clan father himself.[118]

Abraham's sacrifice of his son, Isaac though not consummated (in the sense of really killing Isaac) is a real priestly sacrifice because it expresses what a sacrifice or offering is all about, i.e. one's total self-oblation to God. In Abraham's sacrifice is the offering of his everything – his son represents all that is important to him, everything that really matters – his life, his covenant relationship with God, his posterity, and the future of his clan and family:

> By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who received the promises was ready to offer up his only-begotten son, of whom it was said, 'Through Isaac shall your descendants be named.' He considered that God was able to raise men even from the dead; hence he did receive him back and this was a symbol (Heb 11:17-19).

This truth is well stated by Richard J. Barry IV and David Bentley Hart:

> Abraham has nothing else. His entire life, his every hope, every one of his precious, promised children – more numerous than the stars of the sky – all of it is to be found in Isaac and nowhere else.[119]

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[118] John Bright, *A History of Israel*, 4th ed, with an introduction and appendix by William P. Brown (London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 102.

[119] Barry, *Jewish Temple Theology*, 52.

> The drama of Genesis 22 really comes down to the meaning and the challenge of a single word: *hinneni*.[120] When God calls Abraham, Abraham responds with that one word which implies openness, readiness, and freedom before God. Hearing this word, God effectively asks, 'Will you live out this identity? Will you carry it through to the end? Would you even offer back the gift that I have given you, your only hope in the world, that which you love best, your very son, Isaac?' It is a difficult and sobering story, but no narrative in the Hebrew Bible better communicates the radical claim that God makes on his people: they must fully let go of every clutching desire, and they must fully die to self if they want to know the true meaning of life.[121]
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> All of Israel slumbers in [Isaac's] loins, because he is the child of Sarah's dotage who cannot be replaced, because he is the whole promise and substance of God's covenant.[122]

Second, Isaac, because he made of himself a willing victim.[123] Not only that, he is both a priest and a victim of his father's sacrifice. Priest since he is an offerer who willingly offered himself to God. Victim, because he is himself the sacrificial offering. Isaac has a full participation in the offering of his life.[124] He was not a passive victim. Bergsma pointed out two important aspects of the הָעֲקֵידָה that demonstrate Isaac being truly a priest and a

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[120] Barry transliterated the original Hebrew word in the text of Gen 22:1: הִנֵּנִי which means "Here I am."

[121] Barry, *Jewish Temple Theology*, 114.

[122] David Bentley Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite: The Aesthetics of Christian Truth* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), 351.

[123] See Abraham Oh, "Canonical Understanding of the Sacrifice of Isaac: The Influence of the Jewish Tradition," *HTS Teologiese Studies* 72, 3 (2016): 1.

[124] See Barry, *Jewish Temple Theology*, 66.

willing victim of Abraham's sacrifice. First, during the הָעֲקֵידָה, Abraham was already a very old man. He was one hundred years old. His lack of physical strength is evident in Gen 22:6: "And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it on Isaac his son; and he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So they went both of them together." Isaac was made to carry the wood of the burnt offering because Abraham did not have the enough physical strength to do so. Second, Isaac was *not* a child during the הָעֲקֵידָה. By this time in the narrative, Isaac was a vigorously sturdy young man.[125] In Hebrew, he is called נַעַר [126] the same term used to describe the "young men" (הַנְּעָרִים)[127], the servants and bodyguards who accompanied Abraham in this journey (Gen 22:5). Jon D. Levenson points out that most guesses on Isaac's age put him in his 20s or 30s.[128] In other words, this episode has nothing to do with child sacrifice.[129] This means to say that if Isaac wanted to escape and free himself from the sacrificial madness of his father, he could actually do so. Instead, what he did was to make himself a willing victim. He offered himself freely to God.

Barry explained that "the theological coherence of Yom Kippur, and similarly, of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross, rises or falls with the coherence of Abraham's response to YHWH as recorded in Genesis 22."[130] Why? Because in Abraham, one understands what it really means to offer a sacrifice. A sacrifice is

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[125] See Tim Gray and Jeff Cavins, *Walking with God: A Journey Through the Bible* (West Chester, Pennsylvania: Ascension, 2024), 48.

[126] *na'ar*.

[127] *hā na'arîm*.

[128] See Jon D. Levenson, *The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son: The Transformation of Child Sacrifice in Judaism and Christianity* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1995), 134.

[129] See *JOTRP*, 36.

[130] Barry, *Jewish Temple Theology*, 37.

not so much about loss, destruction, and death. Instead, it is all about the willingness to offer oneself, one's everything totally to God in the spirit of love and trust. It is in the willingness to offer one's life in total-surrender for the sake of communion with God that really makes a sacrifice effective, worthwhile, and meaningful. Where Adam as the primordial priest of creation failed, i.e., failing to offer his life as a sacrifice – a total self-surrender to the will of God, Barry rightly observes that "Abraham and Isaac exemplify the exact opposite way of being, the route to true life through freely handing oneself over in a bond of trust."[131] הָעֲקֵידָה, according to N.T. Wright, is "both the narrative fountainhead and the theological substructure of Israel's election."[132]

c. *Jacob*

The priestly acts of Jacob or Israel recorded in the book of Genesis are the following: (1) the building of an altar in Luz which later on became known as Bethel or the "House of God" (35:6-7); (2) the setting up of sacred pillars, and the pouring out of drink offerings and oil (35:14-15); and finally (3) by blessing his twelve sons before his death (48:9-16; 49:1-28). These priestly acts were supposed to be done by Esau, the firstborn of Isaac and the older twin brother of Jacob. The priestly role of the firstborn son is handed down to him as part of his birthright.[133] But due to the fact that he sold his birthright to Jacob in exchange for bread and pottage of lentils (Gen 25:27-34), this privilege of performing the priestly duties on behalf of the family was transferred to Jacob.

d. *Joseph*

Joseph is the eleventh and the favorite son of Jacob (Gen 37:3). He and Benjamin are the children of Jacob with his beloved wife, Rachel (Gen 35:24). In other words, he is the firstborn of

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[131] Barry, *Jewish Temple Theology*, 87.

[132] Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 904.

[133] See Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant*, 136.

Jacob with Rachel. The third major cycle of the book of Genesis is all about his life story (chs. 37-50). John Bergsma pointed out that the priestly role of Joseph only becomes apparent upon closer reading of some of the texts in the third cycle, for example, Gen 45:8: "So it was not you who sent me here, but God; and he has made me a *father* to Pharaoh (לְאָב לְפַרְעֹה),[134] and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt" (emphasis added).[135] Being a "father to Pharaoh," the "lord of all his house" and "ruler over all the land of Egypt" are three different functions. To be the lord of all of Pharaoh's house meant that Joseph is his trusted steward, while being the ruler of the land of Egypt meant he was Pharaoh's prime minister. What is quite puzzling now is the meaning of Joseph's role as "father to Pharaoh." Bergsma explains in a compelling manner, the meaning of the Dreamer's role of being a "father to Pharaoh:"

> [Joseph] being a 'father' to Pharaoh meant that he was a *priest*, one who consulted God on behalf of Pharaoh, offered prayers and sacrifices for him, and mediated God's blessing to him. This was one of the reasons why he was given the daughter of an Egyptian priest as his wife (Gen 41:45). Pharaoh saw Joseph as a good candidate for a priestly role because he was filled with the spirit of God (Gen 41:38-39), revealed in his ability to interpret the meaning of dreams.[136]

2.2.4. Summary

In this section, the Pre-Levitical Priesthood was explained as the priesthood exercised by the Patriarchs before the establishment of the Levitical Priesthood in the wilderness. This kind of priesthood was handed down from father to the firstborn son. Part of the birthright given to the firstborn is his priestly role which he has to perform on

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[134] *lə'āḇ ləp̄ar'ōh*.

[135] See *JOTRP*, 46.

[136] *JOTRP*, 47.

behalf of his family. Adam is God's firstborn, and he was established as the primordial priest of the whole creation. The Fall was not simply a transgression against God's command not to eat of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, but above all else, a failure of Adam to perform his priestly role in the Garden of Eden. Melchizedek, the king-priest of Salem is the first person in the Bible to be called a priest. This mysterious figure will later on be perceived by the Auct Heb and the Church Fathers as an OT type of Christ. The priesthood of Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph are quite evident after examining the passages in the book of Genesis pertaining to their priestly actions as head of their family.

2.3. Levitical Priesthood

Renaud Silly has fittingly pointed out in his article, "Rituals Pertaining to Levitical Ordination," the fact that "the OT considers the priesthood as an intrinsically necessary institution."[137] The origin of the Levitical Priesthood can be traced back to the book of Exodus as something which is divinely instituted:

> I will consecrate the tent of meeting and the altar; Aaron also and his sons I will consecrate, to serve me as priests (Exod 29: 44).

Lawrence Feingold stated that "the Mosaic Law put the priesthood and the offering of sacrifice at the heart of the worship of Israel."[138] Hence, the Levitical priesthood became a necessary institution for the sacrifices to be offered in the land of Israel. As seen in the previous section, before the Levitical Priesthood, there was already a priesthood exercised by the Patriarchs. From Exodus to the NT, it is this Levitical Priesthood that will be functioning until the Jerusalem Temple was permanently destroyed in 70 AD.[139] After the exile, Israel was headed by

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[137] Silly, "Levitical Ordination," 36.

[138] Lawrence Feingold, *The Mystery of Israel and the Church*, vol. 2, *Things New and Old* (St. Louis, Missouri: The Miriam Press, 2010), 96.

[139] See *CBD*, 726-727.

Levitical priests, instead of the descendants of David. This only shows how the Levitical Priesthood became a sturdy and powerful religious institution especially in the Second Temple Period.[140] According to Pitre and Bergsma, "During much of this period, the high priest was *de facto* ruler of the populace, though a vassal under whatever foreign monarch held military control over the land of Israel."[141] For the Auct Heb, the New Covenant, like the Old Covenant, can only be established through a priestly mediation. It is quite clear for the Auct Heb that Jesus is not qualified to be a priest, if one would simply follow the decrees and regulations of the Old Covenant, since Jesus is not a descendant of Aaron. He did not belong to the tribe of Levi. He belongs to the kingly tribe of Judah, in particular, to the family of David (Matt 1:1-16; Luke 3:23-33; Heb 7:14).

The Levitical Priesthood established under the Mosaic Law is hereditary and temporary, hence, deficient.[142] Though the basis of Christ's Priesthood does not depend on Levitical lineage, it is still indispensable to examine the role of Levitical priests, in particular, the role of the high priest in the OT. Why? Because the Auct Heb argues that Christ is the definitive high priest by making a comparison between the priestly actions of Jesus and that of the OT high priest. The sacrifices in the Temple offered by the priests, especially the one offered by the high priest annually on the Day of Atonement finds its fulfillment and zenith in the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ. In other words, one can only better understand the Priesthood of Christ when it is seen against the background of the Levitical Priesthood. The superiority of Christ's Priesthood is seen in His once-for-all sacrifice *vis-à-vis* the sacrifices of the priests in the Temple that are incapable of providing satisfactory propitiation for the sins of men and women. According to Bryan Murphy, the non-hereditary nature of Christ's Priesthood makes it far more superior to the hereditary priesthood of

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[140] See Cody, *A History of the OT Priesthood*, 175-180.

[141] *CIBOT*, 457.

[142] See Murphy, "Priest According to the Order of Melchizedek," 301.

Aaron since "the hereditary nature of the Aaronic priesthood makes it inadequate to secure eternal salvation, since they do not live forever making intercessions between God and His people."[143]

In this section, the different roles of the three clerical groups of the OT, namely, Levites, priests, and high priests will be explained. Though Levites *per se* are not priests, it is still important to examine their role and to make a clear differentiation between them and the sons of Aaron. In the discussion concerning priests, it will be explained why "Levitical Priesthood" is the preferred term instead of "Aaronic Priesthood," if in the first place only the descendants of Aaron are qualified to become priests.[144] Finally, the office and role of the OT high priest will be explained, since in this way, one can better understand the arguments of the Auct Heb that Jesus is the eternal high priest.

2.3.1. Levites

The corps of the Levites was composed of the men of the tribe of Levi who were not descendants of Aaron, the first high priest.[145] Their appointment was quite a complex one involving three different components: first, according to Shubert Spero, is "the special responsibilities for the tabernacle."[146] Guarding and transporting the Tabernacle were entrusted to them. Scott Hahn has correctly pointed out the fact that the "the three Levitical clans of Kohath, Gershon, and Merari were each entrusted with maintaining and moving specific

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[143] Murphy, "Priest According to the Order of Melchizedek," 301.

[144] See Jeff Cavins, Jeffrey Morrow, Biff Rocha and Andrew Swafford, *A Catholic Guide to the Old Testament* (West Chester, Pennsylvania: Ascension Publishing Group, LLC, 2023), 67.

[145] See *CBD*, 536.

[146] Shubert Spero, "The Levites: A Tribe For All Seasons," *JBQ* 49, no. 4 (Oct - Dec 2021): 220.

parts of the sanctuary (Num 3:21-27)."[147] Like any other religious groups in history, the Levites have to adapt to changes whenever it was deemed necessary. Hahn summarized the tasks of the Levites during the time of the United Monarchy in this manner:

> When the Temple of Solomon was built, the portable Tabernacle was no longer used as a sanctuary. The duties of the Levites thus changed at the time of the United Monarchy, when they first began to serve as liturgical cantors and musicians (1 Chr 25), gatekeepers (1 Chr 26:1-19), and stewards of the Temple treasuries (1 Chr 26:20-28). Others were assigned to be judges and tax officers who would be distributed throughout the tribal territories (1 Chr 26:29-32).[148]

The second component, as mentioned in Num 1:47-54; 18:1-6, they are to be at the service of the Tabernacle's ritual functioning, which means, they have to be of general assistance to the *kohanim* or the priests.[149] They were distinguished from the priests and their role was relegated to an inferior position.[150] Priestly functions were reserved to the descendants of Aaron and though members of the OT clergy, Levites could not offer sacrifices, i.e. to offer up fat and blood to YHWH in the sanctuary.[151]

The third component, according to Shubert, is that they enjoy a special relationship with God, "growing out of their having replaced and redeemed the firstborn of Israel."[152] The firstborn being replaced and redeemed by the Levites can be traced back to the day when Israel apostatized by worshipping the Golden Calf. On that same

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[147] *CBD*, 536-537.

[148] *CBD*, 537.

[149] See Shubert. "The Levites," 220.

[150] See *AI*, 366.

[151] See *AI*, 364.

[152] Shubert, "The Levites," 220.

day, it was shown that the Israelites needed a Tabernacle which would require staffing, and this obligation was supposed to be performed by the firstborn. When the firstborn failed in this obligation, it was the Levites who assumed it instead.[153] From that day, Levites were elected as sacred ministers. For this reason, according to Hahn, "they were exempt from military duty, which is why the Levites were numbered separately from the lay tribes (Num 1 – 3)."[154]

2.3.2. Levitical Priests

Renaud Silly, in his article on Levitical ordination, made an important observation regarding the nature of the ministerial priesthood in Israel:

> The OT knows of no other ministerial priesthood as transmissible, as institutionalized, as perennial according to the predetermined forms than that of the descendants of Aaron – the brother of Moses.[155]

This statement highlights how central the ministry of the Levitical priests is in the life of the Israelite community. According to David M. Levy, Israel was supposed to be "a kingdom of priests" (Exod 19:6). To demonstrate God's standard of holiness to a world that is already critically sinful is the responsibility of Israel as a priestly nation. But due to Israel's apostasy – breaking the covenant that God had made with them at Mount Sinai (Exod 19:5), their privilege to be a kingdom of priests was forfeited. Hence, it became necessary for God to institute a priesthood that will represent the nation of Israel before Him: "Then bring near to you Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the sons of Israel, to serve me as priests – Aaron and Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar" (Exod

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[153] See Shubert, "The Levites," 220.

[154] *CBD*, 537.

[155] Silly, "Levitical Ordination," 36.

28:1).[156] Alois Stöger explained that "by the terms of the *Mosaic Law* the priesthood was transferred exclusively (Num 17:5; 18:7; see 3:10; 16:1ff) to Aaron of the tribe of Levi and his male descendants (Exod 28f; Lev 6; see also Ezra 2:62; Num 16:17)."[157] The sacred office of the Levitical priests is well described by Margaret Barker in this way:

> They were consecrated with blood and oil (Exod 29:1-35) and they alone were permitted to enter the holiest part of the tabernacle or temple…Their 'hands were filled' with incense, the sign of the priesthood. Exodus 28:41 reads, literally, 'you shall anoint them and fill their hands and consecrate them, that they may be priests to me.'[158]

The roles of Levitical priests as already explained in section 2.1. of this study are to be (1) oracular consultants, (2) teachers, (3) ministers of sacrifices, and (4) mediators of God and His people.

Anthony R. Ceresko explained that "with the fall of Jerusalem and the end of the Davidic dynasty in Judah, one of the principal groups that emerged to replace the monarchy in the leadership of the Jewish community was the priests."[159] They were in positions of power in the Jewish community from the 6th century B.C. to the 1st century A.D., aside from their cultic responsibilities in the Temple.

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[156] See David M. Levy, *The Tabernacle, Shadows of the Messiah: Its Sacrifices, Services, and Priesthood* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publications, 2003), 139.

[157] Stöger, "*Priestertum*," 932: "*Durch das mosaische Gesetz wurde das Priestertum ausschließlich (Num 17:5; 18:7; vgl. 3:10; 16:1ff) Aaron aus dem Stamm Levi und seinen männlichen Nachkommen übertragen (Exod 28f; Lev 6; vgl. auch Esr 2:62; Num 16:17)*."

[158] Margaret Barker, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 28.

[159] Anthony R. Ceresko, O.S.F.S., *Introduction to the Old Testament*, rev. and updated ed. (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2001), 276.

In his book, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, Everett Ferguson skillfully describes the priests' social and religious context during the time of Christ:

> The priests were divided into twenty-four courses, each of which was responsible for conducting the temple ritual for one week at a time, twice a year, and all were to be available at the great pilgrim festivals. Most of the priests, therefore, lived outside Jerusalem and were there only when their course was on duty. There was a considerable social gulf between the priestly aristocracy centered on the temple and the ordinary priests scattered throughout the country. Specific duties at the temple were assigned by lot.[160]

This first century AD priestly and cultic setting is the context of the Lucan narrative on the annunciation of the birth of John the Baptist to Zechariah (Luke 1:5-25). The birth of the Baptizer was announced to Zechariah while he was serving as a priest in the Temple of Jerusalem.[161]

Finally, the term "Levitical Priesthood" needs some explanation and further clarification. If the priests in the OT must only come from the family of Aaron, then why not simply call it, "Aaronic Priesthood" instead of "Levitical Priesthood?" The first reason in preferring the designation "Levitical" instead of "Aaronic" in describing the OT priesthood is the fact that Aaron and his descendants were first and foremost members of the tribe of Levi. Second, "Levitical Priesthood" is the term preferred by the Auct Heb, διὰ τῆς Λευιτικῆς ἱερωσύνης[162] (Heb 7:11) – "through the Levitical priesthood." The said term can be found nowhere else in the Bible, but only in Heb 7. And in the same

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[160] Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 565.

[161] See Eugene LaVerdiere, S.S.S., *Luke* (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1980), 15-16. See also Michael F. Patella, O.S.B., "The Gospel According to Luke," in NCBC, 1111. See also Amy-Jill Levine, "The Gospel According to Luke," in JANT, 109.

[162] *dia tēs Leuitikēs hierōsynēs*.

verse, the reader will see that the Auct Heb used the term "Levitical Priesthood" to refer exclusively to the priests belonging to the Aaronic family, and never to the male members of the tribe of Levi. He refers to the "Levitical Priesthood" as the "one named according to the order of Aaron" – κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Ἀαρών.[163]

2.3.3. The High Priest

The high priest was the head of the Levitical Priesthood.[164] Aaron in the Priestly tradition of the Pentateuch, as pointed out by Roland De Vaux, is presented as "the first high priest of Israel, his sons are the only lawful priests, and the other members of the tribe of Levi are given to them as servants (Exod 28-29; Lev 8-10; Num 16-18)."[165] The title "high priest" in Hebrew is הַכֹּהֵן הַגָּדוֹל[166] (Num 35:25, 28; 2 Josh 20:6, Kings 22:8, et al.), literally, "the great priest."[167] According to Noam Mizrahi, the title הַכֹּהֵן הַגָּדוֹל, from a linguistic point of view "was the standard term denoting the high priest in ancient Hebrew, in both preexilic and postexilic times."[168] The LXX translates הַכֹּהֵן הַגָּדוֹל as ὁ ἱερεὺς ὁ μέγας.[169] In his work, *Ancient Israel*, De Vaux stated a significant linguistic and historical observation regarding the title of the high priest:

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[163] *kata tēn taxin Aarōn*.

[164] See Rainer Albertz, *A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period*, vol. 2, *From the Exile to the Maccabees*, trans. John Bowden (Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994), 460. See also Andreas Stutz, "The Jewish Institutions," in *HJRCF*, 143.

[165] *AI*, 395.

[166] *hakohen haggadôl*.

[167] See Margaret Barker, *The Hidden Tradition of the Kingdom of God* (London: SPCK, 2007), 56.

[168] Noam Mizrahi, "The History and Linguistic Background of Two Hebrew Titles for the High Priest," *JBL* 130, no. 4 (Winter 2011): 705.

[169] *ho hiereus ho megas*. See *The Septuagint with Apocrypha*, 227.

> But in the Books of Maccabees, this literal rendering is replaced by a technical term ἀρχιερεύς,[170] which is regularly applied to all the high priests; the NT and Philo follow the same practice.[171]

After the Babylonian Exile, Israel, instead of being headed again by a Davidic king, according to Rudolf Bultmann, was organized "on a hierarchical basis, with the high priest as its head."[172] Henri Daniel-Rops, in his work, *Daily Life in the Time of Jesus* has pointed out that "the high priest was the prime guardian of ritual cleanliness."[173] It means to say that it was part of the high priest's obligation to make sure that the priests under his leadership were performing their duties properly and accordingly based on the laws on ritual purity and cleanliness.

There is not enough information, according to Aelred Cody, regarding the regular life and work of the high priest during the post-exilic period or Second Temple Judaism. But what is certain is his function on the annual Day of Atonement described in detail in Lev 16, which is his great moment liturgically.[174]

> Sirach, in his eulogy of the high priest Simon at the beginning of the second century BC, confirms this impression, for the ritual actions which Simon is described as performing in Sir 50:5-21 are those of the Day of Atonement.[175]

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[170] *archiereus*.

[171] *AI*, 398.

[172] Rudolf Bultmann, *Primitive Christianity in its Contemporary Setting*, trans. R. H. Fuller (Edinburgh: R. & R. Clark, Ltd., 1956), 51.

[173] Henri Daniel-Rops, *Daily Life in the Time of Jesus*, trans. Patrick O'Brian (New York: Hawthorn Books Inc., 1962), 423.

[174] See Cody, *A History of the OT Priesthood*, 184.

[175] Cody, *A History of the OT Priesthood,* 184.

This only shows that the identity of the high priest is essentially and technically tied to his liturgical role in the most solemn day of the Jewish liturgical calendar.[176] According to Barry, this is something very essential since "after all, human beings were not typically admitted to God's private chamber in the old covenant, except for the high priest, and then only once a year on Yom Kippur. Israel enters into God's intimate space in the holy of holies only through the mediation of the high priest."[177] For this reason, even the high priest's vestments are very significant in the celebration of the Day of Atonement. According to Pitre, "In ancient Judaism, there was one person who was viewed as embodying in himself both the Temple and the cosmos. That person was the Jewish High Priest, whose liturgical vestments were meant to replicate both the Temple and the universe."[178] "In other words, the high priest, resplendently vested," Barry explains, "mediates to Israel the inner mysteries of the Temple, even as he personally represents all of Israel, and indeed all of creation, to God in the holy of holies on Yom Kippur."[179] Moreover, the high priest is not only a representative of Israel before God, but also the one who represents God to the people. Barker noted that this is the purpose of the golden seal in the high priest's forehead, engraved with the four letters of the Divine Name.[180]

> The royal high priest who bore the Name and was the LORD with his people, was the key figure on the Day of Atonement. When we read Leviticus, or in the Mishnah of the rituals he performed,

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[176] See Smith, *The House of the Lord*, 116.

[177] Barry, *Jewish Temple Theology*, 88.

[178] Brant Pitre, "Jesus, the New Temple and the New Priesthood," *Letter and Spirit* 4 (2008): 61.

[179] Barry, *Jewish Temple Theology*, 89.

[180] See Margaret Barker, *Temple Theology: An Introduction* (London: SPCK, 2004), 58-59.

> these were the actions of the LORD, and thus atonement was brought about by the LORD and only by the LORD.[181]

Hence, one can really say that the OT high priest is truly a "type" and a "prefiguration" of Jesus – true God and true man – the new and definitive high priest of the New Covenant.

2.3.4. Summary

The Levitical Priesthood was divinely instituted by God and an essential institution of ancient Israel. The three clerical groups in the OT are Levites, priests and high priests. Levites were male members of the tribe of Levi, though sacred ministers, they did not receive priestly ordination. They were commissioned to assist the priests in the service of the Tabernacle or the Temple. The Levitical Priesthood was exclusive to the descendants of Aaron, i.e., only those men belonging to the Aaronic family were ordained to the priesthood. The high priest was the head of the Levitical Priesthood. His identity is essentially tied to his priestly office on the Day of Atonement, the most solemn day in the Jewish liturgical calendar.

2.4. The Meaning of OT Sacrifice

Robert Daly, S.J. was right in saying that "sacrifice is perhaps the most massively misunderstood word and concept in all of Christian theology."[182] It is often a word that is praised or ridiculed for the wrong reasons. Today, Christian A. Eberhart explains, when people talk about sacrifice, it "is usually understood to convey that somebody suffers loss for a particular cause or for the sake of a greater good. It is particularly associated with misfortune or the violent destruction of something, for example, the material being sacrificed or a human

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[181] Barker, *Temple Theology*, 60.

[182] Daly, *Sacrifice Unveiled*, xiii.

life."[183] But is this really what a sacrifice is as presented in the Scripture? Is violence, loss, destruction, and death essential components of a sacrifice? What really makes a sacrifice, in the biblical sense of the word, *a sacrifice*? These questions have to be answered correctly, since a coherent and meaningful biblical theology of the sacrifice of Christ is always dependent on a right understanding of sacrifice, not as presented in the many scholarly theories about it,[184] but as presented in the Bible.

People who do not have the patience to seriously examine the biblical concept of sacrifice end up distorting and maligning it. Richard Dawkins, the famous Oxford biologist and atheist, is a good example of a person who misunderstood what a sacrifice really is all about. He calls the Incarnation, Crucifixion, and Death of Jesus as a form of sado-masochism. God became man to be tortured and executed in atonement for the hereditary sin of Adam and Eve.[185] Reading between the lines, one can see that Dawkins understood sacrifice as synonymous to violence, loss, destruction, and death. When there are no violence, loss, destruction, and death, then there is no sacrifice. This is nothing but a caricature of what a sacrifice truly is. At the onset, it is already important to clarify one essential point – *violence, loss, destruction, and death do not make a sacrifice.*[186] In this section, the meaning of sacrifice in the OT will be presented as a hermeneutical background to better understand Heb's concept of Jesus' once-for-all sacrifice.

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[183] Christian A. Eberhart, *The Sacrifice of Jesus: Understanding Atonement Biblically* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 13.

[184] For a comprehensive discussion on the different scholarly theories of sacrifice, see Eberhart, *The Sacrifice of Jesus*, 14-25.

[185] See Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (London: Transworld Publishers, 2016), 286.

[186] For a more elaborate discussion that sacrifice is not about death, see Andrew Remington Rillera, *Lamb of the Free: Recovering the Varied Sacrificial Understanding of Jesus's Death* (Eugene Oregon: Cascade Books, 2024), 15-22.

2.4.1. Sacrifice as Self-Oblation to God

Roland De Vaux gives a provisory definition of sacrifice as "any offering, animal or vegetable, which is wholly or partially *destroyed* upon an altar as a token of homage to God."[187] Apparently, this definition seems to agree with what Dawkins construed about sacrifice that its essential components are destruction, violence, loss, and death for the sake of God. It seems to showcase that sacrifice is essentially founded on destruction or obliteration. Therefore, to clarify this point is essential in any honest discussion on the sacrificial system of the OT – though destruction is part of sacrifice, it is *not* what essentially constitutes it. An offering might be lucratively destroyed upon an altar, but when the inner disposition of "self-oblation" rooted in the love of God, which makes the act of adoration possible, is absent from the offeror, the sacrifice only becomes displeasing to God. In other words, it does not serve its purpose which is communion or reconciliation with God.[188] According to Otto Semmelroth,

> The sacrifices offered to God by men correspond to the human usage of expressing affection by a gift. One's esteem for self-dedication – a token of one's belonging to another.[189]

The same idea about sacrifice was pointed out by N. T. Wright when he explained in a foreword that the "sacrifices within the Levitical system, which included things like grain offerings (i.e., offerings involving neither animals nor blood) served a variety of purposes, at the heart of which was the desire to give a gift to God as a symbol of one's devotion."[190] The Bible is replete with examples of persons offering sacrifice to God, but were rejected by God for the simple reason that their sacrifice does not correspond interiorly to their self-oblation, and because of that, their sacrificial act cannot

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[187] *AI*, 415, emphasis added.

[188] See *CIBOT*, 208.

[189] Otto Semmelroth, "Concept of Sacrifice," in ET_{CSM}, 1489.

[190] Wright, foreword to *Rethinking the Atonement*, xviii.

be considered an act of adoration worthy of God. Their sacrifice was not an expression of their total self-surrender to the will of God: Cain (Gen 4:1-7), Nadab and Abihu (Lev 10:1-4),[191] Saul (1 Sam 13:8-15), et al.

The inner disposition of self-oblation as the essential spiritual component of sacrifice is something which is explicitly stated in the Bible. According to Semmelroth,

> When man's offering of sacrifice to God is seen in this light, it appears as a confession of faith in the personal nature of God and in the nature of man's relationship with God.[192]

When the spiritual component of sacrifice is absent, it is simply pathetic and futile. When Saul disobeyed the command of God regarding the Amalekites and yet still wanting to offer a sacrifice to Him, Samuel admonished Saul and told him that what really makes a sacrifice effective, i.e. pleasing and acceptable to God is a person's self-oblation or total surrender to the will of God:

> Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has rejected you from being king (1 Sam 15:22-23).

Another similar incident is narrated in one of the earliest prophetic books of the OT, the book of Amos. God rejects the sacrifices of the house of Israel because exteriorly they were offering sacrifices, but interiorly they disregard the will of God and would simply pay heed to their own will, even at the expense of other people's welfare, especially

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[191] For a study on the close theological parallel between the sin of Nadab and Abihu and the sin of Adam, the primordial priest, see, Richard J. Barry IV, "They Feasted Their Eyes": Nadab, Abihu, and the Original Sin," *JTI* vol. 17, no. 2 (2023): 145-165.

[192] Semmelroth, "Concept of Sacrifice," 1489.

the poor and the destitute. When Amos was sent to the house of Israel to prophesy, Carol J. Dempsey observes, it "was a time of prosperity that brought with it, unfortunately, the exploitation of the poor and defenseless by the wealthy and the powerful. With a new economic order came excessive wealth for some Israelites, which, in turn, led to a leisured upper class, many of whom became involved in decadent lifestyle (Amos 2:8; 4:1; 6:1-6). Judicial corruption also took root (Amos 5:7-12) along with religious hypocrisy."[193] When the people of Israel continued to offer sacrifices to God and yet living affluent and decadent lifestyles, not paying heed to the call to conversion, God gave them this loaded admonition:

> I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me burnt offerings and cereal offerings, I will not accept them, and the peace offerings of your fatted beasts I will not look upon. Take away from me the noise of your songs; to the melody of your harps I will not listen. But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream (Amos 5:21-24).

Another important passage in the OT on the importance of the interior disposition of a person in relation to sacrifice is Hosea 6:6:

> For I desire mercy and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.

This passage is not a prohibition or a total rejection of sacrifices by God. Rather, according to P. R. Ackroyd, it is a statement from God regarding the first essential, which is, loyalty to the covenant. It is not a negation of all sacrificial observance.[194] God, according to Benjamin J. Ribbens, "desires covenant faithfulness, and sacrifices were a means by which Israel was supposed to demonstrate their faithfulness."[195]

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[193] Carol J. Dempsey, O.P., "The Book of Amos," in *NCBC*, 890.

[194] See P. R. Ackroyd, "Hosea," in *PCB*, 609.

[195] Benjamin J. Ribbens, "Whose 'Mercy?' What 'Sacrifice?' A Proposed Reading of Matthew's Hosea 6:6 Quotations," *BBR* vol. 28, no. 3 (2018): 384.

Furthermore, Hosea 6:6 only shows that when those unfit to stand in the presence of God offer a sacrifice, it always courts disaster.[196] The same theme can also be found in the book of Proverbs: "To do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice" (21:3).

The biblical passages quoted above only show that what *primarily* constitute a sacrifice is the inner disposition of the offeror. The procedure of offering sacrifices will only have effect when in the first place it is an expression of a person's total self-oblation or surrender to the will of God. But the acceptance or rejection of a sacrifice will always be in God's prerogative. It is always a divine decision. According to Moffitt,

> This is really another way of saying that the sacrifices described in the Old Testament did not merely work by way of performing the proper ritual. Reconciliation rests with God, not with completing the right rituals. The rituals, however, are given by God as a means for creating conditions within which he will be reconciled to his people.[197]

Furthermore, only the sacrifice which is an expression of a person's total self-surrender to God is the one that is accepted. No matter how a person meticulously follows the procedure of doing sacrifice, if it is not founded on the spiritual disposition of self-oblation and obedience to God, all sacrificial acts are simply worthless and meaningless. Several authors agree on this indispensable biblical teaching:

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[196] See P. R. Ackroyd, "Hosea," 609.

[197] Moffitt, *Rethinking the Atonement*, 2.

Terry Briley:

> The worshiper must not only follow the proper ritual but also live in accordance with God's standard in order for the sacrifice to be acceptable.[198]

Henri Cazelles:

> *Die Opfer zeigen verschiedene Ideen, wie die der Gabe, der Gemeinschaft, der Versöhnung, hatten aber das eine gemeinsam, wirksame Mittel in der Hand des Opfernden zu sein, um sich Gott zu präsentieren*.[199]

Robert Daly:

> What actually brought about reconciliation, atonement and communion with God was not so much the actual performance of a sacrifice, but the fact that it was performed *according to the law*, that is, in accordance with the will of God.[200]

Joseph Jensen:

> In sacrifice the end was not the destruction of the victim but the offering of life; the worshipper made this a means of offering oneself to God in total surrender.[201]

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[198] Terry Briley, "The Old Testament 'Sin Offering' and Christ's Atonement," *SCJ* 3 (Spring, 2000): 94.

[199] Henri Cazelles, "Opfer," in *BW2*, 910: "Sacrifice expresses various ideas such as those of gift, of communion, of propitiation, but the single factor which all these have in common is the idea of sacrifice as constituting an effective means in the hand of the offerer of presenting himself before God."

[200] Daly, *Sacrifice Unveiled,* 3.

[201] Jensen, *God's Word*, 114.

Joseph Ratzinger:

> *Das konstitutive Prinzip des Opfers ist nicht die Zerstörung, sondern die Liebe*.[202]

Otto Semelroth:

> In the relationship of man to God the gift offered in sacrifice has a meaning which transcends the gift. It is now an expression of man's total dedication, an acknowledgment of the infinite Lordship of God to whom man belongs and desires to belong.[203]

2.4.2. Sacrifice as a Means for Communion/Reconciliation with God

Richard J. Barry, IV has correctly pointed out that "sacrifice rightly and analogically understood is proper to the divine life."[204] The communion of God and His people in love, peace, happiness, and serenity is what divine life is all about.[205] John Bergsma and Brant Pitre explained that a sacrifice is "a kind of *ritualized self-offering*. By means of the sacrificial gift – be it bloody or unbloody, animal, food, or drink – the worshipper symbolically offers himself to God."[206] And the purpose of this ritualized self-offering is either to *express* communion with God or to *restore* communion (reconciliation) with God.[207] According to Robert Barron, "In a world gone wrong

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[202] Joseph Ratzinger, *Einführung in das Christentum* (München: Kösel-Verlag, 1968), 238: "The fundamental principle of the sacrifice is not destruction but love."

[203] Semmelroth, "Concept of Sacrifice," 1489.

[204] Barry, *Jewish Temple Theology*, 273.

[205] See *CCC*, no. 45.

[206] *CIBOT*, 208, emphasis in the original.

[207] See *CIBOT*, 208.

there is no communion without sacrifice… [and] covenant is almost invariably associated with sacrifice."[208]

A careful reading of the narrative of Leviticus on the five types of sacrifice or offering of the Old Covenant shows that these offerings can be divided into two groups. The first group is composed of the burnt offering (Lev 1), the cereal offering (Lev 2) and the peace offering (Lev 3). These first three offerings express and celebrate a person's communion with God. While the second group composed of the sin offering (Lev 4:1-5:13) and the guilt offering (Lev 5:14-6:7) are offerings which are meant to reconcile a person back to God.[209]

De Vaux, in his definition of sacrifice quoted in the previous section, highlights the aspect of sacrifice which is the destruction of the offering in the altar either wholly or partially as a form of homage to God. Here, destruction of the offering must be understood correctly and accordingly in order not to have an amiss understanding of sacrifice. When sacrifice's aspect of destruction is erroneously understood, it leads to a wrong concept of sacrifice which simply considers it as an act of sheer violence and utter devastation. What is worse is to see sacrifice as a way to appease a god/goddess who is angry, blood thirsty and madly attached to the homage of his/her people.[210] This kind of understanding is prevalent in the sacrificial systems of the pagan world,[211] but such a concept is quite alien to

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[208] Robert Barron, *Catholicism: A Journey to the Heart of Faith* (New York: Image, 2011), 182.

[209] See *CIBOT*, 208.

[210] "The most extreme example being the case of Iphigeneia who was offered as a human sacrifice in response to the goddess Artemis to placate her anger" [Frances M. Young, *The Use of Sacrificial Ideas in Greek Christian Writers from the New Testament to John Chrysostom* (Massachusetts: The Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, Ltd., 1979), 14]. See also Edith Hamilton, *Mythology: Timeless Tales of Gods and Heroes*, illustrated ed. (New York: Black Dog & Leventhal Publishers, 2017), 275.

[211] See Young, *The Use of Sacrificial Ideas*, 11-23.

the sacrificial system of the Bible. YHWH is not a god who is blood thirsty and who needs to be satisfied by the offerings of His people. He is not in need of sacrifice. He is not in need of the blood of birds and animals, since in the first place all of these creatures belong to Him. This truth is well stated in Psalm 50:9-11: "I will accept no bull from your house, nor he-goat from your folds. For every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. I know all the birds of the air, and all that moves in the field is mine."

The proper way to understand sacrifice's aspect of destruction is to perceive it in the context of communion and reconciliation. When an animal is slaughtered or a vegetable is destroyed on the altar as a sacrifice, this action is not executed for the sake of simply destroying or slaughtering the offering, but for it to be a means of communion or reconciliation with God. But in what way? When a bull is killed, or a cereal is burned on the altar, both of these offerings end their terrestrial existence. If these offerings symbolize the person's self-offering of him/herself to God, then these offerings must reach the heavenly or the extra-terrestrial domain where the God of Israel resides. Even the Temple of Jerusalem, especially the Holy of Holies was considered a sphere or domain which is out of this world. Margaret Barker explains that when the high priest steps beyond the veil, into the Holy of Holies during the Day of Atonement, he is actually stepping "outside matter and time, and rituals in the Holy of Holies were deemed to take place in eternity…"[212] Albert Vanhoye explained this sacrificial logic in a compelling manner, and it is advantageous to quote his full explanation regarding this vital aspect of sacrifice:

> Sacrifice is necessary as the final stage of separation from the profane world. The priest himself, in other words, cannot completely realize this separation in his own person. Despite all the ceremonies of his consecration, he remains a terrestrial being and does not pass into the divine world. He must therefore choose another creature, capable of achieving this passage. the ritual commands him to choose an animal of a particular species,

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[212] Barker, *Temple Theology*, 24.

> while taking care to see that it is without any defect. This animal will be completely removed from the profane world, for it will be immolated and offered on the altar of the Temple. Consumed by the sacred fire of the altar, it will mount up to heaven to be transformed into 'perfume of a pleasing odor,' or in another symbol, its blood will be sprinkled over the 'Mercy Seat' as a gesture of reaching God himself.[213]

The sacrificial system of the Bible is deeply rooted in the concept of communion/reconciliation of God and humanity. A sacrifice is never performed because God needs it, rather it is a means given by God to humanity in order for men and women to be united with Him. Since the offerings of the Day of Atonement are a combination of the burnt offering[214] and the sin/purification offering, it is therefore important to correctly understand the profound symbolism and role of the animal's blood in the said ritual, which, in the first place, aims at Israel's communion and reconciliation with God.

For Israel, blood *is* the sacrament of life and she, according to Barry, "must see herself as a Blood of Life people."[215] Blood in the sacrificial system of the Bible is *not* a symbol of death, violence, and destruction, but a symbol of life. This is in direct contradiction with the position of Leon Morris that in the OT blood means *not* life but death, and to be more precise, death with violence.[216] But as Frances Young has pointed out, Morris' position is irrelevant to the discussion since "the actual issue in the dispute is whether the essential act of sacrifice was the death of the victim or the offering of the lifeblood. The form of the rituals definitely suggests that the blood ritual was more important, and that it signified more than merely the death or

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[213] Vanhoye, *OT Priests and the New Priest*, 30.

[214] The Day of Atonement begins and ends with the usual *Tāmīd*, the daily burnt offering in the Temple.

[215] Barry, *Jewish Temple Theology*, 192.

[216] See Leon Morris, "The Biblical Use of the Term 'Blood,'" *TJTS* vol. 6, no. 1 (April 1955): 81-82.

the destruction of the victim."[217] In other words, the animal's blood in a sacrifice symbolizes Israel's total offering of her life to God.

Physical impurities and sins are dual pollutants that defile the sanctuary.[218] These pollutants are hindrances for Israel's communion with God. Israel must be cleansed from her defilement and be forgiven from her sins in order for her communion with God to be restored. Such communal reconciliation between God and His people is the aim of the Day of Atonement. For this reason, it is the holiest day in the Jewish liturgical calendar. Sin and defilement are forces of death and evil. Therefore, death can only be driven away by life. When the blood of the sacrificial animal is sprinkled in the Holy of Holies, this blood which is *the* symbol of life, drives away the forces of death and evil from the sanctuary and makes it a worthy dwelling place of God again in this world. This is what reconciliation is all about in the biblical worldview. When the blood is sprinkled on the "mercy seat" (*kapporet* – כַּפֹּרֶת) of the Ark of the Covenant which is considered the throne of YHWH,[219] it expresses Israel's communion with God. The invisible God and His people become one as the blood is sprinkled on the 'mercy seat.' According to Barry, "Blood is the sacrament through which Israel draws near, open-heart to open-heart, and it is this form of life that overcomes every attempt at destruction."[220] The same point is being said by Barker when she stated that "the blood in atonement rituals was said to be life not death and it was the life which atoned."[221] The process of communion and reconciliation can only happen in the Holy of Holies, in the *kapporet* of the Ark of the Covenant. The

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[217] Young, *The Use of Sacrificial Ideas*, 54.

[218] See Barry, *Jewish Temple Theology*, 161.

[219] See William Neil, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: Ritual and Reality* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1955), 89.

[220] Barry, *Jewish Temple Theology*, 202.

[221] Margaret Barker, *On Earth As It Is In Heaven: Temple Symbolism in the New Testament* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, Ltd, 2009), 44.

importance of this reconciling process is well explained by N. T. Wright in this manner:

> The *kapporet* was where the purification would be made, so that God and his people could safely meet; the blood of the sin offering was to act as a ritual detergent to purify the sanctuary, so that the place on earth where the divine Glory came to dwell, as in Exodus 40, might be kept pure, maintaining not only the covenantal link between God and Israel, but also the very fabric of the cosmos, the joining of heaven and earth.[222]

2.4.3. Sacrifice of the OT: Temporal And Repeatable

Upon careful examination, what is noticeable in the sacrificial system of the OT, especially in the narrative of Leviticus, is the obvious fact that sacrifices were offered in space and time. In other words, they were *temporal*, and because of that, *repeatable*. From the Tabernacle to the Temple, sacrifices were offered morning and evening until it ceased in 70 AD with the destruction of the city and the Temple of Jerusalem. The daily sacrifice in the Temple was a steady reminder to the chosen people that they are a community that totally belongs to God. According to Barry, "The ancient Israelite theology of cultic offerings, which pursues the renewed Eden on Zion, is meant to train Israel in the way of intimacy, harmony, and mutual faithfulness."[223]

The temporal and repetitive characters of the OT sacrifices point to the fact that the sacrificial system of ancient Israel was limited and imperfect. If such a system was already enough and perfect, then there is no need for a future sacrifice that will truly establish God's definitive communion with His people. If the sacrifices of the Old Covenant were enough for the purpose of humanity's reconciliation and communion with God, then there is no need for a New Covenant. But the Old

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[222] N. T. Wright, *The Day the Revolution Began: Reconsidering the Meaning of Jesus's Crucifixion* (New York: Harper One, 2016), 327.

[223] *Barry, Jewish Temple Theology*, 356.

Covenant itself is straightforward regarding its inefficiency since it gave a promise about the coming of a New Covenant (Jer 31:31-34).

For ancient Israel, according to Young, "sacrifice continued as a recognition of God's goodness and a symbol of the obedience of the worshipper and the community as a whole."[224] There is no doubt that the sacrifices of the OT were beneficial in establishing God's intimate relationship with His people. Indeed, as pointed out by Moffitt, "Old Testament sacrifice is deeply relational."[225] To say otherwise is to empty the OT of its content and meaning. The once-for-all sacrifice of Christ spoken of by the Auct Heb in the NT would not make any sense if it was not perceived through the lens of the cultic system of the OT. The definitive, perfect, and once-for-all sacrifice will only be better appreciated and understood when it is placed in contrast to its predecessors that prepared Israel for the New and Everlasting Covenant.

2.4.4. Summary

In this section, the meaning of OT sacrifices was discussed, and what was highlighted is the fact that the sacrificial system of ancient Israel was *not* based on destruction, violence, and death. Sacrifice is an act of adoration of the people to God. It is an acknowledgment of who God is, and how He is worthy of such adoration. Furthermore, sacrifices are means for the communion/reconciliation of God and His people. Sacrifices either express communion with God or to restore communion with God. The sacrificial blood is far from being a symbol of death. Instead, it is a symbol of life that is totally offered to God. In sacrifice, what is really essential is not the death or destruction of the offering, especially in blood offerings, but the manipulation of the blood. Finally, the OT sacrifices were temporal and repeatable. They were operative means for establishing Israel's intimate relationship with God, but they were far from being perfect

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[224] Young, *The Use of Sacrificial Ideas*, 69.

[225] Moffitt, *Rethinking the Atonement*, 2.

and satisfactory. The Old Covenant was looking forward to a New Covenant with its sacrifice, which will be perfect, and the fulfillment of the sacrifices of the OT cult.

2.5. Five Types of OT Sacrifice

The book of Leviticus begins by enumerating and explaining the five types of sacrifice (קָרְבָּו)[226] of the Old Covenant, namely, 1) the burnt offering, 2) the cereal offering, 3) the peace offering, 4) the sin offering, and 5) the guilt offering. These sacrifices are already mentioned in section 2.4.2. were grouped based on their purpose, either to express communion with God or to restore communion with God. Though the burnt offering and the sin offering were the only types of sacrifice offered during the Day of Atonement, it is still beneficial to discuss the other types since it will provide us with a more comprehensive view of the sacrificial system of the OT.

2.5.1. The Burnt Offering

The concept of sacrifice as self-oblation or self-donation to God is well conveyed in the first type of sacrifice in the book of Leviticus, the *burnt offering* (Ch. 1).[227] The Hebrew name for this offering is עוֹלָה[228] which literally means "ascending"[229] or "that which ascends."[230] This name was given to this type of sacrifice because the entire sacrificial animal "ascends" or "goes up" in smoke.[231] According to Jacob Milgrom, "The antiquity of the burnt offering is well established… [it] is attested in the earliest sources (e.g., Gen 8:20; 22:2, 7, 8, 13; Exod

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[226] *qorbān*.

[227] See Cavins et al., *A Catholic Guide to the OT*, 148.

[228] *ʿōlā*.

[229] See *CIBOT*, 208.

[230] See Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 3 of *The Anchor Bible* (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 172.

[231] See *CIBOT*, 208.

10:25; 18:12; Num 23:15; Judg 6:26; 13:16; 1 Sam 7:9; 1 Kgs 18:38; 2 Kgs 3:27; 10:24; Job 1:5; 42:8)."[232] A male animal without blemish – a ram or a goat, a bull, or for the poor, two turtle doves or pigeon – was the one offered as a whole burnt offering. [233] When the burnt offering is contrasted to other sacrifices, one could notice that nothing of this offering was eaten, everything "goes up" to God, everything was offered to Him. [234] As pointed out by Norman H. Snaith, in the burnt offering, "nobody received any part of it,"[235] except God. Pitre and Bergsma described the process of the ritual of burnt offering in this manner:

> In order to signify that the animal symbolizes the offerer, hands are laid on the head of the animal, thereby establishing a transferal of identity or symbolic representation. In this way, the burnt offering is the most basic of all offerings: on behalf of the offerer, the animal is completely given to God, thereby representing the offerer's own self-donation to the Lord, in a fundamental act of worship.[236]

The burnt offering is repeatedly given priority in the OT because as correctly pointed out by James W. Watts, "the biblical writers regard this offering as most representative of Israel's worship, as best expressing the proper worship of God."[237] The chosen people thought

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[232] Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 174.

[233] See Barker, *The Gate of Heaven*, 33.

[234] See *CIBOT*, 208.

[235] Norman H. Snaith, "Sacrifice in the Old Testament," *Vetus Testamentum* (July 1957): 309.

[236] *CIBOT*, 208.

[237] James W. Watts, *Ritual and Rhetoric in Leviticus: From Sacrifice to Scripture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 71.

of the burnt offerings, in a general manner, as being gifts or oblations to God.[238]

The LXX translates the word עוֹלָה as ὁλοκαύτωμα[239] which literally means "whole" (ὅλος)[240] + "burnt" (καυστός),[241] "emphasizing, not the movement of the sacrifice upward, but its complete consumption by fire."[242] In recent years, this term was given a very negative connotation since it is the name commonly applied in English – "holocaust," to the genocide of six million Jews by Nazi Germany during World War II.[243]

תָּמִיד [244] was the daily burnt offering offered by priests in the Temple of Jerusalem.[245] It is the first sacrifice offered during the day and the last sacrifice offered during the evening,[246] i.e., for the "morning," at sunrise, and for the "evening," at 3:00 in the afternoon.[247] The תָּמִיד only ceased when the Temple was destroyed in 70 AD.[248] Israel's self-

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[238] See E. P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief 63BCE–66 CE* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1992), 106.

[239] *holokautōma*. See *The Septuagint with Apocrypha*, 126. See also *Vine AEDNTW*, vol. 1, 159. See also GAGNT, 676.

[240] *holos*. See *Vine AEDNTW*, vol. 4, 213.

[241] *kaustos*. See *Vine AEDNTW*, vol. 1, 159.

[242] *CIBOT*, 208.

[243] See Christian Gerlach, *The Extermination of the European Jews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 14-15.

[244] *Tāmīd*.

[245] See Albertz, *A History of Israelite Religion*, vol. 2, 462.

[246] See Gary Anderson, *That I May Dwell Among Them: Incarnation and Atonement in the Tabernacle Narrative* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2023), 167. See also Sanders, *Judaism*, 116.

[247] See Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 566.

[248] See Stutz, "The Jewish Institutions," 143.

donation to God was very much expressed in this daily burnt offering. According to Hasdai Crescas, the תָּמִיד is a daily offering that "is a substitute for the Jewish people and when they bring the ram near to the altar, they will be all brought near to the service of the Lord."[249] In the תָּמִיד, the chosen people expressed their conviction that they totally belong to God, and God is the source of all goodness, beauty and truth.

2.5.2. The Cereal Offering

The second type of sacrifice in the book of Leviticus is the *cereal* or *grain offering* (Ch. 2). The Hebrew name for this offering is מִנְחָה[250] which literally means "gift" or "tribute."[251] Jacob Milgrom gives a more elaborate meaning for this offering, it is "a present made to secure or retain good will."[252] According to Jeff Cavins et al., "This sacrifice reveals an important feature of ancient Israel's sacrifices – namely, that not all sacrifices were bloody offerings."[253] An important aspect of this sacrifice is the brevity of its procedure which consists only of the apportionment, i.e., the burning of the portion of the substances and the subsequent consumption of the rest of this offering by the priest.[254] Scott Hahn described the procedure of this offering in this manner:

> In this sacrifice, milled wheat or barley was mixed or spread with oil and brought to the sanctuary priest; it could be unbaked, baked, griddled, or otherwise cooked. The priest would throw a handful of the offering upon the fires of the altar as a memorial

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[249] Hasdai Crescas, *Light of the Lord (Or Hashem)*, trans. R. Weiss (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 162.

[250] *minḥâ*.

[251] See *CIBOT*, 208-209.

[252] Milgrom, *Leviticus* 1-16, 196.

[253] Cavins et al., *A Catholic Guide to the OT*, 148.

[254] See Eberhart, *The Sacrifice of Jesus*, 77.

> portion to the Lord, while the rest he took as consecrated food to be eaten by the Aaronic priests.[255]

Another notable aspect of this sacrifice, according to Christian Eberhart, "is the absence of any mention of atonement… The reason might be that the cereal offering is primarily associated with joy and festivity; this is indicated through the mandatory addition of oil which is most likely olive oil."[256]

2.5.3. The Peace Offering

The *peace offering* or the *well-being offering* is the third type of sacrifice mentioned in the book of Leviticus (Ch. 3). The Hebrew name for this offering is שְׁלָמִים.[257] Its name, as indicated by Pitre and Bergsma, "stems from the word for 'peace' or 'wholeness' (Hebrew *shalom*), thus signifying the state of communion between God and the worshipper."[258] It is called peace offering, according to Milgrom, because it "effects peace among the altar, the priest, and the offerer."[259] Scott Hahn described the manner in which this sacrifice is being offered:

> In this sacrifice, a flock or herd animal was brought to the sanctuary and divided into several parts: the blood was collected and splashed on the sides of the altar, the fat portions and kidneys were placed on the fires of the altar, the breast and the right thigh of the victim were given to the priests as consecrated food, and the rest of the sacrificial meat reverted to the worshipper and his family to be eaten as a communion portion.[260]

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[255] *CBD*, 792-793.

[256] Eberhart, *The Sacrifice of Jesus*, 78.

[257] *šĕlāmîm*.

[258] *CIBOT*, 209.

[259] Milgrom, *Leviticus* 1-16, 220.

[260] *CBD*, 793.

In other words, the peace offering is a sacrifice that expresses joy and thanksgiving.[261] It is a sacrifice which expresses a person's joyful or blissful communion with God.

2.5.4. The Sin Offering

The fourth type of sacrifice mentioned in the book of Leviticus is the *sin offering* or the *purification offering*[262] (4:1-5:13). The Hebrew name for this offering is simply the Hebrew word for "sin," חַטָּאת.[263] Scott Hahn adeptly described how the Israelites offered the sin offering in the Temple:

> In this sacrifice, the animal offering is graded according to the person or persons in need of purification, whether a priest (bull), the whole congregation (bull), a ruler (male goat), or a lay person (female goat, lamb, turtledove, or pigeons). The fat portions and the kidneys of the animal belonged to the Lord and were offered on the altar hearth; a meat portion was given to the priests as consecrated food; and the rest of the carcass was removed from the sanctuary and burned outside the camp. Central to the sin offering was the blood of the animal, which was conceived as a cleansing agent and was manipulated by the priest in a variety of ways (splashed, smeared, and sprinkled). The rite conferred forgiveness upon individuals (Lev 4:20, 26, 31), though many

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[261] See *CIBOT*, 209.

[262] Milgrom argues that the Hebrew word *ḥaṭṭā't* should be translated as "purification offering," instead of "sin offering." He argues that the translation, "sin offering" is inaccurate in all grounds: contextually, morphologically, and etymologically. For further discussion, see Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 253-254.

[263] *ḥaṭṭā't*. See CIBOT, 209.

scholars contend that its primary purpose was the removal of ritual impurity[264] from Israel and its sanctuary.[265]

On the Day of Atonement, sin offering is the primary offering that is ritually required.[266] First, a bull as a sin offering for the high priest (Lev 16:6), and second, a goat as a sin offering for the people (Lev 16:9, 15).

2.5.5. The Guilt Offering

The fifth type of sacrifice mentioned in the book of Leviticus is the *guilt offering* or *reparation offering* (5:14-6:7). The Hebrew name for this offering is אשם.[267] Milgrom prefers to translate אשם as "reparation offering," instead of "guilt offering" since this sacrifice is offered as a restitution for desecration or sacrilege,[268] i.e., first, for the sacrilege against the *sancta* [holy things of the LORD] (5:14-16); second, for the suspected sacrilege against the *sancta* (5:17-19);[269] and finally, for sacrilege against oaths (6:1-7). In this sacrifice, an untainted ram was carried to the sanctuary, its meat was donated to the officiating priest as consecrated food, its kidneys and fat parts were burned on the altar, and its blood was splattered across the altar's sides. In addition, the worshipper gave the sanctuary a twenty percent reparation charge

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[264] This is the theological position of Milgrom. He argues that the sin offering does not really purify the offerer but the sanctuary: "The inadvertent offender needs forgiveness not because of his act *per se*… but because of the consequence of his act. His inadvertence has contaminated the sanctuary, and it is his responsibility to purge it with a *chattat*" (Milgrom, Leviticus 1-16, 256).

[265] *CBD*, 793.

[266] See Barry, *Jewish Temple Theology*, 143.

[267] '*āšām*. See *CIBOT*, 209.

[268] See Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 339.

[269] According to Rainer Albertz, the guilt offering is "a rite of reparation for sacral transgressions committed unknowingly at the level of family religion" (*A History of Israelite Religion*, vol. 2, 463).

and confessed his sin to the priest. The guilt offering was intended to address the unjust appropriation of personal property and the profanation of sacred objects.[270]

2.5.6. Summary

The book of Leviticus begins with the narrative on the five types of sacrifice of the Old Covenant, namely, the burnt offering, the cereal offering, the peace offering, the sin offering, and the guilt offering. The first three types were offered to *express* a person's communion with God. While the last two types were offered to *restore* a person's communion with God (reconciliation). A careful examination of these five types of sacrifice leads to the conclusion that the sacrificial system of the OT was designed for the realization of one purpose, i.e., the communion between God and Israel. The priest is a mediator, because he is the instrument for this communion to transpire. Without the priests, it is impossible to offer sacrifices, since to offer them is a task exclusively given by God to them. Priests and sacrifices are essentially inseparable. This is a truth well attested by the book of Leviticus. It is therefore accurate and constructive to say that the OT priesthood can only be understood in the context of sacrifice and vice versa.

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[270] See *CBD*, 793-794.

CHAPTER III

THE DAY OF ATONEMENT

In this chapter, first, the historical background and the theology of the Day of Atonement will be presented, focusing on the biblical meaning of "atonement." Atonement is one of the biblical words often used in theological discourse, but by and large, its meaning is oftentimes clouded or misunderstood. Second, the ritual of the Day of Atonement will be presented based on Leviticus 16 and an extra-biblical writing, the *Mishnah Yoma*.[1] To grasp how this ritual was performed is indispensable in order to interpret Heb 9:1-10:22 in the context of the Day of Atonement. What is being argued in this study is that the Auct Heb alluded primarily to the ritual of the Day of Atonement to develop his theological arguments on Christ's priesthood and His once-for-all sacrifice. This will only be perceived accordingly if one can lucidly see the parallelism between the OT Day of Atonement ritual and its allusions found in Heb.

The OT priesthood as an institution of mediation and the sacrifices as means of communion and reconciliation between God and Israel

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[1] *Yoma* – יומא is the Hebrew word for "the Day." It is an instruction on the Day of Atonement ritual contained in the *Moed* – מועד, the second division of the *Mishnah* – מִשְׁנָה. *Mishnah* is the authoritative collection of exegetical material embodying the oral tradition of Jewish law and forming the first part of the Talmud. The text of the Yoma that will be used in this study is the translation of Herbert Danby. See *The Mishnah*, trans. from the Hebrew with introduction and brief explanatory notes. (London: Oxford University Press, 1964).

reach their zenith or acme in the Day of Atonement. Leviticus 16, the biblical account on the Day of Atonement, according to Daniel Stökl Ben Ezra, is "the most detailed description of any ritual in the Bible."[2] It is the heart of the book of Leviticus.[3] According to Samuel E. Balentine, "From a structural perspective, this chapter stands at the center or *liminal* point of the book."[4] The length and elaboration of this account only shows how important the Day of Atonement is to the people of Israel. Richard J. Barry IV and Margaret Barker beautifully described the indispensability of the Day of Atonement in this manner:

> On the Day of Atonement, everything came to a head: the forces of life and light engage in a great liturgical battle against the powers of death and darkness. The survival of the temple, the survival of the world, stood in the balance.[5]

> The high priest entered the Holy of Holies once a year on the Day of Atonement, and, by implication, the only ritual performed there was the blood rite of the great atonement.[6]

What it really means for YHWH to be the God of Israel, and Israel as His chosen people and His bride are expressed in the ritual of this

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[2] Ben Ezra, *The Impact of Yom Kippur*, 18.

[3] See Robert Barron, "The Day of Atonement," in *The Word on Fire Bible: Pentateuch*, ed. Brandon Vogt (Grove Village, Illinois: Word on Fire Catholic Ministries, 2023), 506.

[4] Samuel E. Balentine, *Leviticus Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville, Kentucky: John Knox Press, 2002), 125, emphasis in the original.

[5] Barry, *Jewish Temple Theology*, 129.

[6] Margaret Barker, *The Great High Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy* (London: T&T Clark Ltd, 2003), 146. See also Michael Hesemann, *Jesus of Nazareth: Archaeologists Retracing the Footsteps of Christ,* trans. Frank Nitsche-Robinson and Michael J. Miller (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2021), 90. See also Michael L. Brown, "Atonement in the Old Testament," in *HJRCF*, 97-98.

most solemn day. Origen of Alexandria describes poignantly the necessity and indispensability of the Day of Atonement:

> A Day of Atonement is necessary for all who have sinned and for this reason, among the festivals of the Law, which contain figures of heavenly mysteries, one certain festival is held which is called a Day of Atonement.[7]

To compellingly show that the Day of Atonement is the fitting context to interpret Heb 9:1-10:22, one first has to immerse oneself in its ritual, be familiar of its historical background, and learn the theology behind its ritual. It is only in this way that a convincing and thoughtful biblical theology of Christ's priesthood and His-once-for-all sacrifice in the context of the Day of Atonement can be developed.

3.1. The Meaning of Atonement

3.1.1. Paradise and Exile

The theological theme on "paradise[8] and exile" is one of the predominant themes found in the Bible.[9] A careful reading of the sacred text from Genesis to Revelation will show that "paradise and exile" is a twofold movement in salvation history – first, the *divine*

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[7] *In Leviticum Homiliae*, IX, 1, 1; Origen, *Homilies on Leviticus 1-16*, trans. Gary Wayne Barkley (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1990), 176.

[8] The word "paradise" is derived from the Greek word, *paradeisos* – παράδεισος. This is the word used in the LXX to translate the Hebrew word for garden, *gan-* – גַּן־. For a more elaborate explanation of the meaning of the word, "paradise" in the Bible, see Elaine Ford, "With Me in Paradise," *Worship* 35, no. 4 (Mar 1961): 235-240. See also Josef Scharbert, "Paradies," in *BW2*, 911-917.

[9] For a more detailed discussion on the Bible as dramatic comedy: paradise gained, lost, and regained, see Francesca Aran Murphy, *The Comedy of Revelation: Paradise Lost and Regained in Biblical Narrative* (Edinburgh, Scotland: T&T Clark Ltd, 2000), 29-32.

movement, God created man and woman for a paradisiacal life,[10] and after the Fall, He continually intervenes in history for its definitive realization (Neh 1:9).[11] Second, the *exilic* movement – man and woman have sinned,[12] and their sin led to their exile from paradise. From the garden of Eden, from a life, in the words of Augustine, "lived in the enjoyment of God" and where "true joy flowed perpetually from God:"

> *Vivebat itaque homo in paradiso sicut volebat, quamdiu hoc volebat quod Deus iusserat; vivebat fruens Deo, ex quo bono erat bonus; vivebat sine ulla egestate, ita semper vivere habens potestate;*[13]

they were expelled and forced to stay and reside in the wilderness.[14] Through sin, humanity moved downward from the paradisiacal life in Eden to an expatriate life in the wilderness.[15] These two movements will be consistent in the entire Bible.

The book of Exodus narrates that the chosen people were enslaved in the land of Egypt for 430 years (12:40). Due to the famine during the time of Jacob and Joseph, the Israelites have to move from the land given to them by God to the foreign land of Egypt (Gen 46). The Promised Land is a figure of paradise where the chosen people must return after their exile in Egypt. Origen calls the Promised Land

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[10] See *CCC* no. 54.

[11] See *CCC* no. 55.

[12] See *CCC* nos. 397-401.

[13] *De Civitate Dei*, XIV, 26, *CSEL* 40, 53; *The City of God*, 590.

[14] See Andrew Ryder, *The God Who Beckons: Call and Covenant in the Old Testament* (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 2005), 11-13.

[15] See Murphy, *The Comedy of Revelation*, 31.

as "the blessedness of perfection,"[16] a reminiscence of the perfection of Eden. The exilic aspect of the Israelites' sojourn in Egypt is heightened by the slavery that they suffered under the Pharaoh and his minions (Exod 1:8-22). God intervenes by sending Moses to free His people from their bondage (Exod 3:10-12). Such intervention was decisive since it only shows that God desires for the freedom and happiness of His people. Moreover, Augustine also observes that men and women can only be truly happy when they are in God.[17] It was a movement from slavery to freedom, from separation to communion. It was a movement from exile to paradise. Origen describes it as a movement away from the darkness of ignorance to the light of the Law of God.[18] The forty year sojourn of the chosen people in the wilderness was a form of purification (Josh 5:6). The Israelites have to understand that their sins was the cause of their downfall, of their exilic condition (Bar 3:8). Paradise can only be gained when hearts are made pure, and people's will is docile and submissive to the will of God. Without repentance and change of heart, it is impossible for the people to be united with God in paradise.[19]

To perform the ritual of the Day of Atonement in the land of Canaan, the Promised Land, is a *conditio sine qua non* for the proper observance of Yom Kippur. In the Promised Land, the figure of the paradisiacal life, the communion of God and Israel is realized. According to Jacob Neusner, "Eden, now the Land of Israel, is

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[16] *In Iosuam Homiliae*, IV, 4; Origen, *Homilies on Joshua*, trans. Barbara J. Bruce (Washington D.C.: The Catholic of University of America Press, 2002), 57.

[17] See *De Trinitate*, XIII, 10; St. Augustine, *The Trinity*, trans. Edmund Hill, O.P. (New York: New City Press, 2023), 350.

[18] See *In Exodum Homiliae*, V, 5; Origen, *Homilies on Genesis and Exodus*, trans. Ronald E. Heine (Washington D.C.: The Catholic of University of America Press, 1982), 284.

[19] This is a theological theme that is clearly highlighted during the Day of Atonement – the people's "affliction of the soul" prescribed by Lev 16:31, see below.

recovered, and Adam, now embodied in Israel, is restored to his place."[20] This is symbolized by the two purification offerings – the bull offering of the high priest and his household (Lev 16:11), and the goat for YHWH of the people (Lev 16:15). While the wilderness is a place of exile (Ezek 20:21). The goat for Azazel, the vehicle of sin and impurity must be led to the wilderness (Lev 16:21).[21] Sin and death must be cast out from the Promised Land so that God can continually abide in the midst of His people. The goat for Azazel is a vivid reminder for the Israelites that sin separates them from God, that sin always leads to exile and death. "The wages of sin is death" (Rom 6:23). Therefore, sin must be rejected at all costs. It must be cast out from their midst if they really want to stay in the land that God gave them. This leads us to another major event in the history of Israel, the Babylonian Exile.

If Exodus was a movement from exile to paradise, the opposite happened during the Babylonian Exile, it was a movement from paradise to exile. The Babylonian Exile is a reenactment of the primordial movement of paradise to exile of Adam and Eve in the book of Genesis. Like her first parents, Israel was cast out from her own land and was exiled in a foreign country, Babylon. After experiencing the bliss, peace, and security of the Davidic Kingdom especially during the reigns of King David and King Solomon, Israel has to be cast out once again as a consequence of her sins, of her obstinate defiance to the will of God. At this time, Israel is identified to the goat for Azazel, and not to the goat for YHWH. Communion with God is sundered. Their seventy year sojourn in Babylon (Jer 25:11) will be a vigorous reminder that the cause of their exile is no other than their sins[22] and their infidelity to God's covenant (1 Chron 9:1).

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[20] Jacob Neusner, *Rabbinic Judaism: The Theological System* (Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, Inc., 2002), 233.

[21] See Barry, *Jewish Temple Theology*, 208-209.

[22] See Leslie J. Hoppe, O.F.M., "Exile," in *CPDBT*, 282-283.

When the chosen people successfully went back to the Promised Land after the Babylonian Exile, they rebuilt their lives, their residences, and above all, the city and the Temple of Jerusalem.[23] Like in Exodus, it was a movement from exile to paradise. This is a period in the history of Israel known as the Second Temple period.[24] The significance of this period should never be underestimated, since it is in this period when the high priestly family, instead of the Davidic family, ruled Israel;[25] when the magnificent Herodian Temple was built;[26] when Jesus lived, died, and resurrected; when Christianity started to spread out in the Roman Empire;[27] and when the most catastrophic event in the history of Israel happened, the second and the full-blown destruction of the city and the Temple of Jerusalem in 70 AD.[28] In first-century Judaism, the most significant institution was the Temple of Jerusalem.[29] The total collapse of the Herodian Temple marked the end of the annual sacrifices of the Day of Atonement, a

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[23] See Peter Dubovský, S.J., "Israel and Judah: History and Society," in *JBC*^{21C}, 118-119.

[24] "The Second Temple period ranges from roughly 520 BC to 70 AD" (Pitre, "Jesus, the New Temple," 48, f. 5).

[25] See Werner Keller, *The Bible as History*, 2nd rev. ed., trans. William Neil (New York: William Morrow, 2015), 335.

[26] See Simon Sebag Montefiore, Jerusalem: The Biography (New York: Vintage Books, 2012), 102-105. See also Hesemann, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 85-92.

[27] See J. M. Roberts and Odd Arne Westad, *The Penguin History of the World*, 6th ed. (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 2014), 254-257.

[28] See Montefiore, *Jerusalem*, 147-157. See also Barker, Temple Theology, 13.

[29] See George H. Guthrie, "Jesus and the Tabernacle/Temple," in *HJRCF*, 107.

ritual that can only be conducted in the Temple, and the end of the whole sacrificial system of the Old Covenant.[30]

One of the ways to properly understand the Day of Atonement is to perceive it in the context of "paradise and exile." In other words, the Day of Atonement is the means given by God to Israel for her to draw close to Him – for her to live once again the paradisiacal life that was forfeited in the garden of Eden. The Day of Atonement, according to Neusner, "marks the beginning of the labor of restoring creation to Eden: the perfect world as God wants it and creates it."[31] The paradisiacal life is all about the communion of God and Israel, and it is ritually expressed in the Day of Atonement. Moreover, Jesus *is* God's definitive movement to lead His people from exile to paradise. Jesus himself solemnly declares this truth: "I am *the way*, and the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me" [ἐγώ εἰμι ἡ ὁδὸς καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια καὶ ἡ ζωή· οὐδεὶς ἔρχεται πρὸς τὸν πατέρα εἰ μὴ δι' ἐμοῦ[32]] (John 14:6, emphasis added). Jesus, according to Barker, is the "living way into the Holy of Holies (Heb 10:19-20), the only way to the Father."[33] The paradisiacal life that God wants to abundantly bestow to His people is now given through Jesus: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but *have eternal life*" [οὕτως γὰρ ἠγάπησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν κόσμον, ὥστε τὸν υἱὸν τὸν μονογενῆ ἔδωκεν, ἵνα πᾶς

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[30] The Temple of Jerusalem "was regarded as the sole place of sacrificial worship… It was the only place where God could be licitly worshiped through the offering of sacrifice" [Pitre, "Jesus, the New Temple," 63-64. See also E. P. Sanders, *Judaism*, 47-54].

[31] Neusner, *Rabbinic Judaism*, 220.

[32] *egō eimi hē hodos kai hē alētheia kai hē zōē oudeis erchetai pros ton patera ei mē di emou*.

[33] Margaret Barker, *King of the Jews: Temple Theology in John's Gospel* (London: SPCK, 2014), 404.

ὁ πιστεύων εἰς αὐτὸν μὴ ἀπόληται ἀλλ' ἔχῃ ζωὴν αἰώνιον[34]] (John 3:16, emphasis added). The definitive paradisiacal or eternal life, which was only emblematically shown in Eden, in the Promised Land, and in the Temple, is now realized in the Person of Jesus. At the heart of the theology of the NT is the communion of God and humanity in the very Person of Jesus. Pope Benedict XVI has accurately pointed out this truth by stating that "the risen Lord is the new Temple, the real meeting place between God and man."[35] That is why, it is very important to highlight as early as now that the Day of Atonement cannot be separated from the Person of Jesus. The communion of God and Israel, the desired end of the OT Day of Atonement ritual, is perfectly realized in the Person of Jesus, and to explain this truth based on the texts of Heb 9:1-10:22 is one of the primary aims of this study.

3.1.2. The Sin of Nadab and Abihu

Exodus 25-40 narrates the preparations, the construction, and the inauguration of the Tabernacle and its appurtenances. What is remarkable in this narrative is its obvious parallelism with the creation account of Genesis 1. The creation of the Tabernacle mirrors the creation of the universe.[36] In Gen 1, God performed seven acts of creation which is noticeable by the use of the literary pattern, "God said… and God saw that it was good" (1) :(וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים[37] … כִּי־ טֹוב[38]) light [vv. 3-4], (2) sea and sky [vv. 6-10], (3) land and vegetation [vv. 11-12], (4) sun, moon and stars [vv.14-18], (5) birds and fish [vv. 20-21], (6) animals [vv. 24-25], and (7) man and woman [vv. 26-

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[34] *houtōs gar ēgapēsen ho theos ton kosmon, hōste ton huion ton monogenē edōken, hina pas ho pisteuōn eis auton mē apolētai all' echē zōēn aiōnion*.

[35] Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth*, vol. 2, 40.

[36] See Joseph Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, commemorative ed., trans. John Saward (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2018), 40-41.

[37] *wayyōmer ʿĕlōhîm*.

[38] *kî- ṭōwḇ*.

31].[39] A similar literary pattern is noticeable in the narrative of the construction of the Tabernacle in Exod 25-39, seven times the phrase, "The LORD spoke to Moses, saying" – וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה, אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר [40] is repeated: 25:1; 30:11; 30:17; 30:22; 30:34; 31:1; 31:12.[41] What is also noticeable in these two accounts is that both of them end with God's Sabbath rest: in Genesis, after six days of creation, God rested on the seventh day (2:3) while in Exodus, after the erection of the Tabernacle, the cloud and the glory of the LORD covered and filled the Tabernacle (40:34-35), the LORD rests on the Tabernacle as His dwelling place in the midst of His people: "For throughout all their journeys the cloud of the LORD was upon the Tabernacle by day, and fire was in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel" (40:38). The similarity between the two accounts is not accidental, but intentional.[42] The author of Exodus, according to Gary Anderson, intentionally presents the Tabernacle as "a microcosm of the universe" and when "God indwells the tabernacle, the goal of the created order has been reached."[43] Richard J. Barry, IV further explains that for the Priestly writers of the Bible, the building of the Tabernacle is actually the culmination of creation. The Tabernacle is truly the recapitulation of cosmic creation because it involves the engagement of human freedom into God's just ordering of the world by the life-giving liturgical cycle of glory and praise. Therefore, the Sabbath described in Gen 2:3 is only totally consummated if humanity freely enters into such rest of communion with God through the divine liturgy of the Tabernacle.[44]

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[39] See Anderson, *That I May Dwell Among Them*, 25-27.

[40] *wayḏabbêr Yahweh ʾel- mōšeh lêmōr.*

[41] See Anderson, *That I May Dwell Among Them*, 29-30.

[42] "Research in the late 1970s showed how the construction of the Tabernacle in Exod 25-40 parallels the creation of the world in Priestly theology, thus suggesting the events are interrelated" (Barry, "They Feasted Their Eyes," 146).

[43] Anderson, *That I May Dwell Among Them*, 23.

[44] See Barry, "They Feasted Their Eyes," 146.

The inauguration of the Tabernacle was surely a joyful and a festive moment for Israel. It was a celebration of a "new creation." But this blissful moment will be shattered by a catastrophic incident wherein priests, the two sons of Aaron were involved, Nadab and Abihu. This terrible tragedy is reminiscent of a previous devastating event described in Genesis, the Fall of Adam and Eve. After the blissful account of God creating the universe, it was immediately followed by the Fall and the expulsion from paradise of the first couple.

The book of Leviticus narrates the sin of Nadab[45] and Abihu[46] very briefly, just in two verses:

> Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer, and put fire in it, and laid incense to it, and offered unholy fire before the LORD, such as he had not commanded them. And fire came forth from the presence of the LORD and devoured them, and they died before the LORD (10:1-2).

This catastrophic event is quite significant since it led to God's instruction of how to draw close to Him through the Day of Atonement (16:1). To avoid what happened to Nadab and Abihu to happen again, God Himself was the one who provided the means on how Israel can draw near to Him, i.e., through the Day of Atonement. What exactly is the meaning of "offering unholy fire before the LORD" continues to be a topic that is hotly debated until today by experts.[47] But Baruch J. Schwartz and Richard J. Barry, IV give a compelling interpretation of the meaning of "unholy fire," which sheds light to what was really the sin committed by Nadab and Abihu that led to their premature death before the presence of the LORD. Schwartz argues that the word typically translated as "fire" (*'esh* – אֵשׁ) should be translated as "coals," hence, "each took his pan, put *coals* in it, and laid incense

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[45] See *CBD*, 636. See also Comfort and Elwell, *Who's Who in the Bible*, 427.

[46] See *CBD*, 8. See also Comfort and Elwell, *Who's Who in the Bible*, 8.

[47] See Owens, "The Book of Leviticus," 133.

on it; and they offered before the LORD unauthorized *coals*."[48] For Schwartz, Nadab and Abihu presented to God, "unlit coals (or wood for kindling) in order to attract the divine fire to light them."[49] Reading between the lines, the two priests offered the unlit coals for God to lit them, not because they want the presence of God to be manifested to His people, but because they want to show off that because of their priestly office, they are capable of controlling the deity.[50] They tried to manipulate the deity in a magical manner.[51] Barry makes Schwartz's interpretation as the starting point of his argument that the sin of Nadab and Abihu is no different from the sin of Adam and Eve. The first couple disobeyed the divine precept not to eat the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil because they were fooled by the serpent to believe that eating the fruit is a shortcut to being "like God" (Gen 3:5). The first couple ended up wanting to be divine on their own accord, and not on God's. The sin of the first couple and the two priests are similar. Both of them wanted to manipulate or to control the deity, to aspire for divinization based on their own will and not on God's will. The sin of Adam and Eve, and that of Nadab and Abihu both led to the same consequence, i.e., the curse of death.[52]

The action of Nadab and Abihu led to a dual pollution of the Tabernacle which was supposed to be the holiest place, since it is where the presence of God dwells. The dual pollutants – sin and impurity became present in the Tabernacle due to Nadab and Abihu's offering of unholy fire or coal.[53] First is the sin, i.e., their evil action

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[48] Baruch J. Schwartz, "Leviticus, Introduction and Annotations," in *The Jewish Study Bible: Tanakh*, ed. Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 215.

[49] Schwartz, "Leviticus, Introduction and Annotations," 215.

[50] See Schwartz, "Leviticus, Introduction and Annotations," 215.

[51] See Thomas Hieke, "Leviticus," in *JBC*^{21C}, 291.

[52] See Barry, "They Feasted Their Eyes," 162-165.

[53] See Barry, *Jewish Temple Theology*, 164-165.

to manipulate or to control the deity. Second is the impurity, the presence of their dead bodies in the Holy Place was a contradiction to what the Tabernacle is all about – the dwelling place of God, the God who is *life*. According to Jacob Milgrom, "The connection of chap. 16 to chap. 10 makes sense. Nadab and Abihu had polluted the sanctuary doubly, in life by their sin and in death by their corpses."[54] With the presence of these dual pollutants caused by the evil action of Nadab and Abihu, the Tabernacle ends up being in need of purification or purgation from sin and impurity so that God who is life will continue to dwell there. But how can this be attained since Israel is not capable of casting out these dual pollutants from the Tabernacle on her own strength and capacity? According to Barry, "The liturgy of Yom Kippur is described in great detail, and it is narratively placed immediately after the death of the brothers. This is the good news of Leviticus, the promise of forgiveness and purification in time of sin."[55] The solution is given by God Himself, and that is the Day of Atonement.

3.1.3. At-One-Ment

Mary Ann Getty explains that "the Anglo-Saxon compound term *at-one-ment* connotes peace and unity. The etymology of this word also indicates reconciliation following estrangement, the restoration and renewal of a broken relationship."[56] In the OT, atonement is primarily understood, as explained by Dale Launderville, as

> the act of restoring a disordered relationship between God and humans. The disordered state is a consequence of sin (Gen 3:14-24); impure and unethical human actions are responsible for the

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[54] Milgrom, *Leviticus* 1-16, 1011.

[55] Barry, *Jewish Temple Theology*, 140.

[56] Mary Ann Getty, "Atonement: New Testament," in *CPDBT* 58, emphasis added.

unleashing of chaotic or impure forces within the community (e.g., 2 Sam 12:7-12).[57]

The disordered state caused by sin and impurity is quite evident with the previous discussion on the sin of Nadab and Abihu, and of the first parents, Adam and Eve. Not only that, the Bible is replete with accounts where people's sin and impurities are the cause of disorder, conflict, and commotion in the community. It only means to say that if people are not peacefully reconciled with God, it simply follows that they cannot be at peace with each other. The peace and order of the community are always deeply rooted in people's communion with God.

Launderville explained that "the primary Hebrew term denoting 'atonement' is *kipper*. The etymology of *kipper* consists of three main possibilities: (1) the Akkadian *kuppuru*, 'to cleanse, to purify;' (2) the Arabic *kafara*, 'to cover'; and (3) a denominative of the Hebrew *kōper,* 'ransom.'"[58] The word ***kipper*** – **כִּפֶּר** is mentioned forty-nine times in Leviticus.[59] According to Jacob Milgrom, the Akkadian *kuppuru* and the Arabic *kafara* may be complementary and not contradictory since "both meanings may go back to a common notion: 'rub'… a substance may either be 'rubbed on' or 'rubbed off.'"[60] In other words, *kipper* can be understood as either "to cover" or 'to purify.' But Milgrom argues that *kipper* in Leviticus is better understood as "to purify" or "to rub off." The blood of the sin or purification offering "is literally daubed or aspersed on the *sancta*, thereby 'rubbing off' their impurities."[61]

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[57] Dale Launderville, O.S.B., "Atonement: Old Testament," in *CPDBT*, 55.

[58] Launderville, "Atonement: Old Testament," 55. See also Baruch J. Schwartz, "The Prohibitions Concerning the 'Eating' of Blood in Leviticus 17," in *PCAI*, 52.

[59] See Watts, *Ritual and Rhetoric*, 130.

[60] Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 1080.

[61] Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 1081.

In the Priestly theology, the sin and impurities of the people makes the Holy of Holies polluted, in other words, uninhabitable for God. When this happens, the Israelite community is driving God away from their midst.[62] On the Day of Atonement, the blood of the sin offering, the symbol of life, purifies the Holy of Holies and drives out the pollution and corruption caused by the dual pollutants – sin and impurities, making it a worthy dwelling place for God again in the midst of His people. Life, being symbolized by the blood, drives away sin and death from the community, because whatever happens in the Holy of Holies is a representation for the whole community. According to Barry, it follows the principle, *pars pro toto*, the rites involving the wiping of a small area represent general cleansing.[63] Furthermore, the blood is not only a detergent that wipes out and drives away the pollution in the Holy of Holies, it also serves as a symbol of communion – God and Israel becoming one in the moment the blood is sprinkled in the *kapporet* or the "mercy seat." The blood that is being sprinkled in the *kapporet* represents Israel's reaching God and being in communion with God. [64]

Another important aspect of the word *kipper* that has to be explored is its possible derivation from the Hebrew word, *kōper* – "ransom." Milgrom explains that *kuppuru* and *kōper* also are not contradictory terms, because "to wipe out" or "to purify" is necessarily succeeded by "substitution" or "ransom." If the blood wipes and drives out the pollution from the Holy of Holies caused by the people's sins and impurities, what follows is how to expel it from the land of Israel. The sins and impurities that pollute the Holy of Holies are driven out by the blood of the goat for YHWH and through the mediation of the high priest, these sins and impurities are being transferred to the goat for Azazel through the priestly act of confession and the laying on of the hands. Milgrom explains that this is the phenomenon of the *kōper,*

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[62] See Launderville, "Atonement: Old Testament," 56.

[63] See Barry, *Jewish Temple Theology*, 178-179.

[64] See Vanhoye, *OT Priests and the New Priest*, 30.

> of the 'substitute' or 'ransom,' the substance to which evil is transferred and thereupon eliminated. This notion of the *kipper* carrier is clearly represented in the Bible in the cases of the scapegoat [goat for Azazel] (Lev 16:10, 21-22) and the broken-necked heifer (Deut 21:1-9). There can be no doubt that the scapegoat rite is an integral part of the sanctuary's purgation and that initially its purpose was to carry off the impurities removed from the sancta to the wilderness.[65]

Margaret Barker further develops this concept of *kipper* as "substitution" or "ransom" by pointing out that לַיהוָֹה and לַעֲזָאזֵל (Lev 16:8) can have two possible interpretations, either "*for* YHWH/Azazel" or "*as* YHWH/Azazel." In other words, the sin offering – "goat for YHWH" can be interpreted as the representation of YHWH while the "goat for Azazel" or the scapegoat, the representation of Azazel.[66]

> If the one goat was chosen 'as Azazel,' rather than 'for Azazel,' then the other goat must have been chosen *as the LORD*. The Mishnah describes how lots were drawn over the two goats, and how the high priest pronounced the Name as the lot bearing the Name was drawn. *This lot was inscribed in the same way as the seal which the high priest wore*, and it was 'put on' the goat before it was sacrificed. It was therefore the blood/life of the LORD which was brought out from the holy of holies to make the atonement which restored the covenant bond and renewed creation. With the system of substitutions that characterized temple ritual, there was the high priest who 'was' the LORD, offering the blood/life of the LORD and taking this into heaven, the holy of holies. *The LORD was both the high priest and the offering*. The Letter to the Hebrews assumes this system of substitutes and contrasts it with the new reality: 'But when Christ appeared as a high priest… he

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[65] Milgrom, *Leviticus* 1-16, 1082.

[66] See Barker, *Temple Theology*, 63-64.

> entered once for all into the Holy Place, taking not the blood of goats and calves but his own blood' (Heb 9:11-12).[67]

Barker's insight is helpful to understand the complex symbolisms involved in the ritual of the Day of Atonement. The high priest and the goat for YHWH possess a dual representation. They both represent YHWH to Israel, and Israel to YHWH. This only shows that the Incarnation was already prefigured in the ritual of the Day of Atonement. For the definitive communion between God and humanity to happen, it is necessary that the mediator and the offering must be YHWH and Israel at the same time. This is obviously fulfilled in the Person of Jesus, as *divine*, He is YHWH, the God of Israel; and as *human*, according to Pope Benedict XVI, He is Israel – He is "the new Jacob, the Patriarch of a universalized Israel."[68]

3.1.4. Summary

The biblical theme on "paradise and exile" and the tragic sin of Nadab and Abihu are necessary backgrounds to better fathom the Day of Atonement. By perceiving the Day of Atonement against the background of "paradise and exile," one understands that God provides a means for His people who were alienated from Him due to their sins and impurities to be reconciled back to Him. The Day of Atonement is the means of communion given by God to Israel. It is God's way of bringing back His people from "exile" to "paradise." What happened to Nadab and Abihu shows how the dual pollutants of sins and impurities pollute the Holy Place and how it is in need of purification so that it will continue to be a worthy dwelling place of God amidst His people. The Day of Atonement is the means given by God for this purification or purgation to happen. 'Atonement' is a word that is rich in meaning as shown by the etymology of the word, *kipper*, but above all else it means *at-one-ment* (reconciliation/

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[67] Barker, *Temple Theology*, 64, emphasis in the original.

[68] Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth*, vol. 1, 45.

communion), God and Israel becoming *one* through the ritual of the Day of Atonement.

3.2. The Day of Atonement Ritual

The Day of Atonement is celebrated annually on the tenth day of the seventh month (Lev 16:29; Num 29:7) of the Israelite calendar, i.e., the month of *Tishri* (תִּשְׁרֵי)[69] which typically falls between September and October on the Gregorian calendar.[70] This Day, according to Eberhart, "differed from other festivals in that it did not require any pilgrimage to the sanctuary; instead, priests performed rituals at the sanctuary on behalf of the community."[71] According to Daniel Stökl Ben Ezra, "The Yom Kippur rituals can be divided into two main groups: those performed in the Temple and those performed in the community or at home."[72] For the purpose of this study, only the Tabernacle or Temple ritual of the Day of Atonement will be discussed since Heb 9:1-10:22 is primarily alluding to this ritual, and not to the one performed by the people in the community or at home.[73]

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[69] See Christian A. Eberhart, "To Atone or Not to Atone: Remarks on the Day of Atonement Rituals According to Leviticus 16 and the Meaning of Atonement," in *SCAEJC*, 197. See also Albertz, *A History of Israelite Religion*, vol. 2, 462. See also James C. VanderKam, *An Introduction to Early Judaism*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2022), 207.

[70] See *CBD*, 917. See also *AI*, 507.

[71] Eberhart, "To Atone or Not to Atone," 197.

[72] Ben Ezra, *The Impact of Yom Kippur*, 18.

[73] It is with utmost difficulty to have a comprehensive reconstruction of the liturgy and prayers of the people either in the family or in the community during the Day of Atonement when the Temple was still in existence since they differ in each community. For the liturgy and prayers of the Jewish community that developed after the destruction of the Temple, see Max Arzt, *Justice and Mercy: Commentary on the Liturgy of the New Year and the Day of Atonement* (Canada: Holt, Rinehart and Winston of Canada, Limited, 1963), 191-287.

3.2.1. The Preparation Rites

Daniel Stökl Ben Ezra, in his work, *The Impact of Yom Kippur*, stated that "the introduction to Leviticus 16 lists the conditions for the entrance to the Holy of Holies: preparing certain animals, washing the body and putting on linen garments"[74] of the high priest. The animals that must be prepared for the ritual are the following: (1) a young bull for a sin offering of the high priest, (2) the two male goats (one as a sin offering of the people – the goat for YHWH, and the other one, the scapegoat or the goat for Azazel), and (3) two rams as burnt offerings, one for the high priest and one for the people (Lev 16:3, 5). The *Mishnah Yoma* gives further details on the preparation for the Day of Atonement which are not indicated in Lev 16. Seven days before the Day of Atonement, the high priest must prepare himself.[75] He is taken apart from his own house and must reside in the Counsellor's Chamber.[76] The *Mishnah Yoma* stipulated that "another priest was made ready in his stead lest aught should befall him to render him ineligible."[77] During these days, according to Ben Ezra, "the high priest is isolated (to avoid contamination) and carefully schooled[78] so that he will be able to perform his complicated task. The character of this preparatory week as investiture is underscored by the purification sprinklings with the ashes of the Red Heifer on the third and seventh days."[79] On the eve of the Day of Atonement, the young members of the priesthood will prevent the high priest from sleeping so that there will be no danger of defilement through seminal emission.[80]

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[74] Ben Ezra, *The Impact of Yom Kippur*, 28.

[75] See *Mishnah Yoma* 1:1; Danby, *The Mishnah*, 162.

[76] This refers to the high priest's room in the Temple precincts.

[77] See *Mishnah Yoma* 1:1; Danby, *The Mishnah*, 162.

[78] See *Mishnah Yoma* 1:3; Danby, *The Mishnah*, 163.

[79] Ben Ezra, *The Impact of Yom Kippur*, 28-29. See *Mishnah Parah,* 3:1; Danby, *The Mishnah*, 699.

[80] See *Mishnah Yoma* 1:7; Danby, *The Mishnah*, 163.

André Reis has accurately pointed out that "the Day of Atonement's activities start with the loud sound of a שׁוֹפָר (*šôpar*, Lev 25:9),[81] an instrument made of ram's horn."[82] After having been washed, the high priest in his festal garments (Exod 28:2, 4-5)[83] performs the offering of the *Tāmīd*, the daily burnt offering, and the incense offering.[84] After the morning *Tāmīd* is completed, the high priest takes a purification bath.[85] This is the first of two washings prescribed by the book of Leviticus: at the commencement of the ritual (Lev 16:4) and after the sending away of the goat for Azazel (Lev 16:24). After the purification bath, the high priest puts on the linen coat and the linen breeches, girds himself with the linen sash, and wears the linen turban (Lev 16:4). After that, he will offer a young bull as a sin offering on his own behalf and his household (Lev 16:6, 11).[86] He then makes a lottery between the two male goats of the people (Lev 16:7-10).[87] Ben Ezra described in this manner what followed after the said lottery: "One of them, the goat for YHWH (the sacrificial goat) will be sacrificed and its blood sprinkled in the Holy of Holies. The other, the goat for Azazel (the scapegoat), is placed in front of the sanctuary, to be sent away after the blood rites in the sanctuary have been completed. The two goats have to be equal. The scapegoat is marked with a red ribbon"[88] or a thread of crimson wool on its head, and the high priest

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[81] For a more detailed discussion on the use of the שׁוֹפָר, see CBD, 926.

[82] Reis, *Echoes of the Most Holy*, 38.

[83] For a more elaborate discussion on the festal garments of the high priest, see Levy, *The Tabernacle*, 144-152.

[84] See *Mishnah Yoma* 3:4-5; Danby, *The Mishnah*, 164-165.

[85] See *Mishnah Yoma* 3:6; Danby, *The Mishnah*, 165. See also Ben Ezra, *The Impact of Yom Kippur*, 29.

[86] See *Mishnah Yoma* 3:8; Danby, *The Mishnah*, 165.

[87] See *Mishnah Yoma* 3:9; Danby, *The Mishnah*, 165.

[88] Ben Ezra, *The Impact of Yom Kippur*, 29.

turns it toward the way by which it is to be sent out, and on the goat to be slaughtered, he binds a thread upon its throat.[89]

3.2.2. The Entrances to the Holy of Holies

The Holy of Holies is entered four times on the Day of Atonement.[90] During the first entry, the high priest takes "a censer full of coals of fire from the altar before the LORD, and two handfuls of sweet incense beaten small;" and he brings it within the veil (Lev 16:12) and he places the incense on the fire before the LORD, and the whole place becomes filled with smoke,[91] "that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat which is upon the covenant, lest he die" (Lev 16:13).[92] According to Balentine, "The phrase 'lest he die' further suggests that the smoke protects Aaron from the potential danger of such close proximity to the holy."[93] The *Mishnah Yoma* made it clear that the high priest "came out by the way he went in, and in the outer space he prayed a short prayer."[94]

During the second entry, the high priest takes some of the blood of the bull, and sprinkles it with his finger on the front of the mercy seat (*kapporet*), and before the mercy seat, he sprinkles the blood with

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[89] See *Mishnah Yoma* 4:2; Danby, *The Mishnah*, 166.

[90] See Ben Ezra, *The Impact of Yom Kippur*, 30.

[91] See *Mishnah Yoma* 5:1; Danby, *The Mishnah*, 167.

[92] "The offer of the incense inside the tabernacle was representative of intercessory prayer, and the large amount used on the Day of Atonement was emblematic of the day's import, highlighting the need for fasting, penitence, and intercession during the day's proceedings. If the high priest entered the Most Holy Place without this intercessory shield of incense and became exposed to the Lord's presence over the kapporet, he would die" (Reis, *Echoes of the Most Holy*, 47).

[93] Balentine, *Leviticus*, 128.

[94] See *Mishnah Yoma* 5:1; Danby, *The Mishnah*, 167.

his finger seven times (Lev 16:14).[95] He then leaves, slaughters the sacrificial goat and takes the blood for the third entrance and further sprinkles as before (Lev 16:15).[96] Only the high priest was allowed into the Temple when this ritual was being done.[97] He similarly sprinkles the sanctuary (Lev 16:16) and daubs and sprinkles the incense and the sacrificial altars with a mixture of the bull's and the goat's blood[98] (Lev 16:18-19).[99] According to the *Mishnah Yoma*, the fourth entry to the Holy of Holies happens after the scapegoat ritual. The purpose for this last entry is for the high priest to remove the censer from the Holy of Holies.[100]

3.2.3. The Sending Away of the Goat for Azazel

When the lottery between the two goats of the people and the three entries to the Holy of Holies are accomplished, the high priest returns to the scapegoat.[101] The high priest lays both his hands upon its head and makes a confession for all the sins, iniquities and transgressions of the people of Israel (Lev 16:20a).[102] The *Mishnah Yoma* provides the complete formula for this confession:

> O God, thy people, the House of Israel, have committed iniquity, transgressed, and sinned before thee. O God, forgive, I pray, the iniquities and transgressions and sins which thy people, the House

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[95] See *Mishnah Yoma* 5:3; Danby, *The Mishnah*, 167-168.

[96] See *Mishnah Yoma* 5:4; Danby, *The Mishnah*, 168.

[97] See Barker, *The Gate of Heaven*, 41.

[98] See *Mishnah Yoma* 5:5-6; Danby, *The Mishnah*, 168.

[99] See Ben Ezra, *The Impact of Yom Kippur*, 30.

[100] See *Mishnah Yoma* 7:4; Danby, *The Mishnah*, 171.

[101] See Ben Ezra, *The Impact of Yom Kippur*, 31. See also Reis, *Echoes of the Most Holy*, 49-50.

[102] See *Mishnah Yoma* 6:2; Danby, *The Mishnah*, 169.

> of Israel, have committed and transgressed and sinned before thee; as it is written in the law of thy servant Moses, *For on this day shall atonement be made for you to cleanse you: from all your sins shall ye be clean before the LORD*.[103]

And when the priests and the people which stood in the Temple Court hear the *Expressed Name*[104] that came forth from the mouth of the high priest, they kneel and bow themselves and fall down on their faces and say, "Blessed be the Name of the glory of His kingdom for ever and ever!"[105] De Vaux described the sending away of the goat of Azazel in the desert in this manner:

> A man then took this goat off into the desert, and it carried with it the sins of the people (Lev 16:8-10, 20-22). The man who took the goat away became impure by doing so, and could not rejoin the community until he washed himself and his clothes (Lev 16:26). Rabbinical tradition says that the goat was taken to Beth Hadûdû, or Beth Hadûdûn, the modern Khirbeth Khareidan, which overlooks the Kedron valley some three and a half miles away from Jerusalem.[106]

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[103] See *Mishnah Yoma* 6:3; Danby, *The Mishnah*, 169, emphasis in the original.

[104] Only on the Day of Atonement that the Holy Name of God, the Tetragrammaton, יהוה is allowed to be pronounced by the high priest before the people. On other occasions, the Holy Name is substituted with the title, *Adonai* – אֲדֹנָי (See Langenhoven, et al., "The Day of Atonement as a Hermeneutical Key," 91).

[105] See *Mishnah Yoma* 6:2; Danby, *The Mishnah*, 169.

[106] *AI*, 508.

The book of Leviticus never mentioned that the scapegoat[107] or the goat for Azazel must die in the wilderness (Lev 16:22). It was the *Mishnah Yoma* that made such an indication. The man who led the goat to the wilderness must divide the thread of crimson wool and ties one half to the rock and the other half between the goat's horns, and he pushes the goat from behind; and it will go rolling down, and before it reaches half the way down the hill it is broken in pieces.[108] There are two ways for the high priest to know that the goat for Azazel has already reached the wilderness: first, the people set up sentinel-

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[107] "The name 'scape-goat' is the common translation in our English Bible, but the Septuagint and Vulgate call it the 'goat sent out' (*caper emissarius*). In the Hebrew the goat is destined '*for 'aza'zel*.' One scholar has recently suggested that this is a common noun, as the Greek and Latin versions take it, but that it means 'the precipice' and is the name of the place to which the goat was taken. Whatever be the philological value of this suggestion, it does not really fit the text: the high priest drew lots between the goats, one 'for Yahweh' and the other '*for 'aza'zel*'. The translation demands that the second name, like the first, should be the name of a person. It is more probable, therefore, that Azazel is the name of a supernatural being, a devil, and this is how it is interpreted by the Syriac version, the Targum and even the book of Henoch, which makes Azazel the prince of the devils, banished to the desert. (We may recall that the Israelites looked on desert places as the dwellings of devils: Isa 13:21; 34:11-14; cf. Tob 8:3 and Matt 12:43)" (AI, 509).

[108] See *Mishnah Yoma* 6:6; Danby, *The Mishnah*, 170. The comment of N. T. Wright regarding the death of the scapegoat in the wilderness as stated in the Mishnah Yoma is noteworthy, especially in its emphasis that the scapegoat was not a sacrifice, and it was not pushed to the cliff as a form of punishing it on behalf of the people:

> The only time in Leviticus when an animal has sins confessed over its head, the animal in question – the 'scapegoat' – is precisely *not* sacrificed. It is, after all, impure, and would not be suitable as an offering. It is driven out into the wilderness. Even though later traditions indicate that the person leading the goat into the wilderness would then kill it by pushing it over a cliff (presumably lest it find its way back and so pollute the people or the sanctuary again), such killing, even supposing it took place, had to do with symbolically removing the sins, not with punishing the goat on behalf of the people (Wright, *The Day the Revolution Began,* 329).

posts and from these they wave towels to signal that the he-goat has reached the wilderness. Second, a thread of crimson wool is tied to the door of the sanctuary similar to the one tied to the head of the goat for Azazel. When the goat reaches the wilderness, the thread tied to the sanctuary turns white to fulfill the prophecy: "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow" (Isa 1:18).[109]

3.2.4. The Closing Rituals

After sending away the goat for Azazel, the high priest takes the second purification bath and changes into the golden garments (Lev 16:23-24a).[110] Then, he offers burnt offerings, i.e., two rams for himself and for the people (Lev 16:24b). It will be followed by his act of offering the sacrificial victims mentioned in Numbers 29:7-11, a bull, another ram, and seven lambs (Num 29:8-10).[111] The bull's and the sacrificial goat's carcasses, whose blood was sprinkled in the Holy of Holies are brought by an assistant to a special holy place outside the camp[112] and then burned (Lev 16:27). The assistant who burned them washes his clothes and bathes his body in water, and afterward he returns into the camp (Lev 16:28). The evening *Tāmīd* concludes the long series of sacrifices of this holy day.[113] The *Mishnah Yoma* gives an additional detail regarding the end of the Temple ritual aside from the evening *Tāmīd* – the celebration organized by the high priest with his friends in his house as a way of thanking the LORD for coming forth safely from the sanctuary.[114]

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[109] See *Mishnah Yoma* 6:8; Danby, *The Mishnah*, 170. See also Healy, *Hebrews*, 168.

[110] See *Mishnah Yoma* 7:4-5; Danby, *The Mishnah*, 171.

[111] See Ben Ezra, *The Impact of Yom Kippur*, 31.

[112] Or outside the Temple of Jerusalem during the two Temple periods.

[113] See Ben Ezra, *The Impact of Yom Kippur*, 32.

[114] See *Mishnah Yoma* 7:4; Danby, *The Mishnah*, 171.

3.2.5. The Affliction of the Soul

The book of Leviticus commands the people to do only two things during the Day of Atonement: first, the 'affliction of the soul' – "you shall afflict your souls" (תְּעַנּוּ אֶת־ נַפְשֹׁתֵיכֶם[115]); and second, to abstain from work (Lev 16:29). The meaning of the 'affliction of the soul' is never specified by Leviticus. According to Ben Ezra, "The Second Temple sources interpret this as fasting."[116] This is reflected also by the most common Greek name for Yom Kippur, "the fast" [ἡ νηστεία[117]].[118] Hans Moscicke explained that "fasting became so ubiquitous on Yom Kippur in the post-exilic era that the holy day came to be known as 'the Fast.'"[119] The earliest source for this tradition is Isa 1:13-14 in the LXX version of the Bible.[120] It is also used in Acts 27:9.[121] The *Mishnah Yoma* interprets it as a prohibition of doing the following: "eating, drinking, washing, anointing, putting on sandals, and marital intercourse."[122] Moreover, the *Mishnah Yoma* makes it clear that the Day of Atonement can only effect atonement if there is repentance.[123] In other words, the actions that comprise "the affliction of the soul"

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[115] *tə'annū 'eṯ- napšōṯêḵem*.

[116] Ben Ezra, *The Impact of Yom Kippur*, 34.

[117] *hē nēsteia*.

[118] See Vine *AEDNTW*, vol. 2, 80. See also Josephus, The Jewish Wars, trans. G. A. Williamson, rev. with a new introduction, notes and appendixes by E. Mary Smallwood (London: Penguin Books, 1981), 305.

[119] Moscicke, *Goat for Yahweh, Goat for Azazel*, 62.

[120] See Ben Ezra, *The Impact of Yom Kippur*, 34, f. 92. See also *The Septuagint with Apocrypha*, 836.

[121] For comments, see *ICSBONT*, 1980. See also William Barclay, *The Acts of the Apostles*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1976), 182-183. See also văn Thanh Nguyên, S.V.D., "Acts," in *JBC*^{21C}, 1515.

[122] See *Mishnah Yoma* 8:1; Danby, *The Mishnah*, 171.

[123] See *Mishnah Yoma* 8:8; Danby, *The Mishnah*, 172.

are varied ways to express a sincere and sorrowful repentance for sins. If a person does not repent of his/her sins, the Day of Atonement makes no atonement for that person.[124] Furthermore, it gives the following conditions for the atonement of transgressions:

> For transgressions between man and God the Day of Atonement effects atonement, but for transgressions that are between a man and his fellow the Day of Atonement effects atonement only if he has appeased his fellow.[125]

3.2.6. Summary

The Tabernacle or Temple ritual of the Day of Atonement is composed of four major parts, namely: 1) the preparation rites, 2) the entrances to the Holy of Holies, 3) the sending away of the goat for Azazel, and 4) the closing rituals. The sources for the narrative reconstruction of this ritual are the book of Leviticus, in particular, chapter 16, and the *Mishnah Yoma*. In the ritual, one can really see how indispensable the Day of Atonement is to the people of Israel. It is truly "the Day" (יומא) because in this most solemn day of the Jewish liturgical calendar, the communion between God and Israel is celebrated through cultic acts that express the two way movement of reconciliation of God and Israel – God provides the means for His people to be reconciled with Him, and the people headed by the high priest doing their part by following the prescribed ritual and by having the right inner disposition of repentance which is expressed in the "affliction of the soul." The Temple ritual and the inner disposition of the people must go hand in hand. The OT Day of Atonement is God's solution to the problem of sin. But it is not definitive and far from being perfect. Because if it so, there is no need for it to be performed annually. One sacrifice would have been enough to remove all the sins and impurities of God's people. In other words, the OT Day of Atonement is still waiting for its perfection and fulfillment in

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[124] See *Mishnah Yoma* 8:9; Danby, *The Mishnah*, 172.

[125] See *Mishnah Yoma* 8:9; Danby, *The Mishnah*, 172.

"the Day" wherein God and humanity are truly reconciled through a once-for-all sacrifice (Heb 9:12) performed by "a high priest of the good things that have come" (Heb 9:11).

CHAPTER IV

THE NEW PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST AND HIS ONCE-FOR-ALL SACRIFICE IN HEB 9:1-10:22 IN THE CONTEXT OF THE DAY OF ATONEMENT

The current chapter is the heart of this research. It seeks to demonstrate that the novelty of Christ's priesthood and His once-for-all sacrifice can only be amply described and comprehended within the context of the Day of Atonement. The other contexts[1] are not being denied of their importance, rather what is being argued is their existence in Heb is dependent on the Day of Atonement being the primary context. When subsidiary contexts are misunderstood as the primary context, the reader or interpreter fails to comprehend the depth, the breadth, and the height of the Auct Heb's theological arguments.

Any reader of Heb will observe that it employs exceptionally cultic terminology and plainly portrays Jesus as the high priest who offered the once-for-all sacrifice.[2] The Auct Heb's theological arguments

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[1] E.g. the OT sacrificial system in general, the inauguration of the Mosaic Covenant (Exod 24:6-8), or the promise of a New Covenant (Jer 31:31-34).

[2] See Raymond E. Brown, *The Critical Meaning of the Bible: How a Modern Reading of the Bible Challenges Christians, the Church, and the Churches*, revised & updated by Ronald D. Witherup (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2023), 117.

center on Jesus' identity and role as high priest.[3] It is quite obvious now, as seen in the previous chapters that this study considers the Day of Atonement as the primary, and therefore the fitting context to better understand the theological arguments of the Auct Heb in Heb 9:1-10:22. As exhibited in the state of investigation of this study, there is a good number of scholars who do not agree that the Day of Atonement is the primary context used by the Auct Heb to expound Christ's priesthood and His sacrifice.

The survey on the OT priesthood and sacrifice in chapter II shows that the high priest, the sacrifice, and the sanctuary are inseparable. These three elements are essential to the Levitical sacrificial system. The disappearance of one destroys the entire system. This is plainly demonstrated by the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem in 70 AD. When the Romans completely destroyed the sanctuary, the priests could no longer offer sacrifices.[4] When the Temple was completely destroyed, the Jewish people could not observe the Day of Atonement as they should have.[5]

The purpose of this chapter is to present the New Covenant's high priest, sacrifice, and sanctuary based on the text of Hebrews 9:1-10:22 in the context of the Day of Atonement. For the Auct Heb, the New Covenant, like the Old Covenant, can only exists if it has its own high priest, sacrifice, and sanctuary. If the New Covenant is the acme and the fulfilment of the Old Covenant, therefore the priesthood,

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[3] See Vanhoye, *Christ Our High Priest*, 30.

[4] See Feingold, *Things New and Old*, 96.

[5] "With the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D., almost all of the Yom Kippur observance became impossible to carry out. To rescue from oblivion this and other observances that were so clearly tied to the Temple, the rabbis instituted radical changes in their observance. Yohanan ben Zakkai, a first-century Jewish leader, declared that God no longer desired blood sacrifices but, in their place, accepted repentance, charity, and prayer. On this basis, Yom Kippur was transformed into a solemn day of introspection, prayer, and fasting" (William Varner, "Yom Kippur," *Israel My Glory*, https://israelmyglory.org/article/yom-kippur/ [accessed October 23, 2024]).

sacrifice, and sanctuary of this latter dispensation must be superior to the former. Nehemia Polen is biblically veracious when he pointed out that "Hebrews argues for perfection: for the perfect priest offering the perfect sacrifice in the heavenly Temple, once and for all."[6] According to Wilfrid Harrington, O.P., for the Auct Heb, the sacrifice of Christ affirms the fundamental weakness of the Old Covenant; while at the same time, the Old Covenant retains its value of prefiguration.[7] "Hence, a comparison of the two phases leads to the identification of three kinds of relations: *resemblance*,[8] *difference*,[9] and *superiority*."[10] [11] This chapter will show how these three kinds of relations in the Auct Heb's theological arguments illuminate the novelty and perfection

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[6] Nehemia Polen, "Leviticus and Hebrews… and Leviticus," in *The Epistle to the Hebrews and Christian Theology*, ed. Richard Bauckham, Daniel R. Driver, Trevor A. Hart and Nathan MacDonald (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 224.

[7] See Harrington, *Record of the Fulfillment*, 339.

[8] "The sacrifice [of Jesus] *resembles* the old sacrifices: something is 'offered' (Heb 8:3); a death was necessary (Heb 9:15 f.); blood was shed (Heb 9:7, 14, 18, 22); there is question of 'entering the sanctuary' (Heb 9:7, 12)" (Harrington, *Record of the Fulfillment*, 339, emphasis in the original).

[9] "Essential differences appear between 'offering gifts and sacrifices' (Heb 9:9) and 'offering of himself' (Heb 9:14); between the blood of victims and the blood of the priest (Heb 9:12, 19, 25); between an entry 'once a year' (Heb 9:7, 25) and entry 'once for all' (Heb 9:12, 26); between access to the type-sanctuary and to the true sanctuary (Heb 9:24)" (Harrington, Record of the Fulfillment, 340, emphasis in the original).

[10] "There is evident superiority: Christ offers 'better sacrifices' (Heb 9:23); he has passed through 'the greater and more perfect tent' (Heb 9:11); the efficacy of his sacrifice is not in the realm of ritual purity, but purifies consciences (Heb 9:13 f.); he wins 'eternal redemption' (Heb 9:12)" (Harrington, *Record of the Fulfillment*, 340, emphasis in the original).

[11] Harrington, Record of the Fulfillment, 339, emphasis in the original. For a further discussion on the three kinds of relations: resemblance, difference, and superiority between the OT and the NT in Heb, see René Latourelle, S.J., *Theology of Revelation* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2009), 67-69.

of the New Covenant's high priest, sacrifice, and sanctuary, which Christ's Paschal Mystery is all about. According to Albert Vanhoye, "The Letter to the Hebrews offers us the priestly and sacrificial way of understanding the Paschal Mystery of Jesus."[12] This Paschal Mystery is hoped to be interpreted as the new and definitive Day of Atonement in which the communion of God and humanity is truly achieved.[13]

4.1. The New Sanctuary

The purpose of the current section is to present the new sanctuary wherein Jesus, the new high priest offered His once-for-all sacrifice. The Auct Heb makes a comparison between the old sanctuary, i.e., the earthly one, and the new sanctuary, i.e., the heavenly one. The earthly sanctuary is described as an essential regulation of the Old Covenant (Heb 9:1). The sacrifice of the OT Day of Atonement can only happen in the Tabernacle/Temple (Lev 16:11-17). It cannot be offered anywhere else. The Auct Heb argues for the novelty and superiority of Christ's priesthood and His sacrifice by presenting first and foremost how the new sanctuary where Christ entered into in the new Day of Atonement is far greater and more perfect than the earthly sanctuary (Heb 9:11). The heavenly sanctuary is the sanctuary *par excellence* because it is the "actual" throne and domain of God (Ps 11:4).

4.1.1. The Earthly Sanctuary

Heb 9 begins by describing the Old Covenant's earthly sanctuary (vv. 1-10). What distinguishes this description is that the earthly sanctuary is shown as two tents or tabernacles (Heb 9:1-5), but the Exodus portrayal is merely of one tent separated by a veil (Exod 26:33). Another peculiarity of Heb's depiction of the sanctuary is that in the Holy of Holies, aside from the ark of the covenant, the golden altar of incense is also there (Heb 9:4). This is quite unusual

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[12] Vanhoye, *Christ Our High Priest*, 105.

[13] See Harold W. Attridge, "The Letter to the Hebrews," in *JBC*^{21C}, 1764.

since the golden altar of incense was supposed to be located not in the Holy of Holies, but in the Holy Place, "before the veil" (Exod 30:6).[14] But this cannot be fully considered a defect in the Auct Heb's description of the earthly sanctuary, rather it can be apprehended as an indirect affirmation that he was speaking primarily in the context of Yom Kippur, that he was alluding to the high priest's act of placing the censer in the Holy of Holies during the Day of Atonement.[15] This interpretation is plausible since the Greek word θυμιατήριον,[16] according to Brooke Foss Westcott, "has two distinct meanings, (1) *Altar of incense*, (2) *Censer*, and from very early times each has been adopted."[17] Myles M. Bourke also explains that θυμιατήριον "means 'censer' in the three places where it occurs in the LXX (2 Chr 26:19; Ezek 8:11; 4 Macc 7:11)."[18] Furthermore, this is affirmed in Heb 9:7, when the Auct Heb mentioned that the high priest enters the Holy of Holies once a year with "the blood which he offers for himself and for the errors of the people." Such offering could not take place in the Holy of Holies without placing first the censer that is continually burning fragrant incense in front of the Ark of the Covenant (Lev 16:13).

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[14] See Myles M. Bourke, "The Epistle to the Hebrews," in *NJBC*, 935. See also Gray and Cavins, *Walking with God*, 84. See also Levy, *The Tabernacle*, 12.

[15] See *ICSBONT*, 2168.

[16] *thymiatērion*.

[17] Brooke Foss Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: The Greek Text with Notes and Essays*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan and Co., 1892), 246, emphasis in the original.

[18] Bourke, "Hebrews," 935.

The earthly[19] sanctuary (ἅγιον κοσμικόν[20]) or Tabernacle is presented as one of the regulations of the Old Covenant (Heb 9:1). The sanctuary's forecourt or Holy Place (Ἅγια[21]) is called the "first tent" (ἡ πρώτη σκηνή[22]) (Heb 9:2, 6, 8) and the Holy of Holies (Ἅγια Ἁγίων[23])[24] is the "second tent" (ἡ δεύτερη σκηνή[25]) (Heb 9:3, 7). According to Aelred Cody, the Holy of Holies is "the place which, above all others on earth, was associated with the presence of God in glory, perfectly realized in heaven."[26] Wescott further described it as "a cube, like the New Jerusalem in the imagery of the Revelation: Rev 21:16."[27] During the Temple period, according to Barker, it "was often described as a tower or high place, perhaps because it was raised slightly higher than the rest of the Temple."[28] According to the Jewish historian, Josephus, it is the innermost chamber of the

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[19] "The word translated *earthly* occurs in the NT only here and at Tit 2:12, where it refers to 'worldly' passions, but it could be understood in a variety of ways" [R. McL. Wilson, *The New Century Bible Commentary: Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1987), 142]. "The term connotes worldliness, but the Hellenistic Jewish tradition of the sanctuary as symbolic of the whole cosmic realm lurks in the background of this usage" [Robert Jewett, Letter to Pilgrims: *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1981), 144].

[20] *hagion kosmikon*.

[21] *hagia*.

[22] *hē prōtē skēnē*.

[23] *Hagia Hagiōn*.

[24] "This innermost sanctuary is also called simply τὸ ἅγιον in Lev 16:2, LXX" (Westcott, *Hebrews*, 246. See *The Septuagint with Apocrypha*, 149.

[25] *hē deuterē skēnē*.

[26] Cody, *Heavenly Sanctuary*, 147.

[27] Westcott, *Hebrews*, 246.

[28] Barker, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 13.

Temple measuring 30 feet, and "it was unapproachable, inviolable, and invisible to all."[29] This imagery of the Holy of Holies as the "high place" will have a significant influence to the Auct Heb's presentation of the new Day of Atonement – Jesus, the high priest ascends to the heavenly sanctuary (Heb 9:24), like the OT high priest ascending through the steps to the Holy of Holies during Yom Kippur. According to Josephus, "The Sanctuary itself, the Holy Temple, situated in the middle, was reached by a flight of twelve steps."[30]

The "veil" (καταπέτασμα[31]) (Heb 9:3) that separates the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies is very telling about the fact that the Holy of Holies is of a different dimension. καταπέτασμα is the *inner* veil that separates the Ἅγια from the Ἅγια Ἁγίων as distinguished from the *outer* veil of the sanctuary, the κάλυμμα[32] (The distinction of the two is not strictly preserved in the LXX).[33] The καταπέτασμα is composed of four colors: blue, scarlet, purple, and white (Exod 26:31) which represent the four elements from which the world was made.[34] Therefore, when the high priest passes through the veil, he passes from what is earthly to what is heavenly. Barker explains that "those who passed through the veil passed beyond the limitations it represented; they passed beyond space and time into eternity, the place beyond."[35]

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[29] Josephus, *The Jewish Wars*, 304.

[30] Josephus, *The Jewish Wars*, 303.

[31] *katapetasma*.

[32] *kalymma*.

[33] See Westcott, *Hebrews*, 163.

[34] See Josephus, *The Jewish Wars*, 305. See also Barker, *Temple Theology*, 29.

[35] Barker, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 20.

In Heb 9:8-10, a spatial contrast is made between these two tents.[36] For the Auct Heb, the "first tent" represents the Old Covenant, and the "second tent" represents the New Covenant. According to Craig A. Koester, "The first tent corresponds to the realm of the flesh (σάρξ, 9:10), and its regulations concern only food, drink, and ablutions, which do not lead to perfection."[37] This is a reference to the entire Mosaic or Old Covenant which is about to become obsolete because of the coming of the New one. "The second tent corresponds to the realm of the conscience (συνείδησις, 9:9) within which perfection can be attained."[38] Furthermore, in Heb 9:8, the Auct Heb, according to Cody,

> takes what he has said of the historical [or earthly] sanctuary and uses it as a figure of the new realities of salvation. The first tent becomes the old, earthly tent in its entirety, including both the Holies [or the Holy Place] and the Holy of Holies, and the second tent, the 'better and more perfect tent' of v. 11, becomes the celestial sanctuary.[39]

What is really essential with the Auct Heb's interpretation of the "first tent" as a representation of the earthly sanctuary, the one regulated by the Old Covenant, and the "second tent" as a representation of the heavenly sanctuary is the fact that he is pointing towards a new Day of Atonement wherein its sacrifice will not anymore be offered in an earthly sanctuary, but in a heavenly one. In the parabolic dimension of the Auct Heb's arguments, the "first tent" is the earthly or temporary sanctuary which is equivalent to the

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[36] See Craig A. Koester, *The Dwelling of God: The Tabernacle in the Old Testament, Intertestamental Jewish Literature, and the New Testament*. Washington, DC: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1989), 158.

[37] Koester, *The Dwelling of God*, 158-159.

[38] Koester, *The Dwelling of God*, 159.

[39] Cody, *Heavenly Sanctuary*, 147-148.

old order of salvation.[40] Furthermore, the attributes of this sanctuary, according to Cody, "are seen in relation to the Day of Atonement, are evaluated not positively, nor purely negatively, but as incomplete shadows of the reality to be accomplished in the parabolically second tent."[41] What is really the problem in the "first tent," as accurately pointed out by David A. DeSilva, is that all the gifts and sacrifices offered before and within it "did nothing to bring the worshipers closer to God. Their place was always restricted to the spaces outside the Holy Place. Direct access to God was still limited to one man, once a year, with a lesser degree of access being enjoyed by a limited number of priests."[42] The fact that the countless sacrifices in the "first tent" left the worshiper still standing "outside" proves for the Auct Heb the inadequacy of the whole system.[43] Hence, there is a need for a "second tent" with a better priesthood and a more efficacious sacrifice. According to St. Ephrem the Syrian, the "first tent" is but a shadow of the "second tent," and when the "actual" – the "second tent" has already arrived, it is not anymore necessary to deal with the shadow.[44]

4.1.2. The Heavenly Sanctuary

For the Auct Heb, the "second tent" – the new sanctuary for the new high priest is no other than the heavenly sanctuary. This is explicitly mentioned in Heb 9:24: "For Christ has entered, not into a sanctuary made with hands, a copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf" (οὐ γὰρ εἰς χειροποίητα εἰσῆλθεν ἅγια Χριστός, ἀντίτυπα τῶν ἀληθινῶν,

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[40] See Cody, *Heavenly Sanctuary*, 149.

[41] Cody, *Heavenly Sanctuary*, 150.

[42] David, A. DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle "to the Hebrews"* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 300.

[43] See DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude*, 301.

[44] See *ACCS Heb*, 132.

ἀλλ' εἰς αὐτὸν τὸν οὐρανόν, νῦν ἐμφανισθῆναι τῷ προσώπῳ τοῦ θεοῦ ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν[45]). The earthly sanctuary and the priestly ministry that went along with it were only hints of the spiritual and celestial order in which Christ fulfills His perpetual priesthood as His people's representative with God.[46] Hence, Jesus, the new high priest, enters a sanctuary that is greater than the one that the high priest of the old dispensation has entered. In other words, the heavenly sanctuary is more actual, more essential than the earthly one.[47] This sanctuary does not refer to the heavens of this creation, but on a dwelling place of God which is transcendent and invisible.[48] This truth is expressed in the singular αὐτὸν τὸν οὐρανόν,[49] 'the heaven itself,' 'the very heaven' which is the absolute reality symbolized by the Holy of Holies.[50] If the Auct Heb was simply referring to the heavens of the present order of creation, he would surely be using the plural form 'the heavens' like in Heb 1:10: οἱ οὐρανοί.[51] According to Luke Timothy Johnson, "The contrast between the *antitypa* of the 'true things' and 'heaven itself' (*auton ton ouranon*) is a perfect expression of biblical Platonism, in which heaven is the realm of the true and the real, and earth the place

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[45] *ou gar eis cheiropoiēta eisēlthen hagia Christos, antitypa tōn alēthinōn, all' eis auton ton ouranon, nyn emphanistēnai tō prosōpō tou theou hyper hēmōn*.

[46] See Bruce, *Hebrews*, 230.

[47] See Barry, *Jewish Temple Theology*, 104.

[48] See Healy, *Hebrews*, 187.

[49] *auton ton ouranon*.

[50] See Westcott, *Hebrews*, 272.

[51] *hoi ouranoi*. The plural form, οἱ οὐρανοί is also used in Heb 4:14 and Heb 7:26. These passages are reminiscent of "heavenly journeys that are common in the literature of Hellenistic Judaism (e.g. Apocalypse of Zephaniah; 2 Enoch; Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah). Curiously the author seems uninterested in the details of the journey, but simply mentions it to qualify the nature of Jesus' priesthood" (Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 105).

of imitation and shadow."[52] This truth is earlier attested by Origen when he explained that the earthly sanctuary and its appurtenances are nothing but "figures," "copies," and forms" of the heavenly one, and the OT high priest is a prefiguration of the perfect high priest of the New Covenant.[53]

Aelred Cody, Craig Koester, and James W. Thompson associate "the greater and more perfect tent" (τῆς μείζονος καὶ τελειοτέρας σκηνῆς[54]) of Heb 9:11 to the "second tent" described in Heb 9:24.[55] The heavenly sanctuary, the "second tent" is "the greater and more perfect tent" where Christ, the high priest traversed[56] and offered His sacrifice. Albert Vanhoye is in total disagreement with Cody's, Koester's, and Thompson's interpretation. For him, "the greater and more perfect tent" does not refer to the heavenly sanctuary. Instead, it is referring to the risen body of Jesus. Believers can really enter into a relationship with God through the Lord's risen body, the New Temple described in John 2:21.[57] Vanhoye follows the theological position of St. John Chrysostom and St. Thomas Aquinas who both taught that "the greater and more perfect tent" refers to Jesus' body:

> Here it denotes his flesh.[58]

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[52] Johnson, *Hebrews*, 243.

[53] See Origen, *In Leviticum Homiliae*, IX, 2, 1; *Homilies on Leviticus* 1-16, 178.

[54] *tēs meizonos kai teleioteras skēnēs*.

[55] See Cody, *Heavenly Sanctuary*, 147-148. See also Koester, *The Dwelling of God*, 159-162. See also James W. Thompson, *The Beginning of Christian Philosophy: The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Washington DC: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1982), 106.

[56] See Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 184.

[57] See Vanhoye, *Structure and Message*, 66. See also Vanhoye, *A Different Priest*, 276-277. See also Vanhoye, *Christ Our High Priest*, 103-104.

[58] St. John Chrysostom, *Enarratio in Ep. Ad Hebraeos*, XV, 4; PG 63, 119. *ACCS Heb*, 139.

Per tabernaculum[59] *potest Christi corpus intelligi, in quo contra Diabolum pugnavit*. [60]

Koester sees Vanhoye's interpretation as implausible by pointing out that "the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands…)" (Heb 9:11) "must be a location since it should be equated with the tent 'that the Lord erected' of 8:2, and in the immediate context the word 'tent' consistently refers to a location in time and space (9:1-10, 26-28),"[61] and not with the body of a person. Hugh Montefiore is in total agreement with Koester's interpretation. He pointed out that to identify the heavenly sanctuary as "the greater and more perfect tent" is in consonance with the Auct Heb's consistent position that the heavenly sanctuary is "better" than the earthly one.[62]

The negative phrase οὐ χειροποίητος,[63] "not made with hands" in Heb 9:11, 24 is a decisive support for this interpretation. Montefiore explains that "the Greek word χειροποίητος, translated *made with human hands*, was probably used by Jewish writers in the Hellenistic world to describe idols (cf. Acts 17:24), and in the New Testament it is applied by Jesus and by his followers to the Jewish Temple (Mark 14:58; Acts 7:48)."[64] To wit, χειροποίητος refers to the earthly sanctuary while οὐ χειροποίητος, according to St. Thomas Aquinas, refers to the heavenly sanctuary, "*id est, non huius creationis, quia non*

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[59] St. Thomas here is referring to "the greater and more perfect tent" of Heb 9:11.

[60] "The tabernacle can be understood Christ's body, in which He fought against the devil" (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Super Epistolam B. Pauli ad Hebraeos Lectura*, IX, 3, 438, trans. Fabian R. Larcher, O.P., https://isidore.co/aquinas/SSHebrews.htm [accessed November 28, 2024]).

[61] Koester, *The Dwelling of God*, 160.

[62] See Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 153.

[63] *ou cheiropoiētos*.

[64] Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 153.

est manufactum, sicut vetus"[65] Hence, Jesus entered, as pointed out by Johnson, the heavenly sanctuary, he "enters into God's own existence rather than into anything 'made by hands;' the distinction between Creator and creation is absolute, and the Son stands on the side of the Creator, since it was 'through him that he created the universe' (Heb 1:2)."[66] It also means to say that the Levitical sacrifices are no longer valid, that they have lost their effectivity, and Jesus' entrance into the heavenly tent or sanctuary connotes the loss of the essential standing or the significant footing of the earthly sanctuary.[67]

During the last years of the Second Temple Period, it became a popular belief among the Jews that the earthly sanctuary or the Jerusalem Temple was simply a copy or reflection of the heavenly one.[68] This is shown in the Jewish literature of this period.[69] Having this kind of belief was quite providential, because when the Jerusalem Temple was destroyed in 70 AD, this conviction became a crucial support for Israel.[70] Yes, the earthly sanctuary was totally destroyed, but there is a heavenly one which is inviolable, eternal, and indestructible because it is "where God dwells."[71] Such conviction, on the part of the Auct Heb, became more convincing, penetrating, and powerful due

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[65] "That is, not of this creation, because it is not made with hands as the Old" (Aquinas, *ad Hebraeos*, IX, 3, 437).

[66] Johnson, *Hebrews*, 235.

[67] See Steve Stanley, "Hebrews 9:6-10: The 'Parable' of the Tabernacle," Novum Testamentum 37 (October 1995): 399.

[68] See Jay A. Parry, and Donald W. Parry, "The Temple in Heaven: Its Description and Significance," in *Temples of the Ancient World*, ed. Donald W. Parry (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1994), 515-518.

[69] For a survey of the Jewish literature of the Second Temple Period, see Sheila Gyllenberg, "Jewish Literature of the Second Temple Period," in *HJRCF*, 130-138.

[70] See Barry, *Jewish Temple Theology*, 104.

[71] Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 182.

to Jesus' Paschal Mystery. His Ascension and Enthronement in heaven are the confirmation of the truthfulness of this belief.

4.1.3. Summary

The novelty and superiority of Christ's priesthood and His sacrifice in Heb 9:1-10:22 is first presented by way of showing what kind of sanctuary Christ entered into *vis-a-vis* the sanctuary of the Old Covenant entered into by the high priest during the Day of Atonement. The new high priest's sanctuary is greater and more perfect than the sanctuary of the Old Covenant because it is heaven itself. The heavenly sanctuary does not refer to the heavens of this creation, but to the dwelling place of God which is eternal, invisible, and transcendent. The Auct Heb has pointed out that the earthly sanctuary is simply a "copy," a "shadow" of the heavenly sanctuary. The sacrifices offered in the earthly sanctuary during the period of the Old Covenant are pointing towards that moment of fulfillment wherein the sacrifice is not only offered in the "copy," but already in the "actual" heavenly sanctuary. The sacrifice is truly offered in God's dwelling place, in His very presence.

4.2. The New Priest And The New Sacrifice: The Yom Kippuric High Priestly Actions of Jesus in Heb 9:1-10:22

The identity and role of the OT high priest is essentially connected with the ritual of the Day of Atonement.[72] This fact is well attested by Lev 16 and the *Mishnah Yoma*. For the Auct Heb, Jesus is the new and definitive high priest of the New Covenant. Hence, it follows that His identity and role cannot be separated from the Day of Atonement. If Christ is truly the "high priest of the good things that have come" (Heb 9:11), it only means to say that the annual Day of Atonement of the old dispensation finds its zenith, perfection, and fulfillment in His person and in the sacrifice that He offered.

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[72] See Cody, *A History of the OT Priesthood*, 184.

Aelred Cody:

> Jesus fulfills and consummates the sacrificial system of the Old Covenant.[73]

Khaled Anatolios:

> It can be asserted that the Old Testament supplies all the necessary definitions to which Jesus must conform to qualify for his role as high priest and sacrificial victim.[74]

The Auct Heb managed to present in a compelling and a creative manner that Jesus is truly the definitive high priest by showing that the indispensable cultic actions of the OT high priest during the Day of Atonement are performed and perfected by Jesus. A careful and thoughtful study of Hebrews 9:1-10:22 reveals five Yom Kippuric high priestly activities performed by Jesus, namely, 1) His victory over the forces of evil, 2) the confession and the goat for Azazel ritual, 3) His entry to the heavenly Holy of Holies, 4) the one-time atoning and purifying offering of His own blood and its sprinkling, and 5) His permanent intercession for His followers.[75] The novelty of Christ's priesthood is demonstrated by these actions, which comprise His Paschal Mystery. The new and perfect Day of Atonement is Jesus' Passion, Death, Resurrection, Ascension, and Enthronement in heaven. As shown later in the explanations below, this essential theological point is one of the most significant and lasting doctrinal contributions of the Auct Heb to the Christology and the Soteriology of the NT.

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[73] Khaled Anatolios, *Deification Through the Cross: An Eastern Christian Theology of Salvation* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2020), 160.

[74] Lindars, *The Theology of the Letter to the Hebrews*, 51.

[75] See Ben Ezra, *The Impact of Yom Kippur*, 185-190.

4.2.1. The Victory of Jesus Over The Forces of Evil

The OT Day of Atonement is Israel's celebration of God's victory over the forces of evil. The ritual of Yom Kippur is divinely mandated (Lev 16). In other words, it is God Himself who provided the means for His people to be united with Him. Israel in her own capacity has no power to cast out or to expel the dual pollutants of sin and impurities, the forces of evil from her midst. The Day of Atonement is God's intervention so that Israel may be reconciled back to Him. But the annual celebration of the OT Day of Atonement is far from being perfect and effective despite its being divinely mandated. The Auct Heb explicitly makes this point in Heb 10:1:

> For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices which are continually offered year after year, make perfect those who draw near (Σκιὰν γὰρ ἔχων ὁ νόμος τῶν μελλόντων ἀγαθῶν, οὐκ αὐτὴν τὴν εἰκόνα τῶν πραγμάτων, κατ' ἐνιαυτὸν ταῖς αὐταῖς θυσίαις ἃς προσφέρουσιν εἰς τὸ διηνεκὲς οὐδέποτε δύναται τοὺς προσερχομένους τελειῶσαι[76]).

The victory over the forces of evil being celebrated by Israel during the OT Day of Atonement through the mediation of the high priest is but a "shadow," a "type" of the definitive victory over the forces of evil won by Jesus Christ. The Auct Heb further argues that if the OT Day of Atonement was already perfect and definitive, then there is no need for its ritual to be performed every year since the sinners were already truly cleansed from their sins and impurities, hence, now given full communion with God:

> Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered? If the worshipers had once been cleansed, they would no longer have any consciousness of sin. But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sin year after year (ἐπεὶ οὐκ ἂν ἐπαύσαντο προσφερόμεναι διὰ

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[76] *Skian gar echōn ho nomos tōn mellontōn agathōn, ouk autēn tēn eikona tōn pragmatōn, kat' eniauton tais autais thysiais has prospherousin eis to diēnekes oudepote dynatai tous proserchomenous teleiōsai.*

> τὸ μηδεμίαν ἔχειν ἔτι συνείδησιν ἁμαρτιῶν τοὺς λατρεύοντας ἅπαξ κεκαθαρισμένους; ἀλλ' ἐν αὐταῖς ἀνάμνησις ἁμαρτιῶν κατ' ἐνιαυτόν[77]) (Heb 10:2-3).

The phrase ἀνάμνησις ἁμαρτιῶν κατ' ἐνιαυτόν is significant in connection with the victory over the forces of evil. If victory over the forces of evil was already truly achieved then there is no need for a "reminder of sin year after year." The word ἀνάμνησις is very telling in this passage, because it does not simply mean, according to W. E. Vine, "an external bringing to remembrance, but an awakening of the mind."[78] Sin is not something that belongs to the past that one simply remembers, but a reality that is present here and now that is in need of forgiveness and must be cast out from the midst of Israel in order for her to be united with God. Albert Vanhoye explains the indispensability and effectiveness of the Day of Atonement in the life of Israel. Though a liturgical celebration that is still waiting for further perfection, it was already effective in obtaining pardon for the faults committed in the previous year:

> The annual repetition of the great expiation did not necessarily mean that it did not obtain pardon of the faults committed in the year; it only showed that after its celebration, other faults had been committed and made a new celebration necessary. What is correct is that this requirement for further repetitions showed that the persons had not been 'purified once and for all,' that is to say completely freed from their attachment to sin and made capable of sinning seriously no more.[79]

It means to say that the OT high priest and the ritual of the OT Day of Atonement were not really capable of having a definitive

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[77] *epei ouk an epausanto prospheromenai dia to mēdemian echein eti syneidēsin hamartiōn tous latreuontas hapax kekatharismenous; all' en autais anamnēsis hamartiōn kat' eniauton.*

[78] Vine *AEDNTW*, vol. 3, 275.

[79] Vanhoye, *A Different Priest*, 310.

victory over the forces of evil. It is for that reason that the Day of Atonement must be celebrated annually. The effects of its ritual were not permanent and stable for all generations. They were simply retroactive.

If such is the case, in what way did Jesus, the high priest, become victorious over the forces of evil? The Auct Heb argues that Jesus won the victory over the forces of evil through His sacrifice:

> But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself (νυνὶ δὲ ἅπαξ ἐπὶ συντελείᾳ τῶν αἰώνων εἰς ἀθέτησιν [τῆς] ἁμαρτίας διὰ τῆς θυσίας αὐτοῦ πεφανέρωται[80]) (Heb 9:26b).

The RSV2CE translates εἰς ἀθέτησιν [τῆς] ἁμαρτίας using an infinitive form, "to put away," but ἀθέτησις is not an infinitive, but a feminine noun which means "a setting aside, abolition."[81] Literally, it is the "abolition of sin." Sin is abolished. It is annulled. Mitchell translates εἰς ἀθέτησιν [τῆς] ἁμαρτίας, "for the removal of sin."[82] Westcott explains that εἰς ἀθέτησιν [τῆς] ἁμαρτίας "goes beyond the redemption of transgressions. It is literally 'for the disannulling of sin.' Sin is vanquished, shewn in its weakness, 'set at naught' (Mark 7:9; Gal 3:15)."[83] ἀθέτησις is only used twice in the NT, and only in Heb. The first time this word was used is in Heb 7:18:

> On the one hand, a former commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness (ἀθέτησις μὲν γὰρ γίνεται προαγούσης ἐντολῆς διὰ τὸ αὐτῆς ἀσθενὲς καὶ ἀνωφελές[84]).

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[80] *nyni de hapax epi synteleia tōn aiōnōn eis athetēsin [tēs] hamartias dia tēs thysias autou pephanerōtai*.

[81] *Vine AEDNTW*, vol. 1, 314.

[82] Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 195.

[83] Westcott, *Hebrews*, 275.

[84] *athetēsis men gar ginetai proagousēs entolēs dia to autēs asthenes kai anopheles.*

Heb 9:26b is essentially connected to Heb 7:18 because the phrase εἰς ἀθέτησιν [τῆς] ἁμαρτίας, according to Johnson, "echoes 7:18, which spoke of 'setting aside' (*athetēsis*) of the preceding commandment because of its weakness and ineffectiveness. The law could not 'put aside sin,' so had itself to be 'put aside.' Only Christ's priestly sacrifice accomplishes the cancellation of sin."[85] It is Christ's sacrifice that abolishes sin, hence, defeating the forces of evil. The ritual of the Day of Atonement that needs to be performed annually for this purpose is perfected in Jesus' once-for-all sacrifice. This sacrifice has an everlasting effect that all the forces of evil in whatever time and place – past, present, and future – are already conquered by it. This important theological insight was already pointed out by Oecumenius in his commentary on Heb:

> For he says that the sacrifices were offered not only for sins that had taken place, but rather for all sins, on the grounds that the sacrifices that had already taken place could not put the sins away.[86]

Jesus' victory over the forces of evil through His sacrifice is better understood when it is interpreted against the background of one of the most important theological claims of the Auct Heb, i.e., Jesus is "a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek" (ἱερεὺς εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Μελχισέδεκ[87]) (Heb 7:17). During the Second Temple Period, especially during the mid-first-century BC to the first century AD, Melchizedek was known to be an eschatological figure who is essentially connected with the Day of Atonement.[88] This is well attested by one of the scrolls discovered in Qumran,

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[85] Johnson, *Hebrews*, 245.

[86] *NTA* 15, 467. *ACCS Heb*, 154.

[87] *hiereus eis ton aiōna kata tēn taxin Melchisedek.*

[88] See Barker, *Temple Theology*, 70-73.

the 11Q*Melchizedek* scroll.[89] This document was written during the mid-first-century BC.[90] It is centered on the mysterious figure of Melchizedek and made up of eleven fragments from Scroll Cave 11 of Qumran.[91]

The 11Q*Melchizedek* scroll depicts Melchizedek, a high priest, the heavenly figure who will atone for the chosen people.[92] On the Day of Atonement, the end of the tenth Jubilee, Melchizedek will overcome the evil forces of Belial/Satan.[93] This scroll, as described by Ben Ezra, "prophesies that at the end of the tenth Jubilee, Melchizedek, the heavenly leader of the forces of light, will liberate the prisoners of Belial, the leader of the evil forces. Melchizedek will then expiate the sins of the people of his lot and take revenge on the adherents of Belial."[94] The 11Q*Melchizedek* scroll is highly shaped and influenced by the Day of Atonement ritual. It makes an essential connection between the first person to be called "priest" in the Bible and the Day of Atonement. This document, instead of having a Levitical high priest, has Melchizedek as the main actor in its depiction of the eschatological Day of Atonement. Barnabas Lindars argues that Heb must have been written not later than 65-70 AD, and he gives a series of plausible arguments for this claim.[95] Hence, Heb is a first century AD document that with all probability could have been highly influenced by the theological climate of its time, especially regarding the heavenly figure, Melchizedek. Therefore, one can safely say that

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[89] For further discussion regarding this scroll, see James C. VanderKam, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012), 45-47.

[90] See *DSS*, 532.

[91] See *DSS*, 532.

[92] See Ben Ezra, *The Impact of Yom Kippur*, 91.

[93] See *DSS*, 533.

[94] Ben Ezra, *The Impact of Yom Kippur*, 90.

[95] See Lindars, *The Theology of the Letter to the Hebrews*, 19-21.

Jesus is the fulfillment of the prophecy of the 11Q*Melchizedek* scroll. He is the heavenly Melchizedek who is victorious over the forces of evil, the forces of Belial. The connection between the theological arguments of the Auct Heb regarding the Melchizedekian priesthood of Christ and the 11Q*Melchizedek* scroll is quite evident.[96] It cannot be a matter only of coincidence how the victory over the forces of evil in two documents coming from the same period is pointing to the same figure of a Melchizedekian connotation. Furthermore, the celestial power of Melchizedek to save the people from evil[97] has a deeper theological implication, since the OT reserves only this divine capacity to YHWH[98] (See Ps 91:1-16; 121:1-8). What the Auct Heb did in his Christological arguments is quite similar to the approach of the 11Q*Melchizedek* scroll, i.e., he identifies Jesus as YHWH at the very beginning of his homily. He applies a passage to Jesus which is only used in the OT to describe YHWH:

> You, Lord founded the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands; they will perish, but you remain; they will all grow old like a garment, like a cloak you will roll them up, and they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years will never end (σὺ κατ' ἀρχάς, κύριε, τὴν γῆν ἐθεμελίωσας, καὶ ἔργα τῶν χειρῶν σού εἰσιν οἱ οὐρανοί·αὐτοὶ ἀπολοῦνται, σὺ δὲ διαμένεις, καὶ πάντες ὡς ἱμάτιον παλαιωθήσονται, καὶ ὡσεὶ περιβόλαιον ἑλίξεις αὐτούς, ὡς ἱμάτιον καὶ ἀλλαγήσονται·σὺ

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[96] For a more elaborate discussion regarding this topic, see Anders Aschim, "Melchizedek and Jesus: 11QMelchizedek and the Epistle to the Hebrews," in *The Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism: Papers from the St. Andrews Conference on the Historical Origins of the Worship of Jesus*, *SJSJ* 63, ed. Carey C. Newman, James R. Davila and Gladys S. Lewis (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1999), 129-147.

[97] See *DSS*, 534.

[98] See Margaret Barker, *The Older Testament: The Survival of Themes from the Ancient Royal Cult in Sectarian Judaism and Early Christianity* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, Ltd, 2005), 14-15.

δὲ ὁ αὐτὸς εἶ καὶ τὰ ἔτη σου οὐκ ἐκλείψουσιν[99]) (Heb 1:10-12; Ps 102:25-27 MT; Ps 101:26-28 LXX[100]).

For the 11Q*Melchizedek* scroll, Melchizedek is YHWH; and for the Auct Heb Jesus is YHWH (Heb 1:10-12), not only that, He is also Melchizedek (Heb 7:15-17). Here one can see a deeper and a more profound approach of the Auct Heb to the claim put forward by the 11Q*Melchizedek* scroll. For the Auct Heb, Jesus is both YHWH incarnate and Melchizedek, the heavenly high priest who is victorious over evil.

4.2.2. The Confession and the Goat for Azazel

One of the major objections of Félix H. Cortez that the Day of Atonement ritual is the primary context of Heb 9:1-10:22 is the absence of the explicit mentioning of the high priestly act of confession and the goat for Azazel ritual in the said passage.[101] He argues that if the Auct Heb has the Day of Atonement ritual in mind in his theological arguments, then he should not fail to mention one of the most important rites during the Day of Atonement.[102] Cortez's objection has its own merit and validity. In the first place, nowhere in Heb that the goat for Azazel ritual is explicitly mentioned. But like Richard J. Barry IV,[103] the author of this study would like to argue that a careful reading of the text will reveal the presence of the high priestly act of confession and the goat for Azazel ritual in a subtle and implicit way in Heb 9:28:

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[99] *sy kat' archas, kyrie, tēn gēn ethemeliōsas, kai erga tōn cheirōn sou eisin oi ouranoi autoi apolountai, sy de diameneis, kai pantes hōs himation palaiōthēsontai, kai hōsei peribolaion helixeis autous, hōs himation kai allagēsontai sy de ho autos ei kai ta etē sou ouk ekleipsousin*.

[100] *The Septuagint with Apocrypha*, 759.

[101] See Cortez, *Within the Veil*, 15-16.

[102] See Cortez, *Within the Veil*, 17.

[103] See Barry, *Jewish Temple Theology*, 236-237.

> So Christ, having been offered once *to bear the sins of many*, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him [emphasis added] (οὕτως καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς ἅπαξ προσενεχθεὶς εἰς τὸ πολλῶν ἀνενεγκεῖν ἁμαρτίας ἐκ δευτέρου χωρὶς ἁμαρτίας ὀφθήσεται τοῖς αὐτὸν ἀπεκδεχομένοις εἰς σωτηρίαν[104]).

In this passage, the phrase τὸ πολλῶν ἀνενεγκεῖν ἁμαρτίας is very significant. Christ is being described as the one who bears the sins of many. If one will return to the ritual of the Day of Atonement found in the book of Leviticus, one can immediately see that the act "to bear the sins of many" is assigned to the goat for Azazel: "The goat shall *bear* all their iniquities upon him to a solitary place" (Lev 16:22a, emphasis added). In the MT, the Hebrew word used for "to bear" is נָשָׂא.[105] In the Pentateuch, this word is used in two ways, first for the high priest, Aaron, bearing the names of the sons of Israel in his ephod as he performs his priestly duties before the LORD (Exod 28:12, 29-30); second, it is used in connection to sin, guilt, and transgression (Exod 28:38; Lev 5:1, 17; 16:22; 17:16; 24:15; Num 30:15). In both instances, either the high priest bearing the names of the sons of Israel, or someone bearing one's sins and transgressions, what one bears takes a certain form of "physicality" or "thingness."[106] When Aaron bears the names of Israel in his ephod, he is "actually" bringing the whole Israel before the LORD. When someone bears a sin or transgression, there is "really" a weight, a heaviness that one is carrying, it is not simply a concept or idea. Sin is spiritual, but it takes

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[104] *houtōs kai ho Christos hapax prosenechtheis eis to pollōn anenenkein hamartias ek deuterou chōris hamartias ophthēsetai tois auton apekdechomenois eis sōtērian.*

[105] *nāśā.*

[106] See Gary A. Anderson, *Sin: A History* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2010), x. See also Barry, "The 'Thingness' of Sin," in *Jewish Temple Theology*, 141-150.

a "physicality" or "thingness" in the form of a heavy burden which is not seen by the visible eyes, but actually felt by the person.[107]

In the OT, the goat for Azazel can only bear the sins and transgressions of Israel through the confession and the laying of the hands of the high priest over it. When the sanctuary is purified by the atoning blood of the sacrifice, the dual pollutants – sins and impurities that pollute the sanctuary are being transferred to the high priest, and then coming out of the sanctuary, he eventually transfers them to the goat for Azazel through the confession and the laying of the hands over it.[108] According to Jacob Milgrom, the verbal confession and the transfer of sins go together. They cannot be separated from each other.[109] Hence, the task of the high priest and the goat for Azazel is essentially similar, i.e., to get rid of the dual pollutants from the sanctuary and eventually from the community. Here, the task of purification is performed by *two* actors, the high priest and the goat for Azazel. Barker explains the ritual significance of the high priest's act of laying his hands on the head of the scapegoat and the cultic indispensability of sending the same goat to the desert:

> When he emerged from the Temple, the high priest placed both his hands on the head of the scapegoat and thereby put all the sins onto the goat. The logic of the ritual requires that the high priest was himself carrying all the sins of Israel at that point. He was the sin bearer. The goat was then led out into the desert, carrying away the sins.[110]

This movement, even though in a very subtle and implicit way, is present in Heb 9:28. In the definitive purification of the new Day of Atonement, there is only *one* actor, i.e., Jesus who is both the high priest and the goat for Azazel. Jesus is the true and perfect fulfillment of the task of the high priest and the goat for Azazel in the OT, i.e., to bear the sins and impurities

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[107] See Barry, *Jewish Temple Theology*, 141-150.

[108] See Moscicke, *Goat for Yahweh, Goat for Azazel*, 37.

[109] See Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 1043.

[110] Barker, *Temple Theology*, 63.

of the community in order for the said dual pollutants to be cast out from the midst of the people.[111] In the cross, Jesus carried the sins and impurities of humanity and did away with them.[112]

When Heb 9:28 is interpreted in light of the Gospel of St. Matthew, Jesus' role as the goat for Azazel becomes more readily apparent. Hans Moscicke argues that the Matthean narrative on Jesus' baptism and temptation is highly influenced and shaped by the goat for Azazel ritual on the Day of Atonement. Matthew 3 begins with the preaching and the baptism of repentance of John the Baptist in the wilderness of Judea, along the banks of the Jordan river. People came to John, "they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins" (Matt 3:6). One should only recall that the people's repentance and the confession of their sins are important aspects of the Day of Atonement. John the Baptist who was of the Aaronic priestly line (Luke 1:5) performs the Yom Kippuric role of the high priest. He heard the confession of the people and then he baptized Jesus. Here, one can see a formal correspondence between the hand-leaning rite on the head of the goat for Azazel by the high priest and Jesus' baptism by John. Through baptism, according to Moscicke, Jesus becomes identified with sinful Israel, "it grants him corporate solidarity with the sinners he is destined to save (Matt 1:21),"[113] and then He is led to the wilderness just like the goat for Azazel during the Day of Atonement.[114] This correspondence is further confirmed by Matthew's vocabulary in 4:1. "Unlike his Lukan counterpart, who writes ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ (Luke 4:1),"[115] he used the phrase

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[111] See G. B. Caird, *New Testament Theology*, completed & ed. L. D. Hurst (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 153.

[112] See Westcott, *Hebrews*, 277.

[113] Moscicke, *Goat for Yahweh, Goat for Azazel*, 37. See also Jeffrey A. Gibbs, "Israel Standing with Israel: The Baptism of Jesus in Matthew's Gospel (Matt 3:13-17)," *CBQ* 64 (2002): 521.

[114] See Moscicke, *Goat for Yahweh, Goat for Azazel*, 37.

[115] Moscicke, *Goat for Yahweh, Goat for Azazel*, 38.

εἰς τὴν ἔρημον[116] which is the same phrase utilized by Lev 16 LXX to describe the goat for Azazel's journey to the wilderness.[117] Three times the phrase εἰς τὴν ἔρημον was used in Lev 16 LXX (vv. 10, 21-22), the OT biblical narrative on the Day of Atonement.[118]

4.2.3. The Entry of Jesus into the Heavenly Holy of Holies

The Day of Atonement is the only day in the Jewish liturgical calendar that the high priest is allowed to enter the Holy of Holies.[119] According to Reis, "The successful completion of the rituals by the high priest on the Day of Atonement functioned 'as a yearly ritual confirmation of his high priesthood.'"[120] The reconciliation of God and Israel is only possible through the mediation of the high priest. Four times the high priest would enter the Holy of Holies during the Day of Atonement in order to perform the atoning sacrifice prescribed by Lev 16.[121] The novelty and uniqueness of Christ's priesthood is seen in the fact that unlike the OT high priest, 1) He entered into the heavenly Holy of Holies, and not only to an earthly one (Heb 9:24); and 2) he entered it once-for-all (Heb 9:25-26). The offering of His sacrifice in the heavenly Holy of Holies is simply perfect, unique, and unsurpassable that there is no need for Him to enter it annually like in the old dispensation. But how did Jesus, the definitive high priest, enter the heavenly Holy of Holies? To answer this question is indispensable in understanding correctly the high-priestly Christology of Heb.

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[116] *eis tēn erēmon.*

[117] See Moscicke, *Goat for Yahweh, Goat for Azazel*, 38-39.

[118] See *The Septuagint with Apocrypha*, 150-151.

[119] See John Bergsma, *Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls: Revealing the Jewish Roots of Christianity* (New York: Image, 2019), 163. See also Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 76. See also Healy, *Hebrews*, 169.

[120] Reis, *Echoes of the Most Holy*, 41.

[121] See Ben Ezra, *The Impact of Yom Kippur*, 30.

David M. Moffitt has pointed out that for many commentators of Heb, the real highlight for the Auct Heb's theological reflection is the Death of Jesus on the cross and His Exaltation in heaven:

> It has become commonplace in Hebrews scholarship to assume that the author maps Yom Kippur's two great moments – the slaughter of the victim and the presentation of its blood in the Holy of Holies – onto the two great Christological foci of the Son's humiliation (epitomized by his death) and exaltation (epitomized by his entry into heaven). As the great high priest, then, Jesus is both victim and priestly officiant on the cross.[122]

Hence, Christ entered the heavenly Holy of Holies through His Death on the cross, and His Ascension and Exaltation in heaven. Here are some of the commentaries of scholars who support this position:

F. F. Bruce:

> It is because of his [Auct Heb] concentration on the priestly aspect of Christ's work that our author has so much to say of his [Jesus'] death and exaltation, but so little of his resurrection. The two principal moments in the great sin offering of Old Testament times were the shedding of the victim's blood in the court of the sanctuary and the presentation of its blood inside the sanctuary. In the antitype these two moments were seen to correspond to the death of Christ on the cross and his appearance at the right hand of God. In this pattern the resurrection, as generally proclaimed in the apostolic preaching, finds no separate place.[123]

Marie E. Isaacs:

> Hebrew's schema has no need of the language of resurrection as the divine vindication of Jesus' righteousness and the means whereby the disaster of death was turned into a glorious victory. By depicting

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[122] Moffitt, *Rethinking the Atonement*, 89.

[123] Bruce, *Hebrews*, 32-33.

> Christ's death as the expiatory sacrifice offered on the Day of Atonement it requires no justification. Its necessity is axiomatic.[124]

Luke Timothy Johnson:

> When Hebrews speaks of Christ entering the sanctuary with his own blood, it means that Christ's entry into God's presence was through the violent and bloody death on the cross.[125]

Thomas J. Lane:

> The Levitical high priest sprinkled blood inside the Holy of Holies each year on Yom Kippur to make atonement for sin. Now Hebrews sees Christ's death as the transfiguration/fulfillment of the Yom Kippur liturgy. When Christ died, he took his blood not into the Holy of Holies in the temple but into the heavenly sanctuary to gain salvation for us… Christ's acceptance of his death as a sacrifice of reconciliation is the perfect fulfillment of his priesthood.[126]

Kenneth Schenck:

> The author of Hebrew integrates these separate events together by using them to construct a metaphor in which Christ's death is a sacrifice offered in a heavenly tabernacle on a decisive 'Day of Atonement.' The whole movement from Christ's death to his 'session,' or seating, at God's right hand thus functions somewhat as a single event in the plot.[127]

These commentaries have the following similarities: 1) the emphasis on the Death of Jesus on the cross as *the* sacrifice; 2) the absence of

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[124] Isaacs, *Sacred Space*, 107-108.

[125] Johnson, *Hebrews*, 237.

[126] Lane, *The Catholic Priesthood*, 63.

[127] Kenneth Schenck, *Understanding the Book of Hebrews: The Story Behind the Sermon* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 14-15.

Jesus' Resurrection as a prerequisite for His entrance into the heavenly Holy of Holies.

The emphasis on the Death of Jesus on the cross as *the* sacrifice and the absence of His Resurrection as a prerequisite for His entrance into the heavenly Holy of Holies are essentially connected with each other. When the sacrifice of Christ is simply understood as His Death on the cross, His Resurrection becomes imperceptible in the theological arguments of the Auct Heb. In Chapter II of this study, it was pointed out that the death of the sacrificial victim is not equivalent to a sacrifice. The death of the victim does not make a sacrifice.[128] Rather what makes a sacrifice is the offering of its blood which symbolizes life, in the case of the Day of Atonement, the blood offering in the Holy of Holies. The same thing can be said regarding the Death of Jesus on the cross. Yes, it is an essential component of His salvific act,[129] presumably few would seriously challenge the claim that humanity's salvation involved Jesus' Death on the cross,[130] but it cannot simply be exclusively equated *as* His sacrifice. The theological equation, *Jesus' Death on the cross = Jesus' sacrifice* is a commonly accepted fact among theologians and believers. The following quotations prove this point:

CCC:

> Christ's death is… the *sacrifice of the New Covenant*, which restores man to communion with God by reconciling him to God through

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[128] See Wright, The *Day the Revolution Began*, 329.

[129] "The Passion and Death of Jesus are, in the plan of God, necessary for our salvation. Without the stage of the work there would be no entrance into the sanctuary, no achievement of salvation. But that initial, earthly stage of the heavenly liturgy is incomplete, and it receives its perfection and its efficacy in the same way that Christ's priesthood receives its crown of perfection and efficacy: by proceeding on to its term in the heavenly sanctuary, where the blood of aspersion, shed on Calvary, is now 'speaking better than Abel's' (Heb 12:24)" (Cody, *Heavenly Sanctuary*, 172).

[130] See Douglas A. Campbell, foreword to *Lamb of the Free: Recovering the Varied Sacrificial Understanding of Jesus's Death* by Andrew Remington Rillera, (Eugene Oregon: Cascade Books, 2024), x.

> the 'blood of the covenant which was poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins' (Matt 26:28; cf. Exod 24:8; Lev 16:15-16; 1 Cor 11:25).[131]

Raniero Cantalamessa:

> Now, on the contrary, it is no longer we humans who offer sacrifices to God, but God who offers himself in sacrifice for us humans, consigning to death for our sake God's only begotten Son.[132]

William Lane Craig:

> The construal of Jesus' death as a sacrificial offering pervades the NT… Christ atoning death delivers us from the judgment of God.[133]

Philippe De La Trinité:

> Christ's sacrifice was offered with bloodshed once only, on the cross, but its consummation lasts eternally.[134]

Lawrence Feingold:

> Christ's suffering and death on Calvary constitutes the one true sacrifice symbolized by all the bloody animal sacrifices.[135]

Martin Hengel:

> With some degree of probability, we can derive the message of the saving death of the Messiah Jesus of Nazareth as an 'expiatory

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[131] *CCC* no. 613, emphasis in the original.

[132] Raniero Cantalamessa, *The Power of the Cross: Good Friday Sermons from the Papal Preacher* (Illinois: Word on Fire, 2023), 247.

[133] William Lane Craig, *Atonement and the Death of Christ: An Exegetical, Historical, and Philosophical Exploration* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2020), 32-33.

[134] Philippe De La Trinité, *What is Redemption? How Christ's Suffering Save Us* (Steubenville, Ohio: Emmaus Road Publishing, 2021), 166.

[135] Feingold, *Things New and Old*, 100.

> sacrifice' for our sins from the 'basic event which gave rise to the Christian community.'[136]

Fleming Rutledge:

> The most important thing about this book [Heb] for us is that it is the only New Testament writing that focuses almost exclusively on Christ's death as a sacrifice for sin.[137]

Vincent Taylor:

> They knew, as he knew, that 'blood' is the vehicle of surrendered life, and that its shedding was the prescribed way of approach to God. He [Auct Heb] had, therefore, only to show that the death of Christ was the one supreme Sacrifice to be immediately understood.[138]

A superficial reading of Heb 9:11-12:

> But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) he entered once for all into the Holy Place, taking not the blood of goats and calves but his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption (Χριστὸς δὲ παραγενόμενος ἀρχιερεὺς τῶν γενομένων ἀγαθῶν διὰ τῆς μείζονος καὶ τελειοτέρας σκηνῆς οὐ χειροποιήτου, τοῦτ' ἔστιν οὐ ταύτης τῆς κτίσεως, οὐδὲ δι' αἵματος τράγων καὶ μόσχων διὰ δὲ τοῦ ἰδίου αἵματος εἰσῆλθεν ἐφάπαξ εἰς τὰ ἅγια αἰωνίαν λύτρωσιν εὑράμενος[139]),

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[136] Martin Hengel, *The Cross of the Son of God: Containing The Son of God, Crucifixion, Atonement*, trans. John Bowden (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1986), 253.

[137] Rutledge, *The Crucifixion*, 250.

[138] Vincent Taylor, *The Cross of Christ: Eight Public Lectures* (London: Macmillan & Co Ltd, 1957), 57.

[139] *Christos de paragenomenos archiereus tōn genomenōn agathōn dia tēs meizonos kai teleioteras skēnēs ou cheiropoiētou, tout' estin ou tautēs tēs ktiseōs, oude di' haimatos tragōn kai moschōn dia de tou idiou haimatos eisēlthen ephapax eis ta hagia aiōnion lytrōsin euramenos.*

and Heb 9:22:

> Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins (καὶ σχεδὸν ἐν αἵματι πάντα καθαρίζεται κατὰ τὸν νόμον καὶ χωρὶς αἱματεκχυσίας οὐ γίνεται ἄφεσις[140])

seems to support such theological position that the shedding of Jesus' blood on the cross and His eventual Death is the one that solely comprises His once-for-all sacrifice. Hence, Jesus' Death on the cross is *the* sacrifice. But one has to be very careful regarding this claim since the Auct Heb was not emphasizing the shedding of blood in the outer court of the sanctuary, i.e. the death of the victim, but on how the blood is being carried into the Holy of Holies either that of goats and calves of the Old Covenant or that of Christ. William L. Lane explains that the word αἱματεκχυσία,[141] translated as "shedding of blood" was probably used by the Auct Heb to elucidate his point that sacrifice is not equivalent to the slaying of the sacrificial victim:

> [The word] may have been coined by the writer [Auct Heb] as a comprehensive term for the application of the blood. Jewish sources indicate that in a cultic context the reference is not to the slaying of the sacrificial victims (i.e., 'the shedding of blood'), but to the final disposal of the blood upon the altar in order to effect atonement.[142]

The "shedding of blood" was done not as an end in itself, and what makes the forgiveness of sins possible is when the blood that was shed is brought inside the Holy of Holies and sprinkled upon the mercy seat of the Ark of the Covenant during the Day of Atonement.[143] In other words, Jesus can only enter the heavenly Holy of Holies, i.e.

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[140] *kai schedon en haimati panta katharizetai kata ton nomon kai chōris haimatekchysias ou ginetai aphesis.*

[141] *haimatekchysia.*

[142] William L. Lane, *World Biblical Commentary*, vol. 47_B, Hebrews 9-13 (Columbia: Word, Incorporated, 1991), 246.

[143] See Cody, *Heavenly Sanctuary*, 171.

His Ascension and Enthronement in heaven, if His Death leads to His Resurrection. According to Moffitt, the widespread belief that Jesus' sacrifice is made up entirely of His Death on the cross has been facilitated by the apparent lack of explicit reference to His Resurrection in Heb as well as certain presumptions about the crucifixion's primary atoning function.[144]

If one would simply speak of Christ's Death as the sacrifice, one is missing the whole point. One has only to remember that what is being offered during the Day of Atonement is not the "death" of the sacrificial victim, but its "life" symbolized by the blood. According to Vanhoye, "The blood of Christ clearly signifies the offering of his life."[145] What makes His sacrifice perfect, unique, unsurpassable is the fact that he offered in the heavenly Holy of Holies His own blood, hence, "the power of an indestructible life" (δύναμιν ζωῆς ἀκαταλύτου[146]) (Heb 7:16). And what is this indestructible life? It is His risen body, His resurrected life. Mary Healy emphasized this vital theological point by saying,

> Christ, in his risen, glorified humanity, ascended there [heaven] that he might now appear before God (literally, 'before the face of God').[147]

There is no temporal limitation to the priestly office of Christ,[148] he remains a high priest forever because he lives forever through His Resurrection. David Moffitt, in his book, *Rethinking the Atonement,* aptly explained the importance of Jesus' resurrection to his being a high priest:

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[144] See Moffitt, *Rethinking the Atonement*, 91.

[145] Vanhoye, *Christ Our High Priest*, 102.

[146] *dynamin zōēs akatalytou.*

[147] Healy, *Hebrews*, 187.

[148] See William L. Lane, *World Biblical Commentary*, vol. 47_A, Hebrews 1-8 (Columbia: Word, Incorporated, 1991), 189.

> His Judahite lineage may prevent him from being part of Aaron's order of priests, but his indestructible life qualifies him to serve in the other biblically attested order of Melchizedek (cf. 7:11). The problem of course, is that the author knows full well that Jesus died (e.g., 2:9; 9:15). How then can he say that Jesus' life is indestructible and everlasting? The most likely answer is that he assumes that Jesus rose from the dead to an enduring life.[149]

The Resurrection of Jesus is hardly mentioned directly in Heb, yet it is obviously supposed if the homily is to make sense at all.[150] That is why, the Resurrection of Jesus is indispensable in order for Him to enter the heavenly Holy of Holies and present Himself before the throne of God, His Father. Albert Vanhoye explains this important point in this way:

> The body of Jesus, which to begin with was a body of flesh and blood in solidarity with sinful humanity, needed a sacrificial transformation to be raised up to the right hand of God and be able to fulfill its heavenly role.[151]

Hence, Jesus' entry to the heavenly Holy of Holies becomes possible through His Death on the cross that led to His Resurrection. In other words, the whole process of the sacrificial offering during the Day of Atonement finds perfect fulfillment in the whole Paschal Mystery of Jesus, and not only in His Death on the cross at Calvary.[152] It only means to say that the theological arguments of the Auct Heb is consistent and in consonance with the NT's teaching on the Paschal Mystery of Jesus. According to Hans Urs von Balthasar,

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[149] Moffitt, *Rethinking the Atonement*, 94.

[150] See Cody, *Heavenly Sanctuary*, 172-173.

[151] Vanhoye, *OT Priests and the New Priest*, 205.

[152] See Moffitt, "Jesus as Interceding High Priest," 552.

> The whole New Testament is unanimous on this point: the Cross and burial of Christ reveal their significance only in the light of the event of Easter, without which there is no Christian faith.[153] Hence, the sacrifice of the New Covenant is not only the Death of Jesus at Calvary, but His whole Paschal Mystery.

Jesus' entry to the heavenly Holy of Holies in the new and definitive Day of Atonement can be illustrated in this way *vis-à-vis* the OT Day of Atonement:

OT Day of Atonement	**NT Day of Atonement**
The high priest sprinkles the blood inside the Holy of Holies and intercedes for the people before the presence of God	Jesus' Session and Enthronement in the Heavenly Holy of Holies
The high priest enters the Holy of Holies	Jesus' Ascension to the Heavenly Holy of Holies
The high priest carrying the blood = "life"	Jesus' Resurrection = "indestructible life"
Slaughter and death of the sacrificial victim	Jesus' Passion and Death on the Cross

[153] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter,* trans. with an intro. Aidan Nichols, O.P. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 189.

The great atoning sacrifice of the Day of Atonement does not end in the slaughter and death of the sacrificial victim.[154] It is a process which involves the slaughter of animals (the bull and the goat), the collection of the blood and its being brought inside to the Holy of Holies by the high priest, and its being sprinkled inside the Holy of Holies, especially in the *kapporet,* in Greek ἱλαστήριον[155] (Rom 3:25; Heb 9:5) – the "mercy seat" of the Ark of the Covenant. The *kapporet* is "the place of both 'meeting' and 'cleansing.'"[156] When the blood, which signifies the life of Israel, reaches the *kapporet*, the throne of God, the communion of God and His people take place. At the same time, the blood casts out the dual pollutants inside the sanctuary, because it is only life that can cast out the agents of death. According to Barry,

> Blood is the theological symbol of the spiritual life that overcomes death, not by taking up the strategies of death, but by simply reaffirming the commitment to true life.[157]

When the blood is sprinkled before the *kapporet,* the blood in a mysterious way does not only represent the life of Israel, but also the life of God.[158] That is why, when the blood is sprinkled into the other parts of the sanctuary, it is being purified from the dual pollutants of sin and impurities because it is the very life of God that casts out these agents of death from the sanctuary. In Jesus' entry to the heavenly Holy of Holies, what is seen is the perfection and fulfillment of the OT Day of Atonement. Jesus, who is risen, who possesses an indestructible life, who is both God and man, is the one who truly makes the desired communion of God and humanity to happen. What entered the heavenly Holy of Holies to effect the needed reconciliation and

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[154] See Wright, *The Day the Revolution Began*, 329.

[155] *hilastērion*.

[156] See Wright, *The Day the Revolution Began*, 328.

[157] Barry, *Jewish Temple Theology*, 189.

[158] See Barker, *Temple Theology*, 64.

purification is the "blood of an indestructible life," the risen Lord who appears before the throne of God. Hence, Christ is both the perfect priest and the perfect sacrifice of the New Covenant.[159] In his usual poetic and tersely cogent Latin, St. Augustine charmingly describes this truth:

> *Pro nobis tibi victor et victima,*
> *et ideo victor quia victima,*
> *pro nobis tibi sacerdos et sacrificium,*
> *et ideo sacerdos quia sacrificium*.[160]

4.2.4. The One-Time Atoning and Purifying Offering of Jesus' Own Blood and its Sprinkling

4.2.4.1. αἷμα

The primacy of the meaning and symbolism of "blood" in the theological arguments of the Auct Heb is quite evident. In Heb 9:1-10:22, the word "blood" (αἷμα[161]) is mentioned 13 times (9:7, 12-14, 18-22, 25; 10:4, 19). A survey of all the chapters of Heb will show that "blood" has a very significant role in the Auct Heb's theological arguments. It is noteworthy that the Auct Heb used the word αἷμα the most frequently in the central and most pivotal part of his letter, the pericope of Heb 9:1-10:22, wherein his most decisive arguments for Christ's priesthood and His once-for-all sacrifice are stated. Below is a table showing the number of occurrence of the word αἷμα in every chapter of Heb.

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[159] See Barker, *Temple Theology*, 64.

[160] "For us he became both victor and victim in your sight, and in fact he became victor precisely because he was a victim, for us he was both priest and sacrifice before you, and in fact he became a priest precisely because he was a sacrifice" [*Confessiones* X, 43, CSEL 33, 279; St. Augustine, *The Confessions*, ed. & trans. Carolyn J. B. Hammond (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2016), 186-187].

[161] *haima*.

CHAPTERS	VERSES	NO. OF OCCURRENCE OF THE WORD αἷμα
I	-	0
II	v. 14	1
III	-	0
IV	-	0
V	-	0
VI	-	0
VII	-	0
VIII	-	0
IX	vv. 7, 12-14, 18-22, 25	11
X	vv. 4, 19, 29	3
XI	v. 28	1
XII	vv. 4, 24	2
XIII	vv. 11-12, 20	3

The Auct Heb makes a parallelism between the blood of the OT sacrificial animals and the blood of Christ, arguing for the superiority of the latter. At this moment, it is beneficial for us to examine all of the verses in Heb 9:1-10:22 that speak about "blood," and make a comparison with what the Auct Heb says about the blood of the sacrificial animals and the blood of Christ.

BLOOD OF SACRIFICIAL ANIMALS	THE BLOOD OF CHRIST
Heb 9:7 εἰς δὲ τὴν δευτέραν ἅπαξ τοῦ ἐνιαυτοῦ μόνος ὁ ἀρχιερεύς, οὐ χωρὶς αἵματος ὃ προσφέρει ὑπὲρ ἑαυτοῦ καὶ τῶν τοῦ λαοῦ ἀγνοημάτων,[162] But into the second only the high priest goes, and he but once a year, and not without taking blood which he offers for himself and for the errors of the people, **Heb 9:13** εἰ γὰρ τὸ αἷμα τράγων καὶ ταύρων καὶ σποδὸς δαμάλεως ῥαντίζουσα τοὺς κεκοινωμένους ἁγιάζει πρὸς τὴν τῆς σαρκὸς καθαρότητα,[163] For if the sprinkling of defiled persons with the blood of goats and bulls and with the ashes of a heifer sanctifies for the purification of the flesh,	**Heb 9:12** οὐδὲ δι' αἵματος τράγων καὶ μόσχων διὰ δὲ τοῦ ἰδίου αἵματος εἰσῆλθεν ἐφάπαξ εἰς τὰ ἅγια αἰωνίαν λύτρωσιν εὑράμενος.[164] He entered once for all into the Holy Place, taking not the blood of goats and calves but his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. **Heb 9:14** πόσῳ μᾶλλον τὸ αἷμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὃς διὰ πνεύματος αἰωνίου ἑαυτὸν προσήνεγκεν ἄμωμον τῷ θεῷ, καθαριεῖ τὴν συνείδησιν ἡμῶν ἀπὸ νεκρῶν ἔργων εἰς τὸ λατρεύειν θεῷ ζῶντι.[165] How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

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[162] *eis de tēn deuteron hapax tou eniautou monos ho archiereus, ou chōris haimatos ho prospherei hyper heautou kai tōn tou laou agnoēmatōn,*

[163] *ei gar to haima tragōn kai taurōn kai spodos damaleōs rantizousa tous kekoinōmenous hagiazei pros tēn tēs sarkos katharotēta,*

[164] *Oude di' haimatos tragōn kai moschōn dia de tou idiou haimatos eisēlthen ephapax eis ta hagia aiōnion lytrōsin heuramenos.*

[165] *Posō mallon to haima tou Christou, hos dia pneumatos aiōniou heauton prosēnegken amōmon tō theō, kathariei tēn syneidēsin hēmōn apo nerrōn ergon eis to latreuein theō zōnti.*

Heb 9:18	**Heb 10:19-22**
ὅθεν οὐδὲ ἡ πρώτη χωρὶς αἵματος ἐγκεκαίνισται·[166] Hence even the first covenant was not ratified without blood; **Heb 9:19** λαληθείσης γὰρ πάσης ἐντολῆς κατὰ τὸν νόμον ὑπὸ Μωϋσέως παντὶ τῷ λαῷ, λαβὼν τὸ αἷμα τῶν μόσχων [καὶ τῶν τράγων] μετὰ ὕδατος καὶ ἐρίου κοκκίνου καὶ ὑσσώπου αὐτό τε τὸ βιβλίον καὶ πάντα τὸν λαὸν ἐρράντισεν[167] For when every commandment of the law had been declared by Moses to all the people, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people	Ἔχοντες οὖν, ἀδελφοί, παρρησίαν εἰς τὴν εἴσοδον τῶν ἁγίων ἐν τῷ αἵματι Ἰησοῦ, ἣν ἐνεκαίνισεν ἡμῖν ὁδὸν πρόσφατον καὶ ζῶσαν διὰ τοῦ καταπετάσματος, τοῦτ' ἔστιν τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἱερέα μέγαν ἐπὶ τὸν οἶκον τοῦ θεοῦ, προσερχώμεθα μετὰ ἀληθινῆς καρδίας ἐν πληροφορίᾳ πίστεως ῥεραντισμένοι τὰς καρδίας ἀπὸ συνειδήσεως πονηρᾶς καὶ λελουσμένοι τὸ σῶμα ὕδατι καθαρῷ·[168] Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way which he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

[166] *hothen oude hē prōtē chōris haimatos egkekainistai;*

[167] *lalētheisēs gar pasēs entolēs kata ton nomon hypo Mōüseōs panti tō laō, labōn to haima tōn moschōn [kai tōn tragōn] meta hydatos kai eriou kokkinou kai hyssōpou auto te to biblion kai panta ton laon errantisen*

[168] *Echontes oun, adelphoi, parrēsian eis tēn eisodon tōn hagiōn en tō haimati Iēsou, hēn enekainisen hēmin hodon prosphaton kai zōsan dia tou katapetasmatos, tout' estin tēs sarkos autou, kai hierea megan epi ton oikon tou theou, proserchōmetha meta alēthinēs kardias en plērophoria pisteōs rerantismenoi tas kardias apo syneidēseōs ponēras kai lelousmenoi to sōma hydati katharō.*

Heb 9:20 λέγων· *τοῦτο τὸ αἷμα τῆς διαθήκης ἧς ἐνετείλατο πρὸς ὑμᾶς ὁ θεός.*[169] Saying, "This is the blood of the covenant which God commanded you." **Heb 9:21** καὶ τὴν σκηνὴν δὲ καὶ πάντα τὰ σκεύη τῆς λειτουργίας τῷ αἵματι ὁμοίως ἐρράντισεν.[170] And in the same way he sprinkled with the blood both the tent and all the vessels used in worship. **Heb 9:22** καὶ σχεδὸν ἐν αἵματι πάντα καθαρίζεται κατὰ τὸν νόμον καὶ χωρὶς αἱματεκχυσίας οὐ γίνεται ἄφεσις.[171] Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.	

[169] *Legōn: touto to haima tēs diathēkēs hēs eneteilato pros hymas ho theos.*

[170] *Kai tēn skēnēn de kai panta ta skeuē tēs leitourgias tō haimati homoiōs errantisen.*

[171] *Kai schedon en haimati panta katharizetai kata ton nomon kai chōris haimatekchysias ou ginetai aphesis.*

Heb 9:25 οὐδ' ἵνα πολλάκις προσφέρῃ ἑαυτόν, ὥσπερ ὁ ἀρχιερεὺς εἰσέρχεται εἰς τὰ ἅγια κατ' ἐνιαυτὸν ἐν αἵματι ἀλλοτρίῳ,[172] Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the Holy Place yearly with blood not his own; **Heb 10:4** ἀδύνατον γὰρ αἷμα ταύρων καὶ τράγων ἀφαιρεῖν ἁμαρτίας.[173] For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins.	

What follows is an explanation of the arguments made by the Auct Heb about the importance and applications of animal blood in the Old Covenant, as stated in Heb 9:7, 13, 18–22, 25; and 10:4. This explanation is necessary, because only then one will be able to comprehend the doctrinal teachings made by the Auct Heb regarding the enormous significance and enduring efficacy of Christ's blood, as specifically stated in Heb 9:12, 14; and 10:19-22.

In Heb 9:7, what the Auct Heb did was to highlight the fact that during the most solemn day of the Jewish liturgical calendar, the high priest alone was the one allowed to enter the Holy of Holies,[174] and he can only enter into it if he takes the "blood which he offers for himself and for the errors of the people." Without the blood of the sacrificial animals, it is impossible for the high priest to enter the Holy

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[172] *oud' hina pollakis prospherē heauton, hōsper ho archiereus eiserchetai eis ta hagia kat' eniauton en haimati allotriō,*

[173] *Adynaton gar haima taurōn kai tragōn aphairein hamartias.*

[174] See Theodore H. Robinson, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (London: Hodder and Stoughton Limited, 1946), 121.

of Holies. The blood is the instrument for the high priest's access to the most holy place. Mitchell explains that this "detail is selected to contrast with the sacrifice of Christ mentioned later in Heb 9:12; he did not need to carry the blood of goats and calves into the sanctuary since it was his own blood that made atonement."[175]

In Heb 9:13, the Auct Heb, by using an allusion to the ritual of the Day of Atonement, intentionally combined with the ritual of the red heifer described in Numbers 19, speaks about the "purification of the flesh" in the Old Covenant.[176] The high priest, the people, and the sanctuary are purified by the blood of the sacrificial animals during the Day of Atonement.[177] The purifying power of blood already mentioned earlier is rooted in the fact that it is the symbol of life, and only life can cast out the dual pollutants – sin and impurities, the forces of death and evil from the midst of the people and the sanctuary. For the ritual of the red heifer in Num 19, three possible reasons have prompted the Auct Heb to include this ritual. First, the ritual of the red heifer, according to the *Mishnah Parah*[178] is an essential part of the preparation of the high priest for the Day of Atonement. The high priest received purification sprinkling (water mixed with the red heifer's ashes) during the third and seventh day of the preparatory week for the Day of Atonement[179] so that he will not defile the sanctuary. This is a detail not found in Lev 16, the biblical account on the Day of Atonement. Second, the Auct Heb will draw emphasis to Christ's immaculate offering to God in the following verse, Heb 9:14. The red heifer must be spotless, according to Num 19, but the sacrificial animals are not specifically covered by

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[175] Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 176.

[176] See Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 183.

[177] See *CIBOT*, 215. See also Kereszty, *Wedding Feast of the Lamb*, 10.

[178] See Danby, *The Mishnah* (פָּרָה – "heifer") is the elaborate instruction on the uses of the ritual of the red heifer found in the Mishnah, 697-714.

[179] Danby, *The Mishnah* 3:1; 699.

that requirement in Lev 16.[180] Third, the Auct Heb may have placed the rite here because he was concerned about cleansing at this stage of his argument, even though its purpose was purification rather than atonement in and of itself. In the following verse, the ritual once more helps to highlight the difference between the purification of the flesh and the purification of the conscience.[181] τῆς σαρκὸς καθαρότητα means that the purification provided by the two rituals, as pointed out by C. J. Vaughan, "is external and ceremonial, instead of spiritual or of the conscience."[182] This point is also shared by Philip Edgcumbe Hughes when he explained the meaning of the term, "flesh" in the said passage. He emphasized that the term "flesh" signifies to what is simply external, and not to what is truly radical or internal:

> The term 'flesh,' accordingly, must be understood here as signifying that which is merely external, in distinction from the 'conscience' which denotes what is essentially internal and radical. It was only in a *superficial* sense that the blood or ashes of animals sacrificed under the Levitical system could be said to achieve cleansing.[183]

Therefore, if rites offered in the earthly sphere can only cleanse the flesh, but not the conscience, then it is necessary to have "better sacrifices."[184]

Heb 9:18-22 is the second piece in the pericope of Heb 9:15-23, the first piece is Heb 9:15-17, and Heb 9:23 serves as the conclusion

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[180] See Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 183.

[181] See Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 183.

[182] C. J. Vaughan, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (London: Macmillan and Co. and New York, 1891), 171.

[183] Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977), 356, emphasis in the original.

[184] See Thompson, *The Beginning of Christian Philosophy*, 105.

for this pericope.[185] Heb 9:15-23 is one of the most difficult and challenging passages to interpret in Heb,[186] yet if one will follow correctly and patiently the Auct Heb's arguments, one will truly and better understand his teachings on the priesthood of Christ. In Heb 9:15, the Auct Heb makes a bold statement that Christ is "mediator of a new covenant" (διαθήκης καινῆς μεσίτης[187]). One has only to remember that the OT priesthood is an office of mediation.[188] Hence, to say that Christ is "the mediator of a new covenant" is another way of saying that He is the new and the definitive priest. This new covenant is brought about by the death of Christ. This is something which is explicitly argued by the Auct Heb by making good use of the twofold meaning of the word διαθήκη,[189] i.e., its common use in the LXX and the NT as the translation for the Hebrew בְּרִית [190] in the MT which means "covenant" (Heb 9:15); and its Greco-Roman secular meaning[191] which means a "will" or "testament:"[192]

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[185] See Vanhoye, *A Different Priest*, 263.

[186] See Healy, *Hebrews*, 178.

[187] *diathēkēs kainēs mesitēs.* For the uses of the word μεσίτης in the NT, see *Vine AEDNTW*, vol. 3, 54-55.

[188] See *AI*, 357.

[189] *diathēkē.*

[190] *berith.*

[191] Recently, there was a criticism on διαθήκη being interpreted as "will" or "testament" based on the Greco-Roman worldview in Heb 9:16-17, since the death involved being mentioned by the Auct Heb can be possibly understood in the context of a Jewish cultic-covenant framework, i.e., a broken covenant demands the death of the covenant-maker. But since this interpretation does not really affect the over-all argument of this present study, I rather leave this topic to students who are interested on studying it. For more information about this topic, see Hahn, "Covenant, Cult, and the Curse-of-Death," 65-88.

[192] See Healy, *Hebrews*, 180.

> For where a will is involved, the death of the one who made it must be established. For a will takes effect only at death, since it is not in force as long as the one who made it is alive (Ὅπου γὰρ διαθήκη, θάνατον ἀνάγκη φέρεσθαι τοῦ διαθεμένου· διαθήκη γὰρ ἐπὶ νεκροῖς βεβαία, ἐπεὶ μήποτε ἰσχύει ὅτε ζῇ ὁ διαθέμενος[193]) (Heb 9:16-17).

St. Thomas explains the importance of the Greco-Roman secular meaning of διαθήκη *vis-à-vis* the Death of Christ in this manner:

> *Necessaria est mors testatoris ad hoc ut testamentum valeat et habeat efficaciam. Unde dicit alioquin nondum valet, quia nullus potest petere aliquid, nec etiam haeredes haereditatem ex vi testamenti, nisi post mortem testatoris. Ideo Christus voluit mortem suam pro nobis interponere*.[194]

The Death of Christ, according to Mary Healy, "brings a twofold grace. First, it has *brought deliverance from transgressions under the first covenant* – that is, explicit violations of the law of Moses:"[195] εἰς ἀπολύτρωσιν τῶν ἐπὶ τῇ πρώτῃ διαθήκῃ παραβάσεων[196] (Heb 9:15). Second, since the sins committed under the Old Covenant have been wiped away, "those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance" (οἱ κεκλημένοι τῆς αἰωνίου κληρονομίας[197]) (Heb 9:15). The Auct Heb does not specify the object of the perfect

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[193] *Hopou gar diathēkē, thanaton anankē pheresthai tou diathemenou; diathēkē gar epi nekrois bebaia, epei mēpote ischyei hote zē ho diathemenos.*

[194] "The death of the testator is necessary, in order that the testament be in force and be efficacious; hence, he says, otherwise it is yet not in force, because no one can seek anything, nor an heir his inheritance by reason of the testament, till after the death of the testator. Therefore, Christ willed to interpose his death for our sake" (Aquinas, *ad Hebraeos*, IX, 4, 451).

[195] Healy, *Hebrews*, 179, emphasis in the original.

[196] *eis apolytrōsin tōn epi tē prōtē diathēkē parabaseōn.*

[197] *hoi keklēmenoi tēs aiōniou klēronomias.*

passive participle, οἱ κεκλημένοι.[198] But he gave hints on the meaning of this participle in 3:1, where the readers are described as having received a divine summons (κλήσεως ἐπουρανίου μέτοχοι[199]), and in 11:8, where Abraham is mentioned as "was called to go out to a place which he was to receive as an inheritance" (ελθεῖν εἰς τόπον ὃν ἤμελλεν λαμβάνειν εἰς κληρονομίαν[200]). Hence, one can infer that οἱ κεκλημένοι is referring to "the people of both the Old Covenant and the New."[201] In other words, the promised eternal inheritance, which was first hinted in the call of Abraham is now being fully offered to all people, [202] and what enables this is the death of Christ.[203]

The power and efficacy of Christ's Death to establish a New Covenant is not based simply on the very act of dying, but on what follows after it. This is verified by the second part of the "Heb 9:15-23 pericope:" Heb 9:18-22. In this passage, the topic of interest for the Auct Heb is not "death" anymore, but "blood." Now, one has to remember once again that the death of the victim is not what essentially constitutes the sacrificial system of the OT. Death does not constitute a sacrifice. It is not an end in itself. The death of the sacrificial animal is only necessary in order for the blood to be collected from it. Now the manipulation and the offering of the blood is the primary constituent of a sacrifice, because sacrifice is a ritualized self-offering.[204] It is the offering of a life to God, and blood is life. According to Briley, "God designated blood as the means of

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[198] See Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 188.

[199] *klēseōs epouraniou metochoi.*

[200] *elthein eis topon hon ēmellen lambanein eis klēronomian.*

[201] Healy, *Hebrews*, 179.

[202] See Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 188.

[203] See Johnson, *Hebrews*, 240.

[204] See *CIBOT*, 208.

atonement because of its inherent connection with life."[205] Caird made the same point when he emphasized the essential relationship between blood and sacrifice:

> Sacrifice was a release of power, since blood stood for life (Lev 17:11) and whatever was consecrated communicated holiness to anything that touched it (Lev 6:17-18).[206]

For this reason, the Auct Heb discusses the significance of blood in the ratification of the First Covenant and, consequently, the New Covenant after explaining the significance of the Death of Christ, the mediator.

In Heb 9:18-22, the Auct Heb makes good use of the passage on the inauguration of the Mosaic Covenant (Exod 24:6-8) to highlight the role and purpose of blood under the old covenant,[207] and to point out that the mediation of both the First and the New Covenants is first and foremost cultic, i.e. within the sacred realm of liturgy.[208] The purpose of the Auct Heb here, according to Mitchell, is to make three important points regarding the significance of blood in the OT:

> First, blood is redemptive; second, blood is ratifying; third, blood is purifying.[209]

Mitchell further explains that by presenting these three characteristics of blood in the OT, the Auct Heb manages

> to make a link between the role of blood under the first covenant and role of Christ's blood in the establishment of the second covenant. His larger purpose is to show how the effects of Christ's

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[205] Briley, "The OT 'Sin Offering' and Christ's Atonement," 97.

[206] Caird, *NT Theology*, 151.

[207] See Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 190.

[208] See Hahn, "Covenant, Cult, and the Curse-of-Death," 67.

[209] Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 190.

> death are constitutive of his role as the mediator of a better covenant.[210]

Felix Cortex argues that Heb 9:18-22 is a clear proof that the Day of Atonement is not the primary context to understand the sacrifice of Christ in Heb, but the inauguration of the Mosaic Covenant.[211] Hence, the New Covenant is greater and more perfect than the First Covenant, because the first was simply ratified by the blood of sacrificial animals, but the new was ratified by the blood of Christ.[212] But such interpretation is nothing but a misunderstanding of the Auct Heb's arguments regarding the theological importance of blood both in the First Covenant, and then in the New Covenant. The Auct Heb's use of the passage on the inauguration of the Mosaic Covenant is not to deviate from his primary context, which is the ritual of the Day of Atonement, but rather to reenforce and to reaffirm the role of blood as redemptive, ratifying, and purifying in a liturgical or cultic framework, which in the first place is what is being presented and taught by the ritual of Yom Kippur. Both the ritual of the Day of Atonement and the inauguration of the Mosaic Covenant are cultic celebrations, and they affirm the same thing – blood is life – for this reason, it is redemptive, ratifying, and purifying. Heb 9:23, the conclusion of the "Heb 9:15-23 pericope" affirms this interpretation:

> Thus it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these (Ἀνάγκη οὖν τὰ μὲν ὑποδείγματα τῶν ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς τούτοις καθαρίζεσθαι, αὐτὰ δὲ τὰ ἐπουράνια κρείττοσιν θυσίαις παρὰ ταύτας[213]).

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[210] Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 190.

[211] See Cortez, *Within the Veil*, 238-240.

[212] See Cortez, *Within the Veil*, 240.

[213] *Anankē oun ta men hypodeigmata tōn en tois ouranois toutois katharizesthai, auta de ta epourania kreittosin thysiais para tautas.*

What the Auct Heb is saying, that if the earthly sanctuary was purified by blood both in the inauguration of the Mosaic Covenant and in the Day of Atonement, and ritually made clean, hence, the blood of Christ is greater and more perfect than the sacrificial blood of the First Covenant, because what it purifies is not only the earthly sanctuary, but the heavenly one.[214] Hence, it is capable of purifying the conscience of believers and makes them truly freed from the bondage of sin.

In Heb 9:25, what the Auct Heb is emphasizing is the fact that when the high priest enters the Holy Place during the annual Day of Atonement, the blood that he brought with him is not his own, but that of the sacrificial animals. In the OT, the high priest and the victim are simply two separate entities. This is well explained by F. F. Bruce in his commentary on Hebrews:

> Having entered in to present the sacrificial blood ('blood not his own'), Israel's high priest had to come out again immediately, to enter in and repeat the same ceremony the following year, and the year after that, and so on indefinitely.[215]

The imperfection of the sacrifice of the OT Day of Atonement which is in need of further fulfillment and perfection is best modified by the Greek adverb πολλάκις which literally means "often," "oftentimes," "many times."[216] The RSV2CE renders this word in English as "repeatedly." The ritual of Yom Kippur has to be repeated annually because it cannot ontologically wipe away the dual pollutants of sins and impurities for all time, i.e., of the past, of the present, and of the future. If the sacrifices of Yom Kippur had been effective, Mitchell explains,

> The worshipers would no longer have consciousness of sin. The fact that they are repeated year after year signifies that the needed cleansing of conscience has not occurred. It is not, however,

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[214] See Bruce, *Hebrews*, 228.

[215] Bruce, *Hebrews*, 230.

[216] See *Vine AEDNTW*, vol. 3, 133.

> only the repeated nature of the sacrifices that indicates their inadequacy to purify the conscience; it is also the nature of the rituals themselves.[217]

For the Auct Heb, the purpose of the ritual of the Day of Atonement, Mitchell further explains, was not only to atone for sin; "it also acted as a reminder of sin, forcing the people to attend to their sinfulness. If anything, it promoted the consciousness of sin."[218] The Auct Heb's audacious claim regarding the imperfection of the sacrifices of the OT Day of Atonement is given greater emphasis in Heb 10:4:

For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins. The boldness of the Auct Heb's claim in Heb 10:4 is well explained by Vanhoye. It gives further elucidation on the power and efficacy of Christ's blood, that the blood of the sacrificial animals in the Old Covenant can never be at par with the blood of the Redeemer in the New Covenant:

> This declaration does not lack boldness, because it seems to contradict the law of Moses which several times affirms the remission of sins obtained by the immolation of animals, for example in Lev 4:20, 26, 35. But to this difficulty it could be answered that the law never says the blood of bulls and goats took away sins and, besides, in the prophets and the psalms, God expresses his disgust with this worship: 'The blood of bulls and goats repel me' (Isa 1:11).[219]

In other words, what the OT Day of Atonement provides was an atonement with a provisional nature. Its effects were simply retroactive, and it was meant to allow the covenant relationship between YHWH and Israel to continue, but it did not really have the power to change

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[217] Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 206.

[218] Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 206.

[219] Vanhoye, *A Different Priest*, 310.

the sinner from within, i.e. in an internal or radical manner.[220] Theodore H. Robinson summarized the provisional nature of the OT Day of Atonement in this way:

> It was a temporary expedient, which had to serve the purpose as best it could until the world as a whole was ripe for the full revelation of God's nature and plans.[221]

4.2.4.2. ἐφάπαξ

Daniel J. Harrington made an impressive explanation on the essence of the OT Day of Atonement. It is a good summary of what Yom Kippur is all about:

> The essence of the Day of Atonement ritual was the high priest's sprinkling of blood inside the Holy of Holies. Based on the idea of blood as a symbol of life and as an agent of purification, this action was believed to take away the past sins of the people (including those of the high priest himself) and to prepare them for renewed life before God in the new year.[222]

For this reason, the ritual of the Day of Atonement must be repeated annually. It only provides a provisional atonement since the ritual was believed to take away only the sins of the year that was recently concluded, and not for the coming years. The sacrifice of the Day of Atonement is far from encompassing the present and the future, that is why, it has to be repeated every year. Its domain is only for the past sins and impurities of Israel, and never for the coming ones. If such sacrifice is definitive, and not provisional, then, it should only be performed once, and its efficacy would be applicable for all times. Hence, the efficaciousness of the ritual of the OT Day of Atonement is retroactive, and never proactive.

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[220] See Healy, *Hebrews*, 195.

[221] Robinson, *Hebrews*, 124.

[222] Harrington, "Hebrews," 1430.

In Heb 9:12, the Auct Heb tells his readers that Christ "entered once for all into the Holy Place, taking not the blood of goats and calves but his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption." This passage is one of the most significant passages in Heb. In it, the contrast between Christ's entrance to the Holy Place and that of the OT high priest during the Day of Atonement is shown in total contrast, also the efficaciousness of His blood *vis-a-vis* the efficaciousness of the blood of the OT sacrificial victims. Christ's entry to the Holy Place and the offering of His own blood, unlike the OT Yom Kippuric sacrifices, has secured an eternal redemption for humanity. The Greek adverb, ἐφάπαξ used by the Auct Heb to describe Christ's entrance to the Holy Place is quite a significant term. This word only appears five times in the NT, and three of which are in Heb (7:27; 9:12; 10:10).[223] Unlike the high priest who entered the Holy Place annually during the Day of Atonement (Heb 9:25), Christ has o/ἐφάπαξ is a stronger form of the word ἅπαξ, which is unknown to the LXX. The Auct Heb reserved this term for the sacrifice of Christ.[224]

Heb 7:27	ὃς οὐκ ἔχει καθ' ἡμέραν ἀνάγκην, ὥσπερ οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς, πρότερον ὑπὲρ τῶν ἰδίων ἁμαρτιῶν θυσίας ἀναφέρειν ἔπειτα τῶν τοῦ λαοῦ· τοῦτο γὰρ ἐποίησεν **ἐφάπαξ** ἑαυτὸν ἀνενέγκας.[225] He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people; he did this *once for all* when he offered up himself.

[223] The other two passages that the word ἐφάπαξ is used in the NT is in Rom 6:10 and 1 Cor 15:6.

[224] See James Moffatt, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1924), 121.

[225] *hos our echei kath' hēmeran anankēn, hōsper hoi archiereis, proteron hyper tōn idiōn hamartion thysias anapherein epeita tōn tou laou touto gar epoiēsen ephapax heauton anenenkas.*

Heb 9:12	οὐδὲ δι' αἵματος τράγων καὶ μόσχων διὰ δὲ τοῦ ἰδίου αἵματος εἰσῆλθεν **ἐφάπαξ** εἰς τὰ ἅγια αἰωνίαν λύτρωσιν εὑράμενος.[226] He entered *once for all* into the Holy Place, taking not the blood of goats and calves but his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.
Heb 10:10	ἐν ᾧ θελήματι ἡγιασμένοι ἐσμὲν διὰ τῆς προσφορᾶς τοῦ σώματος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ **ἐφάπαξ**.[227] And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ *once for all.*

For the Auct Heb, only Christ's sacrifice is "once-for-all." It will never be repeated because it is perfect, sufficient, and everlasting in its efficacy. Christ, as pointed out by Westcott, "did not need to repeat His entrance. One entrance left the way open for ever. The 'veil was rent' (Matt 27:51). There was no longer any obstacle interposed between the worshipper – for all are now priests (Rev 1:6) – and the Object of his worship."[228] St. Thomas explained the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ in this way:

> *Christus autem per totum tempus, quod est quasi annus. Introivit semel in sancta, et semel etiam fudit sanguinem suum. I Pet. III, 18: Christus semel pro peccatis nostris mortuus est. Rom. VI, 10: quod enim mortuus est peccato, mortuus est semel. Item semel intravit, nam*

[226] *Oude di' haimatos tragōn kai moschōn dia de tou idiou haimatos eisēlthen ephapax eis ta hagia aiōnion lytrōsin heuramenos.*

[227] *en hō thelēmati hēgiasmenoi semen dia tēs prosphoras tou sōmatos Iēsou Christou ephapax.*

[228] Westcott, *Hebrews*, 259.

ex quo intravit caelestia, semper est ibi. Et ideo dicit quod intravit semel in sancta.[229]

Heb 10:1-22 is a further theological elucidation of Heb 9:12. The essential connection between this pericope and the earlier verse, Heb 9:12 is manifested through the adverb, ἐφάπαξ. This word appeared for the third and last time in the whole of Heb in the middle verse (v. 10) of the pericope of Heb 10:1-22.

In Heb 10:1-4, the Auct Heb boldly states the inherent value of the law, but at the same time, unflinchingly declares its weakness, its inadequacy, and its imperfection:[230]

> For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true forms of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices which are continually offered year after year, make perfect those who draw near [Σκιὰν γὰρ ἔχων ὁ νόμος τῶν μελλόντων ἀγαθῶν, οὐκ αὐτὴν τὴν εἰκόνα τῶν πραγμάτων, κατ᾽ ἐνιαυτὸν ταῖς αὐταῖς θυσίαις ἃς προσφέρουσιν εἰς τὸ διηνεκὲς οὐδέποτε δύναται τοὺς προσερχομένους τελειῶσαι·[231]] (Heb 10:1).

Here, it is quite evident that the Auct Heb is referring to the sacrifices repeatedly offered during the annual Day of Atonement. He is making the crucial point that even the most solemn cultic event in the Jewish liturgical calendar is incapable of making perfect the believers. In a larger scale, according to Westcott, the Auct Heb is indicating the fact

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[229] "Christ throughout all of time, which is as a year, entered once for all into the holies and poured out His blood once: 'Christ died once for our sins' (1 Pt 3:18); 'for in that he died for sin, he died once' (Rom. 6:10). Furthermore, He entered once; for from the fact that He entered heaven, He is there always. Hence, he says, he entered once for all into the holies" (Aquinas, *ad Hebraeos*, IX, 3, 440).

[230] See Westcott, *Hebrews*, 303.

[231] *Skian gar echōn ho nomos tōn mellonton agathōn, ouk autēn tēn eikona tōn pragmatōn, kat' eniauton tais autais thysiais has prospherousin eis to diynekes oudepote dynatai tous proserchomenous teleiōsai.*

that "the sacrifices of the Mosaic system could not bring τελείωσις"[232] – "perfection," and since these sacrifices are incapable of bringing perfection to believers, they are therefore meant to be abolished and be replaced by a new and better sacrifice. This sacrifice is the one that can bring perfection to believers, the one that is capable of making those "who draw near" to really enter the Holy of Holies, because it has the power to purify the conscience (Heb 9:14). For this reason, the Auct Heb declares that the law simply possesses a σκιά – "shadow," "shade," or "sketch" of the "good things to come." In other words, the law did not possess the very object, the very reality that believers can hold onto in order for them to be sanctified. Hence, according to Vanhoye, the law is pointing to a future accomplishment, i.e. Christ's once-for-all sacrifice, wherein "the law has only the sketch of this accomplishment, for – as the author has shown – it has neither valid priesthood, nor effective worship, nor irreproachable covenant."[233] He further explains that Heb 10:2, "the next sentence is a rhetorical question which suggests an affirmative answer: if the law and its sacrifices had been effective, the sacrifices would have ceased being offered."[234] If the sacrifice being offered during the Day of Atonement is really capable of bringing about the definitive sanctification of the people, then there is no need for it to be repeated annually, because its effect would not simply be retroactive, but proactive. The people, Mitchell explains, "continue to have 'consciousness of sin,' *syneidesin hamartias*, because their 'conscience' *syneidēsis*, cannot be perfected under the Old Covenant."[235]

In Heb 10:3-4, the Auct Heb gives more emphasis on the defectiveness and weakness of the OT Day of Atonement, that instead of really providing a definitive sanctification for the people, its sacrifices end up becoming an "annual reminder of sin" – ἀνάμνησις ἁμαρτιῶν

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[232] Westcott, *Hebrews*, 303.

[233] Vanhoye, *A Different Priest*, 309.

[234] Vanhoye, *A Different Priest*, 302.

[235] Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 200.

κατ' ἐνιαυτόν[236] (Heb 10:3). And he gives the reason why it could not give the desired sanctification for the people in the following verse:

> For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins [ἀδύνατον γὰρ αἷμα ταύρων καὶ τράγων ἀφαιρεῖν ἁμαρτίας[237]] (Heb 10:4).

Apart from not being able to cleanse the conscience or take away the sense of guilt associated with sin, this sacrifice indicated here is unable to eradicate sin itself. The Auct Heb echoes 9:22, which states that blood must be shed in order for sins to be forgiven. Here, he makes it clear that the Day of Atonement ceremony was ineffective on the basis of the sacrificial blood that was used. He has already previously stated in 9:26 how Christ's once-for-all sacrifice atones for sin.[238] Hence, the sin offering of Yom Kippur, according to Westcott, "cannot be more than a symbol, a sign"[239] for the coming sacrifice of Christ. For St. Ephrem the Syrian, the sacrifices of the OT Day of Atonement are fulfilled and abolished through the sacrifice of Christ:

> If they had become perfect, their priesthood would have ceased, because they should have abstained from their sacrifices. And if their conscience was cleansed from sin, at the same time they would have been cleansed from the impurity of the flesh. But 'in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sin' every day. 'For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sin.' Therefore our Lord, who came to this world, said through the mouth of David, 'Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me,' so that the victims of sacrifices might be abolished through His sacrifice.[240]

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[236] *anamnēsis hamartiōn kat' eniauton.*

[237] *Adynaton gar haima taurōn kai tragōn aphairein hamartias.*

[238] See Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 200.

[239] Westcott, *Hebrews*, 307.

[240] *ACCS Heb*, 154.

In Heb 10:5-10, the Auct Heb quotes and interprets Ps 40:6-8 (LXX 39:7-9[241]). It is exhibited as spoken by Christ: λέγει, the Son of God referring to His Incarnation.[242] Johnson has accurately pointed out that "this is only the second time that Hebrews has Jesus himself speak. In both cases, Jesus speaks with the words of Scripture. In 1:12-13 the Son spoke of himself, using the words of Ps 21:23 and Isa 8:17-18."[243] Many scholars consider the Auct Heb's use of Ps 40:6-8 as a means to make a contrast between the sacrifices of the OT and Jesus' act of obedience.[244] The obedience of the Son to His Father supersedes and replaces the sacrifices of the OT. In other words, what is truly pleasing to the Father is obedience, and not sacrifice. For Angela Rascher, Christ's "offering of His body" refers to His supreme act of obedience—i.e., His obedience to death—rather than His ultimate cultic sacrifice. Since Christianity has no cult and Christ's death is not cultic, Heb does not compare two cultic sacrifices or orders.[245] But this kind of interpretation is quite problematic in so many ways. Benjamin J. Ribbens provides two major reasons why the said interpretation is theologically problematic and untenable:

> First it misses the point of the prophetic criticism of sacrifice. While there are number of texts in the Psalms and Prophets that are critical of Levitical sacrifices, these passages do not call for the end or replacement of sacrifices. Rather, they criticize the abuse of the sacrificial system and call for piety, righteousness and repentance to accompany sacrifice. The prophetic criticism never

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[241] See *The Septuagint with Apocrypha*, 721.

[242] See Bruce, *Hebrews*, 241-242.

[243] Johnson, *Hebrews*, 250.

[244] See Attridge, "Hebrews," 1786-1787. See also Johnson, *Hebrews*, 250. See also Simon J. Kistemaker, *The Psalm Citations in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Amsterdam: van Soest, 1961), 43. See also Angela Rascher, *Schriftauslegung und Christologie im Hebräerbrief* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007), 186.

[245] See Rascher, *Schriftauslegung*, 185-187.

> pits sacrifice against obedience; rather, it calls for true sacrifices – i.e. sacrifices accompanied by obedience.
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> Second, Hebrews does not interpret Psalm 40 in a way that pits sacrifice against obedience; rather, he contrasts two kinds of cultic, bodily/bloody sacrifices, [246] [i.e. the Levitical sacrifices, in particular the sacrifices of the OT Day of Atonement and the sacrifice of Christ].

One has only to remember that "burnt offerings and sin offerings" (Heb 10:6) are the sacrifices offered during the Day of Atonement – the former is the daily תָּמִיד which is the sacrifice offered both at the beginning and at the end of Yom Kippur, and the latter, the sin offerings – חַטָּאת are the ones offered by the high priest in the Holy of Holies for himself, for his household, and for the people of Israel. Hence, the Auct Heb's purpose of using Ps 40:6-8 is to reinforce his point that Jesus has offered the once-for-all sacrifice that fulfills and supersedes the sacrifices of the OT.[247] According to Ribbens,

> Heb 10:5-10 emphasizes the *will of God*. Not only does the Auct Heb alter the final quoted line of Psalm 40 to highlight Christ's achievement of God's will, but the interpretation of the psalm in the following verses on the will, as he requotes 'Here I am, I have come to do your will (θέλημά) (v. 9) and then mentions the will (θελήματι) in v. 10.[248]

But what is the will of God according to the Auct Heb? Ribbens further argues that

> God's will in Heb 10:5-10 is his soteriological will. Hebrews uses Psalm 40 to contrast the Levitical sacrifices that were not according to God's desire (θέλω) and pleasure (εὐδοκέω) with the offering

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[246] Benjamin J. Ribbens, "The Sacrifice God Desired: Psalm 40:6-8 in Hebrews 10," *NTS* 67 (2021): 291.

[247] See Harrington, "Hebrews," 1431.

[248] Ribbens, "The Sacrifice God Desired," 293, emphasis in the original.

> of Jesus' body that accomplishes God's will (τοῦ ποιῆσαι ὁ θεός τὸ θέλημά σου). The Levitical sacrifices were never the true desire, never the true pleasure, never the true salvation. The sacrifice that God always desired is the offering of the incarnate Son.[249]

In other words, one can see that the primary concern of God's will in Heb 10:5-10 is the salvific offering of Christ, i.e., the soteriological aspect of His Paschal Mystery; and the obedience of Christ, i.e. the Christological aspect is only secondary. Hence, for the Auct Heb, what is really important is the identification of the type of sacrifice that truly accomplishes the will of God for the salvation of humanity. It is not a way to downplay the importance of Christ's obedience, rather, it situates this obedience as a prerequisite for His being both the high priest and the sacrifice of the new Day of Atonement.[250] Hence, Christ's sacrifice, according to Harrington, "has superseded and even abolished the animal sacrifices. Only the one perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ was able to make people holy ('consecrated'). That sacrifice was offered in a spirit of faithful obedience to God's will: 'Behold I come to do your will.'"[251] σῶμα δὲ κατηρτίσω μοι of Heb 10:5 and τοῦ σώματος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ of Heb 10:10 refer to Jesus' unique self-sacrifice, which stands for the second or New Covenant.[252] Later, this point will be given greater emphasis by the Auct Heb by quoting Jer 31:33-34. For the Auct Heb, the various types of sacrifice in the OT especially the ones offered during the Day of Atonement are fulfilled and transcended in the perfect self-offering of Christ.[253]

In Heb 10:11-18, the Auct Heb makes an important contrast between the priestly offering of Christ and the daily service in the sanctuary of the OT priests, the תָּמִיד. In Heb 10:11, he points out

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[249] Ribbens, "The Sacrifice God Desired," 295.

[250] See Ribbens, "The Sacrifice God Desired," 296.

[251] Harrington, "Hebrews," 1431.

[252] See Eisenbaum, "Hebrews," 480.

[253] See Bruce, *Hebrews*, 241.

two important things regarding the daily sacrifices offered by priests, first they are done repeatedly (τὰς αὐτὰς πολλάκις προσφέρων θυσίας[254]), and second, no matter how many times these sacrifices are repeated, they are incapable of taking away sins (αἵτινες οὐδέποτε δύνανται περιελεῖν ἁμαρτίας[255]). Both Mitchell and Bruce have highlighted the ineffectiveness and the repetitive nature of the OT sacrifices in their respective commentaries on Heb:

> This is a reiteration of 10:4 and a restatement of the ineffectiveness of the daily and multiple sacrifices that priests offered under the Old Covenant.[256]

> Whether the repetition was annual or daily, the main point is that repetition was necessary; not one of these sacrifices could remove sin or cleanse the conscience with permanent effect.[257]

Furthermore, in Heb 10:11, Westcott explains that

> the general term 'priest' (ἱερεύς, Latt. *sacerdos*) suits the argument better than the specific term 'high priest.' The work of Christ is considered in relation to the whole hierarchical and sacrificial system of Judaism. The Jewish priests 'stand' in their service (Deut 10:8; 18:7).[258]

Moreover, this general term "priest" in this passage does not exclude the high priest, since, as accurately pointed out by Mitchell, the "high priest is himself a priest."[259] Whether in the daily offering in the Temple or during the Day of Atonement, both the priest and the

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[254] *tas autas pollakis prospherōn thysias.*

[255] *haitines oudepote dynantai perielein hamartias.*

[256] Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 203.

[257] Bruce, *Hebrews*, 245.

[258] Westcott, *Hebrews*, 313.

[259] Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 203.

high priest are standing when they are performing their liturgical roles inside the sanctuary. Their act of "standing" before the presence of God infers to the fact that their offering is still in need of perfection and completion. Westcott explains that the Greek word ἕστηκεν, in Latin, *proesto est*, means that "the idea of 'standing' is that of a work still to be done, of service still to be rendered, of homage still to be paid."[260] In other words, for the Auct Heb the OT priests were incapable of offering the perfect sacrifice, of rendering the definitive liturgical service, and of paying the absolute homage before God.

In Heb 10:12, The ἐφάπαξ sacrifice of Christ is being contrasted with the multiple and repetitious sacrifices of the Old Covenant.[261] The priest and the sacrifice of the New Covenant is far superior and more perfect than that of the Old Covenant. The single sacrifice (μία θυσία[262]) of Christ is the one that truly takes away the sins of the world. Moreover, the Auct Heb, as pointed out by Healy, "draws a striking contrast between the Levitical priest, who *stands* at his ministry (see Deut 18:7), and Jesus, *who took his seat forever*."[263] Healy further explains that

> in the ancient world, standing was the ordinary posture for work. To sit down meant that one had finished one's labor and could rest. That Jesus 'took his seat forever' is a vivid way of affirming that his work is finished. His one sacrifice for sins is complete, its goal is accomplished.[264]

Hence, Christ, the high priest, being seated is a guarantee or assurance of the completion and acceptance of his sacrifice before

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[260] Westcott, *Hebrews*, 313.

[261] See Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 203.

[262] *mia thysia.*

[263] Healy, *Hebrews*, 204, emphasis in the original.

[264] Healy, *Hebrews*, 204.

the Father.[265] There is no need for Jesus to offer Himself bodily in a recurrent manner.[266] The ministry of the priests and the high priests in the Old Covenant was a "standing" ministry. In other words, it was essentially imperfect and incomplete from the very beginning. Their ministry was a "type" of the priestly ministry of Jesus in the heavenly sanctuary. Jesus did not only sit down in an earthly kingly throne, but "at the right hand of God" (ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ θεοῦ[267]). Later, in the last section of this chapter, Jesus' act of being seated at the right hand of God will be explained in the context of the intercessory action of the OT high priest in the Holy of Holies during the Day of Atonement.

The Auct Heb continues his argument in Heb 10:13 regarding the efficacy of Christ's once-for-all sacrifice by making an allusion to Psalm 110:

> Then to wait until his enemies should be made a stool for his feet (τὸ λοιπὸν ἐκδεχόμενος ἕως τεθῶσιν οἱ ἐχθροὶ αὐτοῦ ὑποπόδιον τῶν ποδῶν αὐτοῦ[268]).

Here, according to Westcott, "the reference to Psalm 110 carries back the thoughts of the reader to the portraiture of the majesty of the Son in Heb 1:13. His victory is won (John 16:33 νενίκηκα): only the fruits of it remained to be gathered."[269] The Auct Heb did not give a detailed description regarding the "enemies" of Christ,[270] but it can be construed as an allusion to His victory over the forces of evil and His permanent

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[265] See Bruce, *Hebrews*, 245.

[266] See Johnson, *Hebrews*, 253.

[267] *en dexia tou theou.*

[268] *To loipon ekdechomenos heōs tethōsin hoi echthroi autou hypopodion tōn podōn autou.*

[269] Westcott, *Hebrews*, 315.

[270] See Bourke, "Hebrews," 939.

triumph against them.[271] Even though believers here in this world are still struggling against forces of evil, the victory is already assured for them, and what they have to do is to entrust and to surrender themselves to Christ. The present middle participle, ἐκδεχόμενος – "waiting"[272] means that Christ is still waiting for the final demise of evil, because as much as believers in this world are still struggling against evil, its final and definitive demise has not yet happened.

In Heb 10:14, the Auct Heb, in a positive form,[273] expresses again the efficacy of Christ's single sacrifice:

> For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified (μιᾷ γὰρ προσφορᾷ τετελείωκεν εἰς τὸ διηνεκὲς τοὺς ἁγιαζομένους[274])

This passage is better understood if one goes back to a previous passage wherein the Auct Heb stated that the Sanctifier and the sanctified have one origin:

> For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified have all one origin [ὅ τε γὰρ ἁγιάζων καὶ οἱ ἁγιαζόμενοι ἐξ ἑνὸς πάντες[275]] (Heb 2:11a).

ὅ ἁγιάζων in this passage is a "singular present active participle"[276] referring to Christ. He is the one who sanctifies, and the recipients of His act of sanctification are the believers, His brothers and sisters:

> That is why he is not ashamed to call them brethren [δι' ἣν αἰτίαν οὐκ ἐπαισχύνεται ἀδελφοὺς αὐτοὺς καλεῖν[277]] (Heb 2:11b).

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[271] See Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 169-170.

[272] See *GAGNT*, 676.

[273] See Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 170.

[274] *mia gar prosphora teteleiōken eis to diēnekes tous hagiazomenous.*

[275] *ho te gar hagiazōn kai hoi hagiazomenoi ex henos pantes.*

[276] See *GAGNT*, 657.

[277] *di' hēn aitian ouk epaischynetai adelphous autous kalein.*

οἱ ἁγιαζόμενοι in Heb 2:11a is the same "plural present passive participle"[278] in Heb 10:14, τοὺς ἁγιαζομένους, the only difference is the case, the former is in the nominative case, while the latter is in the accusative case. Heb 2:11a and 10:14 are referring to the same group of people who are the ones perfected by the sacrifice of Christ. Here, according to F. F. Bruce,

> three outstanding effects are thus ascribed to the sacrifice of Christ: by it his people have their conscience cleansed from guilt; by it they have been fitted to approach God as accepted worshipers; and by it they have experienced the fulfillment of what was promised in earlier days, being brought into the perfect relation to God which is involved in the New Covenant.[279]

In Heb 10:15-18, the Auct Heb continues his arguments on the efficacy of Christ's once-for-all sacrifice by pointing out that the said sacrifice is the fulfillment of the prophecy contained in Jer 31:33-34. Before quoting Jer 31:33-34, what the Auct Heb did first, as pointed out by Healy, is to remind his readers "that Scripture ultimately comes from the Holy Spirit, and therefore has divine authority:"[280]

> And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying, [Μαρτυρεῖ δὲ ἡμῖν καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον· μετὰ γὰρ τὸ εἰρηκέναι] (Heb 10:15).

Then he proceeds by quoting the said OT passage with some alterations to make his intended meaning more evident and understandable to his readers.[281] For the Auct Heb, what really matters is the fulfillment of the twofold promise: 1) laws will be written in people's hearts and 2) the sins of the people will be forgiven.[282] The table below shows

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[278] See *GAGNT*, 657; 676.

[279] Bruce, *Hebrews*, 247.

[280] Healy, *Hebrews*, 206.

[281] See Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 204.

[282] See Vanhoye, *A Different Priest*, 305.

how the Auct Heb's rendering of Jer 31:33-34 is quite different from the MT and the LXX.

MT Jer 31:33-34	LXX Jer 38:33-34	Heb 10:16-17
כִּי זֹאת הַבְּרִית אֲשֶׁר אֶכְרֹת אֶת־בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל אַחֲרֵי הַיָּמִים הָהֵם נְאֻם־יְהוָה נָתַתִּי אֶת־תּוֹרָתִי בְּקִרְבָּם וְעַל־לִבָּם אֶכְתֲּבֶנָּה וְהָיִיתִי לָהֶם לֵאלֹהִים וְהֵמָּה יִהְיוּ־לִי לְעָם: But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.	ὅτι αὕτη ἡ διαθήκη μου, ἣν διαθήσομαι τῷ οἴκῳ Ἰσραὴλ μετὰ τὰς ἡμέρας ἐκείνας, φησὶ Κύριος· διδοὺς δώσω νόμους εἰς τὴν διάνοιαν αὐτῶν καὶ ἐπὶ καρδίας αὐτῶν γράψω αὐτούς· καὶ ἔσομαι αὐτοῖς εἰς Θεόν, καὶ αὐτοὶ ἔσονταί μοι εἰς λαόν[283] For this is my covenant which I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, saith the Lord, I will surely put my laws into their mind, and write them on their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.[284]	αὕτη ἡ διαθήκη ἣν διαθήσομαι πρὸς αὐτοὺς μετὰ τὰς ἡμέρας ἐκείνας, λέγει κύριος· διδοὺς νόμους μου ἐπὶ καρδίας αὐτῶν καὶ ἐπὶ τὴν διάνοιαν αὐτῶν ἐπιγράψω αὐτούς,[285] "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts and write them on their minds,"

[283] *hoti hautē hē diathēkē mou, hēn diathēsomai tō oikō Israēl meta tas hēmeras ekeinas, phēsi Kyrios didous dōsō nomous eis dianoian autōn kai epi kardias autōn grapsō autous kai esomai autois eis Theon, kai autoi esontai moi eis laon.*

[284] *The Septuagint with Apocrypha*, 952-953.

[285] *hautē hē diathēkē hēn diathēsomai pros autous meta tas hēmeras ekeinas, legei kyrios didous nomous mou epi kardias autōn kai epi dianoian autōn epigrapsō autous,*

וְלֹֽא יְלַמְּדוּ עֹוד אִישׁ אֶת־רֵעֵהוּ וְאִישׁ אֶת־אָחִיו לֵאמֹר דְּעוּ אֶת־יְיָ֔ הוָה כִּי־כוּלָּם יֵדְעוּ אוֹתִי לְמִקְטַנָּם וְעַד־גְּדוֹלָם נְאֻם־יְהוָ֔ה כִּי אֶסְלַח לַעֲוֹנָם וּלְחַטָּאתָם לֹֽא אֶזְכָּר־עֹֽוד׃ ס [286] And no longer shall each man teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.	καὶ οὐ μὴ διδάξωσιν ἕκαστος τὸν πολίτην αὐτοῦ καὶ ἕκαστος τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ λέγων· γνῶθι τὸν Κύριον· ὅτι πάντες εἰδήσουσί με ἀπὸ μικροῦ αὐτῶν ἕως μεγάλου αὐτῶν, ὅτι ἵλεως ἔσομαι ταῖς ἀδικίαις αὐτῶν καὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν αὐτῶν οὐ μὴ μνησθῶ ἔτι.[287] And they shall not at all teach everyone his [fellow] citizen, and everyone his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least of them to the greatest of them: for I will be merciful to their iniquities, and their sins I will remember no more.[288]	καὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν αὐτῶν καὶ τῶν ἀνομιῶν αὐτῶν οὐ μὴ μνησθήσομαι ἔτι.[289] Then he adds, "I will remember their sins and their misdeeds no more."

[286] *wəlō yəlammədū ʾōwḏ, ʾîš ʿeṯ- rêʿêhū wəʾîš ʿeṯ- ʿāḥîw lêmōr, dəʿū ʿeṯ- Yahweh; kî- ḵūllām yêḏəʿū ʾōwṯî ləmiqṭannām wəʿaḏ- gəḏōwlām nəʾum- Yahweh, kî ʾeslaḥ laʿăwōnām, ūləḥaṭṭāṯām lō ʾezkār- ʾōwḏ. s*

[287] *kai ou mē didaxōsin hekastos ton politēn autou kai hekastos ton adelphon autou legōn gnōthi ton Kyrion hoti pantes eidēsousi me apo mikrou auton heōs megalou auton, hoti hileōs esomai tais adikiais autōn kai tōn hamartiōn autōn ou mē mnēsthō eti.*

[288] *The Septuagint with Apocrypha*, 953.

[289] *kai tōn hamartiōn auton kai anomiōn auton ou mē mnēsthēsomai eti.*

τῷ οἴκῳ Ἰσραὴλ – "The house of Israel" is simply replaced with αὐτοὺς – "them,"[290] with the purpose of presenting a more general or wide-ranging application of the text.[291] For the Auct Heb, the promise of a New Covenant is not only intended for 'the house of Israel,' but for all people who believe in Christ. Then, "καρδία and διάνοια are transposed, and the clause καὶ τῶν ἀνομιῶν αὐτῶν is added."[292] Mitchell explains that the Auct Heb reversed the order of the words from "διάνοια – καρδία" to "καρδία – διάνοια" to remind his readers of "the Deuteronomic injunction to serve the Lord with one's whole heart."[293] Mitchell further explains that the purpose of this reminder is to highlight the fact that "the Deuteronomic ideal informed Israel's cultic life to the extent that it understood how ritual and sacrifice were pleasing to God when accompanied by the proper interior disposition."[294] Such an injunction was already perfected and fulfilled in the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ. The laws of God can now be written in people's hearts because of the single offering of Christ that does not only purify the flesh, but above all else, the conscience.[295] Believers are given the capacity to follow God's laws wholeheartedly because their heart, their conscience is already purified by Christ's sacrifice. Their hearts now are clean slates where God can write His laws due to Christ's perfect self-offering. To say that God will "remember" the sins and misdeeds of the people no more is another way of saying that He will "forget" them. Healy explains the importance of God's act of "forgetting" or "not remembering" the sins of his people in this way:

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[290] See Westcott, *Hebrews*, 316.

[291] See Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 204.

[292] Westcott, *Hebrews*, 316.

[293] Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 204.

[294] Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 204.

[295] See Ernst Käsemann, *The Wandering People of God: An Investigation of the Letter to the Hebrews*, trans. Roy A. Harrisville and Irving L. Sandberg (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1984), 238.

> For God to 'forget' sins means to blot them out forever (Ps 25:7; Isa 43:25). And if God has forgotten them, they are no longer to burden and condemn the human conscience, which has been fully cleansed by the blood of Christ 'from dead works to worship the living God' (Heb 9:14).[296]

And since Christ's sacrifice perfectly effected the forgiveness of the sins and misdeeds of the people, it simply follows that any offering for sin is now abolished:

> Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin [ὅπου δὲ ἄφεσις τούτων, οὐκέτι προσφορὰ περὶ ἁμαρτίας] (Heb 10:18).

This passage has a tone of resounding finality and irrevocability.[297] It means to say that the irrevocable and powerful erasing of sins before God's presence implies that no further sin offering is needed. Hence, it confirms the finality and conclusiveness of Christ's once-for-all sacrifice.[298]

Finally, Heb 10:19-22 highlights the fact that the sacrifice of Christ secures an eternal redemption (αἰωνίαν λύτρωσιν εὑράμενος) (Heb 9:12). It means to say that unlike the sacrifices of the OT Day of Atonement, Christ's sacrifice, the offering of Himself without blemish to God has the capacity to purify the conscience – συνείδησις (Heb 9:14), and not only the flesh – σάρξ (Heb 9:13). The high-priestly offering of the OT Day of Atonement has no power to make the people enter into the Holy of Holies. It has no capacity to remove the "distance" that hinders the people from being truly intimate with God. But through the once-for-all sacrifice which purifies the conscience, the people are now given the opportunity – like Christ, the new high priest, "the forerunner on our behalf" (Heb 6:20) – to

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[296] Healy, *Hebrews*, 207.

[297] See Healy, *Hebrews*, 207.

[298] See Bruce, *Hebrews*, 248.

draw near not only to an earthly sanctuary, but to a heavenly one.[299] St. John Chrysostom expressed this truth in this way:

> And yet neither was the Old Testament priest visible, but stood within, and they without, the whole people. But here not only has this taken place, that the priest has entered the Holy of Holies, but that we also enter in.[300]

Hence, Christ – the high priest and the sacrifice – is the source of confidence (παρρησία[301])[302] for the people:

> Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way which he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water [Ἔχοντες οὖν, ἀδελφοί, παρρησίαν εἰς τὴν εἴσοδον τῶν ἁγίων ἐν τῷ αἵματι Ἰησοῦ, ἣν ἐνεκαίνισεν ἡμῖν ὁδὸν πρόσφατον καὶ ζῶσαν διὰ τοῦ καταπετάσματος, τοῦτ' ἔστιν τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἱερέα μέγαν ἐπὶ τὸν οἶκον τοῦ θεοῦ, προσερχώμεθα μετὰ ἀληθινῆς καρδίας ἐν πληροφορίᾳ

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[299] See Caird, *NT Theology*, 153. See also Susanne Lehne, *The New Covenant in Hebrews* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 110.

[300] Enarratio in Ep. *Ad Hebraeos*, XIX, 2, *PG* 63, 139-140. *ACCS Heb*, 161.

[301] *parrēsia.*

[302] The word παρρησία in Greek can mean "confidence," 'boldness,' or "freedom." Hence, through Christ, the people are given both the confidence and the freedom to enter the heavenly sanctuary, which the Old Covenant was incapable of providing for the people.

πίστεως ῥεραντισμένοι τὰς καρδίας ἀπὸ συνειδήσεως πονηρᾶς καὶ λελουσμένοι τὸ σῶμα ὕδατι καθαρῷ·[303]] (Heb 10:19-22).

The new and living way (ὁδὸν πρόσφατον καὶ ζῶσαν) to God's dwelling place is opened for the people "through the curtain, that is, through His [Christ's] flesh" (διὰ τοῦ καταπετάσματος, τοῦτ' ἔστιν τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ). This is one of the most profound theological statements in the Bible, especially if it is interpreted against the background of the rich symbolism of the inner veil (καταπέτασμα) of the Temple/Tabernacle, and the vestment of the high priest in the OT. The fabric that is used for the καταπέτασμα, as pointed out by Barker, is exactly the same fabric that was used "for the outer garment of the high priest, which he wore in the hall of the Temple, but not in the Holy of Holies, where he wore the white linen of the angels."[304] Both the veil and the outer garments of the high priest symbolize "the visible creation." Christ became the definitive representative of the visible creation through His Incarnation. St. Gregory of Nyssa, one of the Cappadocian Fathers expressed this truth by pointing out that "because it is composed of various colors, of the four elements"[305] that comprise the visible creation, the inner veil is therefore a "type" or a "prefiguration" of the flesh of Christ. Through His Incarnation, Christ became the fulfillment and realization of what the inner veil in the Temple and the garments of the high priest represent. Hence, it is only through Christ's Incarnation that the people can enter the heavenly sanctuary.[306] It is through the flesh of Christ, incarnate and

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[303] *Echontes oun, adelphoi, parrēsian eis tēn eisodon tōn hagiōn en tō haimati Iēsou, hēn enekainisen hēmin hodon prosphaton kai zōsan dia tou katapetasmatos, tout' estin tēs sarkos autou, kai hierea megan epi ton oikon tou theou, proserchōmetha meta alēthinēs kardias en plērophoria pisteōs rerantismenoi tas kardias apo syneidēseōs ponēras kai lelousmenoi to sōma hydati katharō.*

[304] Barker, *Temple Theology*, 30.

[305] *Vita Moysis*, 178; St. Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses*, trans. by Abraham J. Malherbe and Everett Ferguson (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), 99.

[306] See Clinton Wahlen, "The Pathway into the Holy Places (Heb 9:8): Does it End at the Cross," *JAAS* 11, 1 (2008): 51.

glorified, the offering of His blood, the offering of His "indestructible life" that believers can enter without constraint to the heavenly sanctuary, [307] which the Old Covenant was incapable of dispensing or providing for the people. The opening of the καταπέτασμα of the heavenly sanctuary – i.e., Jesus' Resurrection which reveals His full divinity – grants to the people of God access to the heavenly Holy of Holies. According to Clinton Wahlen, "Jesus has made the pathway open to all willing to follow him there,"[308] and he "has blazed a pathway for us from earth to heaven so that we can already follow him 'through the veil' into the very presence of God."[309] St. Thomas speaks about this truth by saying:

> *Sicut enim sacerdos per velum intrabat in sancta sanctorum, ita si volumus intrare sancta gloriae, oportet intrare per carnem Christi, qui fuit velamen deitatis*.[310]

Without the Resurrection of Christ, His Incarnation would simply be a "closed veil," and access to the heavenly sanctuary would be impossible for believers. This truth highlights all the more the defectiveness of a theological approach of merely identifying the sacrifice of Christ to His Passion and Death on the cross. If Christ did not resurrect from the dead, His Passion and Death would only be a futile undertaking, hence, at the end of the day, not salvific. As much as the death of sacrificial animals does not make a sacrifice in the OT, the Death of Christ cannot also be the sole and the sufficient constituent of the definitive sacrifice of the NT. ἐν τῷ αἵματι Ἰησοῦ – here, the language of "blood" for the Auct Heb, according to Moffitt,

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[307] See David M. Moffitt, "Unveiling Jesus' Flesh: A Fresh Assessment of the Relationship Between the Veil and Jesus' Flesh in Hebrews 10:20," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* (Spring 2010): 83-84.

[308] Wahlen, "The Pathway into the Holy Places," 51.

[309] Wahlen, "The Pathway into the Holy Places," 54.

[310] "For just as the priest entered into the holy of holies through the veil, so we, if we would enter the holy of glory, must enter through Christ's flesh, which was a veil of his divinity" (Aquinas, *ad Hebraeos*, X, 2, 502).

does not function "as a metaphor for Jesus' death (as if one would ever bring death into God's presence), but for his life."[311] Christ's blood, the offering of His "indestructible life" before the Father is the one that opens the heavenly sanctuary for all the believers who draw near. Hence, for the Auct Heb, as exquisitely and accurately pointed out by Andrew Remington Rillera, Jesus is framed in relation to the Day of Atonement, "not on the basis of his *death*, but rather on the basis of his *resurrected and ascended bodily life in the presence of God* since this is how and where the atoning actions take place."[312]

4.2.5. The Permanent Intercession of Jesus for His Followers

When the high priest entered the Holy of Holies during the Day of Atonement, one of his important tasks was to intercede for the people before the presence of God. St. Thomas Aquinas speaks about this fact when he stated the following in his commentary on Heb:

> *Pontifex qui intrabat sancta sanctorum,*
> *stabat coram propitiatorio ut oraret pro populo.*[313]

As a mediator, He appears before the LORD on behalf of the people of Israel. This indispensable task given to the OT high priest, for the Auct Heb, finds fulfillment and perfection in the person of Jesus, especially in His entry to the heavenly sanctuary. Two passages from Heb point to Christ's permanent intercession for His followers in the heavenly sanctuary: Heb 9:24 and Heb 10:12.

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[311] David M. Moffitt, "Blood, Life, and Atonement: Reassessing Hebrews' Christological Appropriation of Yom Kippur," in *The Day of Atonement: Its Interpretations in Early Jewish and Christian Traditions*, ed. Thomas Hieke and Tobias Nicklas (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 220.

[312] Rillera, *Lamb of the Free*, 231, emphasis in the original.

[313] "The high priest, who entered the Holy of Holies, stood at the mercy seat to pray for the people" (Aquinas, *ad Hebraeos*, IX, 5, 466).

Heb 9:24	οὐ γὰρ εἰς χειροποίητα εἰσῆλθεν ἅγια Χριστός, ἀντίτυπα τῶν ἀληθινῶν, ἀλλ' εἰς αὐτὸν τὸν οὐρανόν, νῦν ἐμφανισθῆναι τῷ προσώπῳ τοῦ θεοῦ ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν.[314] For Christ has entered, not into a sanctuary made with hands, a copy of the true one but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.
Heb 10:12	οὗτος δὲ μίαν ὑπὲρ ἁμαρτιῶν προσενέγκας θυσίαν εἰς τὸ διηνεκὲς ἐκάθισεν ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ θεοῦ[315] But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God.

In Heb 9:24, the Auct Heb explicitly tells his readers that Christ has entered the heavenly sanctuary "now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf" – νῦν ἐμφανισθῆναι τῷ προσώπῳ τοῦ θεοῦ ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν. According to Donald Guthrie, the phrase νῦν… ἡμῶν expresses Christ's intercessory work. He explains that there are three main features of this intercession:

First, "the activity of Christ relates specifically to the present *now* (*nyn*). This compares with the finality of his high-priestly work at the time of the passion. However, the use here of the aorist infinitive (*emphanisthēnai*, to appear) states the appearance as an established fact."[316]

Second, "the activity of Christ is in the presence of God. There are no other intermediaries between Christ and God, contrary to what the later Gnostics maintained. Our high priest has direct access"[317] to God.

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[314] *ou gar eis cheiropoiēta eisēlthen hagia Christos, antitypa tōn alēthinōn, all' eis auton ton ouranon, nyn emphanistēnai tō prosōpō tou theou hyper hēmōn.*

[315] *houtōs de mian hyper hamartiōn prosenenkas thysias eis to diēnekes ekathisen en dexia tou theou.*

[316] Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 197.

[317] Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 197.

Third, it is an intercession of intimate communication with the Father.[318] This is indicated by the word πρόσωπον,[319] translated by the RSV2CE as "presence." πρόσωπον literally means "face" – "the part towards the eyes (from *pros*, towards, *ōps*, the eye)."[320] Thus, one can actually translate νῦν… ἡμῶν as "now to appear before the *face* of God on our behalf" (RCRV). Furthermore, Guthrie explains,

> 'Face' is more personal than 'presence' and contains the suggestion of communication. The high priest's office is representative – *on our behalf* (*hyper hēmōn*). As a perfect representative of man he gathers up in himself all humanity…He does for us what we could not do for ourselves.[321]

Hence, Christ came face-to-face with the living God, his Father to intercede for all people.[322] This is strikingly and lucidly explained by St. Thomas:

> *Christus introisse ut appareat vultui Dei, quia, licet semper videret eum clara visione, ut perfecte beatus, tamen status viatoris inquantum huiusmodi non habet hoc, sed tantum status caelestis. Et ideo quando ascendit perfecte beatus in corpore et anima intravit, ut appareat*

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[318] See Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 197.

[319] *prosōpon*.

[320] *Vine AEDNTW*, vol. 2, 67, emphasis in the original.

[321] Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 197.

[322] See Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 196.

vultui Dei, id est, intravit locum ubi Deus manifeste videtur. Et hoc pro nobis. Ad hoc enim ascendit ut pararet nobis viam.[323]

In Heb 10:12, the participle προσενέγκας and the verb ἐκάθισεν are in aorist tense.[324] This means to say that Christ's action of offering a single sacrifice and being seated at the right hand of God is past and complete.[325] The aorist tense here denotes perfection and completion. Christ does not need to offer another sacrifice, because His once-for-all sacrifice is enough and it extends "for all time" (εἰς τὸ διηνεκὲς).[326] The act of sitting down signifies that no repetition is required anymore for the sacrifice that He has offered.[327] The truth that the benefits of His sacrifice will endure perpetually is attested by His heavenly session.[328] Moreover, the Enthronement of Christ is one of the dominant characteristics of Heb. It is mentioned four times in the entire work (1:3, 8:1, 10:12, and 12:2). It highlights the conclusive character of Christ's sacrifice.[329] Hence, Heb 9:24 together with Heb 10:12 express the truth that the intercession of Christ in the presence of God for His followers is "permanent" and "perpetual." St. Thomas ascribes the permanence and the perpetuity of Christ's intercession and enthronement in heaven to His Resurrection:

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[323] "Christ, is said to have entered to appear before the face of God for although He always saw Him clearly as one perfectly happy, yet the state of pilgrims, as such, does not confer this, but only the heavenly state. Therefore, when He ascended perfectly happy, He entered, body and soul, to appear in the presence of God, i.e., He entered the place where God is seen clearly; and this for us. For He entered heaven to prepare the way for us" (Aquinas, *ad Hebraeos*, IX, 5, 467).

[324] See *GAGNT*, 676.

[325] See Lane, *Hebrews* 9-13, 267.

[326] See Lane, *Hebrews* 9-13, 267.

[327] See Lane, *Hebrews* 9-13, 267.

[328] See Lane, *Hebrews* 9-13, 267.

[329] See Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 207-208.

Supra I, 3: sedet ad dexteram maiestatis, et cetera. Et hoc in sempiternum. Non enim iterum morietur, quia Christus resurgens ex mortuis, et cetera. Rom. VI, 9; Dan. VII, 14: potestas eius, potestas Aeterna.[330]

The Auct Heb makes a subtle contrast between the OT high priest's intercession at the earthly sanctuary and the intercession of Christ at the heavenly sanctuary, the former was "transient" and exclusive only for the people of Israel, while the latter is "permanent" and for all people who follow Christ. Since Christ's sacrifice is perfect, he does not need to go out of the heavenly sanctuary, unlike the OT high priest who was bound to enter and to leave the earthly sanctuary during the Day of Atonement. Now, Christ is actively waiting for His followers to enter the heavenly sanctuary. This "active waiting" is expressed in His permanent and perpetual intercession for His people. Hence, the ministry of Jesus as a heavenly high priest and a trustworthy intercessor is ongoing and enduring.[331] The goal of the believers' pilgrimage, according to Marie Isaacs, "is nothing less than the reign of God, which Jesus now shares, and which he holds out to his followers as their inheritance."[332]

4.2.6. Summary

In this section, the five Yom Kippuric high priestly actions of Jesus found in Heb 9:1-10:22, namely, 1) His victory over the forces of evil, 2) the confession and the goat for Azazel ritual, 3) His entry to the heavenly Holy of Holies, 4) the one-time atoning and purifying offering of His own blood and its sprinkling, and 5) His permanent intercession for His followers are ascertained and explained. These five

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[330] "'He sits on the right hand of the majesty on high' (Heb 1:3), and this forever, for He will not die again, because 'Christ rising from the dead, dies now no more' (Rom 6:9); 'His power is an everlasting power' (Dan 7:14)" (Aquinas, *ad Hebraeos*, X, 1, 497).

[331] See *ICSBONT*, 2171.

[332] Isaacs, *Sacred Space*, 219.

actions show that for the Auct Heb, Jesus is truly the new priest who offered the once-for-all sacrifice of the New Covenant. The context of the Day of Atonement is exhibited as the primary implement for the Auct Heb to further his theological arguments for Christ's new priesthood and His once-for-all sacrifice. Furthermore, the rhetorical and the theological genius of the Auct Heb are shown in his capacity to present the resemblance and difference between the Old Covenant's priesthood and sacrifice, and those of the New Covenant, and then to adeptly argue for the superiority of the latter to the former. Hence, the New Covenant's new priest and new sacrifice supersede, perfect, and fulfill those of the Old Covenant.[333] For this reason, believers can now confidently draw near to God because they have a trustworthy high priest, who through His Paschal Mystery, has given them access to the heavenly sanctuary.

[333] See Gerhard Lohfink, *Between Heaven and Earth: New Explorations of Great Biblical Texts* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2022), 189.

CONCLUSION

Today, Christian communities all over the world continue to struggle against the forces of evil. Sins continue to be committed and their dire and catastrophic consequences in the lives of believers are quite apparent and palpable. Sin continues to be a destructive force that any sincere and God-fearing person must face in his/her daily life. Hence, forgiveness, atonement, reconciliation with God continue to be essential necessities in the Christian life. Every time a person commits sin, that person is inevitably in need of forgiveness and reconciliation with God. The majority of the problems today in contemporary societies are actually rooted in people's incapacity to accept their own sinfulness, their own brokenness, their need for God. To have a healthy "sense of sin" is a *conditio sine qua non* in one's relationship with God. In the medical field, only those people who accept they have a disease that needs healing are the ones who will seek immediate medical attention and help. It is not quite different in spiritual life. Only those people who consciously know that there is something wrong with them, that they are sinful, are the ones who will be seeking forgiveness and reconciliation with God.

Ultimately, forgiveness and reconciliation boil down to one essential thing – "communion with God." If at the end of the day, people live their lives in this world with all its ephemeral and material benefits, but still not in communion with God who is the source of all goodness, authentic satisfaction, and real happiness, their lives are nothing but futile – "dusts in the wind." The Letter to the Hebrews

continues today to be a very relevant and a valuable theological document for all peoples of all walks of life, for the simple reason that what it proclaimed almost two thousand years ago continues to be true until now – men and women are in need of forgiveness and reconciliation with God, and these twofold gifts were graciously given to them through Christ's priesthood and His once-for-all sacrifice. Sin and impurities, the forces of evil, do not have the last word any more in the life of a Christian, because in the first place, the sacrifice that has permanently trounced the forces of death and evil, and made the desired communion between God and humanity truly possible has already been offered. The once-for-all sacrifice offered by Jesus, the eternal high priest of the New and Everlasting Covenant has provided access for humanity to the heavenly sanctuary. It is a sacrifice unique, unrepeatable, and everlasting in its effects, because it is an offering that has the power "to purify the conscience," which the sacrifices of the Old Covenant were incapable of doing, not even the sacrifices being offered during the holiest day of the Jewish liturgical calendar. The value and the power of the OT Day of Atonement reside in the fact that it was a "type," a "shadow," a "prefiguration" of the coming sacrifice of Christ. The annual Day of Atonement in the OT was a promise in need of fulfillment. It was not an end in itself. This is a truth that the Auct Heb has painstakingly and meticulously argued in his letter/homily.

The five Yom Kippuric high-priestly actions of Jesus found in Heb 9:1-10:22 only show that for the Auct Heb, the Paschal Mystery of Jesus, i.e. His Passion, Death, Resurrection, Ascension, and Enthronement in heaven, is the definitive Day of Atonement of the New Covenant. In Christ's Paschal Mystery, what the priesthood and the sacrifices of the Old Covenant were incapable of doing, were perfectly fulfilled and brought to completion. Through the new and definitive high priest and His once-for-all sacrifice, "drawing near" to God becomes possible for all those who sincerely desire to be in communion with Him. The sacrifice of Christ has given definitive access to the people, not only to an earthly sanctuary, but to a heavenly one. The defect and imperfection of the OT Day of Atonement were clearly seen in its incapacity to make the people of God enter into the

Holy of Holies. Even if done annually, it was incapable of giving the people access to the Holiest Place. It was inept of truly bringing people before the throne of God, because it was incapable of truly cleansing and purifying the conscience of the people. Only the blood of Christ, the offering of His "indestructible life" that sins and impurities are truly wiped from people's hearts, making them truly clean and worthy to enter the heavenly sanctuary.

By interpreting Heb 9:1-10:22 primarily in the context of the Day of Atonement – believing and arguing that it was really the original context by which the Auct Heb formulated his theological arguments – this research has contributed to a renewed and better understanding of the biblical concept of Christ's priesthood and His sacrifice. It aims at correcting the commonly accepted theological equation "sacrifice of Christ = Passion and Death of Christ." If sacrifice, in the biblical sense of the word, is not primarily constituted by the slaughter and death of the sacrificial animal, then it is also very much true and applicable to Jesus' sacrifice. By carefully following the theological arguments of the Auct Heb, it was exhibited that the sacrifice of Christ is not solely equivalent to His Passion and Death on the Cross, but to His whole Paschal Mystery. Christ's Passion, Death, Resurrection, Ascension and Enthronement in heaven is the perfectly offered and accomplished once-for-all sacrifice of the New Covenant. This study builds upon the work of other biblical scholars, like Margaret Barker, Richard J. Barry, IV, Daniel Stökl Ben Ezra, Christian A. Eberhart, David M. Moffitt, Andrew Remington Rillera, and N. T. Wright who reexamined the biblical concept of priesthood and sacrifice in the OT in order to gain a deeper understanding of Jesus' person and His salvific actions.

Moreover, there are three important rituals of the OT Day of Atonement that are absent in the pericope of Heb 9:1-10:22, namely, 1) the high priest's offering of the fire incense inside the Holy of Holies; 2) the high priest's celebration with his friends; and 3) the affliction of the soul of the faithful. Some comments about these rituals are deemed necessary, because they can provide additional theological insights for the readers. Hence, details that are not mentioned in the

inspired written text of Heb can plausibly help to better understand it.

First, the high priest's act of offering the fire incense in front of the Ark of the Covenant. This ritual was deemed necessary for the high priest, so that "the cloud of incense may cover the mercy seat which is upon the covenant, lest he die" (Lev 16:13). It only means to say that even for someone who is regarded as ritually pure, having direct access to God is still extremely dangerous for a sinner. Despite his high priestly office, the OT high priest remained a sinner. St. Edith Stein gives a satisfactory reason why the offering of incense ritual was not present in the Auct Heb's presentation of Jesus' sacrifice on the new Day of Atonement:

> Jesus is 'always and everywhere, before the face of God… He does not have to conceal himself from God by a protective cloud of incense. He gazes upon the uncovered face of the Eternal One and has nothing to fear. Looking at the Father will not kill him. And he unlocks the mystery of the high priest's realm.'[334]

In other words, one can safely conclude that for the Auct Heb, the offering of incense ritual was not anymore needed by the new and definitive high priest, because He is "holy, blameless, unstained, separated from sinners" (Heb 7:26), therefore, worthy "to appear in the presence of God on our behalf" (Heb 9:24). He is "*Deum ex Deo, lumen ex lumine, Deum verum de Deo vero*."[335]

Second, the high priest's celebration with his friends. According to the *Mishnah Yoma*, the high priest's celebration with his friends – an act of thanksgiving for the successful offering in the Temple – was an

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[334] Edith Stein, "The Prayer of the Church," in *The Collected Works of Edith Stein*, vol. 4, *The Hidden Life: Essays, Meditations, Spiritual Texts*, ed. L. Gelber and Michael Linssen, trans. Waltraut Stein (Washington, DC: ICS, 2014), 12.

[335] Nicene Creed in *Heinrich Denzinger: Enchiridion symbolorum definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum: Compendium of Creeds, Definitions, and Declarations on Matters on Faith and Morals*, 43rd ed., ed. Peter Hünermann (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012), 51.

essential part of the closing rituals of the Day of Atonement. But the Auct Heb did not mention this in his narrative despite the successful and perfect once-for-all sacrifice of Christ. A plausible and possible theological reason for this absence is the fact that the access to the heavenly sanctuary was already provided by Christ to His followers. Hence, His celebration with His friends, i.e. His followers, "I have called you friends" (John 15:15) is still waiting to be fulfilled in the heavenly sanctuary when all of His friends (i.e. the people of God, the Church) are now permanently united with Him in the Father's house. This is in consonance with one of the major themes of Heb which is the pilgrimage of the people of God to the heavenly abode, "For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city which is to come" (Heb 13:14).

Third, the affliction of the soul of the believers. Even though an essential ritual of the OT Day of Atonement, it is absent in the pericope of Heb 9:1-10:22. Two likely and conceivable theological reasons for its absence. First, the affliction of the soul was primarily a ritual for the people as their active participation during the Day of Atonement. Though not exempted, it was not basically focused on the high priest since his responsibility was to take care of the Temple rituals. Hence, the Auct Heb was more concerned on the rituals exclusively performed by the OT high priest as being fulfilled and perfected in Christ, instead of the ritual assigned to the people. Second, Christ, the new high priest, is not subject to the affliction of the soul – repentance and fasting; because unlike the OT high priest, He is sinless and does not require repentance and fasting. The people of God as much as they are still traveling in this earthly life, the affliction of the soul is still applicable for them. Repentance and fasting continue to be a norm for believers as long as they are still in this temporal world, as long as they are not yet fully united with their High Priest: "The days will come, when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast" (Matt 9:15). It will only end if they are already in the heavenly sanctuary – in perfect communion with God.

Finally, the possible pastoral and practical implications for the Christian life that can be derived from this research are entrusted to future students who might be interested in them. Hence, how the biblical theology of Christ's priesthood and His once-for-all sacrifice contained in this research will affect the people's understanding of the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial priesthood is for future researchers to discover and to develop. Based on the brilliant theological arguments of the Auct Heb, the author of this work is merely satisfied in expounding the biblical theology of the new and definitive high priest, sacrifice, and sanctuary of the New Covenant.

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THE NEW PRIEST

Unlocking the mystery of the cross through an ancient ritual.

How do we unlock the novelty of Christ's priesthood and the meaning of His once-for-all sacrifice as contained in Heb 9:1-10:22? This groundbreaking study argues that the key lies in a single, primary source: the Old Testament Day of Atonement. By anchoring the text firmly within the rituals of Yom Kippur, *The New Priest* demonstrates how the subsidiary contexts of the pericope are structurally dependent on this overarching ritual background. What emerges is a profound exploration of Christ as the eternal High Priest and the perfect sacrifice—the ultimate fulfillment and perfection of the Old Covenant cultic actions realized in the Paschal Mystery. Utilizing Joseph Ratzinger's innovative Method C exegesis, this study interprets the sacred text by employing both the historical-critical exegesis of the 20th century and the traditional patristic-medieval exegesis. The result is a fuller understanding of the depth, the breadth, and the height of the sacred author's theological arguments, making this volume an important resource for scholars, pastoral ministers, and students of Sacred Scripture alike.



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