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ABSTRACT

*Αἶμα* IN HEBREWS

by

Hermann V. A. Kuma

Adviser: Richard M. Davidson

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: *Αἷμα* IN HEBREWS

Name of researcher: Hermann V. A. Kuma

Name and degree of faculty adviser: Richard M. Davidson, Ph.D.

Date completed: January 2010

Problem

The focus of the dissertation is the significance of the term *αἷμα* (“blood”) in the Epistle to the Hebrews and how the author of Hebrews uses the term to formulate the argument and message of the Epistle. The dissertation traces the scholarly blood debate involving blood as life or death which began in the last decade of the nineteenth century and eventually fizzled out in the mid-1950s. Recognition of the ambivalence of blood, symbolizing both life and death, is necessary to understand the message of Hebrews.

Method

The dissertation provides a discussion of the concept of blood in the OT and ANE environments, demonstrating that in the OT the role of blood in the context of the cult as a means of atonement is unique.

## Results

References to blood are also classified and assessed from the works of both Philo and Josephus, Rabbinic literature, the Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, the Qumran community, and the NT. The final chapter of the dissertation deals with the meaning of blood in the Epistle itself, where the author of Hebrews uses his rhetorical skill to present blood as a most powerful medium of approach to God.

## Conclusions

According to the Epistle, blood sanctifies, purifies/cleanses, consecrates/inaugurates, effects perfection, seals covenants, and brings about decisive purgation. When it is despised, it destroys by death. Blood, when used with the term *σάρξ* (“flesh”), confirms the true humanity of Christ. Blood constitutes a *Leitmotif* in the Epistle to encompass the atoning work of Christ, who as High Priest shed His blood vicariously to eradicate sin, cleanse the conscience, and save humankind.

Andrews University  
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

*Αἶμα* IN HEBREWS

A Dissertation  
Presented in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Philosophy

by  
Hermann V. A. Kuma

January 2010

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Date approved



This work is dedicated to the loving memory of my late parents

COMFORT AND ANDREWS KUMA

who taught me from childhood to fear the Lord.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AAA</i>	<i>Annals of Archaeology and Anthropology</i>
<i>Ac Or</i>	<i>Acta Orientalia</i>
<i>AJT</i>	<i>American Journal of Theology</i>
<i>ANE</i>	<i>Ancient Near East</i>
<i>Ang</i>	<i>Angelicum</i>
<i>Anv</i>	<i>Anvil</i>
<i>AUSS</i>	<i>Andrews University Seminary Studies</i>
<i>BAR</i>	<i>Biblical Archaeology Reader</i>
<i>BDAG</i>	<i>Bauer-Danker-Arndt-Ginrich Greek-English Lexicon of the NT</i>
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
<i>Bib Trans</i>	<i>Bible Translator</i>
<i>BN</i>	<i>Biblische Notizen</i>
<i>BSac</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
<i>BT</i>	<i>Bible Today</i>
<i>BTB</i>	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
<i>BTS</i>	<i>Bible et vie Chretienne</i>
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
<i>Chr T</i>	<i>Christianity Today</i>

<i>CTM</i>	<i>Concordia Theological Monthly</i>
<i>EAJT</i>	<i>East Asia Journal of Theology</i>
<i>EccR</i>	<i>Ecclesiastical Review</i>
<i>EvQ</i>	<i>Evangelical Quarterly</i>
<i>Exp</i>	<i>Expositor</i>
<i>Exp Tim</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
<i>HUCCA</i>	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JBR</i>	<i>Journal of Bible and Religion</i>
<i>JCBRF</i>	<i>Journal of the Christian Research Fellowship</i>
<i>JCS</i>	<i>Journal of Cuneiform Studies</i>
<i>JJS</i>	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
<i>JANES</i>	<i>Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society</i>
<i>JSJ</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism</i>
<i>JSNJ</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
<i>LQ</i>	<i>Lutheran Quarterly</i>
<i>Mch</i>	<i>Modern Churchman</i>
<i>MQR</i>	<i>Methodist Quarterly Review</i>
<i>Mst</i>	<i>Milltown Studies</i>



<i>NeoT</i>	<i>Neotestamentica</i>
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NT	New Testament
<i>NTAg</i>	<i>New Testament Age</i>
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
<i>Numen</i>	<i>Numen International Review for the History of Religions</i>
OT	Old Testament
<i>OTS</i>	<i>Oudtestamentische Studiën</i>
<i>PEQ</i>	<i>Palestine Exploration Quarterly</i>
<i>QR</i>	<i>Quarterly Review</i>
<i>Rel L</i>	<i>Religion in Life</i>
<i>Rev Exp</i>	<i>Review and Expositor</i>
<i>Rev Q</i>	<i>Revue de Qumran</i>
<i>ScrH</i>	<i>Scripto Hierosolymitana</i>
<i>Semeia</i>	<i>Semeia</i>
<i>SJT</i>	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
<i>SJTh</i>	<i>Southwestern Journal of Theology</i>
<i>StEv</i>	<i>Studia Evangelica</i>
<i>TDNT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i>
<i>T Ed</i>	<i>Theological Educator</i>
<i>Th</i>	<i>Theology</i>
<i>Trad Tes</i>	<i>Tradition and Testament</i>

<i>TrJ</i>	<i>Trinity Journal</i>
<i>T Today</i>	<i>Theology Today</i>
<i>TWOT</i>	<i>Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament</i>
<i>Tyn B</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
<i>UF</i>	<i>Ugaritische Forschungen</i>
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
<i>WW</i>	<i>Word and World</i>

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things of God. To all such people I give due thanks. Above all things, however, I give God the greater glory, who, in spite of all the odds, has helped me to realize my dream.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The Epistle to the Hebrews is one of the most carefully crafted documents of the New Testament. In fact, Harold Attridge maintains that it is “the most elegant and sophisticated, and perhaps the most enigmatic text of first-century Christianity.”<sup>1</sup> A careful examination of the contents of the Epistle to the Hebrews reveals that the term *αἷμα* (“blood”) plays a key role in the development of a theological argument that reaches its climax in the establishment and confirmation of the superiority of the High Priesthood of Christ to the Aaronic priesthood. The word *αἷμα* (“blood”) is used twenty-one times in the entire Epistle,<sup>2</sup> and it appears no less than fourteen times at the core of the theological argument of chaps. 9 and 10 alone. Hence, it is not surprising that William G. Johnsson calls blood the “leitmotif of Hebrews 9-10.”<sup>3</sup> Blood is a key strand

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<sup>1</sup>Harold W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Hermeneia--A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1989), 1. See also W. Lindsay, *Lectures on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia, PA: Smith, English, and Co., 1867), 1:1. “It contains a minute exposition of some of the leading doctrines of Christianity; the plan of it is constructed with great beauty and logical accuracy; and it is written in finer Greek than any other book in the sacred volume.” Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Hermann Bachmann and Wolfgang A. Slaby, eds., *Concordance to the Novum Testamentum Graece* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1987), 52.

<sup>3</sup>William G. Johnsson, “Defilement and Purgation in the Book of Hebrews” (Ph.D. dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 1973), 222. In fact from pp. 222-232 of the dissertation, Johnsson indicates a strong and impressive argument for the role of blood in Hebrews.

in the fabric of the *auctor ad Hebraeos*' theological argument, and the focus of this dissertation.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The concept of *αἷμα* (“blood”) is central to the thought of the writer of Hebrews. Yet in spite of its prominent role in the theological argument of Hebrews, the use and significance of the term *αἷμα* in the Epistle has never been thoroughly examined in the context of the epistle (see Review of Literature in chapter 2).

### **Purpose and Scope of the Research**

The purpose of this dissertation is to investigate the role and significance of *αἷμα* (“blood”) in the theological argument of Hebrews, seen against the background of the OT, ANE, and NT world.

### **Research Methodology**

I have adopted a philological and an exegetical approach to the problem. The investigation involves literary, grammatical-syntactical, contextual, theological, and intertextual analysis of the passages in Hebrews containing the twenty-one occurrences of the term *αἷμα* (“blood”) in order to ascertain the role and significance of blood in the argument of the Epistle.

### **Organization of Research**

Chapter 2 reviews the pertinent literature on the subject of blood. The literature review covers the blood debate among scholars begun in the latter part of the nineteenth

century, surveys more recent literature dealing with blood in the NT as a whole and specifically in the Epistle to the Hebrews, and demonstrates that no comprehensive study has heretofore been conducted dealing specifically with the word αἷμα and the concept of blood in Hebrews.

Chapter 3 surveys the place of blood in the cultic practices of the ancient Near East and references to blood in the Old Testament. Views of the ANE and the OT regarding blood are compared and contrasted.

Chapter 4 deals with the concept of blood in the New Testament and its environment: the literature of the Jewish Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, Qumran, Philo, Josephus, the Talmud, the mystery religions of the Graeco-Roman world, and the NT books (outside of Hebrews).

Chapter 5 investigates the term blood in the Epistle to the Hebrews itself. This involves an exegetical discussion of all verses containing the word αἷμα (“blood”) in Hebrews, viewed in light of the overall argument of the book. The discussion of each passage is divided into three parts: (1) text and translation; (2) exegetical considerations; and (3) the significance of αἷμα in the passage.

Chapter 6 constitutes the conclusion of the whole matter. This chapter attempts to bring together the ideas discussed in the previous chapters, revealing the role and significance of blood in the theological argument of the Hebrews, viewed against the backdrop of the OT, ANE, and the NT world. Implications are drawn, and suggestions are made for further study.



## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Blood is a common possession of both human beings and animals. It is a physiological property necessary for life, the loss of which results in death. Owing to its importance, blood occupies a significant place in philosophical thought as well as in religion.

This chapter is designed to review pertinent scholarly literature dealing with the biblical concept of blood in the Epistle to the Hebrews, viewed against the background of the general debate over the meaning of blood in the NT. Four main areas are covered in the review. The first part deals with the blood debate within NT scholarship (including literature on Hebrews) that raged from the late nineteenth through the mid-twentieth century. The second section examines major works dealing with the subject of blood in the wider context of the NT in general since the demise of the blood debate in the 1950s. The third portion reviews scholarly studies focusing upon blood in the book of Hebrews since the demise of the blood debate. The fourth and final section establishes the need and validity for the present study of blood in Hebrews. I have adopted a modified chronological approach to the entire review, that is, I have sought to trace the pertinent literature in each subsection in general chronological order, although multiple works of a single author, appearing at different times but supporting the same points of view, are

usually treated together even though there may be an overlap in time with other authors.

### **Debate over the Significance of Blood in the New Testament**

The biblical ideas about blood have resulted in the creation of three schools of thought among Bible scholars. The first two schools, originating in the final decades of the nineteenth century, thrived contemporaneously and battled each other till the middle of the twentieth century. The third school came to the scene in the 1950s as a result of scholarly reaction to the ideas of the first and second schools, and its adoption as the consensus view of scholars spelled the demise of the blood debate. The first school asserts that the phrase ‘blood of Christ’ does not indicate death, but is rather a reference to life released through death and made available to be used for new purposes and appropriation of spiritual benefits in the Eucharist. The second school holds that the phrase “blood of Christ,” like the word “cross,” is an expression which portrays more vividly the death of Christ in its redemptive significance; it connotes the vicarious sacrificial death of Christ and all its remedial issues. The third school of thought, rising in response to the debate between the first two schools, recognizes the ambivalence that inheres in biblical references to the “blood of Christ,” whereby blood may denote both life and death. I will review the works of major adherents to each school and the arguments that are advanced by these scholars in favor of their position.

#### **Blood as Symbol of Life**

The claim that blood in Scripture symbolizes only life is an idea traceable to the

monograph by William Milligan on the resurrection of Christ, first published in 1881.<sup>1</sup> Milligan asserts that any deep thinking person would not accept the idea that blood as simply blood could be acceptable to God, but that what made blood acceptable was that as it flowed, it ‘cried’ as it were, confessing sin and desert of punishment. For this reason, it could not be dead; it was alive.<sup>2</sup> Milligan arrives at this conclusion as he discusses the vicarious sacrifice of Christ in terms of the resurrection. He insists that the resurrection should be given its real place and power by regarding it as an essential and integral part of the salvific work of Christ.<sup>3</sup> Christ’s statement that He has the ability to lay down His life and take it up again constitutes an original two-part commandment from the Father. Therefore what constitutes the true goal of His entire ministry should be seen as resurrection from the power of death together with the life which followed.<sup>4</sup>

Milligan argues in favor of the concept of “life having passed through death” by citing three New Testament writers. First, he refers to John 12:27, where he asserts the preposition ἐκ should be translated “out of” and not “from.” His argument is that Jesus is not shrinking from the pain of death but He views death as something through which He must pass to a glorious deliverance which is to a life beyond death. Second, he refers to Luke’s use of the word ἔξοδος in connection with the Transfiguration of Christ (Luke 9:31), where he contends that the meaning of the word is more than “decease.” Rather, it

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<sup>1</sup>William Milligan, *The Resurrection of Our Lord* (London: Macmillan, 1881).

<sup>2</sup>William Milligan, *The Resurrection of Our Lord* (New York: Macmillan, 1917), 277.

<sup>3</sup>William Milligan, *The Resurrection of Our Lord* (New York: Macmillan, 1927; reprint), 122 (page references are to reprint edition).

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 124.

should be understood as a going forth from a state of humiliation and suffering to a glorious rest.<sup>5</sup> Third, he cites Heb 5:7, where the author's use of the preposition ἐκ, again, he argues, should be translated "out of" and not "from."<sup>6</sup> Drawing from Jesus' parable of the grain of wheat which must go through corruption in order to produce life, he infers that, likewise, it is from the living germ in the seed that life springs.<sup>7</sup> He maintains that the texts cited reflect the element of humiliation/exaltation, thus supporting the idea that Jesus passes through death (the first stage of glory) to a still higher and more perfect stage of glory.<sup>8</sup>

Milligan calls attention to the double procedure with the blood of the victim sacrificed on the Day of Atonement in the Jewish cultus. According to him, the slaying of the victims and blood aspersion constituted a double procedure that was a symbolic setting forth of the same relation between the Almighty, on the one hand, and the sinner, on the other.<sup>9</sup> He observes that, since the blood that is used in the ceremonies is warm and alive, it reflects what the Bible says in Lev 17:11 concerning blood as the bearer of life and divine agent of atonement. Milligan asserts that in the first act of slaughtering there is death, however, only as the way to life. But in the second act of sprinkling, there is life. He seeks to clinch the argument by stressing the point that life laid upon the altar of God to be His forever, must always be deemed a higher thing than life yielded up to

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 125.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 127.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 128.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 137.

death because of sin.<sup>10</sup> Concerning the on-going heavenly ministry of Christ, Milligan says that it is only by the continued offering of Himself in the new life of His resurrection-state that believers are taken “in Him” beyond death into heavenly and eternal life.<sup>11</sup>

Although Milligan’s monograph antedates the published commentaries of B. F. Wescott, it was the latter who was chiefly responsible for the promotion and widespread modern prevalence of the view that blood symbolizes life.<sup>12</sup> Westcott holds that in the sacrificial context when blood flows, the life in it is not destroyed, though it has been separated from the organism which it had previously enlivened.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, Westcott maintains that blood shed in this fashion is treated as living when it is sprinkled upon the altar. For this reason, it is able to make atonement by virtue of the life which is inherent in it.<sup>14</sup> With reference particularly to Hebrews, Westcott argues that the term *blood* becomes fully intelligible when one takes cognizance of the idea that it represents the energy of the physical earthly life as it is. Hence, blood poured out is the force of present human life made available for others.<sup>15</sup> He advances four arguments to substantiate his

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 139.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 142.

<sup>12</sup>See, e.g., Alan M. Stibbs, *The Meaning of the Word ‘Blood’ in Scripture*, The Tyndale New Testament Lectures (London: Tyndale Press, 1947; repr., Northampton, England: Stanley Hunt, 1977), 6, who traces this idea to Westcott, without recognizing Milligan’s contribution at all.

<sup>13</sup>Brooke F. Westcott, *The Epistles of St. John: The Greek Text with Notes and Essays* (London: Macmillan, 1883; 4th ed., New York: Macmillan, 1902), 34.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 34, 35.

<sup>15</sup>Brooke F. Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: The Greek Text with Notes and Essays* (New York: Macmillan, 1889), 294.

understanding of *blood* in Hebrews. First, Christ became truly human and, by virtue of His death, He made His life accessible to the race. Second, by His obedient life and death in conformity to the will of God, Christ was able to approach God in His glorified humanity, and by the same token, He provided for men also the means of approach in His blood. Third, by virtue of the efficacy of His superior blood, He sanctifies and cleanses the conscience. Fourth and finally, by His blood, Christ has inaugurated a new covenant for the human race.<sup>16</sup>

This concept of the “blood of Christ” symbolizing His life released for our enlightenment was more fully developed and brought to the attention of the English-speaking world by H. Clay Trumbull. He argues from the perspective of Lev 17:14, which says: ‘For the life of every creature is the blood of it,’ and Deut 12:23 which reads: “the blood is the life.” In the light of these statements from the Pentateuch, it is asserted that blood which was associated with the Old Testament cultus is to be understood as the outflow of the life principle which constitutes an atonement for the soul (cf. Lev 17:11).<sup>17</sup> Trumbull insisted that it was neither the death of the sacrificial victim nor its broken body that really mattered but the blood; because this was the means of the soul’s ransom, of its rescue, and its redemption. After citing the significance of blood in the context of sacrifice from various cultures and the Holy Scriptures, Trumbull concludes that the unique importance of blood as life, the offering of blood as life, the divine acceptance of

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>H. Clay Trumbull, *The Blood Covenant: A Primitive Rite and Its Bearings on Scripture* (London: George Redway, 1887; 2nd ed., New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1893), 345-72.

blood as life, and sharing of blood as the sharing of life, constitute the real meaning of sacrifice in the sight of God and man.<sup>18</sup>

William Sanday and Arthur Headlam, expounding Rom 3:25, argue that among the Hebrews, the significance of sacrificial blood-shedding was twofold. On the one hand, there was the Jewish view that blood is the seat of life (Gen 9:4; Lev 17:11; Deut 12:23). Therefore the death of the sacrificial victim means more than meets the eye. On the other hand, in the sacrificial act, there was the concept of the setting free of life. The offering and application of blood both constitute an offering of life to God. Therefore the virtue of sacrifice is to be found in this act.<sup>19</sup>

These scholars call attention to the significance of blood shedding and sprinkling in the context of sacrifice. They also observe that, in the NT, the death of Christ is not only compared to one, but to several of the leading forms of Levitical sacrifice such as the Passover, sacrifices on the Day of Atonement, the ratification of the Covenant, and the sin offering. Sanday and Headlam insist that the death of Christ should never be overlooked as a mere passing metaphor. Rather, it is to be seen as a concept that is interwoven with the very warp and woof of primitive Christian thinking and is traceable to Christ Himself. However, they lend support to Westcott's argument that the center of the symbolism of sacrifice is found not in the death of the sacrificial victim, but in the offering of its life.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 372.

<sup>19</sup>William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, The International Critical Commentary, vol. 32 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1895), 89.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 92, 93.

The work of Monro Gibson also belongs to the era previously mentioned. He observes that to the ordinary English mind the mention of blood is most unnatural and repulsive. However, the NT statement describing saints washing their robes white in the blood of the Lamb (Rev 7:14) would connote a different picture to a first-century believer.<sup>21</sup> With his Hebraic cultic background, such a first-century Christian would associate blood with life rather than death. In his mind, the blood collected in a bowl for piacular purposes is symbolic of life. It is the life which has passed through death and has emerged out of it and is therefore fit to be presented to God in sacrifice.

According to Gibson, this is how the first-century believer would see the blood of Jesus who lays down His life and has power to take it up again. Just as the sacrificial victim dies and yet its blood is regarded as having passed through death to life, so also, Christ offers His blood in death and rises up into the presence of the Father.<sup>22</sup> Thus the believer in the blood of Christ sees himself as having appropriated newness of life.<sup>23</sup>

In the first three decades of the twentieth century, we find several scholars developing this line of thought with respect to blood. E. P. Boys-Smith's view focuses on the importance of blood which the ancients believed to be life literally and which also bound the individual to the whole kin.<sup>24</sup> Boys-Smith examines the concept of blood in the Passover rite, and relates it to the Eucharist. He argues that when Jesus instituted the

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<sup>21</sup>J. Monro Gibson, "In the Blood of the Lamb," *Exp* 4 (1897): 218, 219.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, 220.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, 222.

<sup>24</sup>E. P. Boys-Smith, "Sacrifice in Ancient Ritual and in Christian Sacrament-I," *ExpTim* 11, no. 3 (October 1899-September 1900): 105.



Eucharist, He was presupposing and adapting the old ideas and rites connected with sacrifice in Hebrew religion. In Christ's sacrifice, he sees the two important parts of sacrifice. The first is His self-immolation, which is the offering of a sacred life and its acceptance to God. The second is Christian service, which is a means of receiving that life on the part of man. Boys-Smith holds that when both acts are combined it brings about communion in one holy life between God and man. This, he asserts, is the aim of sacrifice.<sup>25</sup>

Peter T. Forsyth, speaking of sacrificial blood, argues that the real object of slaying the victim is not death per se, but that the goal is to release and detach the life inherent in the blood. Thus, through the act of sacrifice, blood is isolated from the material base of body and flesh, and in this refined state, it is presented to God.<sup>26</sup> Forsyth approaches the subject of blood within the context of sacrifice where he advances the argument, based on Lev 17:11, that nowhere in the OT does the value of sacrificial blood lie in the blood itself. Again, he is emphatic that it neither lies with the suffering associated with bloodshed nor even with the life symbolized by the blood.<sup>27</sup> The value of sacrificial blood can be found only in the will of God since He appointed it. For this reason, in the OT, acceptance of proffered life symbolized by blood is acceptation.<sup>28</sup> In the supreme sacrifice of Christ, everything turns on His laying down His life voluntarily.

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<sup>25</sup>E. P. Boys-Smith, "Sacrifice in Ancient Ritual and in Christian Sacrament-II," *ExpTim* 11, no. 4 (October 1899-September 1900): 186.

<sup>26</sup>Peter T. Forsyth, *The Cruciality of the Cross* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1909), 186. See also idem, "What Is Meant by the Blood of Christ?" *Exp* 7 (1908): 207-225.

<sup>27</sup>Forsyth, *The Cruciality of the Cross*, 178.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 179.

His death was the conquest of death and the negation of death, and the resurrection which ensued crowned the crisis of the cross. Therefore, Christ's death and resurrection form two sides of a single act.<sup>29</sup>

According to Forsyth, the bloodshed of Christ means the total surrender of a personality from its very center. His blood constitutes not "sacrifice by self, but of self, and of the whole self, sacrifice not merely voluntary but personal, loving, and entire."<sup>30</sup> Forsyth insists that what is offered in bloodshed is life in its most intimate, spiritual, and moral form: This is what blood means. Furthermore, blood as life means the central will, self-will, and, in fact, the whole will, in loving oblation.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, the cross is the absolute active death of self-will into the holy will of God. In the blood of the Cross, the Holy God alone answers Himself and meets the demand of His own holiness.<sup>32</sup> The blood of Christ involves the very citadel of His personality and His total self.<sup>33</sup> The shedding of His blood is indicative of the "exhaustive obedience and surrender of His total self" to God on behalf of mankind.<sup>34</sup> Christ's blood expresses moral pain with respect to God. However, His death was a function of His total life.<sup>35</sup>

Sydney Gayford's contribution to the blood debate during this period deserves

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 180, 181.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 182.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 192.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 194.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 195.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 203.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 211.

attention. It is his contention that much has been lost in Christian teaching with respect to the sacrifice of Christ, because the Person of the Offerer has been detached from the Priest and Victim. The point must be acknowledged that blood has to do with Jesus' laying down His life voluntarily. Thus, he asseverates that appreciation of the moral and spiritual grandeur of the passion loses some luster, so to speak, when Jesus is solely looked upon as a patient Sufferer rather than the One who ordained the passion.<sup>36</sup>

Gayford reiterates the popular argument that in Semitic thought blood is synonymous with life. However, he further asserts that among the Hebrew people, it is regarded as life that has passed through the experience of death without being destroyed and therefore still lives.<sup>37</sup> He claims that the verb  $\rho\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\iota\zeta\omega$  as used by the author of Hebrews in Heb 9:19, 21 is a dual reference to the inauguration of sacrifice (Exod 24) and to the yearly renewal of the Old Covenant on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16). In the death of Christ, Gayford sees a voluntary self-separation from sin in order to live nearer to God. He argues that the result of such an act is not death-bringing, but life-giving. Thus the crucifixion leads to the resurrection, and the Risen Lord gives life to others. He concludes his argument by proposing that the phrase "blood of Jesus" implies a reference to His Risen Life and a place for the Resurrection in the Sacrifice which He offered for the sins of the world.<sup>38</sup>

Nugent Hicks, another scholar belonging to this period, casts in his lot with the

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<sup>36</sup>Sydney C. Gayford, *Sacrifice and Priesthood Jewish and Christian* (London: Methuen, 1924), 61.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, 68, 69.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, 145.

first school of thought, as he writes on sacrifice in the New Testament. For him, blood needs to be dissociated from the idea of death. He points out that, whereas the modern mind merely sees blood as the evidence of slaughter and destruction, to the ancients, blood was not revolting but precious. It was life misused and in an imprisoned state. However, the act of sacrifice released it.<sup>39</sup>

Hicks looks at the cross as an integral part of a whole course of sacrificial action, but it is neither its beginning nor its end.<sup>40</sup> For him, the cross looks both backwards and forwards. With regard to the past, it means death, but as regards the future, since it has to do with blood poured out, it is the surrender and the release of life.<sup>41</sup> Blood is the means whereby believers appropriate the full life of the new community, and this is its significance in the Eucharist.<sup>42</sup> Hicks proposes that sacrifice must be appreciated in terms of the totality of Christ's life.<sup>43</sup> However, if the self-oblation of Christ is viewed in terms of the sin offering of the OT cultus, then one must do well to remember that the surrender of life is the underlying principle of the sacrificial act.<sup>44</sup>

The fourth and fifth decades of the twentieth century produced some scholars who also supported the idea that blood is life. C. H. Dodd discusses three Pauline metaphors of justification, emancipation, and the ancient sacrificial rite of expiation by blood as he

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<sup>39</sup>F. C. Nugent Hicks, *The Fullness of Sacrifice* (London: Macmillan, 1930), 242.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, 240.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, 242.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*, 244.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, 251.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, 233.

associates himself with the sentiments of the first school. He makes his position clear in his commentary on the Epistle to the Romans. Commenting on Rom 3:21-26, he refers to Lev 17:11 and Deut 12:23 and asserts that blood is life. He maintains that when the Apostle Paul speaks of the blood of Christ, he is thinking of life as laid down in self-dedication to God.<sup>45</sup>

Furthermore, Dodd asserts that the language of sacrifice constitutes a figurative expression which indicates reality that is personal and ethical.<sup>46</sup> Thus he affirms with regard to the Eucharist that, by partaking of the blood of Christ, believers are participating in His life as dedicated to God. He observes that even though sacrificial language may be repugnant to us, to Paul's original readership, both Jewish and Gentile, it was deeply impressive because it brought to mind the most sacred thoughts and experiences.<sup>47</sup>

In harmony with the spirit of the period, Vincent Taylor asserts that it is a mistake to explain away the allusions to blood as synonyms of death, since the use of the word *blood* in relation to Christ is a sense that entirely transcends the suggestion of violent death.<sup>48</sup> For this reason, he is insistent that the writer of Hebrews' employment of the term *blood* is a reference to the idea of life freely surrendered, applied, and dedicated to the recovery of men.<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, he argues that underlying the theory of sacrifice is

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<sup>45</sup>C. H. Dodd, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1932), 55.

<sup>46</sup>*Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup>Vincent Taylor, *The Atonement in New Testament Teaching* (London: Epworth [Edgar C. Barton], 1940), 121, 123.

<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*, 123. Taylor cites the following texts: Heb 1:3; 2:17; 5:27; 9:11, 14, 26, 28; 10:10, 12, 14, 19-23; 12:24; 13:11, 20.

the notion that blood is life released. So, for Taylor, sacrificial blood suggests the thought of life, dedicated, offered, transformed, and opened to our spiritual appropriation.<sup>50</sup>

Oliver Quick, writing on the subject of the Atonement in the New Testament, reinforces this view. According to him, blood represents the human life of Christ, His vicarious sacrificial death, as well as His cleansing of believers in the celebration of the Eucharist.<sup>51</sup> Quick tackles the Christian meaning of sacrifice in terms of the Atonement. He observes that, since the time of Constantine, Christianity has lost the eschatological reference to the Atonement which is conspicuous in primitive Christianity.<sup>52</sup> Christianity needs to recover the idea that the Atonement is not complete apart from the resurrection which, in itself, is the inauguration of the new world, and which also marks the newness of life in the world to come; a life which has already been communicated to the believer even now. Such understanding of the Atonement which the NT teaches is what is found in Hebrews. He argues that Hebrews presents a new revelation of sacrifice in Christ, in that the perfect sacrifice consists in a voluntary self-oblation of a sinless priest-victim.<sup>53</sup> According to Quick, herein lies the mystery of the blood of Christ, because it offers both expiation and life to the believer. He explicates the point that when the author of Hebrews argues that it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin, it is

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<sup>50</sup>Ibid., 149, 198. See also idem, *The Cross of Christ: Eight Public Lectures* (London: Macmillan, 1956), 57.

<sup>51</sup>Oliver C. Quick, *The Gospel of the New World: A Study of the Christian Doctrine of the Atonement* (London: Nisbet, 1944), 56.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., 93.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., 101.

because their sinlessness is simply an innocence which exists below the level at which sin is possible. For this reason the only kind of blood fit to take away sin is that of a life which itself has vanquished sin by confronting it and overcoming temptation.<sup>54</sup> Such an idea finds fulfillment only in the supreme obedience of Christ.

### Blood as a Symbol of Death

The representatives of the second school hold that blood is associated with death. James Denney, a champion of this school, vehemently opposes Westcott's view in his writings (namely, Westcott's commentaries on Hebrews and 1 John) which interpret the blood of Christ in terms of life released for the benefit of man. According to him, there was no more groundless fancy than such an interpretation. Denney argues that Christ's blood shed in death means nothing more than His atoning death.<sup>55</sup>

Denney's view is reflected in a series of lectures delivered at the Chicago Theological Seminary published in 1895. He stresses the apostolic confession that Jesus died for our sins. Thus, in the light of the apostolic statement, he maintains that the death of Christ was not a mere *Widerfahrniss* (a thing that simply happens),<sup>56</sup> rather, it is the very core of the gospel. For this reason, any evangelist or theologian who finds it unimpressive will not prosper in the attempt to unfold its contents.<sup>57</sup> He is emphatic on the point that any attempt calculated to detract from the fact of Christ's death will reduce

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<sup>54</sup>Ibid., 104.

<sup>55</sup>James Denney, *The Death of Christ* (London: Tyndale, 1902), 196.

<sup>56</sup>James Denney, *Studies in Theology* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1895; reprint, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1976), 105.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid.

the entire New Testament to intellectual chaos.<sup>58</sup> He calls attention to the Pauline ideas of how Christ was made sin and a curse in order to atone for our sin. Therefore, he insists that Christ's death is the "great fact, the great mystery, the great problem of the Gospels; it dominates them as truly as it does the Epistles."<sup>59</sup>

Denney asserts that Jesus had a Messianic consciousness right from the very beginning of His ministry which could be identified with Isaiah's Servant of the Lord.<sup>60</sup> This is why he would argue that in the celebration of the Eucharist with His disciples, Jesus anticipated the Messianic Supper of the world to come, and therefore He could speak of the bread and wine as His own body and blood.<sup>61</sup> It was this very idea which motivated the statement regarding His blood as the inauguration of the new covenant at the cost of His life.<sup>62</sup>

The interpretation of blood in terms of death is given further support by Armitage Robinson, who affirms the idea in his commentary on Ephesians (Eph 1:7). He stresses the point that, to the Jewish mind, blood in the sacrificial context is not life but that which is symbolic of death.<sup>63</sup> Even though in Jewish thought blood is considered as the life-current flowing in the veins of the living, it is life poured out in death.<sup>64</sup> He refers to the

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<sup>58</sup>Ibid., 109.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., 123.

<sup>60</sup>Denney, *The Death of Christ*, 10.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., 34.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., 40.

<sup>63</sup>J. Armitage Robinson, *St Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians* (London: James Clerk, 1903), 26-29.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., 29.



blood sprinkled on the lintel in the celebration of the Passover and that of the Mosaic ritual and acknowledges their cultic importance, especially in the light of the idea that without blood-shedding there is no forgiveness of sin.<sup>65</sup>

Another significant work contributing to the blood debate is that of Johannes Behm. Behm points out that in Hebrews the use of the word *blood* covers four cultic areas. First, it is employed for apotropaic purposes (Heb 11:28). Second, its use fulfills the divine order (Heb 9:18). Third, it is an agent for consecration (Heb 9:21). Fourth, it effects atonement and purification (Heb 9:7, 12-14, 22, 25; 10:4; 13:11).<sup>66</sup>

Behm maintains that the term for blood achieves its greatest theological significance in relation to the vicarious death of Christ. For him, blood is only symbolic of the life of Christ violently taken from Him through the Crucifixion so that like the word “cross,” blood becomes a symbolic expression designating the death of Christ in its soteriological significance.<sup>67</sup> Christ’s blood in death, according to the Eucharistic words, is the guarantee of the realization of the new divine order. He affirms the thought in Hebrews which states how blood was used in inaugurating both the old and new covenants (Heb 9:18ff.; Exod 24:8). Furthermore, he confirms Hebrews’ point that the new covenant with its gifts is established and set in force by the blood of Christ.<sup>68</sup>

That the supreme importance and significance of Christ’s death on the cross of

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<sup>65</sup>Ibid.

<sup>66</sup>Johannes Behm, “Αἷμα,” *TDNT* (1964), 1:172. The original work in German was first published in 1928. The English translation was first published in 1964.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., 174.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid.

Calvary must be seen in terms of victory is what Nathaniel Micklem proclaims. For him, the focus of the Cross-event is *Christus Victor*. Thus, the cross is the symbol of Christ's victory.<sup>69</sup> He says that, like a magnet, Jesus drew upon Himself all the forces and reserves of evil, and by His death He destroyed the terror, power, and bondage of death.<sup>70</sup> This victory, though anchored in time, is supertemporal and is the bedrock of Easter faith.<sup>71</sup>

However, death, Micklem points out, means more than the physical extinction of life, because it has both a spiritual and a physical dimension. It encompasses bondage to corruption, to sin, to self, to circumstance, and to hopelessness.<sup>72</sup> This is why Christ's death is victory, it must be seen as victory *in toto* over physical death and every kind of spiritual bondage. Through death, Jesus has not only inaugurated a new era for man, but His blood has also sanctified creation.<sup>73</sup> Even though this victory is spoken of in mythological language, yet, it expresses the truth about the real and actual world.

Furthermore, Micklem argues that there is a relationship between death and resurrection. Unlike the Platonic idea of the immortality of the soul, the Judaeo-Christian concept of the resurrection is not of survival, but of victory. He affirms that, through the sacraments of the bread and the wine, Calvary is brought down to us. Christ's death on

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<sup>69</sup>Nathaniel Micklem, *The Doctrine of Our Redemption* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1948), 74.

<sup>70</sup>*Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>71</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup>*Ibid.*, 82.

the cross is a cosmic victory rooted in history which affects the past and the future, as well as the visible world and the invisible. Yet this is neither a mythological victory nor one based on a fantasy of human self-deception, because its effects can be clearly seen within the course of history and also in the hearts and lives of believers.<sup>74</sup>

Leon Morris strongly advocates that blood primarily means death in Scripture. He points out that in both the Old and New Testaments, it seems tolerably certain that blood essentially signifies death.<sup>75</sup> His study of the subject of blood is very thorough; the evidence he amasses in Scripture to establish his stance is rather impressive. He carefully categorizes passages in the OT to show how the term *blood* designates various shades of meaning.<sup>76</sup> According to him, statistical evidence in the OT seems to indicate that blood is primarily a reference to violent death. Furthermore, Morris calls attention to the fact that in Hebrews the term *blood* is employed twelve times, and in all instances, the reference is in connection with animal sacrifice which symbolizes the vicarious death of Christ.<sup>77</sup> He has no doubt that the phrase “the blood of sprinkling” in Heb 12:24 is fraught heavily with cultic implications, and so also is the term in Heb 13:12. Morris asserts that the mentioning of “the blood of Abel” by the author of Hebrews is a metaphorical way of referring to the death of the patriarch.<sup>78</sup> Finally, he identifies himself

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<sup>74</sup>Ibid., 88.

<sup>75</sup>Leon Morris, “The Biblical Use of the Term ‘Blood’,” *JTS* 3, no. 2 (October 1952): 227. See also Stibbs, 32.

<sup>76</sup>Morris, 216-23.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., 224.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., 226.

with Behm that “‘Blut Christi’ ist wie ‘Kreuz’ nur ein anderer, anschaulicherer Ausdruck für den Tod Christi in seiner Heilsbedeutung.”<sup>79</sup>

Alan Stibbs’ monograph furnishes some provocative ideas on blood. He argues that, according to the Bible, “blood is a visible token of life violently ended; it is a sign of life either given or taken in death.”<sup>80</sup> Stibbs furnishes four points to affirm his understanding of the biblical position. First, blood is symbolic of the greatest offering or service. Second, murder is the greatest earthly crime. Third, the death sentence constitutes the severest penalty. Fourth, blood provides the only possible or adequate expiation for sin.<sup>81</sup> He maintains that all these four points, highlighting the biblical significance of blood, find full expression in the cross of Christ, because Christ gave His life when He, on His own volition, became the victim of mankind’s most unique offering. To cap it all, Christ paid the ultimate price on the cross when He did what only God could do by shedding His own blood as a vicarious sacrifice for mankind.

Stibbs claims that the Johannine expression “to drink the blood of Christ” neither means to appropriate His life, nor to feed upon His glorified humanity, nor even to draw upon the power of His resurrection. He insists that the fact of the death on the cross should not be relegated to the background only as a necessary preliminary to release the life,<sup>82</sup> because the shedding of Christ’s blood, resulting in His death, is the one act in

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<sup>79</sup>Ibid., 227.

<sup>80</sup>Stibbs, 30.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid., 30, 31.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid., 32.

history that reconciles all things to God. Therefore, like Morris, Stibbs also identifies with Behm, and concludes that the “‘blood of Christ’ is like the word ‘cross’ only a more vivid expression for the death of Christ in its redemptive significance. It connotes the sacrificial death of Christ and all its remedial issues.”<sup>83</sup>

### The Ambivalence of Blood

Both protagonists and antagonists in the blood debate up to the mid-twentieth century sought to advance their arguments from a biblical standpoint, but in the 1950s, significant studies pointed out that, as one carefully weighs and considers the arguments of both schools, it becomes clear that the Incarnation, Passion, Resurrection, and Heavenly High Priesthood of Christ could be deemed as constituting a process or the unfolding of a divine Christological scheme in time, of which ‘life’ and ‘death’ form an integral part. Hence, the concepts of ‘death’ and ‘life’ are both encapsulated in the term ‘blood’. The term *blood* is, therefore, an embodiment of *life* and *death*, both of which are necessary elements for understanding the salvific function in the work of Christ.

Leon Morris, already cited above for affirming the prevalence of evidence for blood signifying death in Scripture, nonetheless acknowledges that blood as mentioned in Lev 17:11 could equally be construed as a presentation of life or the infliction of death in the sacrificial context.<sup>84</sup> He asserts that חַי translated ‘life’ in Lev 17:11 is not coterminous with the English “life” but it can also mean something like “life yielded up

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<sup>83</sup>Ibid.

<sup>84</sup>Morris, “The Biblical Use of the Term ‘Blood’,” 221.

in death.”<sup>85</sup> While primarily denoting “death,” blood can also mean “life,” and hence it is ambiguous.<sup>86</sup>

Lindsay Dewar boldly asserts the authenticity of the ambivalence of blood on biblical grounds by drawing attention to the relationship between דם and נפש in Gen 9:4 and Deut 12:23. By so doing, he argues for a process of development in Hebrew thought in the book of Deuteronomy which culminated in investing דם with ethical significance. Blood is no longer a mysterious amoral entity, but a thing which has become personalized and moralized.<sup>87</sup> Dewar suggests that, when this background is taken into consideration, Lev 17:11, where the divine injunction states that blood is given on the altar to make atonement, may be better appreciated. He claims the perfect humanity and bloody sacrifice of Jesus may be more fully understood from this perspective. Dewar contends vehemently that the antitheses between *death* and *life* in blood theology is a false one. He insists that both ideas are essential for a right understanding of the biblical concept of sacrifice.<sup>88</sup>

Furthermore, Dewar argues that the inherent limitations of animal sacrifice are pointed out in Hebrews. In the first place, animal sacrifice is involuntary. In the second place, even from a piacular perspective, the death of the victim of sacrifice is not commensurate with the offense created by sin. Both of these impediments are removed in

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<sup>85</sup>Ibid., 219.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid., 221.

<sup>87</sup>Lindsay Dewar, “The Biblical Use of the Term ‘Blood’,” *JTS* 4, no. 2 (1953): 206.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid., 207.

the true and final sacrifice of Christ. He shows clearly that the validity for this reasoning, which reinforces the false antithesis of the blood debate, is also reflected in the rabbinic form of argument (*ad minore ad maius*) advanced by the author of Hebrews himself in Heb 9:13, 14.<sup>89</sup>

The studies of Morris and Dewar at the midpoint of the twentieth century, demonstrating the ambivalence of blood in Scripture, soon carried the day in NT scholarship, and during the decade of the 1950s the flames of the old “blood debate” flickered and fizzled, and sank into oblivion.

### Summary of the Blood Debate

It is clear that, in the blood debate, the scholars of the first school who identify blood with life belong to the camp of Milligan and Westcott. They base their argument

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<sup>89</sup>Ibid., 208. Even though the blood debate is a contention among NT scholars, its roots are deeply embedded in the OT (however, a discussion of this point is beyond the scope of this dissertation). This is why it is rather striking to note what Marc Vervenne has to say about the ambivalence of blood almost fifty years after the heat of the blood debate has subsided. After providing an informative background to the subject of blood in which he reflects ideas from anthropology, Old Testament, Apocryphal, and even Rabbinic literature, he argues that blood in Gen 9 not only symbolizes life, but also death. He holds that such an interpretation fits the context of the literary composition of Gen 1-11 very well. He argues, further, that the expression, “the flesh with its life, its blood” in Gen 9:4 is an ambiguous phrase. For, here in this context, blood has a bi-polar value as a symbol for life and death. Vervenne proposes that attitudes toward blood are ambiguous and even contradictory. It is regarded as being simultaneously pure and impure, fascinating and frightful, full of life and death. Thus the multivalent quality of blood makes it both a life-giving substance and at the same time a symbol of death. In fact, Vervenne insists that the ambiguity of blood theology is very biblical. He examines Gen 9:17 in the light of the ambivalence of blood as expressed in Gen 9:4, and concludes that blood is both promising and risky. He confirms the fact that human life requires the shedding of the blood of animals. Again, he also notes that bloodshed reminds one of murder and homicide. Furthermore, to substantiate his argument, Vervenne draws attention to the ambiguous function of blood in the sacrificial context where blood bearing the animal’s life not only brings about life for the one who offers sacrifice, but at the same time, the death of the sacrificial victim is necessary to obtain life through its blood. According to him, a typical case in point is the covenant bloodshed in Exod 24, where Moses sprinkles the people with blood which symbolizes both life and death. The blood is life for those who comply with the stipulations of the covenant, and death for those who do not. Marc Vervenne, “‘The Blood Is the Life and the Life Is the Blood’: Blood as Symbol of Life and Death in Biblical Tradition,” *OLA* 55 (1993): 452-70.

on the premise that because blood is life, it is able to effect atonement. Trumbull is the first one in this school to promote the idea that sacrificial blood is life released for the benefit of others. Hicks, Dodd, and Taylor take up this idea and develop it. Another major idea portraying blood as life which has passed through death is first proposed by Milligan. This idea is picked up and elaborated upon by Gibson, Gayford, Quick, and Dodd. The development of another key notion is by Boys-Smith, who links the life-giving power of Passover blood with the Eucharist. Subsequent elaboration on the concept is found in Quick, Hicks, and Dodd. Sanday and Headlam focus on the sacrifice of Christ as a total oblation of His life, and by so doing pave the way for further development of the subject by Forsyth. Emerging from the idea of Christ's total self-sacrifice is Quick's assertion that the Resurrection should be seen as part and parcel of the Atonement.

Scholars of the second school promote blood as symbolizing death. Denney could be considered the chief advocate of this school. He points out the apostolic view that Christ's death is rooted in Scripture and it dominates both the Gospels and Epistles in the NT. He further notes that the Eucharist which stems from Christ's Messianic consciousness also foreshadows the eschatological feast. Behm supports the view by asserting the soteriological significance of Christ's blood. Robinson lends further support by reference to blood-sprinkling of the Passover and the Mosaic ritual of the OT, without which there is no forgiveness. Micklem sees the blood of the cross as constituting an eschatological victory over all the forces of evil, and also a means of sanctification of creation. Morris substantiates, by an array of OT texts, that blood signifies death. He



also points out that, in Hebrews, blood is employed twelve times in relation to Christ's vicarious sacrifice. Stibbs maintains that Christ's blood has redemptive implications for mankind.

A third view presents the ambivalence and ambiguity of blood. Dewar contends that the antitheses between *death* and *life* in blood theology cannot be maintained. He demonstrates from Scripture that both concepts are necessary for understanding the vicarious sacrifice of Christ in the NT. He is supported by Morris on this point. Chronologically speaking, Dewar and Morris proclaimed the death-knell of the blood debate.

#### Studies of Blood in the New Testament after 1950

Since the demise of the blood debate, scholars have continued to write on the subject of blood. However, the number of studies, particularly with regard to blood in the NT, has significantly declined. In fact, there is surprising paucity of material on this topic in NT scholarship. A comprehensive literature search yielded less than a dozen studies appearing since 1950 (the majority of these being Roman Catholic works). The paucity of literature on blood in the NT since 1950 is highlighted by David Sperling's 1992 general article on "Blood" in the *Anchor Bible Dictionary*<sup>90</sup> which does not feature even a single work on the subject with reference to the NT. The focus of the studies reviewed below is generally directed to the theological and soteriological significance of the blood of Christ.

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<sup>90</sup>S. David Sperling, "Blood," *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (1992), 1:761-63.

Gaspar Lefebvre's work on the blood of Christ, translated into English in 1960,<sup>91</sup> looks at blood in relation to redemption. He provides both Scriptural and patristic evidence to show the importance and the role that Christ's blood plays in the salvation of mankind. He argues that Christ submitted both His will and being to the will of the Most High, thus making His voluntary oblation and willing immolation a true sacrifice. By this sacrifice God is glorified and the sins of men are expiated.<sup>92</sup>

Lefebvre shows how John and Paul establish a theological relationship between the baptism and the death of Christ in their writings of the New Testament (John 5:6; Rom 6:3-4).<sup>93</sup> He confirms this idea as he refers to Luke's account of the Gospel where Christ Himself likens His death to a baptism of blood which He is most anxious to receive (Luke 12:50).<sup>94</sup>

The true humanity of Christ is affirmed by Lefebvre when he makes the point of how Mary infused her blood into Christ in the Incarnation. He also cites the writing of Pope St. Gregory who made an intimate connection between Bethlehem and Calvary. Gregory saw in the gift of myrrh (one of the items presented by the Magi to the infant Christ) how His passion was announced before the actual event. The rite of circumcision

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<sup>91</sup>Gaspar Lefebvre, *Redemption Through the Blood of Jesus*, trans. Edward A. Maziarz (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1960), 105-62. This work actually appeared in French in 1944, but since it totally sidesteps the "blood debate" and since the influence of its 1960 English translation is foundational to a number of studies cited below, the work is treated at this point.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid., 126-27.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid., 131.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid., 132.

administered to the Holy Infant also suggests the Passion.<sup>95</sup>

Lefebvre affirms the sacrificial character of the blood of Christ shed on Calvary by reference to His institution of the Last Supper. He insists that blood shed for this reason constitutes a true expiatory sacrifice. He cites how the writer of Hebrews establishes a parallelism between the death of Christ and the blood aspersion rite of the OT Day of Atonement which was a type of Calvary.<sup>96</sup>

Drawing on Catholic theology, Lefebvre discusses how Pope Pius IX elevated the “Feast of the Most Precious Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ to the rank of a double of the first class,” thus establishing a relationship between the noun “price” (*pretium*) and the corresponding adjective “precious” (*pretiosus*). As a result, the latter was expressed in the superlative to indicate the priceless and invaluable nature of the price Christ paid for sin by shedding His own blood to redeem us.<sup>97</sup>

Lefebvre maintains that in the formula of the purchase of the human race by the divine blood of Christ, the term *blood* is a metonymy designating a whole mystery by one of its parts.<sup>98</sup> He shows that, in the Catholic devotion to the precious blood, there are two objects, that is, the material and the formal. The blood itself constitutes the material honored by direct cult; the formal object is the reason for the cult. The cult of the “most precious blood,” however, does honor not only to the divine Person of Christ, but also to

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<sup>95</sup>Ibid., 133-37.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid., 146-47.

<sup>97</sup>Ibid., 151.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid., 155.

His entire human nature, which is essentially made of both a spiritual and a material principle.<sup>99</sup>

In 1986, the order of the Catholic priesthood known as the “Precious Blood Spirituality” held a workshop in commemoration of the bicentennial of the birth of Saint Gaspar del Bufalo, its founder in Rome. On this occasion, Patrick Sena presented a study on the blood of Christ and the New Testament. Sena paints an informative picture of the concept of blood in the setting of the Graeco-Roman world. He refers to the expression “flesh and blood” as a designation for humanity originating from this period.<sup>100</sup> He also recalls the Taurobolium of the mystery religions during this era. Sena, moreover, points to the Jewish practice of blood revenge as constituting a significant backdrop to the New Testament.<sup>101</sup>

Sena argues that it is the concept of the blood of Christ which brings together Jews and Gentiles since, in their respective cultures, blood has a significant place. Thus the blood of Christ constitutes the means of incorporation in which both Jew and Gentile lose their ethnic identity.<sup>102</sup> For him, the blood of Jesus not only seals the new covenant, but is also the very vehicle whereby the Messianic peace spoken of by Isaiah is experienced (Matt 26:28; Isa 54:10).

Sena asserts that the ancients’ multivalent attitude towards blood, associating it

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<sup>99</sup>Ibid., 157.

<sup>100</sup>Patrick J. Sena, “The New Testament and the Blood of Christ,” in *Precious Blood Spirituality* (Rome: Vatican Press, 1986), 79.

<sup>101</sup>Ibid., 80.

<sup>102</sup>Ibid., 82.

with both life and death, creates room for ambiguity. Therefore, blood with its symbolism of life and counter-symbolism of death makes it meaningful for the people to whom the New Testament was originally addressed.<sup>103</sup>

Sena holds that if one strips off the thin veneer of sophistication masking contemporary society, blood still evokes unity as it did in biblical times.<sup>104</sup> Furthermore, he argues that blood is a universal symbol for all peoples of every time and place. Finally, Sena concludes that biblical people were down to earth people who dealt with the real, the concrete, and the sensible. Since blood was tangible, visible, and sensible, God chose it to be the vehicle for communicating the message of salvation both to Jewish and Gentile Christians who could understand its unifying symbolism.<sup>105</sup>

Robert Schreiter, at the same seminar, discusses the subject of Christ's blood from three points where the image of the blood intersects with three other images of redemption. These images are the blood of the covenant, the blood of the cross, and the blood of the chalice.<sup>106</sup> He points out that the history of the chosen people is characterized by a succession of covenants which bound them in a unique relationship to God. Because of the role blood played in all these covenants, its significance to the chosen people cannot be questioned. For them, blood is a sign of life, but when the same

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<sup>103</sup>Ibid., 83.

<sup>104</sup>Ibid., 84.

<sup>105</sup>Ibid.

<sup>106</sup>Robert Schreiter, "The Message of Precious Blood Spirituality Today," in *Precious Blood Spirituality* (Rome: Vatican Press, 1986), 21.

is shed, it becomes a sign of death.<sup>107</sup> Blood is such a powerful image that it holds together in itself the meaning of life and the constant prospects of death. For the Hebrew mind, God is the Lord of life, and so blood means first and foremost life. It is only when it is violated that it comes to stand for death.

With His Hebraic understanding of blood, Jesus inaugurates the new covenant before a people who are well aware of the role of blood in the making of covenants. For this reason, the language which describes His blood as the seal of the new covenant is well in place. The blood is the most powerful symbol in Scripture, which describes the excruciating pain felt by God in Christ for the cleavage of human relationships as well as the covenant of a holy and just God. This is also typified in the broken body of Christ.<sup>108</sup>

The image of redemption is most eloquent when the image of blood intersects with that of the cross. The pouring of Christ's blood which resulted in His death on the cross signifies the death knell for sin and death once and for all. In this sense, both the cross and blood have one thing in common: their ability to express a paradox or hold opposites together.<sup>109</sup>

Finally, there is the blood of the chalice which points to the Eucharist and inspires the message of solidarity in suffering and solidarity in hope.<sup>110</sup>

According to Carlo Molari, another presenter at the "Precious Blood" Seminar,

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<sup>107</sup>Ibid., 22.

<sup>108</sup>Ibid., 24.

<sup>109</sup>Ibid., 26.

<sup>110</sup>Ibid., 30.

blood has high symbolic value, taking into consideration its vital importance and the worth of its functions.<sup>111</sup> Molari observes that, normally, the symbology of blood has been tied to life, but in our modern context it has lost the transcendental resonances of former years. In the cultural setting of today, blood often invokes thoughts of death and destruction more than life and self-giving.<sup>112</sup>

However, in the Christian context, Molari notes that blood has numerous symbolic values related to the death of Christ and to the sacrament of the Eucharist. With respect to the Eucharist, he laments that changes in the cultural horizon and secularity have caused blood to suffer a semantic decline resulting in the loss of its value as a sacred symbol. Thus, like some other Christian formularies, it has become just a metaphor.<sup>113</sup> In spite of this situation, from the theological point of view, blood remains a symbol of the gift of life which Jesus offered to humanity on the cross, and as such it is also an emblem of salvation. However, one has to come to grips with cultural influences in the use of blood symbology relating to anthropology, Christology, and soteriology.<sup>114</sup> A case in point is Molari's argument that classical anthropology which gave blood-symbology its values was dualistic and static, but that of today is unitary and dynamic. Whereas man was thought of as "flesh and blood" in his passing condition, in opposition to the kingdom of God, now man is visualized as a corporeal reality. As such, blood is a part of

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<sup>111</sup>Carlo Molari, "Blood: The Human and Theological Experience," in *Precious Blood Spirituality* (Rome: Vatican Press, 1986), 7.

<sup>112</sup>Ibid.

<sup>113</sup>Ibid., 8.

<sup>114</sup>Ibid., 9.

corporeity and belongs to that which is precarious and passing in the present condition of man.<sup>115</sup>

According to Molari, as a theological symbol, blood typifies the loving mercy of God displayed in the fidelity of One man, who although capable of delivering Himself, refused to do so in the face of violent opposition. From the Christological viewpoint, the blood of the cross is a symbol of faithfulness to the proclamation of the Kingdom of God. The blood of Jesus is the symbol of One who takes the risk of making God visible in the face of men who refuse to accept Him. Even though the blood apparently marks the failure of religious renewal, it expresses the sacrificial attitude of the One who knows how to make defeat salvific.<sup>116</sup> “The blood becomes the symbol of a love which makes a failure victorious, a crime salvific, and injustice precious.”<sup>117</sup> Thus the blood of Christ pledges power to all and sundry to live in all situations, even under adverse conditions, and turns failure into triumph.

One major article on blood published since 1950 is the one written by F. Laubach for *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (1986). According to Laubach, αἷμα occurs ninety-seven times in the NT. It is a designation for human blood (Mark 5:25; Luke 13:1; John 19:34). Figuratively, it stands for shed blood (Matt 23:35).<sup>118</sup> Twelve times in Hebrews the term is used for recalling animal sacrifices in the

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<sup>115</sup>Ibid.

<sup>116</sup>Ibid., 14, 15.

<sup>117</sup>Ibid., 15.

<sup>118</sup>F. Laubach, “Αἷμα,” *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (1986), 1:220-24.



OT. However, its most profound theological use is its twenty-five occurrences in connection with the saving significance of the death of Jesus.<sup>119</sup> When the term is used with reference to human blood, it often indicates a person's violent death in which other guilty people are involved. In this sense, it constitutes a figurative expression for the wanton destruction of human life (Rom 3:15). Laubach cites the NT instances of Heb 12:4 and Judas' betrayal of Christ (Matt 27).<sup>120</sup> He maintains that God is the Lord of all life and as such He avenges innocent bloodshed. From God's standpoint, blood denotes the whole of man's existence, for the abuse of which the guilty are held accountable.<sup>121</sup>

Laubach asserts that the NT took over from the OT the ideas of sacrificial blood and covenant-making and these ideas found fulfillment in the sacrificial bloodshed of Christ, which brought peace and reconciliation to man. This whole concept is fully encapsulated by the *hapax legomenon* αἵματεκχυσία of the writer of Hebrews 9:22. Laubach argues that the blood of Christ as expressed in the NT derives its meaning particularly from the OT Day of Atonement.<sup>122</sup>

The Blood of Christ has brought in its train benefits for the people of God. The Church has been liberated from Satan and demonic forces (Acts 20:28; Eph 1:7; 1 Pet 1:18-20; Rev 5:9). Believers are justified and sanctified by the blood of Christ (Rom 3:25; Heb 13:12). The New Covenant inaugurated through the blood of Christ constitutes

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<sup>119</sup>Ibid.

<sup>120</sup>Ibid.

<sup>121</sup>Ibid.

<sup>122</sup>Ibid.

the basis of fellowship with God. The blood means the application of the death of Christ to the individual which is typified in the phrase “the sprinkled blood” in Heb 12:24,<sup>123</sup> an allusion to the OT sacrificial cultus.

Timothy Cargal tackles one of the most troubling statements of the NT with regard to blood found in Matt 27:24, 25.<sup>124</sup> This well-known text of the Passion narratives depicts the Jewish nation and its leaders accepting full responsibility for the crucifixion of Jesus while they call for the divine wrath and curse upon themselves as well as their progeny. Cargal claims that the invocation of Christ’s blood upon themselves and their children by the Jews can best be understood by the use of the word “blood” within the Gospel.

Cargal argues that the imprecation of the text constitutes a double entendre revealing two levels of meaning. While the Jews accept responsibility for murdering Christ, the statement ironically expresses a prayer seeking forgiveness for the guilt of shedding innocent blood in the light of Deut 21:8. Since the LXX text quoted from Deuteronomy refers to Israel as Yahweh’s redeemed, Matthew draws attention to forgiveness, which is the purpose of the outpouring of Christ’s blood.<sup>125</sup> Furthermore, Cargal makes a dramatic, literary, and soteriological connection between Matt 1:21 and 27:25. He focuses on the salvific significance of the angel Gabriel’s words at the Annunciation and the prayer embedded in the imprecation the people bring upon

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<sup>123</sup>Ibid.

<sup>124</sup>Timothy B. Cargal, “‘His Blood Be Upon Us and Upon Our Children’: A Matthean Double Entendre?” *NTS* 37 (1991): 101.

<sup>125</sup>Ibid., 111.

themselves at the Passion. Matthew here introduces a sacrificial view of Jesus' blood which makes room for forgiveness of God's people Israel, even though they be guilty of the blood of the Messiah.

Margaret Barker points out that the NT affirms a comprehensive cosmic reconciliation, and even though some may posit a non-Hebraic origin of such a concept, she would claim a Jewish provenance for it. Barker traces the origins of NT cosmic atonement to the rituals and myths of the Jerusalem temple. She gives six bases for any investigation of atonement: (1) texts from Enoch; (2) association of atonement with the eternal covenant; (3) the idea that the temple service was the service of heaven; (4) the idea that the temple represented the entire system of heaven and earth; (5) blood symbolizing life; and (6) sacred spaces within the temple complex that were repaired to remove the effects of sin.<sup>126</sup>

Barker discusses the concepts of כפר and נשא in the context of atonement and sees in the ministrations of Jewish priests and high priest the ministry of the Lord God Himself as she cites comparisons in the OT and Intertestamental literature. She also deals with the problem of Azazel and shows how, in the context of atonement, that would correspond to the vicarious ministry of Jesus. The crux of her argument is to demonstrate that, with such a rich cultic background, one could not successfully argue for a pagan origin of the NT idea of cosmic atonement. Such a background would support the authenticity of the argument which focuses on the High Priesthood of Jesus in Hebrews. It would also strengthen the concept of cosmic unity in Ephesians and Colossians. The Kenosis hymn

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<sup>126</sup>Margaret Barker, "Atonement: The Rite of Healing," *SJT* 49, no. 1 (1996): 10.

in Colossians and the idea of the Servant in Matthew find their roots in this background, not to speak of titles such as the ‘Righteous One,’ and the ‘Author of life’ in Acts. She asserts that all these point to the significance of the blood of Christ which was poured out in the Atonement to restore creation.<sup>127</sup>

According to Francis Carpinelli, Luke as a writer employs Judeo-Christian piety to assign meaning to the cross. He claims that Luke deliberately draws on the concept of “soteriology of memorial before God,” based on the Septuagint to accomplish this. Thus in Luke 22:19, the author employs the eucharistic expression *εἰς τὴν ἐμὴν ἀναμνησιν*.<sup>128</sup> Carpinelli points out that in spite of the fact that there may be nuances in terms of meaning, the LXX version *εἰς μνημόσυνον* is considered the equivalent of the Lucan expression. Both phrases have to do with a complex of cultic images in Israelite and Judaic religion.<sup>129</sup>

The main thrust of Carpinelli’s argument is the Lucan use of the concept of “a memorial before God” (Lev 24:5-9 LXX). Apart from the LXX, he cites evidence from Intertestamental literature (1 Enoch 99:3) to illustrate his point. He finds a biblical basis for the concept of memorial in Lev 24:5-9 where frankincense and salt placed with bread constitute a memorial before God. Hence, at the institution of the Eucharist in Luke, bread and memorial conjure a picture of the soteriology of a cultic covenant, and the

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<sup>127</sup>Ibid., 20.

<sup>128</sup>Francis G. Carpinelli, “‘Do This as My Memorial’ (Luke 22:19): Lucan Soteriology of Atonement,” *CBQ* 61, no. 1 (January 1999): 75.

<sup>129</sup>Ibid.

scenario is further enhanced by the cup of wine symbolic of bloody expiation.<sup>130</sup> The blood symbolized by the wine is God's special gift to Israel. Through blood God maintains a special relationship with His people, and by means of blood, priesthood, people, and sancta are purified. Luke's version of the eucharistic words function as an interpretation of the cross and, theologically, as an expression of what the relationship between God and the human community should be. Through the symbolism of the Eucharist, Jesus functions as a priest. The bread is a memorial, while the cup is the token of the new covenant in Jesus' blood. In the figure of the OT high priest, Jesus is like Aaron who blesses the people of God.

#### Summary of NT Studies on Blood since 1950

There is a paucity of studies since 1950 dealing with blood in the NT. An analysis of the few scholarly works available for review during this period reveals that scholars writing on the subject of blood are no longer interested in presenting blood from a polemical standpoint. Each writer simply seeks to discuss the concept of blood in a way that probes the rich soteriological, Christological, and theological depths of the term.

Five of the works reviewed here are by scholars from a Catholic background. Lefebvre's work from a Catholic stance provides both Scriptural and patristic evidence for the role and importance of Christ's blood in redemption. Sena upholds the idea of ambiguity in blood theology while he stresses the point that blood constitutes a universal symbol for all peoples. Schreiter discusses blood from three points of intersection with

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<sup>130</sup>Ibid., 87.

three images of redemption: the blood of the covenant, blood of the cross, and blood of the chalice. Molan shows how the term blood deals with both the cross and the Eucharist. However, he also sees the term as constituting a symbol of Jesus and the Kingdom of God, of love, of sacrifice, and of victory in spite of violent opposition and rejection. Even though these four scholars look at the concept of the blood of Christ from the viewpoint of the Catholic idea of the “Most Precious Blood Spirituality,” they share the common notion of the ambiguity of blood symbology.

The writings of the other scholarly authors reviewed above also reflect the multifaceted nature of the symbolism of blood terminology. Barker’s position regarding the NT is that blood effects cosmic atonement. Laubach emphasizes the idea that blood denotes man’s whole existence. Cargal discusses the paradox of forgiveness posed by the blood of Christ in the self-evoked imprecation of the leaders of the Jewish nation and their progeny. Prassel argues that blood has both a cathartic and contaminating quality. Carpinelli shows that the wine of the Eucharist is symbolic of bloody expiation. Among these non-Catholic scholars, as with the Catholic studies, the general idea of the ambiguity and ambivalence of blood undergirds the variety of ideas expressed.

From the previous, it appears that the major focus of scholars writing on the subject of blood in the NT after the demise of the blood debate is to interpret the blood of Christ in salvific terms. It seems their primary objective is to arouse appreciation for the unique sacrifice of Christ for humanity. For each of the writers cited, it appears that the most important thing is the fact that Christ shed His blood vicariously for sinful humanity.

## Blood in Hebrews since 1950

Along with general discussions on the significance of blood in the Bible, there are specific studies in the literature on Hebrews. At this juncture, I will survey, chronologically, major discussions of blood with respect to this book (Hebrews) from the middle of the twentieth century onward. This is not to say that earlier literary activity with respect to blood has been overlooked. All these works, already surveyed in the first section of this review (though not necessarily confined to Hebrews), reflect the various aspects of blood theology, which constitutes the focus of the first section of this review and belong to the first five decades of the twentieth century. The focus in this section will be on literature dealing with Hebrews after the demise of the old blood debate. As will become apparent, unlike the polemical writings of the first four decades, these studies of blood in Hebrews after 1950 are largely focused on deepening one's understanding with regard to the redemptive role of the blood of Christ.

An outstanding contribution to the meaning of blood in the Epistle to the Hebrews is that made by Ceslas Spicq during this period. He dedicates an excursus to blood in his commentary on Hebrews.<sup>131</sup> Spicq's work on the precious blood of Christ is set in the context of the liturgy of Hebrews. He makes the point very clear that the blood of Christ is prefigured in the liturgical rites of the OT,<sup>132</sup> and finds a foundation for this idea in Deut 12:23 where the Torah identifies blood with life.<sup>133</sup> Apart from the prohibition

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<sup>131</sup>Ceslas Spicq, "Excursus VIII—La Théologie et la Liturgie du Précieux Sang," in *L'Épître aux Hébreux*, 2 vols., ed. Ceslas Spicq (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1952-53), 2:271-85.

<sup>132</sup>*Ibid.*, 271.

<sup>133</sup>*Ibid.*, 272.

against blood consumption, he examines the role of blood in OT rituals such as the Passover, the Mosaic covenant, and the Day of Atonement. Spicq maintains that these OT rites find fulfillment in the blood Christology of Hebrews. In the figure of blood aspersion, he discovers the significance of the power of Jesus' heavenly High Priesthood ministry.<sup>134</sup>

According to Spicq, Heb 9:11-14, which designates the entry of the heavenly High Priest into the celestial Holy of Holies, constitutes the quintessence of the message of Hebrews since it stresses the efficacy of the precious blood of Christ. In his estimation, the main thrust of the Epistle focuses on the blood which expresses the uniqueness of the sacrifice of Christ.<sup>135</sup> Spicq calls attention to the author's employment of the dative τῷ αἵματι (Heb 10:21) with reference to the Mosaic covenant where blood is the agent of sanctification, and compares that with another dative expression, τιμίῳ αἵματι (1 Pet 1:19), which points to the blood of Christ as an agent of salvation. Thus, he concludes, "Le Christ est le sanctificateur par excellence."<sup>136</sup>

Moreover, Spicq forges a theological relationship between αἱματεκχυσία (Heb 9:22), which he calls "le mystère de l'effusion du Précieux Sang," and the phrase τὸ (αἷμα) ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν ἐκχυννόμενον (Luke 22:20), an expression which deals with the institution of the Eucharist. This relationship he describes as "strictement théologique," because the Lucan expression, when viewed in the context of sacrificial bloodshed,

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<sup>134</sup>Ibid., 281.

<sup>135</sup>Ibid.

<sup>136</sup>Ibid., 282.



focuses on the vicarious nature of the death of Christ.<sup>137</sup> Again he points to the OT, specifically Lev 17:11 (בנפש יכפר), as the source of the concept. For Spicq, the worth of Christ's blood lies in His Person. This is why he proposes a parallelism between the phrase *διὰ τοῦ ἰδίου αἵματος* (Heb 9:12) and *ἃ διὰ πνεύματος αἰωνίου ἑαυτὸν προσήνεγκεν* (Heb 9:14). Thus the blood of Christ is not only the decisive factor in the concept of perfection in the light of the new covenant, but, as a divine mystery, it is the climax of achievement in the entire history of mankind.<sup>138</sup>

Although not quite approximating the significance of Spicq's work, another work belonging to the 1950s is a Master's thesis by Fred Folkerts who argues that the author of Hebrews employs the term blood in the same general way as both the Jewish and secular Greek writers before him, as well as the writers of the New Testament.<sup>139</sup> According to Folkerts, blood in Hebrews designates concepts of Christ's humanity, the blood of Old Testament sacrificial victims, and blood as it suggests death.<sup>140</sup> He maintains that from the linguistic standpoint, the blood of Christ means His humanity, His bloodshed or death, His blood as an emblem of the covenant, as well as the blood of His sacrifice.<sup>141</sup> He also holds that the author of Hebrews engages the term

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<sup>137</sup>Ibid., 283.

<sup>138</sup>Ibid., 284.

<sup>139</sup>Fred C. Folkerts, "The Meaning of the Blood of Christ According to the Book of Hebrews" (M.A. thesis, Wheaton College, 1958), 24.

<sup>140</sup>Ibid.

<sup>141</sup>Ibid.

blood in a metaphorical sense to suggest the more abstract ideas of “death,” “self,” and obedience unto death.<sup>142</sup>

Moreover, Folkerts upholds the point that blood as a term is posited as a trope where ‘bloodshed’ is the cause of which ‘death’ is the effect. Thus he argues that in Hebrews, further metonymical use of the term is employed as the name of the subject where the adjuncts “flesh” and “body” are intended.<sup>143</sup>

Finally, Folkerts points out that figuratively, blood is used in synecdoche as a part to represent the whole of the more comprehensive references of the writer of Hebrews to the totality of Christ’s atoning work in sacrifice.<sup>144</sup> While he concedes that no simple statement can be made for the meaning of the blood of Christ, Folkerts concludes that the various facets of expression presented in relation to the term blood are “all part of the conceptual entourage which travels along in the writer’s meaning of the blood of Christ according to the book of Hebrews.”<sup>145</sup>

In the late 1950s, John Steinmueller writes that the sacrificial blood of Christ has established a new relationship between Yahweh and mankind.<sup>146</sup> He asserts that the interpretation of Christ’s sacrificial blood as constituting the inauguration of the new covenant in the New Testament should not be ascribed to the creative imagination or wishful hopes of the *Gemeinde-theologie* of the early church. He contends that the idea

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<sup>142</sup>Ibid.

<sup>143</sup>Ibid., 25.

<sup>144</sup>Ibid.

<sup>145</sup>Ibid., 111.

<sup>146</sup>John E. Steinmueller, “Sacrificial Blood in the Bible,” *Bib* 50 (1959): 56.

goes back to Jesus Himself, and the disciples continued the same teaching. By the blood of Christ, in Hebrews, forgiveness is effected. In fact, He is the high priest whose unique sacrifice has won for man eternal ransom.<sup>147</sup>

The discussion of the meaning of blood continues in the 1960s where Thomas Thornton's contribution in this regard deals with the hermeneutical exposition of the *hapax legomenon* αἱματεκχυσία in Heb 9. He points out that even though in the non-Jewish sacrificial context blood strictly refers to the slaying of men and animals, this is not the case in Heb 9:22.<sup>148</sup> He cites evidence from both the LXX and Rabbinic literature that the term should be translated as "pouring of blood" and that it refers to the application of blood to the altar to effect atonement. Even though the pouring of blood presupposes the death of the sacrificial victim, the term does not focus attention on the victim's death per se. Thus, the outpouring of blood at the altar to effect atonement is the real meaning of the term blood in Heb 9.<sup>149</sup>

This period also sees the work of Antony Snell who engages in the exegesis of Heb 13:10 to expose misunderstanding in the interpretation of Scripture. He bemoans the fact that some scholars see in this text a reference to the Eucharist which cannot be justified on the basis of proper exegesis of the text. Within the sacrificial context of the Day of Atonement imagery, he shows that the altar referred to in the text is the cross on which Jesus is offered as a sin offering, and for which reason, His sacrifice cannot be

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<sup>147</sup>Ibid., 564-65.

<sup>148</sup>Thomas C. G. Thornton, "The Meaning of αἱματεκχυσία in Heb 9:22," *JThS* 15 (1964): 64.

<sup>149</sup>Ibid., 65.

eaten just as it was in the matter of sin offering of the Hebrew cultus.<sup>150</sup>

Snell argues that a proper understanding of Heb 13:10 refutes the Hellenizing notion that the purpose of shedding sacrificial blood is the releasing of life. Further exposure of wrong theology, according to him, is the idea that Jesus in heaven has to maintain a sort of continual liturgical action in order to keep the work on the cross in operation.<sup>151</sup> He further opposes the idea that such notions have been read into the interpretation of Hebrews by some scholars.

In another work of this period, Cora Brady cites the philosophical dualism of Hebrews to show how, as a result of the shed blood of Jesus, believers become partakers of the good things to come even in the life here and now. She argues that the two groups of realities referred to as “heavenly” and “to come” do constitute one reality. This is the quality of life of the Christian in the city of the living God.<sup>152</sup> She asserts that, according to Hebrews, the believers’ ability to share in the heavenly liturgy is the sure indication that, in Jesus and His shed blood, Christians have already begun their enjoyment of eternal life.<sup>153</sup>

If the service of the old covenant was characterized by incessant bloodshed, why was it necessary to replace it with further bloodshed, namely, Christ’s blood? James Schierse tackles this problem in view of the widespread disapproval of bloody sacrifices

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<sup>150</sup>Antony Snell, “We Have an Altar,” *RThRev* 13, no. 1 (February 1964): 17.

<sup>151</sup>*Ibid.*, 21, 22.

<sup>152</sup>Cora Brady, “The World to Come in the Epistle to the Hebrews,” *Worship* 39 (1964): 337.

<sup>153</sup>*Ibid.*, 339.

in New Testament times. The issue is sharpened and confirmed by the fact that in contemporary Hellenistic Judaism, the allegorization of Scripture has led to a spiritualization of worship.<sup>154</sup> In the light of this fact, Schierse believes it is possible that the first readers of Hebrews felt a similar dislike for blood offerings.<sup>155</sup>

Schierse highlights the importance of the reference of the author of Hebrews to both the Day of Atonement and the blood aspersion ceremony of the Mosaic covenant in Exod 24 (Heb 9) because he sees a Christian meaning in these Old Testament references. He maintains that the Gospel must be understood in the light of the cross, and that no promise is worth anything unless it is written in blood. He affirms this point by showing how the words of Jesus spoken at the celebration of the Eucharist reflect the words of Moses in Exod 24 at the inauguration of the Sinaitic covenant (Mark 14:24; Heb 9:20).<sup>156</sup>

In a series of lectures delivered at Dallas Theological Seminary during the early 1970s, Philip Hughes takes up a position which militates against the idea that Christ's blood is continually offered in His heavenly ministration as High Priest. He confronts and refutes this concept that was passionately promoted by John Bengel in the eighteenth century.<sup>157</sup> Hughes traces Bengel's problem to a misuse of biblical analogy. Moreover,

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<sup>154</sup>F. Joseph Schierse, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, New Testament for Spiritual Reading, ed. John L. McKenzie (London: Burns and Oates, 1969), 59. See also James W. Thompson, "Hebrews 9 and Hellenistic Concepts of Sacrifice," *JBL* 98 (1979): 569.

<sup>155</sup>Schierse, 59.

<sup>156</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>157</sup>Philip E. Hughes, "The Blood of Jesus and His Heavenly Priesthood in Hebrews—Part 1: The Significance of the Blood of Jesus," *Bsac* 130 (April 1973): 99. Cf. John A. Bengel, *New Testament Word Studies*, trans. Charlton T. Lewis and Marvin R. Vincent, vol. 2 (repr., Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1971), 677-82. The main thrust of Bengel's argument is that the blood that Jesus shed during the Passion is in heaven apart from His body. This is the blood of sprinkling which is before God and still speaks for us.

he also takes up arms against the Socinian idea that the bloody sacrifice of Christ takes place in the heavenly sanctuary itself.<sup>158</sup> Hughes advocates the sufficiency of the cross and stresses the significance of the aorist tense (*προσενέγκη*) in Heb 8:3 with regard to the unique sacrifice of Christ, which is a *fait accompli*.<sup>159</sup> He concludes his argument with the idea of the glorified Christ seated on God's right hand as proof of the finality of the bloody sacrifice on the cross as taught in Hebrews.

The cleansing aspect of blood in terms of the biblical ritual is the main thrust of William Johnsson's dissertation. He focuses attention on Heb 9 and 10 where he argues that "while Christ's sacrifice is indeed set forth as of surpassing excellence, it nevertheless finds its place in the argumentation under the general category of blood." He insists that the 'blood rule' of Heb 9:22 stands over the whole discussion of the atoning sacrifice.<sup>160</sup>

Johnsson demonstrates clearly that Christ's blood constitutes the leitmotif of the theological argument of Heb 9 and 10.<sup>161</sup> He points out that overarching the whole reasoning of the two chapters stands the rubric "better blood."<sup>162</sup> Johnsson gives support to this idea in terms of statistics. Even though he concedes that biblical scholarship is not a matter of concordances and word counts, he proposes that one cannot ignore the

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<sup>158</sup>Philip E. Hughes, "The Blood of Jesus and His Heavenly Priesthood in Hebrews—Part 2: The High-Priestly Sacrifice of Christ," *Bsac* 130 (July 1973): 195.

<sup>159</sup>*Ibid.*, 209. For further elaboration of his views on blood in Hebrews, see also Philip E. Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977), 329-71.

<sup>160</sup>Johnsson, "Defilement and Purgation in the Book of Hebrews," 246.

<sup>161</sup>*Ibid.*, 222.

<sup>162</sup>*Ibid.*

frequency of *αἷμα* in the passage. He also draws attention to how the term constitutes the very fabric of the argument of the pericope, since it undergirds the cultic presuppositions of the train of thought.<sup>163</sup> Particularly striking is how the author of Hebrews employs the phrase *χωρὶς αἵματος* in Heb 9:6-22.

Johnsson maintains that Christ's blood is set forth as a medium of power.<sup>164</sup> It is the blood which provides access to God. It is that which sanctifies, or consecrates. It not only cleanses from sin, but also inaugurates the new covenant. The blood, moreover, perfects and brings about forgiveness.<sup>165</sup> The blood of Christ is associated with life, because it purifies the believer's conscience from dead works and enables him to serve the living God.<sup>166</sup> By highlighting the role of the 'blood rule,' Johnsson shows the importance and significance of the blood of Christ in the divine scheme of soteriology.

Another significant study from the 1980s is Norman Young's discussion of blood in Hebrews. His work is set within the framework of the Day of Atonement, which reaches its culminating point in the ritual of blood aspersion on the mercy-seat in the Holy of Holies.<sup>167</sup> Even though the main task of his essay deals with what *τὰ ἄγια* means in Heb 9, this cannot be done without a discussion of blood since they are closely related. As a demonstration of the centrality of blood in the thought of the writer of Hebrews, Young observes how the author of Hebrews brings together various other Old Testament

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<sup>163</sup>Ibid., 223.

<sup>164</sup>Ibid., 230.

<sup>165</sup>Ibid., 229.

<sup>166</sup>Ibid., 232.

<sup>167</sup>Norman H. Young, "The Gospel According to Hebrews 9," *NTS* 27 (1981): 198.

rituals involving the use of blood such as the Sinaitic covenant (Exod 24), the ceremony of the red heifer (Num 19), and the blood sprinkling ceremony during which Moses sprinkles the people, the tabernacle, and the book.<sup>168</sup>

It is Leland Elhard's contention that the phrase "flesh and blood" associated with Hebrews designates the true humanity of Christ. However, he asserts that "God's Son in perfect *koinonia* with God, is also in perfect *koinonia* with human beings."<sup>169</sup> Jesus becoming flesh and blood means the fellowship of dying, a fellowship of temptation, and a fellowship of mercy with humanity.<sup>170</sup> Elhard maintains that the heart of being flesh and blood is the utter facticity of the dying process, because flesh and blood dies so quickly and so easily.<sup>171</sup> In Jesus, "God is in bits and pieces" as we are. Jesus' suffering of temptation can only be fully appreciated in terms of His becoming flesh and blood, and because of His experience, He is able to help those who are tempted. He is a merciful High Priest because He is made of flesh and blood, and for that reason, His mercy finds a most adequate expression in those who are made of flesh and blood.<sup>172</sup>

In his commentary on Hebrews, Donald Guthrie observes that, in providing a somewhat detailed description of the earthly sanctuary, the author of Hebrews shows a

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<sup>168</sup>Ibid., 205.

<sup>169</sup>Leland Elhard, "The Koinonia of Flesh and Blood," *TrinSemRev* 4, no. 1 (1982): 44.

<sup>170</sup>Ibid.

<sup>171</sup>Ibid.

<sup>172</sup>Ibid., 45.



close connection between the Aaronic ritual and the self-oblation of Christ.<sup>173</sup> The blood of Jesus is unprecedentedly offered by Himself as the High Priest through the “Eternal Spirit.” Consequently His superior blood is able to purify the conscience. Guthrie emphasizes that no other book in the entire New Testament presents this aspect of the sacrifice of Christ more forcefully. Christ’s blood purifies, perfects, and sanctifies.<sup>174</sup> The blood of Christ inaugurates the New Covenant whose inward character is a mark of its superiority, and is backed by a better Mediator.<sup>175</sup>

Martin Hengel offers us another dimension of the subject of blood. He sees the whole of Hebrews as a large-scale development of the Christological theme found in the *kenosis* hymn of Phil 2. He observes that it is of paramount importance to note that at the very point where the divine Sonship and pre-existence of the exalted Christ are stressed, the shame of His passion is also highlighted. In Hebrews, the author does not separate *δόξα* from the shame of His cross.<sup>176</sup> The blood of the cross undergirds this idea in Phil 2.

The discussion regarding the significance of blood persists into the 1990s. During this period, James Scullion wrote a doctoral dissertation whose thesis is to demonstrate that *Yom Kippur* serves as a vehicle for understanding the meaning of the cross in the New Testament.<sup>177</sup> Scullion observes that the *Yom Kippur* ritual in Hebrews is not only

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<sup>173</sup>Donald Guthrie, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries 15 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983), 54.

<sup>174</sup>*Ibid.*, 54, 55.

<sup>175</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>176</sup>Martin Hengel, *The Cross of the Son of God* (London: SCM Press, 1986), 85.

<sup>177</sup>James P. Scullion, “A Traditio-Historical Study of the Day of Atonement” (Ph.D. dissertation, Catholic University of America, 1990), 200.

clear and explicit, but it also constitutes the center and heart of the passage dealing with the Christological exposition of Heb 8:1-10:18.<sup>178</sup> Furthermore, Scullion argues that even though Christ does not continue to offer sacrifices in heaven, His entrance into heaven with His blood is part of His sacrifice. This entrance corresponds to and fulfills the second part of the *Yom Kippur* ritual (Heb 6:20; 9:12, 24).<sup>179</sup>

Scullion justifies the reasoning of the author of Hebrews that just as the blood of bulls and goats cleansed with regard to the flesh, so also the blood of Christ purified the conscience (Heb 9:13, 14). Having emphasized the centrality of blood in the thinking of the author of Hebrews, Scullion concludes that Christ's *Yom Kippur* blood rite is superior to and supersedes the earthly *Yom Kippur* blood rite (Heb 10:4, 18).<sup>180</sup>

According to Arthur Chester, there is no other book in the entire New Testament that is more fully concerned with the themes of priesthood and cult and how these are interpreted in the death of Christ than Hebrews. This book (Hebrews) presents Jesus as the unique High Priest who offered Himself once and for all in an atoning sacrifice, thus rendering obsolete the endless, ineffective sacrifices of the Jewish cultus.<sup>181</sup> Chester shows how, according to Hebrews, every important aspect of priesthood and sacrifice is now to be found in Jesus who adequately and fully satisfies the demands of the cultic law. Hebrews depicts Jesus both as "Offerer" and "Offering" by means of His shed blood. By

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<sup>178</sup>Ibid.

<sup>179</sup>Ibid., 209.

<sup>180</sup>Ibid., 252

<sup>181</sup>Arthur N. Chester, "Hebrews: The Final Sacrifice," in *Sacrifice and Redemption*, ed. S. W. Sykes (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 57.

such an act, God Himself provides the sacrifice and effects universal forgiveness of sin in Christ.<sup>182</sup>

The core of what William Lane says about blood in his commentary on Hebrews is found in the exposition of Heb 9:11-28, where he provides a fruitful and sustained discussion on the blood of Christ according to the author of Hebrews. He contrasts his exposition with the brief review in respect to the cultic arrangements of the OT as set forth in Heb 9:1-10. Lane sees blood and its potency as constituting the leading motif of the pericope according to the author of Hebrews.<sup>183</sup>

The author of Hebrews sets forth Jesus as the High Priest who, like the earthly high priest, passes through the first compartment of the earthly tabernacle into the place beyond the veil on the Great Day of Atonement. However, he establishes the degree of discontinuity in the action of Christ because the sphere of His activity is the “greater and more perfect” tent through which He passes into the very presence of God by means of His own blood. The result of His cultic action is eschatological and final in that He obtained eternal redemption for humanity.<sup>184</sup>

Lane holds that the term blood is pivotal for the cultic argument of Hebrews because, with it, the author strikes a contrast between the blood of Christ and the blood of goats and calves of the OT cultus. He argues that Christ’s blood is qualitatively far superior to that of dumb animals because it is a voluntary self-offering. Moreover, the

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<sup>182</sup>Ibid., 65.

<sup>183</sup>William L. Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 47B (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1991), 251.

<sup>184</sup>Ibid., 236.

blood of Christ is a non-material substance denoting the voluntary action of an unblemished sacrificial victim. In fact, Lane asserts that the term blood in this context is a synonym for the death of Christ in its salvific significance.<sup>185</sup> The purgation that is effected by this blood cleanses the conscience and enables the believer to serve the Living God.<sup>186</sup>

Lane draws attention to the benefits that accrue to the community of believers as a result of the shed blood of Christ. By virtue of the blood, Jesus is the Mediator of the long-promised covenant. Christ's death not only consummated the old order, but it also inaugurated the new order. As the priestly Mediator of the New Covenant, He administers eschatological blessings on the new covenant community.<sup>187</sup>

In his doctoral dissertation, Richard Prassel discusses the biblical metaphor of blood in the context of contemporary ideas on violence, and places special emphasis upon the book of Hebrews. He points out that the Israelite cult sets up boundaries for the protection of the community from the infection of sin. Within the boundaries, the role of blood is cathartic, whereas outside the boundaries it contaminates and stains.<sup>188</sup> He shows how this idea is represented in the Epistle to the Hebrews with particular reference to the story of the sacrifice of Cain and Abel. In this context, Hebrews defines the staining

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<sup>185</sup>Ibid., 240.

<sup>186</sup>Ibid., 241.

<sup>187</sup>Ibid., 242.

<sup>188</sup>Richard C. Prassel, Jr., "An Examination of the Biblical Metaphor of 'Blood' in the Light of Some Contemporary Studies on Violence" (Ph.D. dissertation, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1992), 170.

power of sin and the cleansing power of Christ's shed blood.<sup>189</sup> Prassel attributes Cain's violent act of fratricide to mimetic desire. In view of the contrast the author draws between the blood of Abel and that of Christ, Prassel argues that, in Hebrews, "salvation is based on a functional Christology, rather than ontological one."<sup>190</sup>

Prassel notes that in Hebrews, *καθαρίζω* is employed four times by the author, and in all instances the references maintain a close connection to the blood of Christ (Heb 9:11-14, 22, 23, 10:2).<sup>191</sup> In fact, he declares boldly that "blood permeates the pages of Hebrews."<sup>192</sup> In his estimation, Heb 12:24 constitutes the key text for the author's understanding and usage of the blood of Christ. He criticizes F. F. Bruce's interpretation of the text on the grounds that it does not explain how Jesus' blood cleanses persons. He also observes that even though the author of Hebrews does not speak explicitly of the superiority of Christ's blood, there are hints throughout the text.<sup>193</sup>

In Hebrews' distinction between the two covenants, Prassel sees the author's demonstration of the superiority of the blood of Christ. He compares and contrasts the new covenant in Heb 8:8-13 (Jer 31:31-34) and the Sinaitic covenant of Exod 24 (Heb 9:18-21). Consequently, he argues that, unlike Moses who approaches God alone, Christ approaches God through the sacrifice of Himself, that is, by means of His own blood. Again Hebrews does not speak of obedience prior to the sprinkling of Christ's blood.

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<sup>189</sup>Ibid., 171.

<sup>190</sup>Ibid., 183.

<sup>191</sup>Ibid., 187.

<sup>192</sup>Ibid., 193.

<sup>193</sup>Ibid., 195.

Rather, obedience flows from the conscience sprinkled clean with the blood of Christ.<sup>194</sup> Prassel asserts that Christ's blood inaugurates the new covenant prophesied by Jeremiah. It is the blood of Christ which extends the boundaries of the new covenant to include sinful humanity excluded by the first covenant. Therefore, the shed blood of Christ addresses the deepest needs of the human psyche, offering acceptance rather than rejection by the Divine.<sup>195</sup> Hence, he affirms the danger of rejecting Christ's blood as warned by the author of Hebrews (Heb 10:26-31).

Martin Feucht wrote a master's thesis in which he sets out to prove the significance of the blood of Jesus by investigating the biblical teaching of forgiveness.<sup>196</sup> Feucht asserts that bloodshed in the sacrificial ritual is the direct consequence of sin in the very beginning of the history of mankind. Sacrifice is, as it were, the reversal of sin. Thus, the divine logic of the *satisfactio vicaria* (vicarious sacrifice) found in Hebrews can only be fully appreciated in the context of the Old Testament cultus which constitutes its background. Hence, atonement by bloody sacrifice is the order of a Holy God.<sup>197</sup> He argues that it is the blood of sacrifice that qualifies puny priests before God. In the same manner, it is only on the basis of blood offerings that God establishes a covenant with His people.

According to Feucht, Hebrews does not attribute quality or efficacy to blood per

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<sup>194</sup>Ibid., 196.

<sup>195</sup>Ibid., 197.

<sup>196</sup>Martin Feucht, "Studien zum Blutopfer Jesu Christi nach dem Hebräebrief und seinem alttestamentlichen Hintergrund" (M.A. thesis, Columbia International University, 1998), i.

<sup>197</sup>Ibid., ii.

se. Rather, it is the nature of its provider which matters. Thus, in Hebrews, soteriology finds fulfillment in Christology. It therefore makes sense that the perfect sacrifice of Christ in His “Eternal Spirit” offered once and for all is not only far superior to all animal sacrifices, but also that the blood of that sacrifice is able to cleanse the conscience.<sup>198</sup>

However, in spite of the efficacy of the blood of Christ, there is a limitation for the one who sins willfully (*ἔκουσίως*) after receiving the knowledge of the truth. Such a sinful act constitutes a renunciation of the blood of Christ. For this reason, Feucht maintains that it is only when a deliberate decision of surrender is made to Christ that one comes under the protection of His blood.<sup>199</sup> In conclusion, he asserts that the word of the cross of Christ is also the word of the blood of Christ.<sup>200</sup>

For John Kleinig, the climactic point in the entire movement of the Epistle to the Hebrews is reached in Heb 12:22-24 where believers come to Mount Zion. The most surprising and impressive thing, according to him, is that the culmination of the Epistle is found in the sprinkled blood of Christ.<sup>201</sup>

Kleinig establishes the relationship between Leviticus and Hebrews after a detailed discussion of the use of blood in Leviticus. He claims that through the application and manipulation of sacrificial blood in the Jewish cultus, God accepted His people and qualified them for access to His gracious presence. They were purified and

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<sup>198</sup>Ibid., vi.

<sup>199</sup>Ibid., xiv.

<sup>200</sup>Ibid., 1. Feucht asserts: “Das Wort vom Kreuz Christi, das auch ein Wort vom Blut Christi” (ibid.).

<sup>201</sup>John W. Kleinig, “The Blood for Sprinkling: Atoning Blood in Leviticus and Hebrews,” *LuThJ* 33, no. 3 (1999): 124.

pardoned through blood. Both priests and sancta were purified, by blood, and candidates for the priesthood were consecrated for service.<sup>202</sup>

Kleinig affirms that the writer of Hebrews regards the performance of the blood rite by the Israelite priests as a type of Christ's work.<sup>203</sup> Moreover, he asserts that all the spiritual benefits we enjoy as believers depend entirely on the blood of Christ.<sup>204</sup>

Moreover, Kleinig posits a strong connection between Hebrews and the Eucharist by which the blood of Christ speaks of God's grace to us. He argues that, apart from Christ's blood, our worship would be earth-bound, local, human, and intellectual. However, it is the power of the blood which makes it heavenly, catholic, divine, and effectual.<sup>205</sup>

Interest in the subject of blood in Hebrews and its implications for Christian faith still occupy the thinking of scholars even now in the twenty-first century. Patrick Gray shows how important the superiority of Christ's high priesthood is in the mind of the author of Hebrews. He argues cogently that the efficacy of Christ's sacerdotal office is enhanced by the fact that He is of one blood with His brothers. He demonstrates that, in

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<sup>202</sup>Ibid., 131.

<sup>203</sup>Ibid.

<sup>204</sup>Ibid., 132.

<sup>205</sup>Ibid., 133.



Hebrews, both fraternal identity and empathy are prerequisites for the office of high priest (Heb 2:10-18).<sup>206</sup>

Gray seeks to emphasize the close relationship between Christ's office as High Priest and the concept of kinship that He shares with His blood brothers. In doing this, he appeals to the socio-historical realities of the Greco-Roman world which may have partly inspired the author's use of sibling metaphor in Hebrews.<sup>207</sup> He employs these elements to substantiate his argument: fraternal devotion (Heb 12:5-11), Jesus as the perfect role model (Heb 2:14), and Jesus' willingness to share glory with His brothers (Heb 3:1, 14; 11:39-12:2).

Thus, Gray asserts that Hebrews weaves a wide range of concepts related to the role of brother in Hellenistic society and all these help to develop the image of Jesus as High Priest.<sup>208</sup> To clinch his argument, he presses home the point that Christ's identity as Brother of the faithful serves as a key to understanding the nature of His distinctive priesthood.<sup>209</sup> According to Gray, both ideas of priesthood and brotherhood hinge on the concept of blood in Hebrews.

For Richard Nelson, the concept of blood in Hebrews is seen in terms of sacrifice. He observes that while the author of Hebrews does not deny the validity of earthly sacrificial ritual, he goes beyond it and points to a transcendent temple and a definite

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<sup>206</sup>Patrick Gray, "Brotherly Love and the High Priest Christology of Hebrews," *JBL* 122, no. 2 (2003): 335.

<sup>207</sup>*Ibid.*, 337.

<sup>208</sup>*Ibid.*, 350.

<sup>209</sup>*Ibid.*, 351.

sacrifice.<sup>210</sup> According to Nelson, the complexity of Jewish sacrifice as reflected in the one accomplished by Christ involves three steps, namely, the death of the victim, passage by the priest into the realm of the holy, and the use of blood to create a covenantal relationship.<sup>211</sup> However, the real center of gravity in sacrifice is the priestly act of bringing the victim's blood before God at the altar.

Nelson argues that the cross does not constitute the totality nor the central focus of Christ's sacrificial work. However, it is the first component in a larger sacrificial script. Christ's death on the cross secures entrance into the heavenly sanctuary and provides the blood needed for cleansing on the Day of Atonement (Heb 9:21, 22).<sup>212</sup>

Furthermore, Nelson points out that the author of Hebrews binds the blood of the cross of Christ and His exaltation, not only as elements of a single sacrificial script, but also as successive stages in a single sacrifice and single offering made once and for all. In this way, the cross is no mere prologue or presupposition for Christ's priestly ministry in heaven, but is an essential first element in His multi-stage act of sacrificial offering.<sup>213</sup> He notes that, as a result of the blood of Christ shed in His unique sacrifice, the believer has soteriological, psychological, and social benefits.<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>210</sup>Richard D. Nelson, "“He Offered Himself”: Sacrifice in Hebrews,” *Int* 57, no. 3 (July 2003): 251.

<sup>211</sup>*Ibid.*, 252.

<sup>212</sup>*Ibid.*, 254.

<sup>213</sup>*Ibid.*, 255.

<sup>214</sup>*Ibid.*, 259-65.

## Summary of Ideas of Blood in Hebrews

The concept of *αἷμα* plays a very significant role in the thinking of the author of Hebrews (of the thirty-one times that the word appears in Hebrews, it is mentioned twelve times alone in the theological core of the authors' argument). The purpose of this argument is to demonstrate and affirm to the beleaguered believers who constituted his readership, the superiority of the high priesthood of Jesus Christ, the basis of which office is the blood. To this end, Christology in Hebrews, with its main motif, the uniqueness of the high priesthood of Christ, is intricately orchestrated.<sup>215</sup> Since a wedge cannot be driven between high priesthood and blood, the term is also inevitably and inextricably linked with secondary, and even, tertiary themes in the Epistle.

Such themes are reflected by the various writers whose works have been reviewed in this study. Antony Snell sees a direct correspondence between the cross, the Christian altar, and the altar of bloody sacrifice of the OT cultus.<sup>216</sup> When William Johnsson calls blood the "leitmotif" of the theological core of the argument in Heb 9 and 10, a logical connection is established between the blood of dumb sacrificial animals and that of Christ which is "better blood."<sup>217</sup> Leland Elhard draws a relationship between blood and the real humanity of Christ.<sup>218</sup> James Scullion not only maintains that *Yom Kippur* serves as a vehicle for understanding the cross in the NT, but he also affirms that reference to the

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<sup>215</sup>William L. Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 47A (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1991), cxxxix.

<sup>216</sup>Snell, "We Have an Altar," 17.

<sup>217</sup>Johnsson, "Defilement and Purgation in the Book of Hebrews," 223-26.

<sup>218</sup>Elhard, 44.

bloody event in Hebrews is clear and explicit.<sup>219</sup> For John Kleinig, like several others, the roots of the blood concept are traceable to and firmly established in the Levitical rites. He also contends that the blood of Christ speaks of better things than that of Abel, because it proclaims and conveys our promised eternal inheritance.<sup>220</sup> Patrick Gray has woven into a single strand the concepts of high priesthood and brotherhood in Hebrews within the social context of Greco-Roman society. He shows that the author of Hebrews holds that fraternal empathy on Christ's part is a prerequisite for His office as High Priest.<sup>221</sup> It is almost needless to say that undergirding this concept is blood. Richard Nelson highlights the significance of blood in the Epistle as he lists both the spiritual and material benefits that have accrued to believers as a result of the bloody sacrifice of Christ.<sup>222</sup> It is not surprising that Ceslas Spicq concludes that the bloodshed of Christ, which constitutes a divine mystery, is the highest form of achievement in human history. Whereas each of these sub-themes could be fully developed independently, this is not the purpose here.

Another important observation is that, in the literature on blood in Hebrews, the term “*αἷμα*” (blood) is invariably discussed in the context of Christology. Aspects of Christology that have emerged from the review are high priesthood, atonement, incarnation, new covenant inauguration, consecration, blood aspersion, and purification.

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<sup>219</sup>Scullion, 200-02.

<sup>220</sup>Kleinig, 124, 134.

<sup>221</sup>Patrick Gray, 335.

<sup>222</sup>Nelson, 259-65.

However, these implications of the significance of blood for thematic aspects of Christology have not been systematically set forth in any of the literature surveyed.

The various scholarly articles, monographs, and commentaries that I have examined dating from the sixties do not reflect the blood debate. The polemics of blood have receded into the distance and become a matter of the past. It appears that from the sixties onwards, any writing on blood has been calculated to deepen understanding of some aspect of Christology or soteriology in one way or the other.

### **Justification for the Present Study**

What I have sought to accomplish by this literature survey is to review pertinent published material relating to the subject of blood in Hebrews, in order to assess the scope of such secondary literature, and highlight major issues that have emerged from the scholarly discussion, with special attention to implications of this subject for functional Christology. Thus, this survey necessitated the tracing of the blood debate from its inception to its end. Moreover, there is a notable dearth of scholarly literature on the subject of blood in the context of the NT, in general, from the 1960s to the present. A clear case in point, as I have observed earlier on, is the article on blood in the *Anchor Bible Dictionary* which does not even make a single reference to an article based on the NT.

With regard to the book of Hebrews in particular, it has become apparent that no study has yet appeared which deals with the various issues and numerous passages concerning blood in Hebrews in a comprehensive and systematic way. Surprisingly, of

the dozens of major commentaries on Hebrews which I have examined,<sup>223</sup> only four commentators provide any substantial, sustained treatment of the topic of blood: Spicq, Hughes, Guthrie, and Lane (see reviews of these scholars' views above). The other commentaries mention blood only tangentially, in passing, usually treating it as a cipher for the sacrifice of Christ.

Even though both Fred Folkerts and Martin Feucht wrote master's theses on the subject of blood in Hebrews, they have not dealt with the matter adequately. Folkert's work, focusing on the concept of blood and its meaning in Hebrews, is well written but limited in scope. For a master's thesis, it is adequate, but the subject of blood in Hebrews calls for a fuller treatment. Although *in nuce*, Folkerts touches on a number of points relating to blood in Hebrews, there is a need for a work which will provide a detailed study and investigation of the term *blood* beyond a master's thesis. To my knowledge, no such work has been produced.

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<sup>223</sup>See Jean Calvin, *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews and the First and Second Epistles of St. Peter*, Calvin's Commentaries, ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1963); F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964); Hugh W. Montefiore, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, Black's New Testament Commentaries (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1964); John H. Davies, *A Letter to the Hebrews*, The Cambridge Bible Commentary, vol. 47 (Cambridge: University Press, 1967); Jean Héring, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, trans. A. W. Heathcote and P. J. Allcock (London: Epworth Press, 1970); George W. Buchanan, *To the Hebrews*, The Anchor Bible, vol. 36 (New York: Doubleday, 1972); Homer A. Kent Jr., *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1972); Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Hermeneia--A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible; James Gavigan, Brian McCarthy, and Thomas McGovern, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, The Navarre Bible, vol. 10 (Dublin, Ireland: Four Courts Press, 1991); Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993); Frances T. Gench, *Hebrews and James*, Westminster Bible Companion (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996); Thomas Long, *Hebrews*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1997); Craig R. Koester, *Hebrews*, The Anchor Bible, vol. 36 (New York: Doubleday, 2001); Dimitri Royster, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary* (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003); and Erik M. Heen and Philip D. W. Krey, eds., *Hebrews*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament, vol. 10 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005).

Feucht's thesis, although related to Hebrews, is not concerned with blood in Hebrews per se. His work deals with the significance of the blood of Christ in terms of the biblical teaching of forgiveness. Therefore, he exegetes selected passages in Hebrews as well as relevant OT texts to help establish his case. He deserves to be commended, but the quest for a comprehensive study on blood focusing on Hebrews has not been met. I seek to fulfill this crucial task.

## CHAPTER III

### OLD TESTAMENT BACKGROUND OF דם (*Aḥimā*)

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate the background of the term *āḥimā/דם* (“blood”) in both its Ancient Near Eastern and Old Testament contexts. The chapter is organized into six major sections. The first section tackles the question of the place of blood in the general context of the cults and covenants of the Ancient Near East. The second section focuses on pre-Israelite references to blood in the Old Testament cultic context. The third section deals with sacrificial blood within the Old Testament cultus. The fourth section examines the role of the concept of blood in the covenantal relationship of the Old Testament. The fifth section explores the references to blood in the prophetic protestation of cultic abuse in the eighth century B.C. The sixth and final section—a summary of the findings of the investigation—concludes the whole chapter.

#### **דם/*Aḥimā* in the Ancient Near East (Outside Israel)**

Since God’s dealing with Israel in Old Testament times is rooted in history, it is important to study the general environment of the Old Testament to find out how Israel’s neighbors understood the concept of blood. The focus on blood in this particular context is on cult and its covenantal aspects.



## Blood in the ANE Cults

Many Old Testament scholars embrace the view of the *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule* which stresses “parallel developments and common doctrines within Christianity and Judaism, and later, within Christianity and other, mainly Near Eastern, religious traditions.”<sup>1</sup> Some scholars of a previous generation maintained “that blood-sacrifice in Israel was of Canaanite origin and not an integral part of the indigenous Hebrew cultus.”<sup>2</sup> For instance, D. Urie holds that since there seems to be an intimate connection between the sacrificial systems of Israel, Phoenicia, and Ugarit, such a phenomenon could be attributed to borrowing by Israel and Phoenicia from Ugarit. From such a stance, one could propose that “the importance of the Ugaritian literature lies in the fact that if not itself the medium, it represents the medium by which Babylonian ritual and mythology were propagated in Syria and Palestine.”<sup>3</sup> However, as will become evident in this chapter, the current ANE and OT evidence does not support this contention.

## Blood in the Ugaritic Cult

A. DeGuglielmo has conducted an informative study of sacrifice in the Ugaritic texts, and his findings do shed some light on the issue of blood in the Ancient Near Eastern environment.<sup>4</sup> In texts dealing with religion, he laments, however, that these “are in the main fragmentary, so in most instances one can do little more than establish the

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<sup>1</sup>A *New Dictionary of Christian Theology* (1989), s.v. “*Religionsgeschichtliche Schule*.”

<sup>2</sup>Raymond Abba, “The Origin and Significance of Hebrew Sacrifice,” *BibThBul* 7 (1977): 124. See also Johannes Pedersen, “Canaanite and Israelite Cultus,” *AcOr* 18 (1939): 1-14.

<sup>3</sup>D. M. L. Urie, “Sacrifice among the West Semites,” *PEQ* 81 (January-April 1949): 82.

<sup>4</sup>A. DeGuglielmo, “Sacrifice in the Ugaritic Texts,” *CBQ* 17, no. 2 (1955): 196-215.

presence of sacrifice and the victims sacrificed.”<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, DeGuglielmo refers to the Baal and Anat cycle, and especially to the slaughter of various animals “other than the domestic bovine and ovine species” after the death of Baal Anat, but he confesses that the meaning of this slaughter is uncertain.<sup>6</sup>

In the Saga of Keret, DeGuglielmo observes that “the religious texts solidly establish the existence and frequency of sacrifice at Ugarit, but throw little light on the ritual.”<sup>7</sup> He cites a ceremony of ablution during which “Paghat washes and rouges (‘*dm*) before setting out to avenge her brother’s death.”<sup>8</sup> Some scholars, he points out, have understood this text to refer to “a rite in which the offerer [of sacrifice] washes his hands in blood.”<sup>9</sup> McCarthy, however, refutes this idea when he maintains that the Ugaritic texts show no special concern for blood in ritual. It is evident that King Keret washes and reddens (*wy’adm*) his arms ritually, but this is *preparation* for sacrifice. Whatever the purpose of this, what is significant for our context is precisely that it is not sacrificial blood which is used.<sup>10</sup>

DeGuglielmo sums up his observations in three points. First, he contends that, in the Ugaritic texts wherever the presence of sacrifice is established, there is the notion of

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 197.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 202.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 203.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>D. J. McCarthy, “The Symbolism of Blood and Sacrifice,” *JBL* 88 (1969): 170.

the wining and dining of the gods. Sacrifice is plying the gods with food and drink.<sup>11</sup> In this respect, both André Caquot and Maurice Sznycer affirm that sacrifice was the most important religious action at Ugarit. Records even reveal that liturgical menologies confirm fixed dates of sacrifices, that of the new moon being the most prominent. Apart from animal sacrifice, items such as jars of wine have been found suggesting that the gods were great drinkers. Gold and silver artifacts have also been discovered as sacrificial items. Moreover, the technical cultic language of Ugarit seems to bear a relationship to that of Hebrew. However, it should be noted that although there is no proof denying a definite relationship between these terms and Hebraic terminology, there is no evidence that the Ugaritic rites had the same function as the parallel biblical rites.<sup>12</sup> Second, it seems the aim of sacrifice in these texts is that of suing the favor of the gods so that they will respond to prayer.<sup>13</sup> Third, the “Ugaritic texts unearthed to date do not lay specific stress on the value of blood.”<sup>14</sup>

In the ancient Mesopotamian cult, the belief about the origin of man is found in the tradition that the gods “created man by vivifying clay with the blood of a god slain for rebellion.”<sup>15</sup> However, in the cult, divine character is never attributed to blood as one would expect. Like the Hittites, sacrifice was basically a meal served to the gods.<sup>16</sup> Even

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<sup>11</sup>DeGuglielmo, 216.

<sup>12</sup>André Caquot and M. Sznycer, eds., *Ugaritic Religion* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1980), 17.

<sup>13</sup>DeGuglielmo, 216.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>McCarthy, “The Symbolism of Blood and Sacrifice,” 166.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

though the point is well noted among some scholars that “since the Akkadian *naqû* (pour) is the ordinary word for ‘offer sacrifice,’ . . . the pouring out of a victim’s blood was so central as to denominate the whole sacrificial process.”<sup>17</sup> However, one has to reckon with the fact that in the Akkadian cultic context, there is no evidence for ritual manipulation of blood. Moreover, since drink offering was an integral part of the sacrificial cultus, “the act of libation was certainly designated by *naqû*.”<sup>18</sup> Therefore, since the concept of sacrifice was more of a meal, it is most unlikely that the term *naqû* would refer to “an unattested use of blood.”<sup>19</sup>

Ritual involving animal slaughter is well-known in Akkadian literature. The following instructions are for priests regarding the new year’s festival in Babylon:

He shall call a slaughterer to decapitate a ram, the body of which the *mašmašu*-priest shall use in performing the *kuppuru*-ritual for the temple (355). He shall recite the incantations for exorcizing the temple. He shall purify the whole sanctuary, including its environs, and shall remove the censer. The *mašmašu*-priest shall lift up the body of the aforementioned ram and proceed to the river (360). He shall (then) go out into the open country. The slaughterer shall do the same thing with the ram’s head. The *mašmašu*-priest and the slaughterer shall go out into the open country. As long as the god Nabu is in Babylon, they shall not enter Babylon, but stay in the open country from the fifth to the twelfth day (of the month Nisannu).<sup>20</sup>

Samuel Hooke notes that, in the ritual cited, purification is achieved by rubbing

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<sup>17</sup>Albrecht Goetze, “Hittite Šipant,” *JCS* 23 (1970-71): 77. Goetze points out that “the Hittite verb *šipant* denotes a religious ceremony which is mostly performed for gods and normally with beverages . . . or with animals. . . . Its purpose is, as far as can be seen, providing the gods with nourishment” (ibid.).

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 167.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1955), 333.

the carcass on the object defiled. Thus defilement was transferred onto the carcass.<sup>21</sup> It is significant to observe that in the quoted text of the ritual, there is no instruction regarding the manipulation of blood at all. Once again, it is clear that the understanding of cultic bloody sacrifice is significantly absent.

The subsequent text deals with animal ritual in connection with the covering of the temple kettle drum:

Then you shall cut open that bull and start a fire with cedar. You shall burn the bull's heart with cedar, cypress, and *mashatu*-flour before the kettle-drum. You shall remove the tendon of its left shoulder and shall bury the body of that bull (wrapped) in a single red-cloth (20). You shall throw some *gunnu*-oil on it (and) arrange it so that its face points to the west. You shall take the hide of that bull and dip it in fine flour made from clean barley, in water, prime beer, (and) wine.<sup>22</sup>

Once again, this text does not say anything about blood manipulation. The bull is slain, its heart is burnt, and the carcass is buried. The cultic process described is notably silent on the manipulation of blood.

In the Akkadian cultus, instructions are provided for the repair of the broken temple walls of the god Anu. Three sacrificial rites are ordered for the god of the temple, the goddess, and the household god of the temple.<sup>23</sup> The following text is a sample of one of the three sacrifices: "You shall sacrifice [the sheep] (and) offer the thigh, . . . and *roas[ted* meat. You shall make a libation of beer, wine, and milk.] You shall light a fire for the gods Ea and Marduk, (5) sacrifice [a sheep to Ea and Marduk], and make a

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<sup>21</sup>Samuel H. Hooke, *Babylonian and Assyrian Religion* (New York: Hutchinson's University Library, 1953), 58.

<sup>22</sup>Pritchard, 335.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, 339.

libation of prime beer, wine, (and) milk.”<sup>24</sup>

Once again, in the ritual cited, the absence of any reference to blood manipulation is conspicuous.

Furthermore, the Akkadian texts provide a ritual menu for the gods: “Anu, Antu, Istar, Nana, and the (other) gods dwelling in the Resh Temple, the Irigal Temple, and the Esharra Temple, (which is) the topmost stage of the temple-tower of the god Anu. From the first day of the month Nisannu through the thirtieth day of the month Adaru.”<sup>25</sup>

These numerous ritual meals involve both the animals of the bovine and ovine families, wild animals, as well as domesticated and wild birds. However, in all these arrangements, blood does not play any significant role. In fact, it is not even mentioned.

In the cultic practice of Babylon, there is a place for ritual dealing with the protection and purification of a house.<sup>26</sup> Martin Selman speaks of propitiatory offerings that were essentially apotropaic in character. “They might involve the destruction of a portentous object such as the drowning of an animal, the setting up of an obstruction such as smearing a door with a mixture including bat’s blood and crushed spider, or the substitution of another image as a means of transferring evil from the person who was expected to suffer.”<sup>27</sup> Even though “elaborate sacrifices are made to Marduk (as god of lustration), and altars are erected and blood-sacrifices offered in honor of Anu, Enlil, Ea,

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 344.

<sup>26</sup>Oliver R. Gurney, “Babylonian Prophylactic Figures and Their Rituals,” *AAA* 22 (1935): 31.

<sup>27</sup>Martin Selman, “Sacrifice in the Ancient Near East,” in *Sacrifice in the Bible*, ed. R. T. Beckwith and M. J. Selman (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1995), 94.

and the house god,” no significance is attached to blood.<sup>28</sup>

Another Babylonian ritual for the healing of a sick man prescribes a ceremony in which “a black kid is sacrificed for use as a scapegoat.”<sup>29</sup>

The man is taken out into the open air and a line of meal-water is drawn about him, to serve as a ban against everything evil. When evening comes the scapegoat is to be brought to the sick man, and a spell is to be cast, mentioning the names of the various evil influences which may have attacked him. Marduk is then to command the devils to come forth from the sick man and return to the lower world, and the skin of the scapegoat is thrown into the street.<sup>30</sup>

Once again, the text says nothing about the blood of the goat. If anything at all, in such ceremonies, attention seems to be focused rather on the clay statuettes and figurines employed in the ritual of exorcism.<sup>31</sup>

Roy Gane’s dissertation on “Ritual Dynamic Structure” is an eye-opener on the nature of ritual in the ancient Near East. He points out commonalities in the cultic practices of Israel and her neighbors, but he also notes that the significance accorded to blood in ritual matters is specifically Israelite.<sup>32</sup> He writes concerning purgation: “For example, Israelite sacred precincts and sancta are purged by sprinkling and daubing blood, the Babylonian sacred precincts are purged by sprinkling water, ringing a bell,

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<sup>28</sup>Gurney, “Babylonian Prophylactic Figures and Their Rituals,” 33.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 36.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 31.

<sup>32</sup>Roy E. Gane, “Ritual Dynamic Structure: Systems Theory and Ritual Syntax Applied to Selected Ancient Israelite, Babylonian and Hittite Festival Days” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California at Berkeley, 1992), 381.

carrying a torch and censer, and wiping a carcass, and Hittite sancta are purified by being washed in a river.”<sup>33</sup>

Samuel Hooke calls attention to the idea of substitution in the context of the Babylonian cultus.<sup>34</sup> In relation to this, he cites instances where a cultic rite involving the idea of substitution is employed to protect royalty. The underlying philosophy of the concept of the *šar puhi* is that “when the threat of danger assumed unusual proportions, a substitute was installed in the hope that the royal person might be saved.”<sup>35</sup>

In such a ritual the priests selected a person who was invested with the royal insignia and authority, and was thus authorized to undertake all the religious roles of the king, exposing himself to the supernatural dangers which threatened the king at this critical time. The royal substitute played the role imposed upon him for a period of a hundred days. Meanwhile the real king and the royal princes, who were also involved in the danger, were confined to the palace. The record of texts indicates that the priests expected that, during this period, the substitute would die. The usual form, *ula ana šimte lillik* or *ittalak*, has been interpreted to mean that the substitute would be ritually killed, either during or at the end of the prescribed period.

In spite of sacerdotal expectation, “it was possible that he might fulfil his term safely, and having served his purpose as potential lightning-conductor, might return to

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

<sup>34</sup>Samuel H. Hooke, “The Theory and Practice of Substitution,” *VT* 2 (1952): 2-17.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 3-4.



private life, in which case, his subsequent death would have no apotropaic value.”<sup>36</sup> Once again, despite the possibility of death of the substitute, no significance is attached to his blood. Furthermore, Hooke points out that the substitution-ritual was not confined to royal persons.<sup>37</sup> The forms of substitute were numerous.<sup>38</sup>

### Summary

In spite of the influence of the history-of-religions approach to the study of sacrifice in the environment of the Ancient Near East, the evidence clearly shows that Israel’s neighbors did not view sacrificial blood as a divine agent. Sacrifice was offered for the purpose of alimentation to the gods to curry their favor. Even in substitutionary rituals, no special significance is attached to blood.

### **Blood and Covenant-Making in the ANE**

A study of the covenant-making procedures of the Ancient Near East not only sheds light on the biblical practice, but also affords an insight into one of the most ancient forms of contractual concepts governing human relationships. International covenants from Hittite sources (1450-1200 B.C.) are invaluable in this context because they are

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 5.

<sup>38</sup>Hooke says, “Animal forms might be bull, kid, lamb, pig, rat, and in the highest form of substitute for the king, a human being, a man, noble or commoner. Inanimate objects might be the hair, nails, or articles of apparel belonging to the threatened person; we also find the image of the patient or of the unquiet ghost used as a substitute; a staff decked with red wool, and a cedar tree, no doubt a small one, cut from the forest, occur in some rituals” (ibid., 8).

“contemporary with the beginnings of the people of Israel.”<sup>39</sup>

As previously mentioned in this study, it was commonplace in the Near Eastern environment that bloodshed and covenant making went side by side,<sup>40</sup> not to mention the element of superstition.<sup>41</sup> Even though Weinfeld observes that among the Hittites and Assyrians there is no reference to sacrifices for the ratification of the covenant, “in the treaty between Naram-Sin and the Elamites, we find sacrifices offered and statues erected at the Elamite sanctuary.”<sup>42</sup>

Generally speaking, in the Ancient Near East, blood is involved in covenantal sacrifices. For this reason, “it seems striking, therefore, that in Hittite and Assyrian treaties the sacrificial element is absent.”<sup>43</sup> In addressing this problem, Weinfeld conjectures, “in the formally developed treaty formulation, the proclamation of the oath replaced the sacrificial ceremony. The treaty became valid not by virtue of the ritual but

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<sup>39</sup>George E. Mendenhall, “Covenant Forms in Israelite Tradition,” *BAR* 17, no. 3 (September 1954): 53.

<sup>40</sup>According to Jaroslav Černý, the following is a description of how Cambyses’ envoys made a contract with the king of the Arabs: “A man stands between the two parties that would give security, he informs us, and cuts with a sharp stone the palms of the hands of the parties, by the second finger: then he takes a piece of wool from the cloak of each and smears with the blood seven stones that lie between them, calling the whole on Dionysius and the heavenly Aphrodite; and when he has fully done this, he that gives the security commends to his friends the stranger (or his countryman if the party be such), and his friends hold themselves bound to honor the pledge.” Jaroslav Černý, “Reference to Blood Brotherhood among Semites in an Egyptian Text of the Ramesside Period,” *JNES* 14 (January-October 1955): 161.

<sup>41</sup>Arnid S. Kapelrud, “Religion and Magic in Hittite Religion,” *Numen* 6 (1959): 42.

<sup>42</sup>Moshe Weinfeld, “Covenant Making in Anatolia and Mesopotamia,” *JANES* 22 (1993): 137. The author comments, “The stele of the vultures, which relates the covenant between Lagash and Umma, describes the sacrifice of a bull and two doves. In the Mari documents we meet with two traditions of covenantal ritual: the provincial tribes preferred a goat and a puppy for the ritual ceremony of covenant-making, whereas the king of Mari insisted on killing an ass. In the Alalah documents the covenant involves cutting the neck of a lamb. In a later Alalahian document we find offerings in connection with the oath that the parties had taken. Similar features characterize the ancient Israelite covenant” (ibid.).

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., 138.

by the oath imprecation, the *māmītu*.”<sup>44</sup> In this case, the performance of a sacrificial ceremony would simply serve as a dramatic and climactic act to overawe the vassal into perpetual submission to his overlord.

### Summary

In the making of covenantal contracts in the ancient Near East, the most important thing was the oath of imprecation. The sacrificial ceremony simply served as a dramatic climax to the whole ceremony. It was calculated to intimidate the vassal before his overlord. It therefore inspired a spirit of submission and not rebellion.

### ⲁⲓⲙⲁ in the OT

#### Pre-Israelite References to ⲁⲓⲙⲁ (*Aīma*) in the OT

The concept of blood appears early in the Genesis narrative of the Pentateuch. In the account dealing with the fall of man, God comes down to confront the fallen pair. After establishing the guilt of Adam and Eve, punishments are meted out to them. However, God performs the symbolic act of clothing their nakedness with coats of skins from slain animals. By this act, God not only provides a better form of raiment, but “also the skins were a constant reminder of their lost innocence, of death as the wages of sin, and of the promised Lamb of God, who would by His own vicarious death take away the sin of the world.”<sup>45</sup>

Moreover, God’s act of clothing the sinful pair imparted to them the feeling of

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

<sup>45</sup>“Genesis,” *SDA Bible Commentary*, ed. Francis D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1953-57), 1:235.

shame—the visible sign of an awakened conscience.<sup>46</sup> It is a fact that the skins of beasts for clothing necessitated the death or slaughter of beasts. Even though in this text, namely Gen 3:21, the term blood is not used, yet the provision of animal skins presupposes the shedding of blood. For this reason, one can say that the “sacrificial service, though not specifically mentioned here, was instituted at this time.”<sup>47</sup>

### The Sacrifice of Cain and Abel

The story of blood continues in Gen 4—the next chapter. The pericope (Gen 4:2-15) relates the account of the sacrifice of the two brothers Cain and Abel. The narrative indicates that the first sons of Adam and Eve were well acquainted with the sacrificial ritual involving bloodshed.<sup>48</sup> This might explain why Cain’s non-bloody sacrifice is rejected, whereas the sacrifice of blood and fat offered by his brother Abel finds favor with God. The subsequent act of murder that Cain commits in his moment of depression and anger constitutes illicit spilling of blood. Hence, in the expression צעקים אלי מן האדמה (Gen 4:10) (“the voice of thy brother’s blood crieth unto me from the ground”) one discovers that a case of blood-guiltiness seeking redress is implied.<sup>49</sup> Since

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<sup>46</sup>Carl F. Keil and Friedrich Delitzsch, *Pentateuch*, Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament, trans. J. Martin (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1952), 1:106.

<sup>47</sup>“Genesis,” *SDA Bible Commentary*, 1:235.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid. See also Sperling, 1:761. Sperling explains, “Indeed ‘blood’ and ‘life’ are attested as lexical pairs in Hebrew, Ugaritic, and Akkadian poetry.”

<sup>49</sup>Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis*, The JPS Torah Commentary, vol. 1 (New York: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 34. See also Michael Maher, *Genesis*, Old Testament Message, vol. 2 (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1982), 52. Maher says, “The words of divine accusation, the *voice of your brother’s blood is crying to me from the ground* (Gen 4:10), must be understood against the background of the Old Testament view that life is in the blood (Lev 17:11-14), and that blood and life belong to God alone” (ibid.).

a breach of the moral law has been effected, countervailing forces inevitably set in motion must ultimately prevail because they are sustained by God Himself. Since Cain, a tiller of the soil, had by a criminal act stained the earth with his brother's blood, it is fitting, then, that the earth be the instrument of his punishment. It will no longer yield readily to him the benefits of its produce, and so he can no longer pursue his vocation. He must perforce become a vagrant and an outcast.<sup>50</sup> Even though we are speaking of 'sin,' 'guilt,' and 'blood' here, it is likely that the word *חטאת* (Gen 4:7) in this context is "sin offering" and not "sin."<sup>51</sup> The word *דם*, however, in this context (Gen 4:10), is a reference not to the sin/purification offering in a sacrificial context, but to Cain's blood-guilt resulting from fratricide.

#### The Aftermath of the Flood

Events constituting the aftermath of the Flood provide another dimension to the story of blood in the Old Testament (Gen 9:1-6). God pronounces a benediction on Noah and his family and restores the order of creation that has been disturbed by the Deluge. This benediction, in a sense, gives back to Noah the Adamic authority over fauna and flora, but there is prohibition against eating flesh with its life-blood in it.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup>Ibid.

<sup>51</sup>José Azevedo, "At the Door of Paradise: A Contextual Interpretation of Gen 4:7," *BN* 100, (1999): 45-59. José Azevedo argues from a linguistic viewpoint that the word has two basic meanings, namely, "sin" and "sin/purification-offering." The application of one or the other meaning will depend, exclusively, on the context of the specific passage where the word is located.

<sup>52</sup>Sarna, 60-61. Sarna asserts, "Partaking of the flesh of a living animal is prohibited. It must first be slaughtered. . . . Also implicit in the formulation is the additional prohibition on partaking of the blood that oozes out of the animal's dying body. This means that the flesh may not be eaten unless the life-blood has first been drained. These laws are made incumbent on all humanity. In rabbinic theology they, together with those of the succeeding verses, form part of what are known as the 'Noachide Laws'" (ibid.).

In addition to this, the teaching against homicide is reiterated.<sup>53</sup> The Torah condemns murder not only because it is the supreme and capital crime, but because the dignity, sanctity, and inviolability of human life all derive from the fact that every human being bears the stamp of the divine Maker. The murderer deserves to be put to death because his unspeakable act effaces the divine image in his victim and in himself as well, so that his own life forfeits its claim to inviolability.<sup>54</sup>

### **דָּם (*Aĩµα*) in the Old Testament Cultus**

#### **Blood and the Problem of Feminine Impurity in Leviticus 15**

Leviticus 15 is organized around the subject of genital flows and the problem of impurity created by such flows. Even though both male and female are concerned with this kind of problem, it is the contention of Deborah Ellens that in the process of showing the way from impurity to purity, the female is marginalized and objectified.<sup>55</sup> She argues that since under this circumstance דָּם (menstruating) is applied to the woman, a state of ritual inequality is created. She maintains that the word is fraught with negative connotations in the OT (Deut 7:15; 28:60; Lam 5:17; Ps 41:4; Isa 1:5; 30:22). As such, the word tends to polarize the problem of genital discharge and designates the woman's normal genital discharge as necessarily unhealthy and therefore dangerous as compared to

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<sup>53</sup>Ibid., 62.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid.

<sup>55</sup>Deborah Ellens, "Menstrual Impurity and Innovation in Leviticus 15," in *Wholly Woman, Holy Blood: A Feminist Critique of Purity and Impurity*, ed. Kristin De Troyer, Judith A. Herbert, Judith Ann Johnson, and Anne-Marie Korte, Studies in Antiquity and Christianity (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2003), 31.

the man's.<sup>56</sup> The problem is compounded by the fact that a different word הזב ("he who has a discharge") is used of the male.

Ellens advances an argument based on the structure of Lev 15 which, she claims, pictures the woman as equal to the man for maintaining the laws of purity with respect to genital discharge. She argues cogently that in this situation, posed here in Lev 15, the woman's status as an agent of pollution is equal to the man's. For this reason, mediation caused by her discharge of impurity is equal to that of his own. Thus both male and female agents cause the same level of cultic jeopardy to the community.<sup>57</sup> She concludes her argument by asserting that, if seminal emission is a normal condition not associated with illness, there is no reason why, in accordance with the structure of Lev 15, menstruation should not be seen as healthy and normal.<sup>58</sup>

On the matter of the objectification of woman in Lev 15, there are two scholars who share contrary views. Carol Meyers points out that the "biblical record is a cultural document that emerges from, but does not necessarily mirror social reality."<sup>59</sup> She claims that the correlation between low status in a certain area of life and low status in other areas is negative because sometimes conditions removed from the total cultural context are taken up as signs of biblical patriarchy and of the inferior status of women generally

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<sup>56</sup>Ibid., 30.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., 32.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., 42.

<sup>59</sup>Carol Meyers, *Discovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 34.

in Israelite society.<sup>60</sup> She holds that it is misleading to assign gender value to such instances of apparent discrimination against women. Meyers would not subscribe to the concept of any reliable set of indicators defining the status of women. In the light of such ideas, she calls for a reassessment of menstruation and impurity (Lev 12-15).<sup>61</sup>

The other scholar who does not lend support to the pejorative view of womanhood in the context of Lev 15 is Richard Whitekettle. Whitekettle critiques Gordon Wenham's idea of the polarity of life and death as an organizing principle for understanding the problematic passage (Lev 15). He argues that to associate the emission of semen with an aura of death is unreality.<sup>62</sup> He also points out that it is wrong to attribute a sapping of the father's strength to the emission of seed, because the father's vitality is indicated by his ability to produce seed which contains the nascent life.<sup>63</sup> Again, he sees in the sexual act a movement within a unitary whole, a life-giving liquid moving from one part to another. Life fluid carrying seed moves from an environment of origin to an environment of growth within the constraints of what the Bible calls 'one flesh.' Therefore the idea of defilement cannot be sustained.<sup>64</sup> The schema of polarity of life and death breaks down because it cannot explain why the physiology of Lev 15:18 should result in impurity.

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<sup>60</sup>Ibid., 35.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., 37.

<sup>62</sup>Richard Whitekettle, "Leviticus 15:18 Reconsidered: Chiasm, Spatial Structure and the Body," *JOT* 49 (1991): 33.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid.



According to Whitekettle, Lev 15 addresses only one kind of bodily discharge and that is limited only to the sexual act. Furthermore, he asserts that only the setting of Lev 15:18 is akin to the context of Gen 2:20-25, which describes an ideal sexual relationship.<sup>65</sup> For these reasons, Lev 15 must be seen solely as a passage dealing with the ideal physiological functioning of the reproductive system.

Furthermore, Whitekettle claims the existence of a homologous link between body and tabernacle in Lev 15. For this reason, the so-called defilement of intercourse could be understood in light of some aspect of the correspondence between the body and the tabernacle.<sup>66</sup> In relation to the tabernacle, he takes up the idea of the center and periphery as they relate to the gradation of holiness. He argues that, if the parallel between body and tabernacle is maintained, the only way the impurity of Lev 15:18 could be explained is that “something compromises the integrity of the reproductive system in that setting.”<sup>67</sup> This problem he identifies with the ambivalent anatomical function of the male reproductive organ which functions in an ambiguous and confusing way, producing a life-giving substance and at the same time emitting waste. In this sense, it bears the two characteristic features of the tabernacle, namely the center and the periphery.<sup>68</sup> Thus the crux of the matter here is not about female inferiority at all.

Kathleen O’Grady, however, lends support to Ellens’ view of Lev 15. She

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<sup>65</sup>Ibid., 37.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., 40.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., 43.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., 44.

points out that even though the current view in feminist circles with respect to menstruation as presented in Lev 15 is not prohibitive but celebratory of women and their physiology, such a view, as noble as it may appear, rather sounds simplistic.<sup>69</sup> She also notes some have even associated menstrual blood with demonic powers, thus equating menstrual prohibitions with superstition.<sup>70</sup> From this position, she claims the universal demonic nature of menstrual blood has emerged in many cultures.

O'Grady refutes the argument advanced in certain circles that the menstrual prohibitions found in Lev 15 constitute punitive measures against the transgression of Eve. She holds that a careful examination of the pericope should rather lead to a comparison with the ritual observances for the נזיר ("dedicated") in Num 6:2 where the concept of separation is used as a means for maintaining the sanctified order.<sup>71</sup>

Mayer Gruber contributes to the discussion on feminine blood and the question of impurity from the viewpoint of Qumran and Halakic law. In the process of her argument, she calls attention to some passages in the Torah which some have viewed from a misogynic perspective (Exod 19:15; Lev 12:1-8). In the light of Lev 15, it may appear that these passages regard feminine blood as a pollutant. However, Gruber disagrees and cites Lev 15:16-18 to emphasize the point that the male's emission of semen in a coital setting defiles both himself and his partner.<sup>72</sup> Common to both Lev

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<sup>69</sup>Kathleen O'Grady, "The Semantics of Taboo: Menstrual Prohibitions in the Hebrew Bible," in *Wholly Woman, Holy Blood*, 22.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., 27, 28.

<sup>72</sup>Mayer I. Gruber, "Purity and Impurity in Halakic Sources and Qumran Law," in *Wholly Woman, Holy Blood*, 67.

15:16-18 and Deut 23:11, 12 are the points that a man's semen is impure and therefore any person defiled by such an impure substance ought to wash themselves in water as prescribed by the law. She also refers to Rashi's philogynic commentary on Exod 19:15 to strengthen her argument.

Gruber calls attention to the Qumranic exegesis of Exod 19:15 and how it agrees with Lev 15 and later Tannaitic halakah and biblical exegesis which see the male ejaculate as a source of pollutant for both sexual partners.<sup>73</sup> Thus, she asserts that the evidence shows that 11QT, Lev 15, Deut 23, and rabbinic halakah all share the common view that semen from a man has the capability to defile a woman through engagement in the sexual relation.<sup>74</sup> Gruber concludes that a careful study of the texts cited shows that neither did the rabbinic sages nor the Qumran lawyers see women qua women as sources of pollution to the temple or the community.<sup>75</sup>

### Blood and Leviticus 17

What the Old Testament has to say about the sanctity of blood reaches its culminating point in Lev 17. The entire chapter is calculated not only to spell out clearly the inviolability and sacrosanctity of blood, but also to provide both the rationale and *raison d'être* for the ritual use of blood.

Friedhelm Hartenstein has made some notable observations with respect to blood ritual in the OT. He calls attention to Lev 17:10, 11, which he designates as a

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<sup>73</sup>Ibid., 70.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., 72.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., 75.

theological hermeneutic key for the cult of atonement in blood ritual.<sup>76</sup> In this regard, he discusses Lev 16 and related texts such as Lev 8-10. He recognizes the uniqueness of the Day of Atonement ritual in that it is the cultic act by which the sin of both the individual and the community is removed. In the highly spiritual and symbolic nature of the blood ritual, he claims that visible communication with the invisible takes place. He also observes that the “inner” and the “outer” aspect of the cult plays a decisive role for the double active movement of the blood ritual event on the Day of Atonement.<sup>77</sup> On the one hand the “inner” deals with the Kapporeth; on the other hand, the “outer” involves the scapegoat. Moreover, in the ceremony of the Day of Atonement, the elements of the “physical” and the “ethical” can be seen. However, he notes, why, of all things, blood is the substance that atones for the sanctuary is not explained.

Again, following the logic of the “inner” and “outer,” Hartenstein asserts that blood manipulation in the most holy place involves the transference of sin, the continuation of which is effected at the door of the tabernacle (אהל מועד) (Lev 16:16). Furthermore, he proposes that from the syntactic perspective, one finds here the parallel application of both the piel verb טהר (“pure, to make pure”) and קדש (“holy, to make holy”). Hartenstein maintains this is a semantic equivalent for both כפר piel (“to atone”), and a נן privative.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup>Friedhelm Hartenstein, “Zur Symbolischen Bedeutung des Blutes im Alten Testament,” in *Deutungen des Todes Jesu im Neuen Testament*, ed. Jörg Frey and Jens Schröter, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 181 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 118, 135.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., 127.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., 129.

Hartenstein holds that the entire ceremonial event of the Day of Atonement could be described as atonement-making and not necessarily the blood ritual alone. For this reason, he points to other non-blood ritual stipulations or requirements in Lev 5. Blood as such is not portrayed exclusively as the center of cultic atonement.<sup>79</sup>

The multivalent quality of blood, in that it is a means of both sanctification and defilement, should not be overlooked. The destruction of utensils in which holy flesh for priests has been boiled is clear evidence of this quality (Lev 6:17-23). In this regard, he also makes reference to the cleansing of men and buildings that have been contaminated (Lev 14:7, 14-25, 51). Hartenstein cites the very special case of blood application in the sanctification of Aaron and his sons in Exod 29 and Lev 8-9 to corroborate his point.

The application of blood in the covenantal situation such as recorded in Exod 24:3-8, Hartenstein observes, is for the purpose of confirming a close relationship between both parties of the pact. He also shows that blood serves as a prophylactic in an apotropaic setting such as the incident involving the family of Moses' dangerous bloody encounter with Yahweh, and also the experience of Israel during the Passover ceremony (Exod 4:24-26; 12).

For Hartenstein, Lev 17:10-16 constitutes the basis for blood ritual in the OT. The unique blood prohibition provided here establishes a close connection between דם ("blood") and נפש ("soul" "life") (Lev 17:11, 14) and (Gen 9:4). The application of דם and נפש in a nominal sentence with the preposition כּ for each other confirms this

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<sup>79</sup>Ibid., 131.

relationship.<sup>80</sup> He argues that if it is understood that life is contained in the blood, this would mean that the one who sacrifices identifies himself with the animal victim and participates in its death. Likewise, the priest also identifies himself with the animal victim in the symbolic ritual involving the sprinkling or smearing of blood on designated appurtenances of the sanctuary. Thus by so doing, the priest performs a symbolic-realistic dedication of the offerer's נַפְשׁוֹ (“soul” “life”) to the sanctuary.<sup>81</sup>

Another aspect of blood ritual that Hartenstein identifies is the idea that sacrifice is a gift (*die Gabe*). This concept which is couched within the cultic framework is regarded as communication with God. Sacrifice is conceived of as (*Audienzgeschehens*) audience-seeking.<sup>82</sup> However Hartenstein asserts that the function of blood application consists in the cleansing of men and cultic opposition, and it stands as a symbol of cultic atonement. He muses on the idea that if blood is the seat of life and is identified with vitality, could it be that its pouring out at the base of the altar, and its application at the altar and the sanctuary could be seen as the return of life to its Giver?<sup>83</sup>

Leviticus 17 also provides instruction regulating the slaughter of animals.<sup>84</sup> The verb employed here is שָׁחַט, which has two meanings, namely “to slaughter” and “to

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<sup>80</sup>Ibid., 133.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid., 135.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid., 136.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid.

<sup>84</sup>Herbert C. Brichto, “On Slaughter and Sacrifice, Blood and Atonement,” *HUCA* 47 (1976): 21-22. Brichto comments on the passage in 1 Sam 14:32-35. In the light of this law forbidding the consumption of blood, he asks: “But what is the nature of the taboo? Where does it inhere? Not in the preparation of the meat after slaughter, but in the very slaughter itself. And also, not so much in the manner of the slaughter as its place, on the ground” (ibid.).

slaughter a sacrifice.”<sup>85</sup> The dual meaning of the verb, however, is a moot question and is beyond the scope of the present investigation. However, the crucial point is the role that blood plays within the divine injunction contained in the chapter. It should be noted that contravention of such a divine law makes the offender guilty of illicit bloodshed (דם שפך), and such an offense is punishable by being “cut off” (כרת).<sup>86</sup> Donald Wold shows that, in the כרת formula, the Israelite’s identity is linked to his name and to his children. He contends that variations of the כרת formula themselves suggest that נפש is paradigmatic with איש (“man”), thus identifying the individual offender worthy of כרת. Wold concludes that the כרת penalty of the Bible is at home in the kin-cult-land-afterlife complex of ideas. Therefore, in short, כרת as a conditional divine curse of extinction, in its original form, may occur simultaneously with or subsequent to the mere fact of death, whether the latter be prematurely wrought by God or man. Moreover, Wold holds that it is imposed for deliberate violations against the concept of priestly pollution, delineating trespasses against the fixed boundary between the sacred and the profane.<sup>87</sup>

The prohibition of blood consumption is again reiterated in this chapter (Lev 17). On no account should an Israelite or a stranger dwelling among the people of God

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<sup>85</sup>Baruch A. Levine, *Leviticus*, The JPS Torah Commentary, vol. 3 (New York: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 112. Levine argues, “The verb can mean ‘to slaughter,’ in the general sense. In that case, the verse would indicate that whenever an Israelite slaughtered an animal for whatever reason—including for food—that act of slaughter had to be carried out at the one, legitimate altar located at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting. The verb can also mean ‘to slaughter a sacrifice.’ As such, the sense would be that all sacrifices had to be made at the legitimate altar; but the general slaughter of animals for food, which is non-sacrificial, would be permitted anywhere” (ibid.).

<sup>86</sup>Donald J. Wold, “The Meaning of the Biblical Penalty of *Kareth*” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1974), 14.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid., 254.

eat blood. Two reasons are given for this prohibition: (1) because the creature's life is in the blood (נפש בשר בדם הוא) Lev 17:11<sup>88</sup> and (2) blood has been provided by God to effect atonement for [their] lives at the altar (על המזבח לכפר על נפשתיכם) Lev 17:11). Gordon Wenham proposes that "this is the most explicit statement about the role of blood in sacrifice. . . . Here it suffices to say that 'make atonement' literally means 'pay a ransom' or 'ransom,' and 11c could be paraphrased 'the blood ransoms at the price of life.'"<sup>89</sup>

Baruch Levine argues that since God has provided blood for expiatory purposes, the specific intent of the Hebrew formula (לכפר על נפשתיכם), that is, "for making expiation for your lives," literally means "to serve as כפר ('ransom') for your lives." Levine points out that this clause, which has been interpreted in various ways, is critical for a proper understanding of the entire Israelite sacrificial system. For instance, it has been understood to mean, "by means of the *life* that is in it, it meaning the blood effects expiation." Such an interpretation probably underlies the given translation, which takes the prepositional כ in the word בנפש to be כ *instrumentii*, "the כ of means." Hence expiation is effected by *means* of blood. An alternative rendering takes a prepositional כ as כ *pretii*, "the *bet* of price" (at the cost of blood). Levine indicates that there is a subtle but significant difference between the two functions. A כ *pretii* expression occurs in legal statements, where its meaning is clear, such as in Exod 21:23, that is, (נפש תחה נפש) "a life

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<sup>88</sup>Gordon J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, The New International Commentary of the Old Testament, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977), 245. Wenham notes that "by refraining from eating flesh with blood in it, man is honoring life. To eat blood is to despise life. This idea emerges most clearly in Gen 9:4ff. where the sanctity of human life is associated with not eating blood. Thus one purpose of this law is the inculcation of respect for all life" (ibid.).

<sup>89</sup>Ibid.



in place of a life.” But in Deut 19:21, the same provision is restated as נפש בנפש, that is, “a life in exchange for a life.” It should be noted, however, that blood is considered efficacious because it represents life, not because it has special properties. It is a fact that creatures cannot live without blood, and killing is expressed as shedding blood. Therefore, it is on this basis that the blood of the sacrifice offered on the altar is the *life* of the sacrifice and can stand in place of human life. Hence, God accepts it in lieu of human life and grants expiation or refrain from wrath.<sup>90</sup>

Angel Rodriguez also addresses the issue from a syntactical perspective, pointing out that while not ignoring a locative translation of the expression דם in Lev 17:11a, a *beth essentiae* translation is preferable, since there is a clear biblical support for this in Deut 12:23, where it is also stated, “for the blood is the life.”<sup>91</sup> It seems to me that Rodriguez’s point expressed here points to blood as the essence of life. This is why he makes a connection between atonement blood and the blood of the Passover ceremony. Even though the distinction between the two is rather difficult to explain, the ideas are clear enough. However, it is worthwhile to bear in mind that blood per se is considered efficacious, not because of any particular intrinsic quality, but because God says so. Moreover, Theodoor Vriezen points to the consecration of blood before expiation rites to

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<sup>90</sup>Levine, *Leviticus*, 115-16.

<sup>91</sup>Angel M. Rodriguez, “Substitution in the Hebrew Cultus and in Cultic-Related Texts” (Ph.D. dissertation, Andrews University, 1979), 236. Rodriguez explains, “This identification of blood and life is to be understood as indicating that for the Hebrew mind דם (‘blood’) was ‘the tangible manifestation’ of the נפש (‘life’). In the passage mentioned above, including the one under discussion, the identification blood=life is given as a rationale for the prohibition against consuming blood. Man can eat flesh, but the blood, since it is life, belongs to Yahweh. This understanding of blood is essentially unique in the ancient Near East. While in Israel blood belongs to Yahweh, the heavenly God, in the Near Eastern religions it belongs to the chthonic powers” (ibid.).

affirm that only God can expiate sins. Furthermore by consecrating blood, the danger of a magical view of blood is not only suppressed, but any *ex opere operato* ideas of the substance are clearly eliminated.<sup>92</sup>

In spite of the shades and nuances of meaning of the Hebrew phrase *זָרַח*, I would like to lend support to Rodriguez's interpretation of a *beth essentiae*. However, at the same time, I submit that, in view of the ambivalence of blood, there is something to be said for a *beth instrumentii* and *beth pretii* as well for such interpretations have meaningful implications for understanding the vicarious death of Jesus in the New Testament, and particularly in Hebrews.<sup>93</sup>

The comprehensive coverage of the divine injunction lies in the fact that it deals with blood affecting wildlife as well. The law demands that the blood of creatures that are hunted for game must be poured on the ground and covered with dust before they are considered fit for human consumption.<sup>94</sup> Moreover, any person who eats any creature that dies a natural death is rendered ritually unclean by such an act.<sup>95</sup>

Wenham points out that while Deuteronomy recommends that animals found dead be disposed of differently, and that they should not be eaten by native Israelites,

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<sup>92</sup>Theodoor C. Vriezen, "The Term *Hizza*: Lustration and Consecration," in *Oudtestamentische Studiën*, ed. P. A. H. de Boer (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1950), 7:234.

<sup>93</sup>I would argue that the OT provides the theological grounds for blood theology later expressed by the NT writers. The idea of price and worth expressed by the *beth pretii* is reflected in the theologies of Luke, Acts 20:21; Paul, 1 Cor 6:19, 20; Peter, 1 Pet 1:18-20; and Heb 9:14. The *beth instrumentii* idea means is reflected in Col 1:20; Rev 12:11; 19:2 and Heb 9:12. This is a significant factor.

<sup>94</sup>Wenham, 246. Wenham points out that similar regulations about the hunting and eating of game are found in Deut 12:15-16, 22-25.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid.

such meat may be consumed by resident aliens or (visiting) foreigners. With regard to this injunction, Wenham sees no conflict of principle between the provisions of Deuteronomy and Leviticus. He argues that it is clear Deuteronomy fails to mention the consequences of eating this sort of meat. However, the fact that it instructs full-born Israelites to avoid eating it suggests it concurred with Leviticus that such meat does cause uncleanness. He contends that whereas Leviticus allows both Israelite and sojourner to become unclean and prescribes ritual ablution afterward, Deuteronomy simplifies the rule by forbidding such meat entirely to Israelites, but allowing sojourners to eat it at will. Wenham concludes that this seems to be a case of upholding a principle while varying its detailed application.<sup>96</sup>

P. M. Venter discusses the close connection between דם (“blood”) and נפש (“soul,” “life”) (Lev 17:10, 11; Deut 12:23) and raises some points worthy of notice. He reiterates the fact that Lev 17:10, 11 constitutes the key passage on blood ritual of the chapter. According to Venter this is the only passage that comes close to providing a rationale for blood as an agent that effects atonement.<sup>97</sup> In this passage, not only is Israel totally forbidden to consume blood for any reason whatsoever, but sacrificial blood on the altar does not have an apotropaic function to protect God from any malignancy of impurity by which man infects the sanctuary. Thus, in Israel, blood has a unique function in terms of sacrifice.

The use of blood is permitted as an element in atonement because it is the carrier

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<sup>96</sup>Ibid.

<sup>97</sup>P. M. Venter, “Atonement through the Blood in Leviticus,” *Verbum et Ecclesia* 26 (2005): 287.

and symbol of life. It is true that blood and life are associated with each other (Deut 12:23), but God is the source of all life. God permits the use of blood because He has the power to control and give life. Since blood is close to Him, blood manipulation in the sacrificial context appeals to God's sole authority on life. Offering sacrificial blood is the recognition that life is solemnly presented to the Life-Giver.<sup>98</sup>

Venter points out that sacrificial blood represents substitutionary death, but in the ritual, blood reverses the process of death. The offerer who presents blood at the altar identifies himself with the sacrificial victim, and presents his own life, so to speak, before the Deity. However, the bloodshed of the victim releases the offerer's life, which is surrendered and dedicated to God. Blood serves as a ransom for the life owed by the offerer, and restores the imbalance brought by transgression.<sup>99</sup>

The process of atonement is a divine arrangement established by God, whereby, through the shedding of blood, God provides a visible way for His people to find forgiveness for their sins. In terms of sacrifice, blood not only signifies life as a gift from God, but the process of sacrifice itself is also a gift granted by God as a means of salvation. The whole process of offering sacrificial blood is an indication of God's generosity whereby He creates an opportunity for man to give back to God what He has already given him.<sup>100</sup> This process rules out any magical conception of sacrificial blood. Thus, blood, per se, has no intrinsic ultimate value. It is God Himself who has endowed

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<sup>98</sup>Ibid., 288.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid., 288-89.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid., 289.

blood with expiatory power. Blood does not remove sin automatically, for God requires ritual participation of the guilty person. Because life is neither inherent in the blood itself nor in the performance of the ritual, life is granted by God within the framework of ritual prescription. The shedding of blood in this context establishes a judicial basis for God to grant forgiveness to the offerer.<sup>101</sup>

Finally, Venter argues that it is God who accommodates blood as a reconciliatory agent for man's redemption. The offering of blood symbolizes the offerer's acceptance of his sinful condition and his willingness to act on God's terms. The whole system of sacrifice points to God as the Author of life and the Giver of life who is willing to forgive His people as they follow His ritual prescriptions. "God is never the direct object of the verb 'atone' as though the sacrificial offering must somehow affect Him."<sup>102</sup>

A significant point at this juncture is that the affinity between  $\text{נָפַשׁ}$  and  $\text{זָבַח}$  in the Hebrew Scriptures cannot be overlooked. As Venter has acknowledged in his presentation, so also has William Gilders affirmed it in his work. According to Gilders, all ritual symbols in the Hebrew Bible possess three characteristics, namely, condensation of meaning, multivocality, and ambiguity.<sup>103</sup> Condensation of meaning refers to how individual symbols represent and unify a rich diversity of meanings. Multivocality points to the variety of different meanings attached to the same symbol, while ambiguity stresses

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<sup>101</sup>Ibid.

<sup>102</sup>Ibid., 290.

<sup>103</sup>William K. Gilders, *Blood Ritual in the Hebrew Bible: Meaning and Power* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 4.

that the symbol has no single precise meaning.<sup>104</sup> Furthermore, even though Guilders asserts that symbols are not arcane ways of expressing simple ideas, they derive their strength from their complexity and uncertainty of meaning.<sup>105</sup> Thus one should consider that blood has an multivalent character: It can symbolize life and death or both.

### **אֵימָה and Various Kinds of OT Sacrifices**

Since אֵימָה plays an important and unique role in the cultus of the Old Testament, a proper understanding of the meaning of “cult” would help one to appreciate the uniqueness of the place of blood within the Old Testament cultus.

Speaking about the meaning of “cult” in connection with the Old Testament, Martin Buss maintains that it provides a way in which one can recognize the nature of Israelite reality as a structure of existence. Thus he sees cult as consisting of a pattern of facts which have a reasonable connection with each other in the mind and attitude of the person who stands within it.<sup>106</sup> Such a study of the Old Testament cultus would afford an insight into the meaning of human existence, and it should never be viewed merely as an endless repetition of blood-spilling sacrifices.

The sacrificial system constitutes the heartbeat of the Old Testament cult; obviously the ritual manipulation of blood is at the core of this system. As a phenomenon, sacrifice has arrested the attention of many scholars. Alberto Green has

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<sup>104</sup>Ibid.

<sup>105</sup>Ibid.

<sup>106</sup>Martin J. Buss, “The Meaning of ‘Cult’ and the Interpretation of the Old Testament,” *JBR* 3, no. 4 (October 1964): 317.

observed that “since the beginning of the [twentieth] century scholars representing seven major schools of thought have grappled with the theory of sacrifice, endeavoring to trace its basic origin and meaning.”<sup>107</sup> According to Philip Jenson, sacrifice deals with the ideas and regard for purity and impurity which are in part a concern for maintaining boundaries which must not be transgressed. Otherwise, there will be a descent into chaos, disaster, and death.<sup>108</sup> Sacrifice has a crucial role in maintaining spiritual order and restoring the equilibrium when that order is disturbed, because it is generally recognized that both sin and impurity are responsible for creating disorder, a broad category which can apply to the personal and the impersonal, the unavoidable and the deliberate, the individual and the corporate.<sup>109</sup> Hence, sacrifice, as an act, is calculated and prescribed to do justice to a range of faults which pose a threat to the spiritual and social equilibrium of society.

Raymond Abba also reflects on the meaning of sacrifice, but he does so with specific reference to the Old Testament.<sup>110</sup> He notes that “although as an idea and institution sacrifice is deeply rooted in Old Testament thought, nowhere is its rationale

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<sup>107</sup>Alberto R. W. Green, *The Role of Human Sacrifice in the Ancient Near East*, American Schools of Oriental Research Dissertation Series, no. 1 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1975), 3-17. The author discusses the views of E. B. Taylor, W. Robertson Smith, Sir James G. Frazer, Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss, Edward Westermarck, M. Alfred Loisy, Sigmund Freud, and R. Money-Kyrle. These are the representatives of the seven schools of thought on the subject. See also Gerhard F. Hasel, “Studies in Biblical Atonement I—Continual Sacrifice, Defilement/Cleansing, and Sanctuary,” in *The Sanctuary and the Atonement*, ed. Arnold V. Wallenkampf and W. Richard Leshar (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1989), 83-86. Here, Hasel discusses the ideas concerning the origin and meaning of sacrifice.

<sup>108</sup>Philip P. Jenson, “The Levitical Sacrificial System,” in *Sacrifice in the Bible*, 32.

<sup>109</sup>Ibid.

<sup>110</sup>Abba, 123-38. See also George B. Gray, *Sacrifice in the Old Testament: Its Theory and Practice* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925), 1-178.

explained. The institution is taken for granted as a divine ordinance, and the only principle laid down is that ‘the blood is the life.’”<sup>111</sup>

Theodore Gaster has classified Old Testament sacrifices in accordance with their respective motivations, namely, gifts and tributes; media of alimentation; media of communion; and media of expiation.<sup>112</sup> However, it is significant to note that “the most common word translated as sacrifice in the English Bible, זֶבַח, simply means ‘slaughter’ and as a matter of etymology, the word for altar (מִזְבֵּחַ, literally the place of slaughter) is derived from it.”<sup>113</sup> Hence the concept of bloodshed resulting from slaughter is the warp and woof of Old Testament sacrifice.

In spite of the diversity of the classes of sacrifice in the Old Testament, there are two broad categories of sacrifice, namely ‘blood’ and ‘bloodless’. The word זֶבַח (“slaughter”) would stand for all sacrifices involving blood, whereas bloodless sacrifices would be designated as מִנְחָה (“offering,” “gift”). Sydney Gayford claims that the word employed for the latter designation “was originally applied to all kinds of offerings, but afterwards confined to the ‘meal offering’ as distinct from the ‘slaughter offering.’”<sup>114</sup> The following immediate discussion deals with the main kinds of bloody sacrifices.

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<sup>111</sup>Ibid., 123.

<sup>112</sup>Theodore H. Gaster, “Sacrifices and Offerings,” *IDB* (1962), 4:147.

<sup>113</sup>Arthur S. Herbert, *Worship in Ancient Israel*, Ecumenical Studies in Worship, no. 5 (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1959), 16.

<sup>114</sup>Gayford, 23. See also Herbert, 19.



## The Holocaust Offering

The burnt offering or the holocaust (עולה)<sup>115</sup> “is the sacrifice completely offered to Jahweh, that is, the offerer or the priest did not participate in the cultic act by sharing the meal with Jahweh (hence it is sometimes called the ‘whole offering’ כליל).”<sup>116</sup> The burnt offering is usually offered on some occasions to express joy or to solicit God’s help in a time of trouble (1 Sam 6:14, or Judg 11:30; 21:4, 1 Sam 13:9; Mic 6:6). However, it is the only sacrifice that is general rather than special in its bearing on the sacrificer’s relation with God.<sup>117</sup> In the first chapter of Leviticus, where instruction pertaining to this sacrifice is provided, among other things, the priest shall sprinkle the victim’s blood on and around the altar (Lev 1:5, 11, 15).

## The Peace Offering

The peace offering (זבה שלמים)<sup>118</sup> is another kind of sacrifice that involves the sprinkling of blood. According to Jacob Milgrom, “the שלמים falls into three categories of motivation: נדבה ‘freewill’; נדר ‘vow’; and תודה ‘thanksgiving’ . . . The common

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<sup>115</sup>See Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, The Anchor Bible, vol. 3 (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 172. Milgrom explains, “‘עלה’ literally means ‘that which ascends,’ which implies that the offering is entirely turned to smoke (Jos., Ant. 3.225, Ibn Ezra). Except for the skin that is given to the officiating priest as his emolument . . . the animal is completely incinerated on the altar” (ibid.).

<sup>116</sup>Gerhard Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 2 vols., trans. D. M. G. Stalker (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), 1:255. Von Rad notes, “We meet with it as early as the law of the altar in Ex. xx.24-6, which is certainly very old; and later it came to have a special importance as the sacrifice of the nation offered regularly in the temple (1 Kings ix. 25; 11 Kings xvi.15 cf. also 1 Kings iii.4,15). It was also offered by private persons but with the official rotation--though this was probably only the case on special occasions” (ibid.).

<sup>117</sup>Gayford, 42.

<sup>118</sup>Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 218.

denominator of these motivations is rejoicing.”<sup>119</sup> It is not a sacrifice to propitiate an angry God. The peace it refers to is “a peace already existing when the offering is made; it is because the offerer is at peace with God that he dares to invite Him to eat and drink with him.”<sup>120</sup>

The offerer lays his hand upon the head of the victim and after he has slain the animal, the presiding priest is instructed to sprinkle the blood upon and around the altar (Lev 3:2). Unlike the burnt offering, the whole animal is not offered to God but the fat parts only. The flesh is consumed by the worshipers. This sacrificial act is always an occasion for rejoicing, and the worshiper invites his friends to eat and drink with Jahweh who is the invisible Guest of honor.<sup>121</sup>

#### The Sin/Purification Offering

Leviticus 4 deals with the sin/purification offering (תאטת), the sacrifice at whose core is the manipulation of blood. The reason for this offering is the cleansing of the offerer from all inadvertent sins. Consequently, sacrifice for “inadvertences are graded according to the socio-economic position of the offender.”<sup>122</sup>

Detailed regulations are spelled out for the procedure of the sacrifices dealing with the erring priest, the entire congregation, the ruler, as well as the individual or the common man. The notable difference between this offering and the burnt offering lies in

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<sup>119</sup>Ibid.

<sup>120</sup>Ibid., 35-36.

<sup>121</sup>Von Rad, 1:257.

<sup>122</sup>Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 264-65.

the details of the procedure with the blood—it is not only poured round about the altar, but is also smeared on its horns as well (Lev 4:25, 30).<sup>123</sup> Furthermore, Milgrom calls attention to two distinctive procedures involving the sin/purification offering.<sup>124</sup>

The manipulation of blood in these sin/purification offerings deserves attention. In the sacrifice involving the sin of a priest, the officiating priest brings the blood of a bullock into the outer sanctuary and sprinkles the same seven times before the veil. Roy Gane offers a very stimulating discussion on the sprinkling of blood seven times in the outer sanctuary by the high priest. He concludes that the seven-fold sprinkling of blood “before the veil” should take place on the east of the altar of incense. He maintains this point for two reasons. First, this high-priestly blood rite corresponds to the sevenfold sprinkling done in the inner sanctum as well as that which is done for the Tent of Meeting (לאהל מועד). Second, the high priest’s act of blood aspersion contributes to purging (כפר) that area.<sup>125</sup> Moreover, he smears the horns of the altar of incense with blood. Finally, he pours all the blood at the base of the altar of burnt sacrifice. Gane notes that the seven times sprinkling of blood before the Paroketh veil coupled with the smearing of blood on the horns of the altar of incense “serves as a more powerful functional equivalent of

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<sup>123</sup>Herman Th. Obbink, “The Horns of the Altar in the Semitic World, Especially in Jahwism,” *JBL* 54 (1937): 44. Obbink points out that “among the Hebrews the right of asylum was associated with altars. The refugee found shelter by catching hold of the horns of the altar (1 Kgs 1:51, 2:28) as a sign that he took refuge in God” (ibid.).

<sup>124</sup>Jacob Milgrom, “Two Kinds of *HATTAT*,” *VT* 26 (1976): 333. Milgrom asserts, “Two discrete procedures are prescribed for the חטאת. They differ in that in one the blood is daubed on the outer, sacrificial altar and its meat becomes the perquisite of the officiating priest (Lev 4:30; 6:19), and in the other the blood is daubed on the inner, incense altar and sprinkled before the *paroket*-veil, but the animal, except for its suet, is burned on the ash heap outside the camp (Lev 4:6, 7, 11, 12). This distinction is to be maintained rigidly” (ibid.).

<sup>125</sup>Roy E. Gane, *Cult and Character: Purification Offerings, Day of Atonement, and Theodicy* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 74, 75.

putting blood on the horns of the outer altar.”<sup>126</sup>

Gane explains further that daubing the horns of the altar with blood “elevates the importance of expiatory blood in a vertical direction.” This is the same direction the smoke of sacrificial offering goes toward God. Apart from the Day of Atonement ceremony, the blood aspersion rites of the outer sanctum focus on blood as a unique agent of atonement.<sup>127</sup> The centrality of blood and its role in these rites cannot be over-emphasized. In fact, Gane asserts that its expanded and extended use in the ceremony at the outer sanctum correlates with greater expiatory power necessary to obliterate the sin of a community-wide magnitude.<sup>128</sup> In actuality, blood through the ritual is extended to God in two directions, namely, vertical and horizontal. Vertically, it is projected toward His heavenly dwelling, and horizontally, it is pointed toward His Presence enthroned above the ark in the inner sanctum.<sup>129</sup>

When the entire congregation commits an inadvertent sin, the elders shall lay their hands on the head of a bullock that is slain for the purpose of sacrifice. Again, the blood of the victim is brought into the outer sanctum by the officiating priest where he sprinkles it seven times before the veil. The horns of the altar of incense are smeared with blood, and all the rest of the blood is poured at the base of the altar of burnt offering.

When a ruler sins unknowingly, he offers a male kid whose blood is smeared on

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<sup>126</sup>Ibid., 87, 88.

<sup>127</sup>Ibid., 88.

<sup>128</sup>Ibid., 89.

<sup>129</sup>Roy E. Gane, *Altar Call* (Berrien Springs, MI: Diadem, 1999), 93.

the horns of the altar of burnt offering, and all the remaining is poured at the base of the same. In the case of inadvertent sin concerning a common man, the prescribed victim's (a female kid or lamb) blood is smeared on the horns of the altar of burnt offering, while the remaining portion is poured at the base of the same.

### The Trespass Offering

Another blood offering has to do with the law regarding trespass or guilt (אשם,<sup>130</sup> Lev 5), the purpose of which is expiation.<sup>131</sup> The prescribed victims for such sacrifices are a female kid, or lamb, or turtle-doves/pigeons. Since birds are comparatively smaller creatures, the instruction to the priest is to wring the head of the bird and sprinkle its blood at the side of the altar and the rest at the bottom of the same. For this kind of sacrifice, since the law prescribes two birds, the second bird is burnt wholly at the altar.

### The Day of Atonement

The expiatory use of blood in the Old Testament reaches its apogee<sup>132</sup> in the

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<sup>130</sup>Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 339. Milgrom indicates that “the cultic usages of the root 'šm are as follows: the noun 'āšām is the restitution for desecration by either composition or sacrifice and should be rendered ‘reparation’ and ‘reparation offering,’ respectively. The verb 'āšām is a stative. When it is followed by the preposition l and a personal object it means ‘to incur liability to’ someone for reparation, without an object, it refers to the inner experience of this liability, meaning ‘to feel guilt’” (ibid.).

<sup>131</sup>Von Rad, 1:259.

<sup>132</sup>George Gray, 321. See also Gerhard F. Hasel, “Studies in Biblical Atonement II—The Day of Atonement,” in *The Sanctuary and the Atonement*, ed. Arnold V. Wallenkampf and W. Richard Leshar (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1989), 107. Hasel observes that “the Day of Atonement (*yôm hakkipurim*) is the grand climax of the ritual year of ancient Israel, which involves the cleansing/purification of the sanctuary/temple. The distinctive Hebrew name *yôm hakkipurim* is usually translated as ‘Day of Atonement.’ Some scholars have rendered it as ‘the Day of the Purifications,’ or it has been designated as the annual ‘day of purgation’. It recently and correctly has been emphasized that the Day of Atonement had as its ‘objective the purification of the sanctuary, and not the purification of the people’” (ibid.).

ritual performed in the inner sanctum by the high priest on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16). According to Gane, the prescriptions of this ritual ceremony are strategically placed at the heart of the central book of the Pentateuch.<sup>133</sup> Furthermore, the introduction to the book constitutes a literary focus on the blood manipulations in the inner sanctum rather than on the bloodless ritual of the scapegoat.<sup>134</sup> Thus, the very literary arrangement of the book is designed to rivet attention on blood. This day is also known as the “day of purification,” because the blood sacrifices offered are of one type designated “purification offering” (חטאת הפרים) (Exod 30:10, Num 29:11).<sup>135</sup> The three חטאת animals chosen for the sacrifices on this day (the tenth day of the seventh month), namely, the bull and the two goats, represent the priesthood and the people respectively (Lev 16:6, 11; 5, 15).<sup>136</sup> Indeed, the ritual ceremonies performed on this day involve what has been called the “two extreme poles of the spatial dimensions of the Holiness Spectrum,” namely, the inner sanctum (purification offerings) and the wilderness with regard to Azazel’s goat.<sup>137</sup> Again, Gane points out that of the five unique rituals carried out on the Day of Atonement, only the two purification offerings and Azazel’s goat have qualitative meaning.<sup>138</sup>

Attention must be drawn to the point that the purification ritual complex

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<sup>133</sup>Gane, *Cult and Character*, 217.

<sup>134</sup>Ibid.

<sup>135</sup>Jacob Milgrom, “Day of Atonement,” *Encyclopedia Judaica* (1971), 5:1384.

<sup>136</sup>Ibid.

<sup>137</sup>Gane, *Cult and Character*, 219.

<sup>138</sup>Ibid.

involving both priesthood and laity should be seen as a unit. Gane argues that even though these two bloody sacrifices are mentioned separately, they are structurally bound together by interweaving and merging.<sup>139</sup> Thus, he demonstrates common points of similarity with respect to blood manipulation in the blood aspersion regarding both the inner and outer sancta. He refers to the one time application to the כפרת and the seven times sprinkling of blood before it and compares that to the daubing of blood on the horns of the altar of incense and the sevenfold sprinkling of blood before the same. It is also noteworthy that blood is applied to both appurtenances once a year.<sup>140</sup>

Amid the intricate discussion with respect to blood manipulation on the Day of Atonement, Gane does not lose sight of the purpose of these bloody rites. He provides ample evidence from Scripture (Lev 16:11a, 16, 17b, 18a, 19b, 20a, 30, 32-34) to show that the goal of the bloody rites as specified is to purge (piel of כפר with על or direct object; compare piel of טהר in v. 19) the three parts of the sanctuary, namely the inner, outer, and the outer altar from (מן) the impurities and moral faults of the Israelites on behalf of (על/בעד) both priest and laity. They are thereby purified (טהר) and the outer altar is consecrated (piel of קדש).<sup>141</sup> Gane makes the important observation that the word סלה (“to forgive”) does not appear even once in any of the biblical Day of Atonement prescriptions (Lev 16; 23:26-32; Num 29:7-11). This is because the profundity of the

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<sup>139</sup>Ibid., 222.

<sup>140</sup>Ibid., 226.

<sup>141</sup>Ibid., 230.

purity accomplished for the people on this day is (כפר) beyond forgiveness.<sup>142</sup> It is worthwhile to note that through blood application on the Day of Atonement, the principle of reversal comes into play in that sins transferred from offenders into the sanctuary toward the ark during the year are purged out.<sup>143</sup>

The ritual festivities of the Day of Atonement championed by the high priest are meant to supercede and bring to a climax the entire process of purification which is done on a piece-meal basis throughout the year by means of the daily sacrifices offered continually by the ordinary priests. In other words, one has to reckon with a two-stage process of a *daily* and a *yearly* ritual arrangement of purification in ancient Israel. Hartenstein also describes and confirms the whole process as eliminatory.<sup>144</sup>

It is particularly interesting to note the focus on the function of blood in the cultic ritual of Leviticus. One is enabled to see the rationale for purgation by blood as stated by divine decree in this book (Lev 17:11), whereby it is directed that the application of blood to duly designated appurtenances of the sanctuary effects cleansing from the miasmata of sin. Milgrom argues that “for both Israel and neighbors impurity was a physical substance, an aerial miasma that possessed magnetic attraction for the realm of the sacred.”<sup>145</sup> Therefore, from his perspective, this was how the sanctuary was defiled. Milgrom’s view, however, is refuted by his student Roy Gane who asserts that

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<sup>142</sup>Ibid., 234.

<sup>143</sup>Ibid., 282.

<sup>144</sup>Hartenstein, “Zur symbolischen,” 130. He notes, “Die ganze Ritalsequenz ist eliminatorisch, sie dient der Beseitigung der quasi substanzhaft gedachten Verschuldungen Israels” (ibid.).

<sup>145</sup>Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 257.



“on the Day of Purgations, the ‘purification offering of purgations’ purges the sanctuary of the accumulated ‘pollution and transgressions of the Israelites, including all of their sins,’ and the scapegoat ritual purges the community of ‘all the iniquities and transgressions of the Israelites, including all of their sins.’”<sup>146</sup> Whereas Milgrom’s idea of defilement is somewhat impersonal, Gane’s clearly indicates the source of pollution as proceeding from the people.

One other striking thing to note from Milgrom’s perspective is that since the sanctuary was defiled through aerial miasmata, atonement of the same involved only a single stage. Gane, on the other hand, shows that atonement involves a two-stage act. He argues that a careful comparison of Lev 4 and 16 shows that there was a reversal in the order of blood applications performed in the holy place. In Lev 4, blood ritual indicated that sin moved toward the ark. In other words, sin moved into the sanctuary. However, in Lev 16, on the Day of Atonement, the blood ritual showed sin moving away from the ark. Thus, sin was now moving away from the sanctuary.<sup>147</sup> Gane confirms this biblical position by citing Lev 4:6-7 and 4:17-18 involving blood aspersion by the high priest with respect to sins by the high priest or the community. The two places where blood is applied in the two instances cited, indicating sin moving toward the ark, are the horns of the altar of incense and the front of the *paroketh* veil.

By contrast, in Lev 16 on the Day of Atonement, the sanctuary was cleansed from the inside out. In this process, blood was applied to locations that moved

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<sup>146</sup>Gane, “Ritual Dynamic Structure,” 173. See also idem, *Altar Call*, 206.

<sup>147</sup>Gane, *Altar Call*, 204-05.

progressively away from the ark (Lev 16:14-16; 18-19). The places where blood was sprinkled in this instance were the following: (1) Sprinkling once on the lid of the ark, (2) Sprinkling seven times in front of the ark's lid, (3) Daubing on the horns of the incense altar, (4) Sprinkling seven times in front of the veil, (5) Daubing on the horns of the outer altar, and (6) Sprinkling seven times on the outer altar.<sup>148</sup>

Sin accumulates daily at the sanctuary as a result of the ritual activity that goes on continually (תמיד) at the place.<sup>149</sup> This is so because ritual blood of victims shed daily in connection with the confession of individual sins becomes the means of transference of sin to the sanctuary. Through the principle of substitutional interchange, we have a clear case of paradox in which sacrificial blood is “viewed as having simultaneously both a defiling/cleansing function.”<sup>150</sup> Therefore, it becomes necessary to rid the sanctuary of the sin that has accumulated there throughout the year.

Such an action is necessitated by a cardinal teaching of Leviticus, set forth in the “Holiness Code” (Lev 11:44, 45). Since God is holy, He cannot live side by side with sin, neither will He permit His chosen people to live in and entertain sin. Moreover, He is the God who wants to commune with His people and it is His desire to dwell among

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<sup>148</sup>Ibid., 205-06.

<sup>149</sup>Angel M. Rodriguez, “Transfer of Sin in Leviticus,” in *The Seventy Weeks, Leviticus, and the Nature of Prophecy*, ed. F. B. Holbrook, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series 3 (Washington, DC: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1986), 179-80. See also idem, “Sacrificial Substitution and O. T. Sacrifices,” in *The Sanctuary and the Atonement*, ed. Arnold V. Wallenkampf and W. Richard Leshar (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1989), 138; Alberto R. Treiyer, “The Day of Atonement as Related to the Contamination and Purification of the Sanctuary,” in *The Seventy Weeks, Leviticus, and the Nature of Prophecy*, 254. Here Treiyer shows that sacrificial blood in this context has simultaneously both a defiling/cleansing function. This paradox is known as the principle of substitutional interchange.

<sup>150</sup>Rodriguez, “Transfer of Sin in Leviticus,” 179-80.

them in His sanctuary (Exod 25:8). Such a situation calls for purity both on the part of the individual and the body corporate.

The whole cultic system having to do with the removal of sin from God's people and from the sanctuary is based on the principle of the gradation of holiness.<sup>151</sup> Thus, the manipulation of blood in the ritual of the day of atonement is in harmony with this principle.

The cultic ritual brings to view another concept involving sacrifice in the Old Testament. This is encapsulated in the word קרב ("draw near"). "The office and work of the Priests was 'to draw near' unto the Lord to offer the Sacrifices (Lev. 9:7, 21:17; Num 16:40)."<sup>152</sup> On a daily basis, priests continually (תמיד) "draw near" as they offer blood on behalf of sins in the sanctuary. However, once a year, on the appointed day, the high priest is privileged "to enter into the more immediate presence of God in the innermost shrine, the Holy of Holies."<sup>153</sup> The most significant point in this ritual process is that the high priest brings sacrificial blood into the very presence of God. By virtue of this ritual

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<sup>151</sup>Menachem Haran, "The Priestly Image of the Tabernacle," *HUCA* 36 (1965): 216-19. Haran observes that "the articles of the tabernacle furniture and their immediate vicinity are regarded in P as taboo to all non-priests. Thus the tabernacle and most of the enclosure become a shut-off domain, inaccessible to all the common people. At the same time, there is a gradation in the taboo of the ritual circles. It begins with the enclosure and becomes progressively stricter the more one proceeds inside the tabernacle, as far as the area which is taboo even for the priests themselves. . . . This prohibition suffices for creating a drastic and clear-cut cleavage between the realm of cult and the rest of the world, acting as a barrier round a most extreme degree of holiness. For all the pieces of furniture are endowed with a contagious holiness, that is transmittable from one object to another by touch" (ibid.).

<sup>152</sup>Gayford, 86-87. Gayford points out that the priests ministered daily "at the Altar of Burnt Offering in the outer Court, and also at the Altar of Incense in the Holy Place" (ibid.).

<sup>153</sup>Ibid.

act, blood manipulation reaches its highest point in the entire cultic system.<sup>154</sup> On this day, blood is sprinkled<sup>155</sup> (נזה) on the Mercy Seat<sup>156</sup> itself by the high priest on behalf of himself and the entire nation.

It is a biblical principle that blood atones for and cleanses from sin (Lev 7:11). For this reason, it is important to understand the concept of כפר in connection with the role of blood in the cultus of the Old Testament. According to Mary Douglas, Hebrew usage suggests two meanings for the verb כפר, which is translated “to atone” or “to expiate.” The sense suggested here means “to cover” with something or “to put on a covering.” In another sense it means “to wipe off,” “rub,” “brush,” or “cleanse.” It is a fact that the Hebrew verb כפר expressed in the piel stem as כפר, “to expiate,” has several cognates in other Semitic languages, most notably in Akkadian.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>154</sup>Ibid. Commenting on the ritual, Gayford says, “Here was the ‘Mercy Seat,’ the ‘footstool of the throne of God’; above it rested the ‘Glory’ of the Lord adored by the worshipping Cherubim on either side. This was the most God-filled, most sacred spot on earth: to it even the high priest might not ‘draw near’ at all times, but only once a year, and then for a special purpose—to make atonement for all the sins of the nation, to cleanse and hallow both them (especially their priest-hood) and their sanctuary, that they might ‘draw near’ on other occasions as a ‘sanctified’ people” (ibid.).

<sup>155</sup>See ibid., 89-91. Gayford provides an interesting cultic significance of the word *hizzah*, the causative form of the verb ‘to leap’ or ‘to jump’ and meaning therefore ‘to cause to jump.’ See also Hasel, “Studies in Biblical Atonement I,” 96.

<sup>156</sup>Hasel, 91. Gayford says, “The Mercy Seat was the spiritual center of the Tabernacle, which was called the ‘house of the Mercy Seat’ (1 Chr 28:11). The Hebrew *kapporeth* comes from the same root as the verb *kipper*, which is translated in our English Bible ‘to make atonement.’ From the belief that the original meaning (now lost) of this root was ‘to cover,’ some scholars maintain that the word simply meant ‘the covering’ or ‘lid’ of the Ark, on the top of which it rested. But nothing is certain about the original meaning of *kaphar*, and the ‘Mercy Seat’ was not a part of the Ark, but a distinct thing that lay upon it. The description of it is given in Exod 25:17ff. Our translation ‘Mercy Seat’ is derived from the metaphorical meaning of *kipper* = ‘to make atonement’, and is supported by the sprinkling of the blood upon it on the Day of Atonement ‘to make atonement’ for sin” (ibid.).

<sup>157</sup>Mary Douglas, “Atonement in Leviticus,” *JSQ* 1, no. 2 (1993/94): 115-16. See also Gayford, 100-22. He engages in a fruitful discussion of *kipper*, but he seems to put undue emphasis on blood, which he maintains still lives even after the sacrificial victim has been slain. It is worthwhile to realize that the Old Testament does not ascribe *ex opere operato* powers to blood. Blood atones for sin simply because God says so.

The Akkadian verb equivalent *kuppuru* means “to wipe off,” “burnish,” “cleanse.” Therefore, in the ritual context, the concept of expiation is viewed in terms of cleansing, or wiping away of impurity, contamination, and by extension, sinfulness itself. This interpretation differs from that endorsed by many scholars that the verb כפר means “to cover,” “conceal” the sin of impurity from God’s view. The Levitical texts use the verb כפר to express the concept that through expiation one is “wiped clean” of impurities that adhere or cling to a person or infect him.<sup>158</sup> In fact, both ideas dovetail into each other, because the sinner is covered as the sin is wiped away.

The uniqueness of the blood ritual on the Day of Atonement lies in its comprehensive scope. Atonement is made for the high priest and the general priesthood by the blood of the bullock, while the blood of one of the two selected goats effects atonement for the entire congregation. Thus, in the process of the entire ritual, the tabernacle itself together with its *sancta* is cleansed from the baneful miasmata of sin, and blood is the divinely designated agency for this purpose.

The removal of sin from the midst of God’s people is given the highest expression in the bloody cleansing ritual of the Day of Atonement. At the heart of the ceremonies performed on the day is the ritual of the sin offering of the two goats. One goat is killed and its blood is used in the blood ritual that takes place in the sanctuary proper. When he returns from the sanctuary, the high priest lays his hands on the head of the live goat and confesses over it the sins and transgressions of the entire nation.

The goat that is called “Azazel” is sent into the wilderness by the hand of a

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<sup>158</sup>Gayford, 100-22.

strong man bearing all the sin. Chaim Feinberg indicates that “Azazel is an active participle or participial noun, derived ultimately from *azal* (connected with the Arabic word *azala*, and meaning removed), but immediately from the reduplicate form of that verb, *azazal*.”<sup>159</sup> As it is used in this context, it is “the reduplication of the consonants of the root in Hebrew and Arabic” and as such it carries “the force of repetition, so that while *azal* means removed,”<sup>160</sup> *azazal* denotes removal by means of repeated acts.<sup>161</sup>

Azazel, or Azazel, may carry the meaning of one who removes by a series of acts, designating an agent who removes or separates. Yet this agent carries out the task of removal, not by a single act, but by a series of minor acts resulting in a complete removal. The movement of the doomed goat being dragged to its destiny by a strong man could not have been expressed better by any other word. On the Day of Atonement, the people watched with relief as every step of the goat removed their sins farther and farther away from them. By means of a visible symbol, and by continued repetition of the movement, their sins receded into the distance of the desert.<sup>162</sup>

Although some may argue that the ritual of the two goats constitutes one sin

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<sup>159</sup>Charles L. Feinberg, “The Scapegoat of Leviticus Sixteen,” *Bsac* 115 (October 1958): 332.

<sup>160</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>161</sup>However, it should be noted that even though numerous etymologies of the term Azazel including references to places, personal demonic beings or deities, or an abstraction denoting removal have been suggested, the definite derivation and meaning of the term has continually eluded scholars. See Roy E. Gane, *Leviticus, Numbers*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 289-90.

<sup>162</sup>*Ibid.*

offering,<sup>163</sup> it is crucial to maintain this distinctive difference that “the live goat is a type of Satan, and the slain goat is a type of Christ.”<sup>164</sup> This is important because the “way the scapegoat bears (אשׁוּב) the sin of the people is essentially different from the way the expiatory sacrifice bears the sin of the offerer.”<sup>165</sup>

Several reasons could be given for this remarkable difference.

1. The casting of lots on the two goats selected on the Day of Atonement by the high priest indicates clearly that the role of each goat is determined by Yahweh.<sup>166</sup>

2. The question of ownership in this respect is also important. Since the Lord is a Being to whom ownership of one goat is ascribed, it follows that Azazel must also be some kind of being who is the designated owner of the other goat.<sup>167</sup> Through the casting of lots before Yahweh, one goat is designated ליהוה (for “Yahweh”). The other is

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<sup>163</sup>Ibid., 322. See also Menachem Haran, “The Complex of Ritual Acts inside the Tabernacle,” *ScrH* 8 (1961): 289. Haran’s argument that “all the rites performed inside the tabernacle are independent parts of a single organic whole—deserves to be emphasized again. Apart from anything else, it further strengthens the contention that this whole sphere of ritual activity is the sole prerogative of the high priest” (ibid.).

<sup>164</sup>Hasel, “Studies in Biblical Atonement II,” 119.

<sup>165</sup>Rodriguez, “Sacrificial Substitution and O. T. Sacrifices,” 129. Rodriguez stresses, “It is precisely this that Lev 16:22 is stating: ‘The goat shall bear all their iniquities upon him to a solitary land.’ This is the only place where the expression (*nā’sā’ āwôn*) ‘to bear sin’ is followed by a clause of destination. In all other cases this phrase is used in the absolute. *Nās’ā’* here means ‘carry away’ rather than ‘bear’ in the sense of ‘suffer’. However, that is not the meaning of the phrase in the case of an expiatory sacrifice. In such a context *nās’ā’ āwôn* clearly means to be guilty and liable to punishment (Lev 5:1-2,5-6). It is the state of sin/punishment that is transferred to the sacrificial animal through the laying on of hands” (ibid.).

<sup>166</sup>Gane, *Altar Call*, 248.

<sup>167</sup>Ibid.

לעזאזל (“for Azazel”). This shows clearly that Yahweh and Azazel are legal parties capable of ownership.<sup>168</sup>

3. It must be noted that Azazel’s goat is not offered as a sin offering but it is considered a part of the ritual complex involving the blood of the Lord’s goat, which is normally slain on this occasion. The scapegoat typifying Satan as the originator and instigator of sin is sent alive into the wilderness bearing all the accumulated impurities of both sancta and people.<sup>169</sup>

4. Even though Lev 16:10 says that the scapegoat shall be presented לכפר עליו (“before the Lord to make an atonement with Him”), atonement in this sense is not made for the people, but on the goat itself. Thus it is sent bearing the uncleanness of the people away from them into the wilderness. This form of atonement is like the one made by Phinehas, the son of the high priest in Num 25:13 ויכפר על בני ישראל (“and [he] made an atonement for the children of Israel”).<sup>170</sup> It is also important to note, with regard to the ritual process, that by the time the scapegoat is sent into the wilderness, the people have already been forgiven through the ritual involving the blood aspersion of the Lord’s goat at the inner sanctum.<sup>171</sup>

It should be noted that the sacrificial binding factor is the element that holds together the sanctuary cultus, and this can be said “of all other rites performed inside the

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<sup>168</sup>Gane, *Cult and Character*, 249.

<sup>169</sup>Ibid.

<sup>170</sup>Ibid., 249.

<sup>171</sup>Ibid., 250.



tabernacle. What makes them unique is not their performance as such, but their fusion into a single symbolical and doctrinal conception.”<sup>172</sup>

Through the ritual of sacrifice, the cultic community seeks fellowship with Yahweh in the sacral institutions for the purpose of atonement, in other words, in the assurance that all the things that interrupt and destroy the relationship between God and His people must be removed by the sign of blood.<sup>173</sup>

### Blood as Purification and Consecration Agent

In the Old Testament cultus, blood is also employed for purification and consecration purposes. In fact, contrary to the *Umwelt*, the ancient Israelite ritual traditions are much more concerned with blood, because blood is reserved for Yahweh and deemed to be a purifying agent.<sup>174</sup>

The ashes of the red heifer are used for purification purposes. Unlike other sacrificial animals that are normally slaughtered at the entrance of the tent, it is killed outside the camp. Some of its blood is sprinkled seven times directly before the Tabernacle of the congregation (Num 19:4).<sup>175</sup> However, since ritual impurity is a threat to the holiness of the Sanctuary itself, the greater portion of the heifer’s blood is burnt outside the camp. In burning the red heifer with its blood, the crimson that is combined with it and the red color of the animal itself “may allude to the power of blood to overcome the

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<sup>172</sup>Ibid., 295.

<sup>173</sup>Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Worship in Israel: A Cultic History of the Old Testament*, trans. G. Buswell (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1966), 123.

<sup>174</sup>Ververne, 460. See also Venter, 290.

<sup>175</sup>Alfred Rubens and Samuel Tolansky, “Red Heifer,” *Encyclopedia Judaica* (1971), 14:9-10.

power of death which threatens both the sanctity and the existence of the Israelite camp (Exod 12:22-23).”<sup>176</sup>

In the Torah, the law that prescribes the ritual cleansing of the leper (and a house contaminated by a plague) demands the shedding of blood (Lev 14). In both cases, two clean birds are required for the performance of purification rites. One bird is slain and its blood is allowed to drain into running water. The living bird, together with cedar wood, scarlet, and hyssop, is dipped into the blood, preserved in a vessel, of the bird slain over the running water.

The one to be cleansed is sprinkled with the blood seven times, after which the officiating priest sets the living bird free and pronounces the candidate clean. In the case of a house, it is the building that is sprinkled. A second phase of the ritual demands the sacrificing of a lamb for a burnt offering. The priest takes some of the blood of the victim and, having dipped his finger into it (the blood), smears the tip of the candidate’s right ear, the thumb of his right hand, and the great toe of his right foot. This second phase of the ritual, however, is limited only to a person requiring the needed cleansing.<sup>177</sup>

In his recent work, Roy Gane observes that the sin/purification offering is the one in which blood plays the most important role. Whereas in other offerings, blood is applied by means of dashing it at the sides of the altar, in the case of the sin/purification

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<sup>176</sup>Ibid., 10, 12. See also Gane, “Ritual Dynamic Structure,” 202. Gane points out, “Similar cognitive task dynamics operate in the purgation procedures dealing with corpse contamination, in which the ashes of a red cow, cedar wood, and scarlet thread, burned outside the camp (Num 19:1-10), subsequently function as a ritual ‘sponge’ when they are rehydrated as the ‘water of lustration’ and sprinkled directly on contaminated persons and objects. Since the ashes contain the blood of a red cow, reddish cedar wood, and scarlet thread, the ‘water of lustration’ functions like blood” (ibid.).

<sup>177</sup>Lev 15 prescribes similar ritual regulations for people contaminated by bodily secretions.

offering, it is smeared at the horns of the altar. Since the horns are the highest part of the altar, the application of blood at that location makes the blood prominent in a vertical direction.<sup>178</sup> Gane claims that the collective singular *הטאת הכפרים* (“purification offering of purgation”) is a designation for the ritual complex involving both *הטאת* rituals.<sup>179</sup> Because purification blood is presented this way, the expiatory value of blood is affirmed. This expiatory quality of purification blood is reiterated by the expression *לכפר עליכם* (“to make an atonement for you”) in the cultic calendar of Num 28-29.

Furthermore, Gane calls attention to Yahweh’s ownership of blood in this form of sacrifice because blood is not delivered to Him (God) in the form of smoke. Treating blood this way may have something to do with the prohibition of consuming meat with the blood in it.<sup>180</sup> Not only this, but by setting the blood aside from the rest of the animal offering, Yahweh sets an example for the respect of life.<sup>181</sup>

A very significant point to bear in mind is the idea that the term *הטאת* in this context can refer to both moral fault and ritual impurity. Moreover, Gane calls attention to locations of blood applications with respect to the ‘outer sanctum’ and ‘outer altar’ (Lev 4:3-21 and 22-35) respectively,<sup>182</sup> and he observes that in the purification ritual, the high priest performs two applications of blood in the ‘outer sanctum.’ First, blood is sprinkled seven times in front of the paroket veil, then the horns of the altar of incense are

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<sup>178</sup>Gane, *Cult and Character*, 62.

<sup>179</sup>*Ibid.*, 221.

<sup>180</sup>*Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>181</sup>*Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>182</sup>Gane, *Leviticus, Numbers*, 99.

daubed with blood. After this, the high priest goes out and pours blood at the base of the ‘outer altar’. The blood rite involving the ‘outer altar’ calls only for a one-time application on its horns.<sup>183</sup>

Again, in the rites of consecration, blood plays a vital role.<sup>184</sup> Exodus 29 describes the dedication service of Aaron and his sons as priests of Israel. Underlying these ceremonies is the notion of the holiness of God, which precludes any form of impurity. The ritual requires the sacrifice of a bullock upon whose head Aaron and his sons confess their sins. After the animal is slain, the horns of the altar are smeared with its blood while the rest of the blood is poured at the base of the altar.

Two rams are also provided for a part of the ceremony. One of the rams is slaughtered after the laying on of hands, and its blood is sprinkled round about the altar. The victim’s body is cut into pieces and burnt as a whole offering to God. After the laying on of hands, the third victim, which is the second lamb, is killed and a part of its blood is used to anoint the tips of the right ears, the thumb of the right hands, and the right great toes of Aaron and his sons. The rest of the blood is sprinkled on the altar and round about it. Later on, at a sacred meal, Aaron and his sons shall consume the entire flesh of the lamb.

The seventh chapter of Numbers relates how Moses inaugurated the tabernacle. In the LXX account the word ἐγκαίνισμός (“inauguration”) is used in Num 7:10, 11, 84.

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<sup>183</sup>Ibid., 99-101.

<sup>184</sup>Sperling, 1:762. The author observes that, “in the climax of the rite, blood from the altar together with anointing oil is sprinkled on the consecrants and their vestments in order to render both priests and vestments holy (Exod 29:9-21; Lev 8:24)” (ibid.).

Another form of the word ἐγκαίνωσις is employed in Num 7:88. Moreover, Johannes Behm cites the use of the verb form ἐγκαίνιζω in Heb 10:19 to express (“opening”) or (“dedication”).<sup>185</sup> The idea of inauguration is further confirmed in the LXX<sup>186</sup> narrative in Num 7:88 where the actual statistics of sacrificial animals are provided. These animals are donated by the twelve princes of the house of Israel for the bloody sacrifices marking the inaugural ceremony of the Tabernacle. It is significant that the word appears only here in the entire Pentateuchal ritual.

### Summary

In summary, it could be said that blood plays a key role in the OT cult. It constitutes the means whereby the tension between purity and impurity is resolved. Through blood, the spiritual and social equilibrium of society is maintained. While it is the means of establishing peace between the worshiper and the Deity, it also denotes total sacrifice. The manipulation of blood in terms of the cult is very significant for it confirms not only the principle of the gradation of holiness, but it also serves as a means of transfer of impurities from the sancta. Finally, it is also a means of expiation and consecration affirming the sanctity and respect for life.

### ⲁⲓⲙⲁ (Aïma) and the OT Covenant Relationship

One of the key concepts of the relationship between a god and his people in the

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<sup>185</sup>Johannes Behm, “ἐγκαίνιζω,” *TDNT* (1964), 3:454.

<sup>186</sup>Lancelot C. L. Brenton, *The Septuagint with Apocrypha: Greek and English* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1986).

ancient world is kinship, and such a tie is based on physical descent.<sup>187</sup> The god in this sense is thought of in terms of a kinsman who belongs to his people on the basis of blood relationship. Martin Noth points out that, not only was the tribal god conceived of in human terms in a patriarchal society of the ancient Orient, but in a very primeval stage, the deity was still regarded as being a blood relative of the tribe.<sup>188</sup> Even in very ancient personal names, he was simply called “ancestor,” “tribal brother,” “relative.” He was viewed as the lord, leader, and judge of the tribe.<sup>189</sup> On the contrary, in the Old Testament, the relationship between Israel and God is that of a covenant, an agreement, by which Yahweh and the nation are, as it were, wedded to one another. Yahweh is essentially a *Bundesgott* and Israel a *Bundesvolk*.<sup>190</sup>

The covenant between Yahweh and His people is based on what Yahweh has already achieved for them. Thus, response on the part of the people is on the grounds of gratitude.<sup>191</sup> From the perspective of Israel, the Covenant was not a legal contract.

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<sup>187</sup>Abba, 131.

<sup>188</sup>Martin Noth, *The Old Testament World*, trans. V. I. Gruhn (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1966), 382.

<sup>189</sup>Ibid.

<sup>190</sup>Abba, 131-32. Abba explains that “the central concept of biblical religion is therefore that of the Covenant between God and the people of God. The Hebrew term for this is *bryt* which, like its Akkadian cognate *biritu* meaning a fetter, conveys the idea of binding together. A covenant is thus a binding relationship between two parties. Such covenant relationships were common in the ancient world and made possible mutual trust in social and political life” (ibid., 132). See also George E. Mendenhall, “Law and Covenant in Israel and the Ancient Near East,” *BAR* 17, no. 2 (May 1954): 26-46, and idem, “Law and Covenant in Israel and the Ancient Near East” *BAR* 17, no. 3 (September 1954): 49-76; Weinfeld, “Covenant Making in Anatolia and Mesopotamia,” 135-39; Ronald Youngblood, *The Heart of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1971), 37-56; Delbert R. Hillers, *Covenant: The History of a Biblical Idea* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 1969).

<sup>191</sup>Abba, 131-32.

Rather, it was an agreement designating an intimate and personal relationship between God and His people.<sup>192</sup> It was more like a marriage relationship. It is no wonder that in the prophetic literature of the Old Testament, the marriage motif recurs over and over again, denoting the bond between God and Israel.

Raymond Abba has observed a significant difference between the sacrificial system of Israel and that of paganism in terms of the covenantal relationship. Whereas pagan sacrifice focuses on what man can do to win the favor of a god, Hebrew sacrifice is based on what God does for man; as such, it presupposes the divine initiative in redemption.<sup>193</sup>

The Old Testament speaks of three main administrations of God's covenant. God made covenants with Noah, Abraham, and Israel. In each case, sacrificial shedding of blood was involved.<sup>194</sup> It seems to be the norm that, in the biblical context, sacrificial bloodshed and covenant-making go together.<sup>195</sup> The Hebrew expression כרת ברית, literally ("cut a covenant"), per se, does imply the spilling of blood. Commenting on the phrase, Gerhard Hasel maintains that it "corresponds to a Sumerian expression which means 'to cut a ban' (*nam-erim-TAR*)."<sup>195</sup> He asserts that the phrase "to cut" in the Hebrew has the idiomatic sense of "to make." Therefore, the making of a covenant has the

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<sup>192</sup>Ibid.

<sup>193</sup>Ibid., 133.

<sup>194</sup>James I. Packer, ed., *Eucharistic Sacrifice* (London: Church Book Room Press, 1962), 22.

<sup>195</sup>O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1980), 9. Palmer points out with reference to sacrificial slaughter: "This relating of a 'cutting' process to the establishment of a covenant manifests itself throughout the ancient languages and cultures of the Middle East. Not only in Israel, but in many of the surrounding cultures, the binding character of a covenant is related to a terminology of 'cutting'" (ibid.).

original idea of the actual cutting up of an animal or animals; since the “killing and cutting of the animal establishes or ratifies the covenant.”<sup>196</sup>

Edmond Jacob traces the Hebrew expression of covenant-making to an ancient rite whereby participants making a solemn agreement pass between the two halves of one or several beasts that are killed. By this gesture, the participants undertake to suffer the lot of the victims in the event of their transgressing the claims of the covenant (cf. Gen 15 and especially Jer 34:10-22). This is the practice that designates the origin of the expression כרת ברית (“to cut a covenant”), where the term ברית denotes the result of the action, and the cutting being, in this case, only the means of attaining an agreement.<sup>197</sup>

#### God’s Covenant with Noah

After the Fall, God’s action of providing better clothing for Adam and Eve constituted a form of covenant in that there was bloodshed. In like manner, the covenant God makes with Noah after the flood involves bloodshed. The story of this covenant is recorded in Gen 9.

After the catastrophic event of the deluge, Noah, moved by a sense of deep gratitude, erects an altar on which he offers a sacrifice of thanksgiving to God. When God smells the “sweet savor” of the sacrifice, he pronounces a benediction on Noah and his family and promises never to destroy the world again by water. Consequently, all

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<sup>196</sup>Gerhard F. Hasel, *Covenant in Blood* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1982), 17-18. See also Robertson, 8. Robertson asserts, “The phrase translated ‘to make a covenant’ in the Old Testament literally reads ‘to cut a covenant.’ This phrase ‘to cut a covenant’ does not appear just at one stage in the history of the biblical covenants. Much to the contrary it occurs prominently across the entire spread of the Old Testament. The law, the prophets, and the writings all contain the phrase repeatedly” (ibid.).

<sup>197</sup>Edmond Jacob, *Theology of the Old Testament*, trans. A. W. Heathcote and P. J. Allcock (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1958), 209-10.



mankind is blessed by the covenant through Noah.

### God's Covenant with Abraham

Genesis 15 records the covenant made between God and Abraham. God calls Abraham from Ur, his own country, to a strange land. As a result of Abraham's response to this call, he receives a three-fold promise from God involving seed, land, and fellowship. This three-fold promise is backed by a covenant. God instructs Abraham to take, for the purpose of sacrifice, a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old she-goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtle-dove, and a young pigeon. He slaughters the animals and cuts them equally and lays each piece against the other, leaving a gap between the pieces.<sup>198</sup> However, he does not cut up the birds. He does this in the open field and so he stays by to drive away carrion-eating birds from the carcasses. However, at sunset when a deep sleep falls on Abraham, God speaks to him and reiterates the three-fold promise. That same evening, some kind of heavenly fire passes through the divided bodies of the slain animals and birds, and a covenant is made between God and Abraham. Again, it is significant that blood is shed in the process of making the covenant.

### The Passover

In Exod 12, the narrative deals with the significant event of the Passover, which

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<sup>198</sup>Ibid. The cutting up of animals for this purpose reminds one of imprecation oaths which were taken in ancient times on such occasions. Weinfeld cites a case in point, "For example, in the treaty between Assurnirari V and Mati'ilu of Bit Agusi of the eighth century B.C.E., a ram is brought forward not for sacrificial purposes but to serve as an example of the punishment awaiting the transgressor of the treaty: 'This ram was not taken from its flock for sacrifice. . . . If Mati'ilu (should violate) the covenant . . . then, as this ram, which was taken from its flock and to its flock, will not return, so Mati'ilu with his sons . . . to his city will not return . . . as the head of this ram shall be struck off so shall his head be struck off.' Dramatic acts of this sort were performed not only with animals; similar acts were performed with wax images and other objects." Weinfeld, "Covenant Making in Anatolia and Mesopotamia," 138. See also Robertson, 9.

leads to the departure of Israel from Egypt. The origin of the Passover as a cultic event has been examined by scholars time and again. Theodoor Vriezen has proposed that the Passover festival, which had probably sprung from the ancient Semitic lustral spring-offering festival, was modified extensively by the “process of historicizing.” Vriezen argues that it developed from a tribal feast into a temple-feast and family-feast. The sacrificial ritual, its blood-manipulation, and its “legend” of the origin of the festival bear the character of a renewal of the relationship between God and the people. Thus, the Passover lamb is, on the one hand, a community-meal (peace-offering), on the other hand, a sin-offering (the sprinkling of blood), and by the “legend” connected with it, a glorification of Yahweh.<sup>199</sup> In spite of such conjectures which I cannot subscribe to, the biblical narrative in its final form gives the origin of the Passover as a real historical event pointing to the unique relationship between Israel and Yahweh.

At the Passover meal, the whole victim is to be eaten roasted with no bones broken. Moreover, it is to be eaten with bitter herbs and unleavened bread. The instruction specifies a night meal eaten hastily by people who are getting ready to go on a long journey. Nothing should be left of the lamb, but should that happen, the leftovers should be burnt up.

Two important points should be considered in this narrative, namely a sense of

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<sup>199</sup>Theodoor C. Vriezen, *An Outline of Old Testament Theology* (Oxford, England: Basil Blackwell, 1970), 259. See also Archibald H. Sayce, *The Religions of Ancient Egypt and Babylonia* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1902), 472. Sayce says, “Still more interesting is it to find in the ritual of the prophets instructions for the sacrifice of a lamb at the gate of the house, the blood of which is to be smeared on the lintels and doorposts, as well as on the colossal images that guarded the entrance. To this day in Egypt the same rite is practiced and when my *dahabiah* was launched I had to conform to it. On this occasion the blood of the lamb was allowed to fall over the sides of the lower deck” (ibid.).

the holiness of God and the special manipulation of blood. In fact, the call of Moses to lead Israel from the house of bondage is founded on the fact that God is holy. The story of the burning bush is indicative of this. God reveals Himself and His Name (יהוה) to the terrified Moses, and the subsequent events take place within this context.

Yahweh is the Hero of the Exodus. He, the Holy One of Israel, is the Champion and the Deliverer of His oppressed people. Whereas the Exodus constitutes a supreme revelation of God, the Passover (פסח) is the heart of the Exodus, and the focus of the Passover is the blood of the lamb.<sup>200</sup> The blood is the guarantee that a house is saved from wrath. The blood is what God looks for, because the divine injunction says, “When I see the blood, I will pass over you” (וראיתי את־הדם ופסחתי עלכם) (Exod 12:13).<sup>201</sup> Furthermore, Rodriguez asserts that Yahweh’s statement underscores the importance of sacrificial blood because, in this particular case, “it seems to stand for the life of the victim sacrificed as a substitute for the Hebrew firstborn. It is life removed from the creature, implying its death.”<sup>202</sup>

The blood focuses on four key thoughts in this context. First, the blood is propitiatory. God is satisfied that a certain requirement has been fulfilled. Second, the blood means security and, as such, it provides a sense of safety for God’s people. Third, redemption has been brought about by substitution. Here, Angel Rodriguez notes “that substitution is a divine act of love by which God’s wrath does not reach the sinner. It is

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<sup>200</sup>Packer, 25.

<sup>201</sup>Rodriguez, “Substitution in the Hebrew Cultus and in Cultic-Related Texts,” 274.

<sup>202</sup>Ibid.

God in action—a revelation of how His love cleanses the sinner, rather than how His wrath operates.”<sup>203</sup> The blood of the lamb has cleared the guilt of those who have taken cover under it. Fourth, through the shed blood of the lamb, God’s people are delivered from bondage to liberty. In fact, Alec Motyer argues cogently that the Passover contains *in nuce* all that the other sacrifices are meant to express.<sup>204</sup>

It would be proper, at this juncture, to establish a relationship between the Passover and covenant. The circumstances surrounding the biblical account of the Passover focus on the relationship between Yahweh and His chosen people Israel whom He had delivered from Pharaoh’s house of bondage. This deliverance is symbolic of freedom from the thralldom of evil and sin. God makes a pact binding Him to His people and His people to Him. The treaty is ratified by the blood of the paschal lamb which is smeared at the doorpost. At the sight of the blood, the angel of destruction spares the dwellers of the home. Again, this very pact is referred to in the preamble of the decalogue at Sinai which constitutes the covenant par excellence.

### God’s Covenant with Israel at Sinai

The covenant at the foot of Mount Sinai is a high-water mark in the spiritual experience of Israel. The wilderness provides a setting for this ceremony where an altar

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<sup>203</sup>Angel M. Rodriguez, “Sacrificial Substitution and the Old Testament Sacrifices,” 143.

<sup>204</sup>J. Alec Motyer, “Priestly Sacrifices in the Old Testament,” in *Eucharistic Sacrifice*, 27-28. Motyer observes, “The burnt offering expressed consecration; and similarly, those who offered the Passover sacrifice were thereby committed to a life of consecrated pilgrimage and obedience (Exod 12:11). The peace offering expressed the active enjoyment of peace with God, in the fellowship of God’s people; and similarly, those who offered the Passover knew the reality of God’s peace in a day of judgment, and enjoyed together the feast which the lamb provided. The sin offering expressed the putting away of sin, confession, forgiveness, and restoration; and similarly, those who offered the Passover sacrifice knew the reality of the turning away of God’s wrath” (ibid.).

of twelve stones representing the twelve tribes has been erected. Once again, there is profuse sacrificial bloodshed. Moses sends certain young men of the people of Israel who offer sacrifices of burnt offerings and peace offerings of oxen to God (Exod 24:5).

Moses takes half of the blood into basins, while he sprinkles the other half on the altar. After this, he takes the book of the covenant and reads from it in the hearing of all the congregation, and the people respond in the affirmative as they pledge their obedience and support to the stipulations of the covenant.

At this juncture, Moses takes the basin of blood and sprinkles it on the people<sup>205</sup> as he utters these words, “Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words” (Exod 24:8).<sup>206</sup> Motyer maintains that the covenant is what establishes the relationship of peace between God, the Creator and Redeemer-King, and Israel, the created and redeemed servant. God did not make a covenant *de novo* at Sinai. It existed since the days of Abraham, and it was called into new and final existence at the Passover, when God claimed Israel as His son by a decisive-historical, public action. The ceremony at Sinai is simply the re-ratification of the covenant from God’s side in the light of the people’s re-acceptance of it as fully expounded to them in the lately given laws. The “blood of the covenant,” therefore, exhibits the foundation on

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<sup>205</sup>Benjamin Kedar-Kopfstein, “מִן,” *TDOT* (1974), 3:248. Kedar-Kopfstein notes that “Exod 24:5ff. tells of a ceremony in which half the sacrificial blood is sprinkled on the altar and the other half on the people participating in the ceremony. What is described here is the concluding of a covenant, as it was done between human partners, but doubtless also in the form a sacral league between tribal groups and their God. Many scholars think this was a type of oath rite according to which the blood of the covenant breaker was to be shed like the blood of the animal in the rite” (ibid.).

<sup>206</sup>Motyer, 29-30.

which the covenant relationship rested.<sup>207</sup>

### The Covenant at Shechem

Even though Shechem is not as well known as Sinai, the covenant that takes place there under Joshua is an important landmark in the history of Israel. Joshua who is about to step out of the position of leadership summons all the tribes to Shechem where he rehearses the deliverance and saving acts of Yahweh before the people from the call of Abraham to his own day. He solicits loyalty and allegiance to God and renews the covenant of Sinai at Shechem. Delbert Hillers shows the significance of Shechem as an ancient place noted for covenant-making even before the Israelite occupation of the land. Even the name of the god worshiped in its temple, the largest temple yet discovered in Palestine, is variously given as “God of the Covenant” (*El Berit*) or “Lord of the Covenant” (*Baal Berit*).<sup>208</sup> I think this is striking in terms of a discussion on covenantal blood.

Furthermore, it is interesting to note that the covenant at Shechem also bears the normal features of ancient Hittite treaties that have been discovered through archeology. Features such as writing the stipulations in a book, reference to witnesses, blessings and curses (Josh 24:20-27), and the very format of the entire chapter (Josh 24) with a preamble rehearsing the benefits of Yahweh to His people confirm the nature of the covenantal form as it was known in the Old Testament environment. According to Moshe Weinfeld, some scholars think the striking similarity between the imprecations in

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<sup>207</sup>Ibid.

<sup>208</sup>Hillers, 58-59.

Deut 28 and the maledictions in ancient Near Eastern treaties may be an indication that there was a direct Deuteronomic borrowing from outside sources. A particular case in point is the resemblance between Deut 28:23 and the vassal-treaties of Esarhaddon.<sup>209</sup>

Peter Craigie also notes that significant scholarly contributions have been made in terms of comparing the Hebrew covenant with the ancient Near East vassal treaty. He calls attention to the similarities of the format of the Near Eastern suzerainty covenant and that of the Hebrew covenant. Furthermore, Craigie argues that the Hebrews who served as slaves in Egypt were familiar with such a covenant which bound them as vassals of their Egyptian overlord, and so they adopted this form of treaty to express the nature of their relationship to God.<sup>210</sup>

Craigie goes on to show how the Hebrew word ברית and its Egyptian cognate show up several times in Egyptian texts from the Nineteenth Dynasty as a Semitic loanword.<sup>211</sup> The meaning of the Semitic loanword in Egyptian is “contract, or contractual labor.”<sup>212</sup> Craigie holds that since the Egyptian word is also related to Akkadian *birtu* and Assyrian *biritu* meaning “link, clasp, fetter,”<sup>213</sup> the meaning and connotation of the word seem to indicate the forging of a relationship which the word “covenant” implies.

Thus, the scholarly evidence seems to confirm that there may be similarities in

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<sup>209</sup>Moshe Weinfeld, “Traces of Assyrian Formulae in Deuteronomy,” *Bib* 46 (1965): 417.

<sup>210</sup>Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, New International Commentary of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1976), 22, 23.

<sup>211</sup>*Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>212</sup>*Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>213</sup>*Ibid.*, 81.

the biblical material and the general environment of the Old Testament. In spite of this idea, one should not be hasty in concluding that there is continuity between Israelite and pagan sacrificial practices. It is also significant to note that even though the word **דָּם** is not mentioned in the text in connection with the covenant at Shechem, it is implied in the expression **ויכרת יהושע ברית לעם ביום ההוא** (And Joshua made a covenant with the people that day Josh 24:25).<sup>214</sup>

### Circumcision as Sign of Covenant

One could not discuss the concept of covenant in the Old Testament without touching on the subject of circumcision (**ברית מילה**). In Gen 17, as God renews His covenant with Abraham, He instructs him to “circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you” (Gen 17:11). Every male in Abraham’s household is to be subjected to this rite, because it is bound up with the promise of the inheritance of the land.<sup>215</sup> The rite in this context is important for two reasons. First, failure to keep it means a “cutting off” from the community. Second, the “repeated contemptuous reference to the Philistines as uncircumcised” is a stigma of alienation.<sup>216</sup> It is in keeping with the divine injunction that Joshua circumcises all the males just before the entry into Canaan (Josh 5:2-4). Once again, blood is shed to seal the covenant with God.

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<sup>214</sup>Weinfeld asserts that “in covenantal sacrifices blood played an important role. Thus we find in the Sinaitic covenant that the blood of the slaughtered bulls is sprinkled on the people entering the covenant (Exod 24:6).” Weinfeld, “Covenant Making in Anatolia and Mesopotamia,” 138.

<sup>215</sup>Leonard V. Snowman, “Circumcision,” *Encyclopedia Judaica* (1971), 5:576.

<sup>216</sup>*Ibid.*



The strange incident relating the encounter between Moses and Yahweh who seeks to kill him on his way to Egypt is a little curious story that has to do with circumcision and bloodshed (Exod 4:24-26). Hans Kosmala deals with this event in an article in which he shows how blood is related to the slaying of the firstborn sons of Egypt in the Passover account.

Finding herself in a rather precarious situation, Zipporah, Moses' wife, quickly circumcises her infant son to save both his and her husband's life. Kosmala argues from a linguistic standpoint to explain Zipporah's usage of the expression כִּי חַתָּן־דָּמִים אַתָּה לִּי ("Surely a bloody husband art thou to me") (Exod 4:25) to underscore the importance of the role of blood in the covenant.<sup>217</sup> According to Kosmala, lexicographers of the Hebrew language have noted that the word חַתָּן ("husband") used by Zipporah in this context in Arabic means ("circumcise"). The expression, as employed here, can only be a connotation for the circumcised with a strong emphasis on blood, which plays so important a part in this story because the evil intention of the Deity can only be averted by the sign of blood. This, Zipporah does with haste, and saves the day.

In the Hebrew text, with Hebrew vocalization, חַתָּן means ("bridegroom"). However, it is also worth noting that the Arabic word for "circumcise" has been compared with the Akkadic word *hatanu*, meaning "to guard," "to protect." Consequently, it has been proposed that perhaps there was, in very ancient times, a closer

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<sup>217</sup>Hans Kosmala, "The 'Bloody Husband,'" *VT* 12 (1962): 27. See also Kedar-Kopfstein, 3:246; Sperling, 1:763. Sperling says, "The role of blood in ceremonial kinship explains the tale in which Zipporah the wife of Moses (Exod 4:25-28) saves his life after Yahweh's attack by circumcising her son and touching the bloody foreskin to Moses's genitals (Heb. *raglayim*; cf. Judg 3:24; 1 Sam 24:4). By this procedure Zipporah transformed Yahweh from an adversary into a 'blood kinsman' (Heb. *hatan damin*), who was required by the newly established kinship to let Moses alone" (ibid.).

connection between the two roots. Kosmala thinks this would suit our archaic story very well. Because in her predicament, as Zipporah says the ritual formula, “A blood-circumcised one art thou with regard to me,” the Deity, seeing the blood of circumcision and hearing Zipporah’s declaration, disappears. Consequently, the firstborn son is saved.<sup>218</sup> The linguistic connections of *ḥḥ* both in Arabic and Akkadian as indicated by Kosmala in this Old Testament narrative show the complexity of meaning in relation to the term *blood*. However, I think the apotropaic aspect of blood stands out without question in this curious narrative.

### Summary

From the foregoing discussion, the evidence is clear that blood has a very significant role in the covenantal ritual of the OT because blood attests to the presence and participation of the Divine in the covenant ritual. Blood is a constant reminder of the necessity of faithfulness to the stipulations imposed by the covenant on the people involved. Blood is symbolic of life that has been sacrificed for the benefit of the parties bound by the covenant, and not only that, it is also an assurance that the faithfulness of the God of the covenant can be counted upon. Finally, blood affirms God as the God who keeps His promises.

### **Bloodshed in the OT**

The subject of bloodshed is also found in other parts of the OT. Usually this term is meant when *ḥḥ* is used in the plural (*ḥḥim*). Such use implies the mishandling of

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<sup>218</sup>Sperling, 1:763.

blood. In the Hebraic cultic context, blood is a sacred symbol and, for this reason, great care must be taken in handling it. When it is misused or wrongfully spilt, the consequences can be disastrous for both the individual and the community.

### Blood and Its Sphere of Influence

Generally speaking, in the Old Testament, blood as a sacred sanguinary substance is so powerful that it is able to create and establish a dangerous sphere of influence. To mishandle blood may precipitate a situation of baneful<sup>219</sup> influence and a threat to the very existence of the entire community. The wanton destruction of human life is the greatest evil, but the actual shedding of blood in murder, by the same token, imposes a special burden on the murderer (Gen 37:18-25).<sup>220</sup>

The land could be defiled by murder, and if the murderer is not found to be brought to justice, a ritual is celebrated in which the miasma of defilement is removed by the blood of a slain animal—a substitute for that of the unknown murderer (Deut 21:1-9). In fact, shed blood “becomes a sphere of danger which moves with fearful power against the murderer and seeks to explode upon him.”<sup>221</sup>

### The Dangerous Problem of Blood-guilt

The Old Testament also deals with the peril of blood-guilt. The notion that power is released whenever blood is shed presupposes vengeance. Moreover, according

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<sup>219</sup>Note here that the language used is very figurative. The Old Testament nowhere ascribes magical powers of any kind to blood per se.

<sup>220</sup>Kedar-Kopfstein, 3:242.

<sup>221</sup>Ibid.

to this view, a victim's blood becomes a burden to the murderer (Prov 28:17), clinging to his hands (Isa 1:15;59:3) and even to his clothing (1 Kgs 2:5).<sup>222</sup>

In a case of murder, it is the responsibility of the גאל הדם (“avenger of blood”) to vindicate the dead.<sup>223</sup> Owing to the complexity of the nature of blood, it is “inevitable that different types of homicide should be assessed differently.”<sup>224</sup> In view of this, the charge is leveled against Joab that he avenged blood that had been shed in war during the time of peace and, by his act, he put blood both on his girdle and shoes (1 Kgs 2:5). The law abhors the shedding of innocent blood (Deut 19:10), and such a crime inevitably brings blood upon the offender's own head (2 Sam 1:15, 16). For this reason, one could understand why the gravity of Manasseh's catena of sins reaches its culminating point with the statement, “Moreover Manasseh shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another” (2 Kgs 21:16).

### Yahweh as Avenger of Blood

Above all, Yahweh is the righteous Judge and as such He is the דרש דמים<sup>225</sup> (“Avenger of blood”) “who does not forget the cry of the afflicted and He intervenes

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<sup>222</sup>Ibid.

<sup>223</sup>Ibid. See also Sperling, 1:763. Sperling says, “The ‘blood’ avenger was literally ‘taker back of the blood,’ that is, a redeemer with a special function. The killing of one clan member was construed by the remaining members not only as a shedding of the group's blood . . . but as misappropriation of blood which properly belonged to the whole group. The responsibility of the blood avenger was to win back that misappropriated blood by killing the original blood shedder” (ibid.).

<sup>224</sup>Kedar-Kopfstein, 3:243.

<sup>225</sup>See Sperling, 1:764. Sperling notes, “It is of interest that, although God ‘avenges/rescues blood’ (Deut 32:43; 2 Kgs 9:7 Heb. *nāqam*) and requires it of those who shed it wrongly (Gen 9:5; 42:22; Ps 9:13; Heb. *dāraś*), he is never referred to as *gō'el haddām*” (ibid.).

when human justice proves to be powerless or irresolute in executing His commands” (Ps 9:13).<sup>226</sup> It is in such a capacity that Yahweh will tread the winepress of justice when He vents His anger against the wicked, whose blood will stain His garments (Isa 63:1-4).

### **אִימָה/(Aîμα) in the Israelite Cult as Viewed by the Prophets of the Eighth Century B.C.**

Since blood plays such a significant role in the Old Testament cultus, how can the apparent prophetic protestation against the sacrificial system be accounted for? In solemn passages such as Isa 1, Jer 7, and Mic 6, the prophets seem to inveigh against sacrifices almost to the point of condemning the entire cult. Yahweh, they claim, does not delight either in sacrifices or burnt offerings.

The opening chapter of Isaiah “is informed by deep perceptions of Israel’s culpability, and it presents a universal vision of Jerusalem’s role as a reconstituted temple city in which the cult is being abused.”<sup>227</sup>

Jeremiah belches a fiery message against Jerusalem and “complains that the Temple has become a den of robbers, and predicts its destruction, which was to be as complete and thorough as that of Shiloh.”<sup>228</sup> The reason for such vehement condemnation is because the people “steal, and murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and refuse to hearken to the voice of God.”<sup>229</sup>

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<sup>226</sup>Ibid., 249.

<sup>227</sup>Baruch A. Levine, “An Essay on Prophetic Attitudes toward Temple and Cult in Biblical Israel,” in *Minhah le-Nahum*, ed. Marc Brettler and Michael Fishbane, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, Supplement Series 154 (Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1993), 202.

<sup>228</sup>Harold H. Rowley, “The Religious Value of Sacrifice,” *Exp Tim* 58, no. 3 (December 1946): 70.

<sup>229</sup>Ibid.

In Micah's view, the profusion of cultic activity does not necessarily indicate true devotion to Yahweh (Mic 6:6-8). Therefore it is not surprising that the prophet waxes eloquent in condemning "the elaborate cult of Samaria operating in an unjust society."<sup>230</sup>

It may appear that the prophets cited do not have anything good to say about the shedding of blood in sacrifice, but that is not the point. Baruch Levine maintains that there is a relationship between cultic and ethical behavior. He sums up the ethical message of the biblical prophets in the following words:

In the eyes of the God of Israel, it is more important that Israelites follow the dictates of morality and justice, commanded by him, than they offer sacrifices to him and celebrate sacred festivals. Furthermore, no amount of ritual purification will expiate wrong doing between one human being and another, or atone for an unjust and corrupt society.<sup>231</sup>

I would agree that the conclusion arrived at by the prophets of the eighth century B.C.E. is justified on the grounds that morality and cultic activity should be correlative. What Yahweh expects of the worshiper is "to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God" (Mic 6:8). However, this is not to say that Yahweh does not approve of blood sacrifice because He both expects and commands it as a means of atonement.

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<sup>230</sup>Levine, "An Essay on Prophetic Attitudes," 211.

<sup>231</sup>Ibid., 202. See also Rowley, "The Religious Value of Sacrifice," 71. Rowley argues that, "as a mere external act, sacrifice cannot present to God man's plea or pledge; it is only when a man makes it more than a mere external act by bringing to it the spirit of obedience, and charging it himself with his plea and his pledge that it has validity" (ibid.).

## Summary

In the light of the foregoing discussion, it is clear that an examination of the cultic practices of Israel's neighbors in the Ancient Near East reveals a different understanding of the concept of blood. It is true that bloody sacrifices are part and parcel of cultic rites, but because the gods are regarded from an anthropomorphic viewpoint, sacrifices are considered more as food for the sustenance of the deity, and blood plays no significant part in the sacrificial ritual. For instance, in some of the Babylonian cultic ceremonies of purification, although an animal is slaughtered, nothing is said about manipulation of blood.

Based on the evidence in literature, one may safely conclude that blood is not considered necessary for expiatory purposes within the cults of the ancient Near East. Outside Israel, it appears that even in the ratification of covenants, the role of blood is only calculated to inspire obedience and fear on the part of the vassal toward his overlord, and is not an *essential* feature of the covenant-making procedure.

In addition to the indifferent attitude toward blood in the Ancient Near East for expiatory purposes, there is a magical dimension to blood. A case in point is the reference to Černý's account by Herodotus in which he relates how the Persians were assured of a water supply for their crossing the desert between Palestine and Egypt. The ceremony describing a covenantal contract is linked with a superstitious rite. Moreover, Černý identifies with W. Robertson Smith's point that, in such pacts, it is only after the blood of one party has passed into the other party's body that the two parties become akin and a blood covenant between them is concluded. Such an act would constitute a serious

breach of the Old Testament injunction against the eating of blood. Furthermore, it has been observed that among the Hittites, the ideas of God and magic are closely connected.

In contrast with evidence elsewhere in the Ancient Near East, the role of blood is deeply rooted in Old Testament cultic thought and practice. The concept of blood constitutes the bedrock of the redemptive act of God. This is well-demonstrated in Gen 3-4 where the shedding of blood is established as the *sine qua non* of the divine plan to redeem mankind from the Fall. Although the Torah sets forth blood as the means of atonement, no other explanation is provided for it (blood) in this capacity, other than what is stated in Lev 17:10, 11. It is also significant to note the close connection that the Torah makes between life and blood (Gen 9:4; Deut 12:23). This connection is not only vital for the OT understanding of blood, but also regarded because God commands it. Thus, blood is forbidden for human consumption and failure to comply with this rule is punishable by ostracism and ultimately death.

Therefore, it is evident that the ambivalence and multivocality of blood cannot be ignored; it must be taken into consideration as one seeks to understand and appreciate the cultic role of this sanguinary substance in the OT cultus. It can mean both life or death. Such an understanding has theological implications for the meaning of blood in the NT and especially for the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Moreover, it is a fact that the entire ritual of the Hebrew cultus hinges on blood manipulation. For this reason, the book of Leviticus is replete with the intricate detail of the sacrificial system at the heart of which, in this respect, is blood manipulation. The instructions are provided in meticulous detail as to the requirements of both priest and



people in the sacrificial context. In this respect, one must recognize that Gane's gainful and painstaking explanation of blood aspersion is very helpful in understanding the intricacies of the OT cult. He engages in a fruitful discussion with regard to the significance of daubing the horns of both the altar of incense in the outer sanctuary and the altar of burnt sacrifice before the tent of meeting. His observation that since the horns of the altar constitute the highest point of the same, blood daubed at the horns brings blood to the closest proximity to God in the process is very remarkable. It is also noteworthy to appreciate his explanation of the role of Azazel and in what sense the high priest does כפר on him on behalf of the people. Hartenstein's discussion of Lev 17, which he calls the theological hermeneutic key for atonement ritual, provides a broad spectrum of ideas related to sacrificial blood. Some of these ideas are also reflected by Venter. Not only does Venter claim that Lev 17:10, 11 is a passage which constitutes the key to blood ritual of the OT, but he also recognizes the close connection between נפש and דם, a factor which is crucial for understanding the concept of sacrificial blood. In fact, it appears there is a linkage of broad common concepts about blood in all the works of scholars cited here, which seems almost to suggest that these men have been sharing from the same pool of ideas.

The relationship between blood and the principle of the gradation of holiness with respect to the sanctuary services affords an insight into the numinous subject of the holiness of Yahweh. It is in this light, regarding the holiness of God, that the dedication of the Levitical priesthood should be understood. Once again, the application of blood to specific parts of the body, as stipulated by the divine injunction, is indicative of

sanctification of the entire person for divine service. Obviously, it is the abuse of such a meaningful understanding of blood and sacrifice that evoked profound prophetic protestation in the eighth century B.C.E.

In discussing the subject of the covenant, the role played by blood cannot be ignored. The Adamic, Noachic, and Abrahamic covenants all deal with blood. Hence, it is not strange that God commands blood to be shed in connection with the Passover. Here, in a very significant way, the supreme importance of blood as an agent of salvation is urged upon the attention of the new nation of Israel before she launches out on her pilgrimage to Canaan. In that night, the significance of the blood of the covenant is made indelible in the minds of the Israelites as a nation.

The renewal of the covenant at the foot of Mount Sinai is carried out amidst sacrificial slaughter and the sprinkling of blood. When Joshua brings the tribes into the land, the covenant is once more renewed through bloody sacrifice. The profuse use of blood in those circumstances is calculated to underscore the fact that God is the Divine Being who keeps the covenant with His people. It is no wonder that both Israel's understanding of and attitude to blood is unique in the Old Testament environment. However, one should not overlook Craigie's contribution which draws attention to the common elements in both Israelite and non-Israelite covenant-making ceremonies of the OT environment.

After a careful consideration of the foregoing evidence, the point can be reiterated that the role and function of blood in the Old Testament are unique in the Ancient Near East. It is this peculiar understanding of blood that underlies its use and

meaning in the entire Bible. Therefore, the ambivalence of blood—the fact that it is symbolic of both life and death, the fact that it both defiles and cleanses (the principle of substitutionary interchange)—should not be overlooked. From such a stance, one learns to appreciate the quality of the meaning of blood in terms of condensation of meaning, multivocality, and ambiguity, as propounded by Gilders.

The multivalent quality of blood is given further impetus and prominence in the feminist contributions of Ellens, O’Grady, and Gruber. These scholars discuss the question of genital emissions of both the male and female in the context of Lev 15. They argue strongly from the Scriptures that if female emission is judged impure so also is the male’s. Gruber resorts to both Qumran and Rabbinic-Halakic evidence to support their argument. The cogent arguments for understanding Lev 15:18 as advanced by Meyers and Whitekettle are both noteworthy and helpful.

As a divinely appointed means of atonement, blood stands in a unique cultic capacity, providing a theological basis and carrying heavy implications for the dictum that “without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness for sin” (Heb 9:22). Hence, the theological position and cultic uniqueness of blood in the Old Testament has definite repercussions for the rest of this work.

## CHAPTER IV

### *Αἷμα* IN THE NEW TESTAMENT WORLD

Several corpora of literature bear witness to the background and world view of the New Testament writers. A study of this literature reveals a great deal about the meaning of *αἷμα* (“blood”) in the context of the New Testament world. In this chapter, I explain the use of the term *αἷμα* in the Jewish Apocrypha, OT Pseudepigrapha, Qumran literature, Philo, Josephus, Rabbinic literature, the Graeco-Roman context, and the New Testament itself. There is also a section about the possible roots of the theological debate regarding blood. Finally, a summary and conclusion are drawn.

#### ***Αἷμα* in the Jewish Apocrypha**

The study of the term *αἷμα* (“blood”) in the Jewish apocrypha<sup>1</sup> is organized into two categories. These two categories are grouped, first, around the sense of *αἷμα* (“blood”) as designating death/murder and the spilling of innocent blood. Second, the term is considered as indicating humanity/family.

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<sup>1</sup>The text used in this work is Lancelot C. L. Brenton, *The Septuagint with Apocrypha: Greek and English* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1986). See also *A Concordance to the Apocrypha/Deuterocanonical Books of the Revised Standard Version*, with a foreword by Bruce M. Metzger (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983). See also Lester T. Whitelocke, *An Analytical Concordance of the Books of the Apocrypha*, 2 vols. (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1978). See also Robert H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913). See also James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985).

## Blood as Designating Death/Murder

More often than not, the word blood conjures a mental picture of murder, death, and the spilling of innocent blood. The literature under review uses blood in this sense. A scenario of slaughter and carnage is painted in the book of Judith where Nebuchadnezzar boasts about the impending destruction of the Jewish people to the point that even “their mountains shall be drunken with their blood.”<sup>2</sup>

In 2 Maccabees, there is an account of Judas besieging a city named Caspin because of the blasphemy of its inhabitants. The city falls just like Jericho, and Judas makes “unspeakable slaughters, insomuch that a lake two furlongs broad near adjoining thereunto, being filled full, was seen running with blood.”<sup>3</sup>

In the Apocrypha, blood has the connotation of martyrdom and the shedding of innocent blood. A typical case in point is the torture and subsequent death of Eleazar, who refuses to renounce his faith at the command of Antiochus Epiphanes. Consequently, this man is tormented and tortured, “his flesh was stripped off by the scourges, and his blood streamed down, and his sides were pierced through.”<sup>4</sup> At a stage in the process of torture, he sees “streams of blood flowing from his own entrails.”<sup>5</sup>

The charge is leveled against foreign oppressors that they “shed innocent blood on every side of the sanctuary, and defile it.” Moreover, they cast out the saints of God and

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<sup>2</sup>Jdt 6:4; 9:3; Sir 8:16; 11:32; 12:16; 27:15; 28:11.

<sup>3</sup>2 Macc 12:16; 14:45, 46.

<sup>4</sup>4 Macc 6:6.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

shed their blood round about Jerusalem and there is none to give them a decent burial.<sup>6</sup> In view of such inhumane actions, great care must be taken to prevent the shedding of innocent blood.

In the book Susanna, there is a scenario in which the timely action of a young man rescues the entire community from committing a wrongful act, and as a result, “innocent blood was saved the same day.”<sup>7</sup> Concerning Judas Maccabeus, it is said that he prepared for battle in order to hear “the blood that cried unto him”<sup>8</sup>—probably the shed blood of innocent ones by the oppressor. Innocent bloodshed, therefore, demands vengeance.<sup>9</sup>

#### Blood Designating Humanity/Family

In the Apocrypha, blood connotes humanity and family relationship. A speaker in the Wisdom of Solomon speaks of himself as a mortal man and offspring of Adam who “in my mother’s womb was fashioned to be flesh in the time of ten months, being compacted in blood, of the seed of man, and the pleasure that came with sleep.”<sup>10</sup>

Alexander the Great is depicted as having honored Jonathan a Jewish leader by sending him a buckle of gold “as the use is to be given to such as are of the king’s

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<sup>6</sup>1 Macc 1:37; 7:17. See also 2 Macc 1:8 where a similar complaint is made against Jason, a Jewish oppressor.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 1:62.

<sup>8</sup>2 Macc 8:3.

<sup>9</sup>1 Macc 9:42.

<sup>10</sup>Wis 7:2.

blood.”<sup>11</sup> So also in 4 Maccabees, the writer refers to the “charm of brotherhood” by which, through the womb, God has caused brothers to remain “an equal time and having been formed for the same period, and being increased by the same blood, and having been perfected through the same principle of life.”<sup>12</sup> The generations of mankind are also designated by the term “flesh and blood” (*σὰρξ καὶ αἷμα*).<sup>13</sup> However, the Apocrypha also uses the term blood in a purely symbolic sense.<sup>14</sup>

### *Αἷμα* in the Pseudepigrapha

The study of blood in the Pseudepigrapha focuses mainly on the divine prohibition against blood consumption. However there are scanty references to blood in relation to murder, the cult, and physiology.

In Jubilees, God warns Noah concerning the danger in using blood for the purpose

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<sup>11</sup>1 Macc 10:89. In this verse the term “blood” designating humanity and family is even more focused because *σὺγγενῶ* is used in connection with *αἷμα*.

<sup>12</sup>4 Macc 13:19.

<sup>13</sup>Sir 14:18; 17:31.

<sup>14</sup>Ben Sirach employs the word in the ethical sense when he asserts that whosoever deprives the poor of his bread or defrauds the laborer of his wages has actually slain him. Such a man is called “a man of blood” and a “blood shedder.” (Sir 31.21, 22). Furthermore, when the author talks about the physical needs of man, he lists water, fire, iron, salt, flour of wheat, honey, milk, oil, clothing, and “the blood of the grape” (Sir 39.26; 50.14). Obviously the last phrase is symbolic of wine. Again, blood symbolizes the disaster that afflicts all men and the *sevenfold nemesis* that overtakes the sinner (Sir 40.9). In the Wisdom of Solomon, the expression “perpetual running river troubled with foul blood” refers to the turning of the waters of the Nile into blood as a means of punishing stubborn Pharaoh and the Egyptians (Wis 11.6).

Moreover, blood is used as a symbol of human life. In this respect, 4 Maccabees deals with the Old Testament account of King David who, even though parched with thirst, refuses to drink water procured for him by two brave young soldiers at the peril of their lives. Instead, he pours on the ground the water that he equates with blood as a sacrifice to the honor and glory of God (4 Macc 3.15). Again, the writer, rhapsodizing on the zeal of Eleazar for the Torah, speaks about “those who perform the duties of the law at the risk of their own blood, and defend it with generous sweat by sufferings even unto death” (4 Macc 7.8).

Finally, the writer speaks of blood in symbolic terms of the cult. He does not employ the term only in the context of defilement and purgation, but he also shows that it is understood vicariously.

of alimentation. Noah is strictly charged not to eat blood because it is the life of all flesh.<sup>15</sup> The divine prohibition against blood consumption is reiterated further with cultic concerns. God forbids the eating of blood because He has designated it for the purpose of atonement and for the enactment of the covenant.<sup>16</sup> Further detailed instructions are provided with regard to the handling of blood at the altar and for the burning of sacrifice.<sup>17</sup> The patriarch Abraham is said to have cautioned his son Isaac to exercise extreme care to avoid smearing his garments with blood, and spilt blood must be covered with earth to avoid exposure.<sup>18</sup>

### **Blood Designating Murder**

In the Pseudepigrapha, the term blood is also employed in the sense of bloodshed and murder. The book of Jubilees gives the account of the wickedness of the antediluvians and how they shed blood in murder. In this context, Noah is depicted as a righteous father who warns his sons never to get involved in such gory acts.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore the writer of Jubilees corroborates the biblical account that God brought the flood on the antediluvians because of their wickedness and bloodshed.<sup>20</sup> The wickedness of these people was escalated with the birth of Serug through whom crimes such as

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<sup>15</sup>Jub 6:7, 8. See also Ps-Philo 3:11.

<sup>16</sup>Jub 6:10-14. See also Ps-Phoc 31 where eating of blood is coupled with things sacrificed to idols. See also SibOr 2:95 for the same injunction.

<sup>17</sup>Jub 21:6-12.

<sup>18</sup>Jub 21:17, 18.

<sup>19</sup>Jub 7:20-24.

<sup>20</sup>Jub 7:25.



slavery, war, and murder became the order of the day.<sup>21</sup> Therefore it does not come as a surprise when the counsel is given to use the sword not to kill but for defense.<sup>22</sup> The Pseudepigrapha emphasizes the point clearly, just as the Old Testament does, that the blood of the murderer must be shed because man was made in the image of God.<sup>23</sup>

### *Αἷμα* in the Qumran Literature

The term דם (“blood”) is found a good number of times<sup>24</sup> in the Qumran writings, and it is now examined under three groupings: (1) The term in the sense of murder or destruction of life, (2) in terms of defilement, and (3) in the cultic sense.

It must be recognized, however, that owing to the age and condition of the original manuscripts, translators have not been able to make sense of the term as it appears in all places in the literature.<sup>25</sup> Consequently, one can use the term only where its context is clear enough.

#### Murder or Destruction

In the Habakkuk Commentary of the Scrolls, there is a denunciation of the murderous intentions of the “Spreader of Deceit, who has misdirected many, building a

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<sup>21</sup>Jub 11:1-6.

<sup>22</sup>SibOr 2:95. See also Ps-Phoc 32.

<sup>23</sup>Ps-Philo 3:11.

<sup>24</sup>See K. G. Kuhn and others, *Konkordanz Zu Den Qumrantexten* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1960). See also James H. Charlesworth and others, *Graphic Concordance to the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Westminster, PA: John Knox Press, 1991).

<sup>25</sup>The following texts illustrate this point very well: 4Q178 3:1.5; 4Q185 1+1.2; 4Q497 16:1.3; 4Q502 28:1.3; 4Q504 6:1.1; 4Q510 2:1.1; 4Q511 162:1.2; 4pUn 9:1.2; 4Tstm 1:29; 1QH 2:32; 1Myst 1:2.8; 4pN 3:1.2; 1QH 7.3; 11tgJ 1:6. These references can be found in Charlesworth and others, *Graphic Concordance to the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 110.

useless city with blood and erecting a community with subterfuge” (1QpHab 10:10).<sup>26</sup>

Since God abhors bloodshed, the people of the covenant are warned to note how God, “on account of blood . . . hid his face . . . from Israel, until their extinction” (CD 2:8).<sup>27</sup>

In the same spirit, the covenanters are reminded of how David’s “deeds were praised, except for Uriah’s blood” (CD 5:5).<sup>28</sup> For this reason, one of the rules of the community states that no covenanter shall “stretch out his hand to shed the blood of one of the gentiles for the sake of riches and gain” (CD 12:6).<sup>29</sup>

In the thanksgiving hymns, the writer describes his condition in distress when he says, “My eyes are closed by the spectacle of evil and my ears by the crying of blood” (1QH 7:10).<sup>30</sup> In fact, a commentary on Isa 40 speaks about a divine person who will accomplish miracles and righteousness among God’s people and who shall also “dispute with the kingdoms over the blood of . . . Jerusalem and shall see the bodies of thy priests . . . and none to bury them” (4Q176).<sup>31</sup>

*The War Scroll* also describes a military scenario in which a well-armed cavalry will “shed the blood of the fallen on account of their wickedness” (1QM 6:17).<sup>32</sup> Blood is

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<sup>26</sup>F. G. Martinez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated: The Qumran Texts in English*, trans. W. G. E. Watson (New York: E. J. Brill, 1994), 201.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 34.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 36.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 42.

<sup>30</sup>Géza Vermès, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 3rd ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 1987), 184. See also p. 171 where reference is made to the intent to spill the blood of one who serves God.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 302.

<sup>32</sup>Martinez, 100.

used in a figurative sense when, in the *War Scroll*, reference is made to “an arrow of blood to fell the dead by God’s wrath” (1QM 6:3).<sup>33</sup>

### Blood as Defilement

A study of the Qumran community has demonstrated how the covenanters took great care in preventing any form of defilement. For this reason, there are regulations with regard to various ablutions to ensure ritual purity at all times.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, there is recognition of the power of blood to contaminate the pure, for which reason, the following instruction is provided for the priests in a war situation to safeguard their purity: “Then the dead fall, the priest shall follow, blowing at a distance, and they shall not enter into the midst of the fallen so as not to be defiled with their impure blood, for they are holy. They shall not desecrate the oil of their priestly anointing with the blood of futile nations (1QM 9:8).”<sup>35</sup>

After the battle, the sons of light will sing a hymn of return as they go back to camp. “In the morning they shall wash their clothes and shall wash off themselves the blood of the guilty corpses” (1QM 14:3).<sup>36</sup>

Even though the Qumran covenanters separated themselves from the Jerusalem

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 99. See also Vermès, 111-12. Moreover a hymn of thanksgiving is raised to God for wreaking deliverance “in the midst of lions destined to the guilty, and of lionesses which crush the bones of the mighty and drink the blood of the brave” (1QH 5:7). Figuratively, blood, in the form of judgment or curse, could fall over one’s house. Therefore in order to prevent such misfortune, the admonition is given that “when you build a house, you shall make a parapet on your roof; in this way you shall not cause blood to fall on your house if anyone falls from it” (11QT 65:6).

<sup>34</sup>Lawrence H. Schiffman, *The Halakha at Qumran* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975), 102.

<sup>35</sup>Martinez, 102.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 108.

community, they “never abandoned the belief in the sanctity of Jerusalem and the centrality of the temple.”<sup>37</sup> In view of this, the community inveighs against those “who defiled the temple, for they did not keep apart in accordance with the law, but instead lay with her who sees the blood of her menstrual flow” (CD 5:6, 7).<sup>38</sup>

The Old Testament view that ritual uncleanness can be effected through the eating of blood is reiterated (CD 12:11, 12).<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, the Old Testament concept of blood ritual performed to rid the land of the baneful stigma resulting from unidentified murder is upheld (11QT 63:7, 8).<sup>40</sup> The Qumran literature also reflects and reinforces the Old Testament injunction forbidding the eating of blood.<sup>41</sup>

### Blood in the Cultic Sense

As one might expect, the Qumran literature employs the term blood in the cultic context. Since the community regards itself as the true sons of Zadok, the importance of his office is emphasized. In fact, it is said to his credit: “Zadok who maintained the

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<sup>37</sup>Jean M. Baumgarten, *Studies in Qumran Law* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977), 74.

<sup>38</sup>Martinez, 36. In this same section vss. 8 and 9 speak about the Mosaic law against incest. Here blood is used in the sense of family relations (ibid.).

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 43.

<sup>40</sup>Vermès, 155.

<sup>41</sup>For this reason, it is lamented that while the children of Israel were in Egypt, “their sons walked in the stubbornness of their hearts plotting against God’s precepts and each one doing what was right in his own eyes; and they ate blood” (CD 3:6). The writer attributes the cutting down of the male population in the wilderness to this fact.

In fact, as it has been pointed out earlier on, the covenanters maintain that consumption of blood defiles the soul (CD 12:11, 12). The *gravitas* of the command can be felt in the statement: “You shall eat no blood of any kind” (1QapGen 11:17). In view of this, the biblical instruction is reiterated that the blood of hunted game be poured out like water on the ground and it should be covered up with dust (11QT 52:11).

service of my temple when the children of Israel strayed far away from me, shall offer the fat and the blood” (CD 4:1, 2).<sup>42</sup> *The Temple Scroll* describes a cultic ritual in which the Levites shall slaughter rams, and the priests, the sons of Aaron, “shall sprinkle their blood on the altar all around” (11QT 22:5).<sup>43</sup>

The sacerdotal interest of the community is shown in the comments made on blood manipulation in the *Targum of Leviticus*. Here, reference is made to the sprinkling of blood on the Mercy Seat by the high priest on the Day of Atonement (4Q156 1:5-7).<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, there is a description of Aaron smearing the horns of the altar with blood (4Q156 2:1-3).<sup>45</sup> *The Temple Scroll* makes more references to the act of blood manipulation in terms of the cult (11QT 16:1-17; 23:12-13; 26:6, 10; 52:21).<sup>46</sup>

The schism that led to the separation of the covenanters from the temple in Jerusalem has been interpreted to mean that the covenanters rejected animal sacrifice. This view seems to make sense since the “Qumran ‘offerings’ consisted of prayer, study, ablutions, and the communal meals which had apparent sacramental significance.”<sup>47</sup>

It has been suggested, however, that separation from the Jerusalem temple does not necessarily constitute “total repudiation of sacrifice and the centrality of the holy

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<sup>42</sup>Vermès, 135.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>Martinez, 143. This is a commentary on Lev 16:12-15.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid. This is a commentary on Lev 16:18-21.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 157, 161, 171.

<sup>47</sup>Baumgarten, *Studies in Qumran Law*, 57.

city.”<sup>48</sup> Even though the *Manual of Discipline* speaks of the “offerings of the lips” as “a sweet fragrance of righteousness and blamelessness of conduct as an acceptable freewill offering,”<sup>49</sup> it is important to remember that the people of the Qumran community were not indifferent to the Temple and its sacrifices.<sup>50</sup>

Thus by their strict obedience to the requirements of the law, the Qumran covenanters emphasize the proper relationship between ethical behavior and cultic practice. For them, the works of the Law are “useless without an inward turning to God.”<sup>51</sup>

The study of the subject of blood and sacrifice in the Qumran community would perhaps demand an explanation for the presence of “ossuaries containing the bones of animals which had been cooked or roasted” during excavations at the site.<sup>52</sup> There is the suggestion that “these bones are certainly the remnants of meals, though they represent

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<sup>48</sup>Ibid. See also Helmer Ringgren, *The Faith of Qumran: Theology of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, trans. E. T. Sander (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1963), 214. Ringgren states, “*The Damascus Document* refers to sacrifice as something which is a matter of course and gives detailed directions for various situations involving sacrifice. . . . But nowhere does it say whether these sacrifices are offered in Jerusalem or elsewhere. . . . It mentions ‘a house of prostration or worship’ into which one may not enter unless he is pure, but what is meant by this is not said” (ibid.).

<sup>49</sup>Ringgren, 215.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid. See also Edmund F. Sutcliffe, *The Monks of Qumran* (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1960), 109. Sutcliffe observes, “We have seen above that there was no doctrinal or theoretical objection among the men of Qumran to the rite of sacrifice. Indeed there could not be as their whole religious life was based on the law of Moses which contains so many regulations regarding sacrifices and their ritual. They anticipated that at the time of the eschatological war there would be regular worship in the Temple accompanied by holocausts and other sacrifices” (ibid.).

<sup>51</sup>Bertil E. Gärtner, *The Temple and the Community in Qumran and the New Testament* (Cambridge, MA: University Press, 1965), 45.

<sup>52</sup>Kurt Schubert, *The Dead Sea Community: Its Origins and Teachings*, trans. J. W. Doberstein (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1959), 53.

only a small fraction of the refuse which must have accumulated from the daily meals in the refectory.”<sup>53</sup>

It is also speculated that the meticulous way in which these bones have been set aside seems to point to a religious ritual, and it is not surprising that some regard them as the remains of sacrifices.<sup>54</sup> However, the fact that “no trace of any altar has been found at Qumran”<sup>55</sup> has to be reckoned with. The Temple Scroll, however, makes clear that the altar of the Jerusalem temple is the only one they recognized, in harmony with Deut 12. Hence it is rather difficult to establish any cultic significance of the bones excavated at the site of Qumran. Perhaps the wisdom of silence with respect to these bones is in order.

### *Αἷμα* in Philo

The term *αἷμα* (“blood”) is found frequently in the writings of Philo.<sup>56</sup> For the purpose of organization, the use of the term has been classified under three categories. The first category, which is the greatest group, employs the term as a designation for family relationships. In the second category, which is the least of all, the term denotes

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<sup>53</sup>Baumgarten, *Studies in Qumran Law*, 59.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid. See also Jean L. Duhaime, “Remarques Sur les Dépôts D’ossements D’animaux à Qumrân,” *RevQ* 9, no. 34 (July 1977): 247. In this article, the author provides very detailed statistical information regarding the excavated bones. He also quotes P. De Vaux and Pr. Zeuner: “Ces ossements représentent . . . les restes des repas et sont des déchets ramassés dans le réfectoire ou dans la cuisine” (ibid.). However, the main thrust of his essay shows that the matter concerning these bones is not yet certain.

<sup>55</sup>Baumgarten, *Studies in Qumran Law*, 61. Baumgarten contends, “The claim of Solomon H. Steckoll that a stone cube (with sides said to be about 26 cm) served as an altar for sacrifice has not been accepted by those familiar with the excavation of the site. The elaborate installations of the center of the community clearly did not include a sanctuary” (ibid.).

<sup>56</sup>Philo employs the term about 106 times in his voluminous writings. See Günter Mayer, *Index Philoneus* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1974), 9. See also Hans Leisegang, *Philonis Alexandrini Opera Quae Supersunt*, ed. Leopoldus Cohn (Berolini: Typis et Impensis Georgii Remeri, 1896).

humanity. In the third, it is used in the cultic sense.

### Blood Designating Family Relationship

There are numerous instances where Philo employs the term blood as a designation for family relationship. For instance, he speaks of one whose desire for truth causes him to abandon “the mythical fables and multiplicity of sovereigns, so highly honored by the parents and grand-parents and blood relations.”<sup>57</sup> In a discussion of Roman politics, he mentions a man by the name of Macro who is venerated by both his peers and “all his blood relations.”<sup>58</sup>

Commenting on the story of Joseph, Philo discusses the embarrassing scene of his self-disclosure to his brothers. Among other things, Joseph attributes his spirit of forgiveness to “the natural humanity which I feel to all men, and particularly to those of my blood.”<sup>59</sup>

Philo also recounts the blunders of Democritus who through lack of foresight inflicts severe privations “on his own blood relations.”<sup>60</sup> There are other references that could be cited, but space does not permit it.<sup>61</sup> The employment of the term blood as the

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<sup>57</sup>Philo *Spec.* 4.178.

<sup>58</sup>Philo *Legat.* 75.

<sup>59</sup>Philo *Jos.* 240.

<sup>60</sup>Philo *Contempl.* 15.

<sup>61</sup>Philo *Spec.* 4.119; *Virt.* 102, 195; *Praem.* 109; *Legat.* 54; *Abr.* 67, 198; *Mos.* 1.303; *Mos.* 2.230; *Spec.* 1.110, 137, 317; *Spec.* 2.128; *Spec.* 3.155; *Contempl.* 72; *Agr.* 154; *Her.* 277.



essence of the soul can also be found in the writings of Philo.<sup>62</sup>

### Blood Typifies Humanity

In Philo, the term blood is employed in the generic sense. Blood can simply mean humanity. Rhapsodizing on the virtue of courage, Philo laments the fact that some men are praised for laying “low multitudes of antagonists in a general slaughter, and win the well-sounding but little deserved name of noble achievement. However, praise and recognition of their fellow men have made them savage and bestial in their thirst for human blood.”<sup>63</sup>

Again, recognizing the virtues of Moses as a leader, Philo observes: “For Moses alone, it is plain, had grasped the thought that the whole nation from the very first was akin to things divine, a kinship most vital and far more genuine tie than that of blood.”<sup>64</sup>

Philo claims there are two types of men, namely “those who live by reason, the divine in-breathing, the other of those who live by blood and the pleasure of the flesh.”<sup>65</sup> In fact, he

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<sup>62</sup>A case in point is when he disparages the strangling of animals for cultic purposes. He points out that by such a practice men “entomb in the carcase the blood which is the essence of the soul” and which should be allowed to flow freely. Philo maintains that blood is poured at the altar and, for this reason, it “may truly be called a libation of the life-principle” (*Spec.* 1.205). He seems to argue that the close affinity between blood and the image of God in man is the justification for shedding the blood of murderers. He notes: “The soul’s likeness to God the lawgiver has shown elsewhere, by saying ‘God made man, after the image of God made He him’ (Gen 1:27), and again in the law enacted against murderers, ‘he that sheddeth man’s blood, in requital for his blood shall there blood be shed, because in the image of God made I man’ (Gen 9:6)” (Philo *Somn.* 1.74). He also calls the mind “the vital faculty . . . whose essence is blood” (*Det.* 92). See also the following references where blood is used in the same sense: *Somn.* 1.30; *Her.* 56, 57; *Det.* 80, 81, 83, 100.

<sup>63</sup>Philo *Virt.* 2.

<sup>64</sup>Philo *Virt.* 79.

<sup>65</sup>Philo *Her.* 57.

describes man as a “piece of molded clay, tempered with blood and water.”<sup>66</sup>

When Philo speaks in terms of the divine inheritance, he poses the question: “Can he who desires the life of the blood and still claims for his own the things of the senses become the heir of the divine and incorporeal things?” He answers in the negative, and asserts that “the heir of spiritual things does not only have a purified mind, but he disregards not only the body, but the other section of the soul that is devoid of reason and steeped in blood, aflame with seething passions and burning lusts.”<sup>67</sup>

#### Blood Designating Pollution/Defilement

Philo regards blood as a means of effecting pollution or defilement. Referring to Cain’s act of fratricide, he points out that he “was the first to pollute the earth with human blood.”<sup>68</sup> Furthermore, he asserts that “the monstrous pollution of human upon the still pure earth . . . set a bar” to the fruitfulness of the same.<sup>69</sup> Thus, Philo confirms the biblical reason for the earth’s barrenness because the ground “hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother’s blood from thy hand.”<sup>70</sup>

According to the sage, blood defiles to such an extent that purgation is effected only when “blood is purged with blood, the blood of the wilfully murdered, with the

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<sup>66</sup>Ibid., 58.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., 64.

<sup>68</sup>Philo *Virt.* 199.

<sup>69</sup>Philo *Praem.* 68.

<sup>70</sup>Philo *Agr.* 21.

blood of the slayer.”<sup>71</sup> Owing to the danger posed by the blood of a murderer, an avenging kinsman of the slain should never slay a murderer in the temple, since this will “be a profanation of the gravest sort. For the blood of the murderer will mix with the blood of the sacrifices, the impure with the consecrated.”<sup>72</sup> A figurative use of the term blood is also present in the writings of Philo.<sup>73</sup>

### Cultic Use of Blood

As one would expect, Philo uses the term blood in the context of the Old Testament cultus. He describes the ceremony of the consecration of priests in Exod 29, focusing on the distinctive aspects involving the manipulation of blood.<sup>74</sup>

Again in the context of the cult, Philo takes up the subject of the ordinances of

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<sup>71</sup>Philo *Spec.* 3.150.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., 3.91. See also *Spec.* 1.254 where Philo speaks of the defilement of the altar by human blood, although in a different context.

<sup>73</sup>He makes reference to Gaius who, posing as a god and arrayed in full armor with a drawn sword, is flanked by a procession of worshipers “composed of homicides and official cut-throats to render their base service to a master avid for slaughter and thirsting for human blood” (*Legat.* 97). According to Philo, speech that is praiseworthy is like a river. However, speech that calls for censure is “none other than the river of Egypt—speech that is ill-trained, ignorant and practically soulless, and therefore it changes into blood” (*Somn.* 2.259). Philo also maintains that the bloody river Nile constitutes the sign of Cain (*Det.* 177).

Commenting on the biblical statement regarding Abel’s blood crying from the ground, he shows not only the injustice of fratricide, but also how sin is detrimental to the one who commits it (*Det.* 69). Furthermore, in a rather difficult passage, Philo employs both allegory and obscure symbolism to explain what he calls “the blood of a sackcloth robe.” This expression, he claims, on the basis of etymology, stands for Damascus (*Her.* 54). Again, he uses bizarre figurative expressions such as “drinking my dark blood” (*Jos.* 78); “seek the blood of the slayer” (*Spec.* 1.160); and hands that have not been “soiled with innocent blood” (*Spec.* 1.204).

In a sarcastic way, Philo describes a scene of carnage in which Jews stand in the midst of their kinsfolk after having bathed themselves “in their blood.” Finally, in the crowning act of self-martyrdom, he exults, “we will mingle our blood with theirs” (*Legat.* 235).

In Balak’s encounter with Balaam against the people of Israel, Philo cites Balaam who compares the victorious zeal of the people of Israel to a lion’s cub who feeds upon the prey and “takes for his drink the blood of the wounded” (*Mos.* 1.234).

<sup>74</sup>Philo *Mos.* 2.150-52.

sacrifice and shows how, in the holocaust offering, blood is sprinkled all around the altar.<sup>75</sup> With regard to the pouring of blood around the altar, he explains that since the circle is the most perfect of figures, “no part should be left destitute of the vital oblation, for, the blood may truly be called a libation of the life-principle (*ψυχή*).”<sup>76</sup> He also discusses the sprinkling of the inner veil of the sanctuary and the horns of the altar with blood in connection with the offering for the sins of the high priest.<sup>77</sup>

Furthermore, Philo allegorizes the ritual of the red heifer, but he claims the high priest is instructed to take the “blood and sprinkle it seven times over everything in front of the sanctuary.”<sup>78</sup> In his characteristic way, he calls attention to Moses’ dividing the blood of sacrifice in two equal parts in Exod 24, and he asserts that the division of the blood in two portions shows that “sacred wisdom is of a twofold kind, divine and human.”<sup>79</sup>

In addition, Philo identifies the “bowls” into which the blood is poured with the senses of man—“sight,” “hearing,” and “smell.” “On these ‘bowls’ the Holy Word pours the blood, desiring that our rational part should be quickened.”<sup>80</sup> As a member of the delegation to the Roman emperor on behalf of the Jews of Alexandria, he informs Gaius

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<sup>75</sup>Philo *Spec.* 1.199.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., 1.205.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., 1.231-33.

<sup>78</sup>Philo *Spec.* 1.268.

<sup>79</sup>Philo *Her.* 182.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., 185; i.e., blood belongs to the irrational part of the human being, which animates the rational.

that blood has been poured on the altar for his benefit.<sup>81</sup> Gaius was not satisfied with the fact that sacrifices were offered on his behalf. He demanded that they be offered to him.

In Philo's writings blood is also spoken of as a plain physiological element. So, e.g., he refers to the fate of Flaccus whose corpse had been so mangled that the place of its location "was flooded with the blood which poured out like a fountain."<sup>82</sup>

### *Αἷμα* in Josephus

The use of the term "blood" in Josephus can be organized under three headings: (1) in the sense of death, (2) under the defilement/purification motif, and (3) in the sense of family relations.

#### Blood to Denote Sense of Death

The grim description of death is painted before the reader when Josephus describes the condition of Aristobulus who was continually plagued by the guilt of murder "until sheer grief rending his entrails, he threw up a quantity of blood."<sup>83</sup>

Josephus speaks of a wholesale carnage inflicted by Roman legions on the rebellious Jewish populace of Alexandria, in which he says of the soldiers, "there was no pity for infancy, no respect for years: all ages fell before their murderous career, until the

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<sup>81</sup>Philo *Legat.* 356.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid. He also recalls the biblical story of the Exodus, bringing to mind the turning of the waters of the Nile into blood. Speaking from the medical perspective, he not only refers to the decomposition of blood, but he also cites the liver as both a "sifter and creator of blood." Philo displays knowledge of the animal kingdom when he describes how a snake sucks the blood of an elephant in India, during which process both creatures perish.

<sup>83</sup>Josephus *Bellum Judaicum* (trans. Thackeray, LCL, 1.81).

whole district was deluged with blood and the heaps of corpses numbered fifty thousand.”<sup>84</sup>

Furthermore, Josephus gives a dramatic account of a naval battle involving a Roman and a Jewish fleet on the Lake of Gennesar in which heavy losses were inflicted upon the Jews to such an extent that “one could see the whole lake red with blood and covered with corpses, for not a man escaped.”<sup>85</sup> There are numerous references to blood and death in his writings.<sup>86</sup> The concept of blood/bloodshed is also an epitome for murder in Josephus.<sup>87</sup> But it is also evident that the term is also employed in the metaphorical sense.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>84</sup>Ibid., 2:494-97.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid., 3.530.

<sup>86</sup>See the following: BJ 3.63, 237, 249, 529. See also BJ 4.72, 313, 647. See also BJ 5.18. See also BJ 6.259, 275. See also AJ 5.114. See also AJ 6.363. See also AJ 8.361.

<sup>87</sup>A case in point is the fear expressed by the murderous Aristobulus as a servant carrying blood that he has thrown up, slips, and some of the blood falls on the bloodstain of his own brother whom he has murdered. When he hears what has happened, he exclaims: “Swift retribution pursues me for my kinsman’s blood” (BJ 1.82-84).

In another case, Josephus describes contumeliously the scheming and treacherous Cleopatra who does not hesitate to dispatch “her own family one after another” as one who is “now thirsting for the blood of foreigners” (BJ 1.359-60).

A reference to the Old Testament story about Naboth, whose vineyard king Ahab coveted and had him murdered, provides further evidence for the use of the term blood to denote murder in Josephus (AJ 8.407, 417).

As God renews His covenant with Noah after the flood, Josephus quotes God as saying to Noah, “Yet I exhort you to refrain from shedding human blood, to keep yourself pure from murder and to punish those guilty of such crime” (AJ 1.102).

<sup>88</sup>In his work, Josephus makes a metaphorical use of the term blood when he recounts the political intrigues of a Lacedaemonian named Eurycles—a schemer who would not hesitate “to make merchandise out of the realm at the price of blood” (BJ 1.514). Herod is also depicted as a tyrant who not only cripples the towns in his own dominion, but lavishes “the life-blood of Judaea on foreign communities” (BJ 2.85).

When Josephus speaks about the massacres of Jews by Syrians in Caesarea, he says of the Syrians that “they passed their days in blood, their nights, yet more dreadful, in terror” (BJ 2.463). Josephus, in describing the privations within the beleaguered city of Jerusalem, speaks of a situation where “it was still possible to feed upon the public miseries and to drink of the city’s life-blood.” His work is replete with numerous references to blood in the figurative sense (BJ 1.524, 628; BJ 3.75; BJ 4.561; BJ 5.344, 419, 440;

## Blood to Denote Defilement/Purification

In the narrative of the siege of Jerusalem, Josephus cites Titus who, in disgust, questions a man named John as to why he, his friends, and, in fact, all the Jews have permitted the temple to be defiled with the “blood of foreigner and native.”<sup>89</sup>

Moreover, Josephus refers to a situation in the heat of the siege of the city where pockets of brigands constituting the Jewish resistance lurk in alleys, killing and snatching food from people; they eat it even though it is “all defiled with blood.”<sup>90</sup>

In another instance, Josephus recalls the story of Joseph and how his brothers devise a plan to deceive their aged father about the “death” of his favorite son. According to him, they “befoul” (*μολῦναι*) his coat “with goat’s blood.”<sup>91</sup>

Furthermore, he cites the case of Saul’s soldiers who, in the excitement of victory over the Philistine camp, commit the defiling act of slaughtering their booty and eating “before they had duly washed away the blood and made the flesh clean.”<sup>92</sup>

Then, there is the story of Abigail’s encounter with furious David who is bent on punishing churlish Nabaal, but she pacifies him by thanking “God who has prevented thee from soiling thy hands with human blood.”<sup>93</sup> Blood is also simply referred to as a

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AJ 3.183; AJ 6.82; AJ 7.314, 337; AJ 9.108, 123; AJ 10.38; AJ 19.87).

<sup>89</sup>Ibid., BJ 6.126.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid., 372.

<sup>91</sup>Josephus, AJ 2.35.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid., 6.120.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid., 6.303. Reflecting on the story of the Passover, Josephus acknowledges the fact that blood is also a purifying agent (AJ 2.312). Josephus also touches on the question of eating blood. Commenting on Lev 17, he writes: “However, blood of any description he has forbidden to be used for food, regarding it as the soul of the soul and spirit” (AJ 3.260).

physiological substance in the writings of Josephus.<sup>94</sup> Moreover, there are references to blood in the cultic context in Josephus.<sup>95</sup>

### Blood to Denote Family Relationship

Finally, in the writings of Josephus, blood is employed as a term designating family relationship. He points out that Aaron, the brother of Moses, was the first high priest and, after his death, he was succeeded by his sons. “Wherefore it is also a tradition that none should hold God’s high priesthood save him who is of Aaron’s blood.”<sup>96</sup>

Moreover, Josephus makes reference to a man named “Haman, the son of Amadathos, of the Amalekite race, an alien among those of Persian blood” to whom kindness was shown.<sup>97</sup>

King Saul is said to have kept to himself all matters related to the kingdom even from his loyal friends “whom he loved more affectionately than all those of his blood.”<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>94</sup>He speaks of Aristobulus’s illness, which became more acute because of his guilt feelings. Consequently, “his inward parts were corrupted by intense pain, and he vomited blood” (AJ 13.314). Another instance is cited where one Zenodorus “suffered a ruptured intestine, and losing a great quantity of blood in his illness, departed this life” (AJ 15.359).

Again, Josephus describes a murder scene in which one Caesonia is found stretched beside the corpse of her murdered husband. She is portrayed as “all dabbled with blood from his wounds and in a state of deep misery” (19.195). Further references to blood as a physiological substance can be found in Josephus (BJ 4.480, 561; BJ 7.181; AJ 1.185; AJ 3.17; AJ 7.309; AJ 9.39; AJ 13.314-15; AJ 18.175; AJ 19.123).

<sup>95</sup>In the story of the sacrifice of Isaac, he maintains that God forbids Abraham from taking the life of his son because it is “from no craving for human blood that He had given command for the slaughter” of the lad. (AJ 1.233). Josephus focuses on blood and describes its manipulation in the cultic ceremonies (AJ 3.205, 206. See also 3.226, 228, 231, 242, 4.79). He also recounts that when David brought the Ark to Jerusalem, a huge procession went before it with sacrifices, “drenching the ground with libations and the blood of numerous victims” (AJ 8.101).

<sup>96</sup>Ibid., 20.226.

<sup>97</sup>Ibid., 11.227.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid., 6.59.



During Absalom's rebellion against David, a message calculated to inspire loyalty to the king was sent to the chiefs of Judah and especially the words "as you are his kin and have common blood with him"<sup>99</sup> were added.

Joshua made the people of Israel swear an oath of allegiance to be faithful to the covenant and that "should any person of their blood essay to confound and dissolve the constitution that was based on those laws," they should be dealt with accordingly.<sup>100</sup>

Finally, in the saga of Joseph, when the sons of Jacob were charged with espionage and arrayed before the Egyptian authorities, Ruben, the eldest, had to make a speech in defense of them all, stressing their innocence and further affirming that "we are brethren and of one blood."<sup>101</sup>

### *Αἷμα* in Rabbinic Literature

For the purpose of organization, the use of the term blood (דָּם) in Rabbinic literature has been grouped under three categories: (1) the figurative/superstitious use, (2) its cultic sense, (3) the subject of ritual defilement.

#### Blood, Figurative/Superstitious Use

A figurative use of the term *blood* is found in the course of a conversation between Rabbi Nahman and a man who is said to have come from a place called Damharia. Upon hearing the word Damharia, Rabbi Nahman puns on the Hebrew דָּם

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<sup>99</sup>Ibid., 7.260.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid., 4.310.

<sup>101</sup>Ibid., 2.102.

(blood”) and makes the statement: “Blood will be his latter end.”<sup>102</sup>

In a discussion regarding a thief who breaks into a house, Raba maintains that since his entry is unlawful, he has evil intent and enters at his own risk. Therefore, if he steals utensils and departs without being caught, he is free from making restitution because “he has purchased them with his blood.”<sup>103</sup>

According to Rabbi ben Yohai, there are five things, including blood-letting, that can cause a man who “does them to forfeit his life and his blood upon his own head.” Therefore, he asserts that blood-letting followed immediately by sexual intercourse should be avoided because whosoever indulges in that “will have feeble children.”<sup>104</sup>

Rabbi Papa also warns that on the day of blood-letting, one should not eat fish or fowl. He reinforces this warning by quoting Samuel, a physician, who says that “if a man who has let blood eats the flesh of fowl, his heart will fly off like a fowl.”<sup>105</sup>

The record says, “A Tanna cited in the presence of R. Nahman b. Isaac” claims that “if one dreams that he is undergoing blood-letting, his iniquities are forgiven.”<sup>106</sup> However the blood-letter’s lancet is susceptible to uncleanness.<sup>107</sup>

Furthermore, it is said that the wise judge Rabbi Bana’ah once saw an inscription

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<sup>102</sup>B. T. *R.Sh.* 21a. Whatever the Rabbi meant by that statement is not the objective of this citation. The point at stake here is a figurative use of the term blood.

<sup>103</sup>B. T. *Sanh.* 72a.

<sup>104</sup>B. T. *Nidd.* 17a-17b.

<sup>105</sup>B. T. *Meil.* 20b-21a.

<sup>106</sup>B. T. *Ber.* 57a.

<sup>107</sup>Herbert Danby, *The Mishnah* (London: Oxford University Press, 1944), 622.

over a gateway that read, “At the head of all death am I, Blood: At the head of all life am I, Wine.”<sup>108</sup>

### Blood in Cultic Use

The writings of the Rabbis also reflect a cultic usage of the term *blood*. A rabbinic injunction regarding the sprinkling of blood at the altar stipulates:

If blood which has to be sprinkled . . . once has been mixed with other blood which has to be sprinkled once, the whole has to be sprinkled once. If blood which has to be sprinkled four times has been mixed with other blood which has to be sprinkled four times, the whole must be sprinkled four times. If blood which has to be sprinkled four times is mixed with blood which has to be sprinkled once, R. Eleazar says the whole should be sprinkled four times.<sup>109</sup>

On the contrary, R. Joshua argues that “it should be sprinkled once.”<sup>110</sup>

The cultic importance of blood at the altar is stressed in both the “sin” and “guilt” offerings.<sup>111</sup> However, rabbinic law specifies that “the laying hands, waving, bringing near [the meal-offering], taking the hand-ful, burning [the fat], wringing [the neck of bird sacrifices], receiving and sprinkling [the blood], are performed by men and not by women, excepting the meal-offering of a *sotah* and *anezirah* where they [themselves] do perform waving.”<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>108</sup>B. T. *B.B.* 58a-58b.

<sup>109</sup>B. T. *R.Sh.* 28b.

<sup>110</sup>Ibid. The text provides arguments justifying each man’s position, but this is not the place to accept or reject either. The point of this quotation is to substantiate the cultic use of the term blood in rabbinic literature. See also B. T. *Pes.* 64a-64b, 65a-65b; B. T. *Hag.* 11a; B. T. *Sanh.* 3b-4a, 34b.

<sup>111</sup>B. T. *Yeb.* 7a-7b. It is written: “‘As the sin-offering so is the guilt-offering’: As the sin-offering requires application of the blood to, and burning of the prescribed portions upon the altar, so does the guilt-offering also require application of the blood to, and burning of the prescribed portions upon the altar” (ibid.).

<sup>112</sup>B. T. *Kidd.* 36a.

A description of blood manipulation at the altar in *Yoma* shows the priest sprinkling both the inner and the outer altars as well as the horns.

Finally, “the remainder of the blood at the western base of the outer altar and the remainder of the blood sprinkled on the altar he poured out at the southern base.”<sup>113</sup> Both mingle and flow through a canal into the brook of Kidron.

In the rabbinic writings, there is a deep respect for the sanctity of blood. For this reason, in keeping with the Torah, instruction is provided for its disposal. In fact it is asserted that the covering up of blood after slaughter is binding both in the land of Israel and outside it.<sup>114</sup> However, if an animal is slaughtered in dedication to an idol, its blood should not be covered. This rule is applicable also to wild animals or birds, all the more if they become carrion in the hand of the slayer.<sup>115</sup> The rule stipulates further that if an imbecile, a deaf-mute, or a minor slays a wild animal or bird in the sight of others, those who saw the act are responsible for covering up the blood of such an animal. But if no one witnessed such slaying, the blood should be left uncovered.<sup>116</sup> The law also says if one slays one hundred wild animals in the same place, if he covers the blood of one, that goes for all of the rest. Furthermore, the law stipulates that if a man has to slaughter a wild animal and a bird, he should slay the animal first and cover up its blood before slaying the bird. If the slayer did not cover the blood, whoever saw him do it becomes

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<sup>113</sup>B. T. *Yoma* 58a-58b.

<sup>114</sup>Danby, 522.

<sup>115</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>116</sup>*Ibid.*

responsible for covering up the blood. If the blood was duly covered and later it became uncovered, it need not be covered again. But if the wind covered it up and later it became uncovered, it must be covered up again.<sup>117</sup>

Further instruction with respect to the covering of blood is provided in the rabbinic writings. For instance, if blood be mixed with water and yet has the appearance of blood, it must be covered up. However, if blood be mixed with wine it is viewed as water. In the same way, it is looked upon as water if it is mixed with the blood of a living animal. Spattered blood on objects and knife, if not mixed with other blood, must be covered up.<sup>118</sup> According to the law, the prescribed material for covering such blood is fine dung, or fine sand, or lime, or pieces of potsherd or brick that have been crushed.<sup>119</sup>

With respect to blood aspersion, the Talmud cites a strange case of analogy where Rab Judah compares the throwing of a stick before an idol to the rite of sprinkling blood in the Temple.<sup>120</sup> Moreover a rabbinic injunction forbids a “lay Israelite, a mourner, an inebriate, or one blemished” from receiving, carrying, or sprinkling the Passover blood, and this pertains also to “one seated and the left hand.”<sup>121</sup> The Talmud also upholds and

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<sup>117</sup>Ibid.

<sup>118</sup>Ibid., 523.

<sup>119</sup>Ibid.

<sup>120</sup>B. T. *A.Zar.* 50b-51a. See also B. T. *Sanh.* 60b-61a, where R. Johanan and Resh Lakish dispute the propriety of using both the blood and the fat of a cow that has been slaughtered with idolatrous intent, for cultic purposes. See also B.T. *Pes.* 64a; B. T. *Yom.* 43b, where the golden utensils for catching blood in the ritual are mentioned.

<sup>121</sup>B. T. *Yom.* 48b-49a, 53b, describes a ceremony for sprinkling blood at the sanctuary. See also B. T. *Bekh.* 21b-22a. Here “R. Eliezer b. Jacob says: If a large domestic animal has discharged a clot of blood, it [the clot] shall be buried, and it [the mother] is exempted from the law of the firstling.” There are cultic regulations regarding the covering of the blood of both birds and quadrupeds. See also B. T. *Pes.* 65a-65b; B. T. *Sukk.* 33a; B. T. *A.Zar.* 47a; B. T. *Betz.* 7b-8a; B. T. *Hull.* 17a passim.

comments on the biblical command prohibiting the consumption of blood.<sup>122</sup>

### Blood and Ritual Defilement

There is an abundance of material in rabbinic literature with respect to blood as a defiling agent. According to the teaching of the Rabbis, “a log of blood” or “a log of mixed blood” from a corpse or two, or “the blood of a child that has completely flowed forth” defiles.<sup>123</sup> A tent may be defiled by blood<sup>124</sup> whether the blood be dry or wet.<sup>125</sup>

One also finds in rabbinic literature differences of opinion between the schools of Shamai and Hillel as to the ritual state of the “blood of a carcass,” “the blood of a gentile woman,” and “‘the blood of purity’ of a leprous woman.”<sup>126</sup>

The ritual state of blood is such a crucial issue in Judaism that when Rabbi Akiba was tempted in a matter of pronouncing judgment in a certain case or compromising for his personal advantage, he decided to stick to principle. He is quoted as saying, “It is better for me to be called a fool all my days than that I should become [even] for one hour

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<sup>122</sup>According to the Rabbis, the command to abstain from eating blood also implies that adults should refrain from giving blood in the form of food to the young (B. T. *Yeb.* 114a-114b). In fact, among the offenses for which judicial flogging is prescribed is the consumption of blood (B. T. *Makk.* 13a). Blood-eating is also punishable by extinction (B. T. *Ker.* 2a, *passim.*). Furthermore, the eating of blood drawn from living animals is condemned, as well as eating a piece of flesh cut from the same (B. T. *Sanh.* 56a-56b; 56b-57a; 59a). Since blood is regarded as a special possession of God, he who eats blood is “guilty of malappropriation” and needs to atone for his sin (B. T. *Naz.* 32a). See also *Ket.* 60a. Even though human blood is not allowed for consumption, blood “which is between the teeth may be sucked without any scruple.” It is also interesting to note that rabbinical teaching defines apostasy in terms of eating blood and suet (*Hor.* 11a).

<sup>123</sup>B. T. *Ohol.* 2:2. See also *ibid.*, 3:5 where “mixed blood” is defined.

<sup>124</sup>B. T. *Naz.* 38a.

<sup>125</sup>B. T. *Nidd.* 22a-22b.

<sup>126</sup>B. T. *Eduy.* 5:1.

a wicked man in the sight of God; and let not men say: he withdrew his opinion for the sake of getting power. He used to pronounce unclean the hair which has been left over [in leprosy], and yellow blood.”<sup>127</sup>

Since blood effects defilement, there are directions on how it should be handled.<sup>128</sup> Rabbi b. Eliezer declares among other things that “blood, from blood-letting for healing, is unclean.”<sup>129</sup> The defiling power of blood is further reflected in a dictum attributed to R. Zera: “The daughters of Israel imposed spontaneously upon themselves the restriction that if they saw [on their garments] a spot of blood no bigger than a mustard seed, they waited for seven days without issue [before taking a ritual bath].”<sup>130</sup>

Again, based on the Levitical law, the contaminating power of blood is reflected in rabbinic literature. It is stated that a woman “who sits over clean blood is forbidden intercourse.”<sup>131</sup>

The danger of defilement posed by blood is the cause of intricate rabbinic argument.<sup>132</sup> The issue of blood and defilement is crucial to Judaism as the story of R.

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<sup>127</sup>Ibid., 5:6.

<sup>128</sup>B. T. *Hull.* 87a-87b. The following instruction is provided to guide animal slaughter: “If a person slaughtered and the blood was absorbed in the earth he must nevertheless cover it up. If the blood became mixed with water and it still has the color of blood, it must be covered up. If it became mixed with wine, [the wine] is to be regarded as though it was water. If it became mixed with the blood of cattle or with the blood of a wild animal, it is to be regarded as though it was water. . . . The blood which spurted out and that which is upon the knife must also be covered up” (ibid.).

<sup>129</sup>B. T. *Maksh.* 6:7.

<sup>130</sup>B. T. *Meg.* 28b-29a.

<sup>131</sup>B. T. *Pes.* 113b-114a.

<sup>132</sup>B. T. *Nidd.* 71a-71b. The question leading to a rabbinic debate is posed: “What is meant by ‘mingled blood’? R. Eliezer son of R. Judah explained: If blood issued from a slain man both while he was still alive and when he was dead and it is doubtful whether [a full quarter of a log] issued while he was alive

Eleazar son of R. Simeon reveals: “Sixty specimens of blood were brought . . . and he declared them all clean.”<sup>133</sup>

In answer to a question regarding personal safety and the risk of pollution of the land resulting from shedding blood on the Sabbath, R. ben Azariah ruled,

If a thief be found breaking in. Now if in the case of this one it is doubtful whether he has come to take money or life, and although the shedding of blood pollutes the land, so that the *Shechinah* departs from Israel, yet it is lawful to save oneself at the cost of his life—how much more may one suspend the laws of the Sabbath to save human life!<sup>134</sup>

The Rabbis understood blood as being synonymous with murder, since it involves bloodshed.<sup>135</sup>

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and partly while he was dead, such is mingled blood. But the sages ruled: In a private domain such a case of doubt is unclean while in a public domain such a case of doubt is clean. What then is meant by ‘mingled blood’? If a quarter of a log of blood issued from a slain man both while he was still alive and when he was dead and the flow had not yet ceased and it is doubtful whether the greater part issued while he was alive and the lesser part when he was dead or whether the lesser part issued while he was alive and the greater part when he was dead, such is mingled blood. R. Judah ruled: The blood of a slain man, from whom a quarter of a log of blood issued while he was lying in bed with his blood dripping into a hole, is unclean, because the drop of death is mingled with it, but the sages hold it to be clean because each single drop is detached from the other. But did not the Rabbis speak well to R. Judah?—R. Judah follows his own principle, for he laid down that no blood can neutralize other blood? R. Simeon ruled: If the blood of a man crucified on the beam was flowing slowly to the ground, and a quarter of a log of blood was found under him, it is unclean. R. Judah declared it clean, since it might be held that the drop of death remained on the beam. But why should not R. Judah say to himself ‘since it might be held that the drop of death remained on the bed’?—[The case of blood] in a bed is different since it percolates” (ibid.).

<sup>133</sup>B. T. *B.M.* 84b.

<sup>134</sup>B. T. *Yom.* 85a-85b.

<sup>135</sup>Raba answered with a tinge of sarcasm, the man who had asked him whether it was lawful for him to kill another at the command of the governor of his town or else he himself be killed: “Let him kill you rather than that you should commit murder, what [reason] do you see [for thinking] that your blood is redder? Perhaps his blood is redder” (B. T. *Pes.* 25a-25b).

Again, the Rabbis maintained that God had given to Noah “seven commandments embracing the whole of natural religion,” and one of these is the commandment against murder (B. T. *Azar.* 2b-3a). See also B. T. *Shab.* 31b-31a, where God has commanded concerning blood. See also *Hag.* 15b, where, it is said, “If the Holy One, blessed be He, is thus grieved over the blood of the wicked, how much more so over the blood of the righteous that is shed.” See also B. T. *Sanh.* 46a. For this reason, witnesses in a murder charge are “inspired with awe” and “intimidated” to speak the truth. Failure of this means a false witness “is held responsible” for the blood of the accused “and the blood of his descendants until the end of time”



## *Αἷμα* in the Greco-Roman World

Blood also played an outstanding role in the religions of the Greco-Roman world.

This role was especially seen in the mystery religions<sup>136</sup> and more specifically in the taurobolium (*ταυροβόλιου*), which was associated with the cult of Cybele, otherwise known as the *Magna Mater*.<sup>137</sup>

The following is the gory account of the rite of the taurobolium:

The high priest who is to be consecrated is brought down underground in a pit

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(B. T. *Sahn*.37a). “For thus we find in the case of Cain, who killed his brother, that it is written: The bloods of thy brother cry unto me: not the blood of thy brother, but the bloods of thy brother, is said—i.e., his blood and the blood of his [potential] descendants” (ibid.). See also B. T. *Yom*. 9b, passim, where it is said of Manasseh: “Moreover Manasseh shed innocent blood very much, till he filled Jerusalem from one end to another.” See also B. T. *A. Zar*. 22b. A rabbinic injunction forbids trusting cattle or women with the heathen on grounds of their propensity towards immorality. “Nor should a man be alone with them. Because they are suspected of shedding blood” (ibid.). See also a statement in B. T. *Ab*. 5.9. “Wild beasts come to the world for vain swearing, and for the profanation of the Name. Exile comes to the world for idolatry, for incest and for bloodshed.”

Furthermore, rabbinic literature asserts that “there is nothing that comes before the saving of life except idolatry, incest and bloodshed” (B. T. *Ket*. 18b-19a). Finally, rabbinic teaching confirms the biblical position that illicit bloodshed defiles the land (B. T. *Shebu*. 7b. See also B. T. *Sahn*. 70a. The teaching reiterates the biblical warning forbidding looking upon wine “for it leads to bloodshed” (ibid.).

<sup>136</sup>See Helmut Koester, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1982), 1:191. The author gives an account of a two-week Spring festival which was celebrated by the devotees of Attis. On an appointed day designated “*dies sanguinis*: the *galli* a lower class of priests, cut their skins in a frenzied ecstatic dance and sprinkled their blood upon the image of the goddess while the novices castrated themselves in ecstasy” (ibid.).

<sup>137</sup>Franz Cumont, *The Oriental Religions in Roman Paganism*, with an introductory essay by G. Showerman (New York: Dover Publications, 1956), 66. The author observes, “We know the nature of this sacrifice, of which Prudentius gives a stirring description based on personal recollection of the proceeding. On an open platform a steer was killed, and the blood dropped down upon the mystic, who was standing in an excavation below. ‘Through the thousand crevices in the wood,’ says the poet, ‘the bloody dew runs down into the pit. The neophyte receives the falling drops on his head clothes and body. He leans backward to have his cheeks, his ears, his lips and his nostrils wetted; he pours the liquid over his eyes, and does not even spare his palate, for he moistens his tongue with blood and drinks it eagerly.’ After submitting to this repulsive sprinkling he offered himself to the veneration of the crowd. They believed that he was purified of his faults, and had become the equal of the deity through his red baptism” (ibid.). See also Ronald H. Nash, *The Gospel and the Greeks* (Richardson, TX: Probe Books, 1992), 141-42. See also Gordon J. Laing, *Survivals of Roman Religion* (New York: Longman Green and Co., 1931), 124-25. Speaking of the taurobolium he says, “It was literally a baptism of blood. It cleansed the sins away. The person who submitted to it was ‘born again.’ Some ancient records speak of its efficacy as limited to twenty years; according to others it lasted forever” (ibid.).

dug deep, marvellously adorned with a fillet, binding his festive temples with chaplets, his hair combed back under a golden crown, and wearing a silken toga caught up with Gabine girding.

Over this they make a wooden floor, with wide spaces, woven of planks with an open mesh; they then divide or bore the area and repeatedly pierce the wood with a pointed tool that it may appear full of small holes.

Hither a huge bull, fierce and shaggy in appearance, is led, bound with flowery garlands about its flanks, and with horns sheathed; yea, the forehead of the victim sparkles with gold, and the flash of metal plates colours its hair.

Here, as is ordained, the beast is to be slain, and they pierce its breast with a sacred spear; the gaping wound emits a wave of hot blood, and the smoking river flows into the woven structure beneath it and surges wide.

Then the many paths of the thousand openings in the lattice the falling shower rains down a foul dew, which the priest buried within catches putting his shameful head under all the drops, defiled both in his clothing and in all his body.

Yea, he throws back his face, he puts his cheeks in the way of the blood, he puts under it his ears and lips, he interposes his nostrils, he washes his very eyes with the fluid, nor does he even spare his throat but moistens his tongue, until he actually drinks the dark gore.

Afterwards, the flamens draw the corpse, stiffening now that the blood has gone forth, and shows his wet head, his beard heavy with blood, his dripping fillets and sodden garments.

This man, defiled with such contagious and foul with the gore of the recent sacrifice, all hail and worship at a distance, because profane blood and a dead ox have washed him while concealed in a filthy cave.<sup>138</sup>

Robert Duthoy traces the historical development of the taurobolium.<sup>139</sup> He asserts

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<sup>138</sup>Peristephanon, X, 1011-50, quoted in C. K. Barrett, ed., *The New Testament Background: Selected Documents* (London: S. P. C. K. , 1956), 96, 97.

<sup>139</sup>Robert Duthoy, *The Taurobolium: Its Evolution and Terminology* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1969), 116. "If we now go back to what has been said in the preceding chapters, we can see that in the history of the taurobolium three periods of change have occurred. About A.D. 160 the taurobolium was incorporated in the cult of Cybele; about A.D. 225 the ceremony with the *cernus* part of the rite; and finally about A.D. 300 the taurobolium developed into the baptism of blood in the pit that we know from Prudentius. We should like to emphasize once again that the transitions from one form of the rite to the next were gradual and did not take place overnight. Indeed the whole of the second phase was itself a transition. It is only for

that the “oldest taurobolia in the cult of Cybele were performed for the benefit of the emperor, but after only a short time, it also became customary to celebrate the rite for the prosperity of the dedicator.”<sup>140</sup>

One of the motivating factors that inspired the taurobolium was the “longing for purity and purification.” The worshipers of Cybele sought to ascribe such “purifying power to the blood of the victim in the taurobolium.”<sup>141</sup>

Another factor that encouraged participation in the rite was the desire for rejuvenation, which could be spiritual or physical, or both.<sup>142</sup> However, Duthoy has shown in his research, though “the nature of the taurobolium in its premetroac phase remains uncertain, yet a number of indications point to its having consisted of a ritual hunt followed by a sacrifice of the quarry.”<sup>143</sup>

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the sake of clarity that we have marked the various stages off so definitely” (ibid.). See also Laing, 122. The author points out that “the cult of this Phrygian divinity, variously called the Mother of the gods, Cybele, the Great Mother or Idaean Mother, was introduced into Rome in 204 B.C.” (ibid.).

<sup>140</sup>Duthoy, 117.

<sup>141</sup>Ibid., 118-19.

<sup>142</sup>Cumont, 67. The author points out, “The ideas on which the immolation was based were originally just as barbarous as the sacrifice itself. It is a matter of general belief among savage peoples that one acquires the qualities of an enemy slain in battle or of a beast killed in the chase by drinking or washing in the blood, or by eating some of the viscera of the body. The blood, especially, has often been considered as the seat of vital energy. By moistening his body with the blood of the slaughtered steer, the neophyte believed that he was transfusing the strength of the formidable beast into his own limbs” (ibid.).

<sup>143</sup>Duthoy, 126. See also 125, where the author reveals that “the words *taurobolium* and *criobolium* which originally denoted the hunting and the struggle were perhaps also used for the killing and sacrifice of the animal.”

## *Αἷμα* in the New Testament

The term *αἷμα* occurs ninety-seven times in the entire New Testament.<sup>144</sup> The word has been employed in the New Testament in five senses: (1) for death/murder, (2) for the vicarious death of Christ, (3) as a designation for humanity, (4) in symbolic usage, and (5) in a physiological sense.

### Blood as Death/Murder

Several texts in the New Testament employ the term blood in the death/murder sense. For instance, in Matt 23:30, Jesus denounces a hypocritical attitude of veneration on the part of the Pharisees and Scribes toward the remains and the tombs of the prophets while rejecting His message of repentance, which was the very essence of prophetic preaching.<sup>145</sup> Jesus bemoans the fact that His own generation is revealing the same spirit of rebellion that led their forefathers to murder those very prophets whose tombs have now become objects of their veneration and admiration.

In Matt 23:35, He condemns them for shedding the innocent blood of holy men from Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Barachiah, who was murdered between the sanctuary and the altar. In fact, Donald Hagner comments that notwithstanding their disclaimer, the Jewish religious leaders are at one with their fathers in killing those sent by God to them. In this sense, the Scribes and Pharisees will not only be guilty of the blood of Jesus and those whom He sends but will also be considered, in principle, guilty

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<sup>144</sup>Bachmann and Slaby, 50-54. In this chapter, however, I do not examine the usage of the term in Hebrews. This has been reserved for chapter 5.

<sup>145</sup>See also Luke 11:50.

of the blood of the OT prophets murdered by their fathers.<sup>146</sup>

At the trial of Jesus, Pilate declares himself guiltless of His blood.<sup>147</sup> But “Pilate’s public and apparent display of innocence cannot, however, veil his own complicity, even if reluctant and passive, in the death of Jesus.” It appears, at a deeper level, that Matthew is alluding to a ritual prescribed in the Old Testament, where the law states that if the body of a murder victim is found in the open countryside, then the leaders of the nearest town shall engage in a hand-washing ritual, praying as they do, “‘Our hands did not shed this blood, nor were we witnesses to it.’ Absolve O Lord, your people Israel, whom you redeemed; do not let the guilt of innocent blood remain in the midst of your people Israel” (Deut 21:7, 8).<sup>148</sup>

At one time, Jesus was informed by some people in His audience concerning Pilate who had murdered some Galileans by mingling their blood with their sacrifices.<sup>149</sup> The use of blood as a term for murder in the NT is also reflected by a narrative in Acts

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<sup>146</sup>Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 33B (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1995), 676. See also Luke 11:51.

<sup>147</sup>Matt 27:24.

<sup>148</sup>Hagner, 827. See also Thomas G. Long, *Matthew*, Westminster Bible Companion (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 313. See also Leopold Sabourin, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew*, 2 vols. (Bombay, India: St. Paul Publications, 1983), 904. The author thinks, “Matthew has captured the significance of the scene and expressed it by blending together his own perspective with O. T. models. These may be found first in Deut 21:1-9 where the elders are instructed to ‘wash their hands’ over the substitutionary sacrificial victim, as a symbolical gesture that ‘our hands did not shed this blood.’ More directly, perhaps, Pilate’s hand washing and his words reflect formulations found in the Psalms: ‘I wash my hands in innocence’ Ps 26:6. ‘I wash my hands as an innocent man’ Ps 73:13” (ibid.).

<sup>149</sup>Luke 13:1. See also Janice Knight, *Luke’s Gospel*, New Testament Readings (New York: Routledge, 1998), 114. See also Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 514. Green confirms the point that “the scenario presented to Jesus is of Pilate’s execution of Jewish pilgrims from Galilee, cut down while in the act of offering sacrifices” (ibid.).

that relates how Stephen's blood was shed by stoning as Paul stood by and watched, guarding the clothes of his murderers.<sup>150</sup> Perhaps the action of the mob illustrates well what Paul says about feet that hasten to shed blood.<sup>151</sup> God, however, is presented as the avenger of blood for his murdered saints.<sup>152</sup>

The vicarious quality of the blood of Christ is clearly presented in the works of the New Testament writers. They make no bones about the fact that it is the blood of Jesus that is shed on behalf of many for the remission of sin.<sup>153</sup> Donald Senior sees in the expression, "the blood of Jesus shed on behalf of many" ('my blood of the covenant'), a reference probably inspired by Exod 24 where Moses pours half of the blood of slaughtered oxen on the altar and then sprinkles the rest on the people declaring, 'see the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words' (Exod 24:8). The blood of Christ in this context is a symbol of life which expresses the covenant between God and Israel.<sup>154</sup> Undoubtedly the blood spoken of

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<sup>150</sup>Acts 22:20.

<sup>151</sup>Rom 3:19.

<sup>152</sup>Rev 6:10; 16:6; 19:2.

<sup>153</sup>Matt 26:26-30; Mark 14:22-26; Luke 22:15-20; 1 Cor 11:23-25. See also D. Edmond Hiebert, *The Gospel of Mark* (Greenville, SC: Bob James University Press, 1994), 409. Hiebert asserts, "Only that blood in being poured out could ratify the New Covenant" (ibid.). See also Craig S. Keener, *Matthew*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series, vol. 1 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 368. The author observes, "Many of his words (such as body, blood, and poured out) suggest sacrificial terminology" (ibid.). See also Joseph C. Fenton, *Saint Matthew*, S. C. M. Pelican Commentaries (London: S. C. M. Press, 1977), 417. Fenton says Jesus "compares the bread to his body, and the cup of wine to his blood. The separation between body and blood suggests sacrifice because in the Old Testament sacrifices the blood was separated from the body" (ibid.).

<sup>154</sup>Donald Senior, *Matthew*, Abingdon New Testament Commentaries (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998), 300.

here is not the blood that was necessary to the first covenant but that which inaugurates the new covenant.<sup>155</sup>

Resorting to cultic imagery, Paul speaks of Jesus whom “God set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood.”<sup>156</sup> Karl Barth points out that “the propitiation occurs at the place of propitiation—only by blood, whereby we are solemnly reminded that blood gives life only through death. Consequently, in Jesus also atonement occurs only through the faithfulness of God, by his blood.”<sup>157</sup> The same imagery is conjured when believers are described as people elected “through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.”<sup>158</sup> Again, by His blood, believers

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<sup>155</sup>Hagner, 773.

<sup>156</sup>Rom 3:25.

<sup>157</sup>Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans. E. C. Hoskyns (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), 105. See also Matthew Black, *Romans*, New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 62. Black says these words “make precise the sense in which St. Paul speaks of Jesus as a hilastērion; it is above all the dying Jesus, Christ crucified, ‘the shedding and sprinkling of blood is a principal idea, not secondary’ (ibid.). See also William Hendriksen, *Exposition of Paul’s Epistle to the Romans*, New Testament Commentary, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1980), 132. Hendriksen holds that “blood represents life. The words ‘by shedding of his blood’ refer to the Messiah’s voluntary sacrifice of his life in the place of those whom he came to save” (ibid.). See also Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 232-33. Here, Moo maintains that “this interpretation, which has an ancient and respectable heritage, has been gaining strength in recent years. It is attractive because it gives to hilastērion a meaning that is derived from its ‘customary’ biblical usage, and creates an analogy between a central OT ritual and Christ’s death that is both theologically sound and hermeneutically striking” (ibid.).

<sup>158</sup>1 Pet 1:2; Rev 1:5; 7:14; 12:11; 19:13; 1 John 1:7. See also Paul Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1996), 88. Achtemeier observes that “a more direct parallel to the sprinkling of blood, however, is found in the O.T. account of the establishment of the covenant between God and Israel (Exod 24:3-8).” See also J. Ramsey Michaels, *1 Peter*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 49 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1988), 12-13. Michaels points out, “to ‘obey’ was to accept the Gospel and become a part of a new community under a new covenant; to be sprinkled with Jesus’ blood was to be cleansed from one’s former way of living and released from spiritual slavery by the power of his death.” See also I. Howard Marshall, *1 Peter*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series, vol. 17 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1991), 32. Here Marshall proposes that “just as the covenant between God and Israel was sealed by a ritual in which the people were sprinkled with the blood of a sacrifice (Exod 24:7, 8), so Christians can be regarded as dedicated to God by being sprinkled with the blood of Jesus.” See also Peter H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand

have redemption,<sup>159</sup> and those who were once far from the commonwealth of the redeemed have now been brought near.<sup>160</sup> Thus through the blood of His cross, cosmic reconciliation has been achieved between heaven and earth.<sup>161</sup>

### Blood as a Designation for Humanity

There are instances where the term “blood” is coupled with the word “flesh” to designate humanity. The expression is used when Jesus commends Peter for revealing His divine identity on the way to Caesarea Philippi.<sup>162</sup>

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Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 49. According to Davids, “the people who have responded to the gospel proclamation have been properly brought into a covenant relationship with God, and that covenant is not the old one of Sinai, but the new one based on the blood of Christ himself” (ibid.).

<sup>159</sup>Eph 1:7. See also Klyne Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 51. The author points out, “The price paid is clearly the ‘blood’ of Christ, which is merely a short hand way of pointing to his sacrificial death and the new covenant it established with God” (ibid.). See also Marcus Barth, *Ephesians*, The Anchor Bible, vol. 34-34A (New York: Doubleday, 1974), 83. Barth says, “The text makes a sudden transition . . . to Jesus Christ’s death on the cross. . . . It is unlikely that ‘blood’ refers to the eucharistic cup, but the liturgy of the eucharist may have been the channel through which the congregation became aware of the sacrificial meaning of Christ’s blood” (ibid.).

<sup>160</sup>Eph 2:13. See also A. T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 42 (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1990), 139. Lincoln holds that “in addition, in the coming near of which no special conditions to be fulfilled, all that is necessary has already been accomplished through Christ’s sacrificial death—‘ἐν τῷ αἵματι τοῦ Χριστοῦ’ through the blood of Christ” (ibid.). See also Adrienne Von Speyr, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, trans. A. Walker (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1996), 98. Speyr comments, “And this has happened in the blood of Christ, since he shed his blood for them and thereby purchased them for himself, in order to give them to one another as well” (ibid.).

<sup>161</sup>Col 1:16.

<sup>162</sup>Matt 16:17. In John 1:13, it is made clear that the birth of Jesus is not the result of the biological drive of human desire. See also Keener, 270. Keener points out, “Peter did not receive his revelation from man, literally ‘flesh and blood’ a common expression for ‘mortals’ or ‘humans’” (ibid.). See also Senior, 190. Senior claims “Peter is openly blessed by Jesus because his recognition of Jesus’ true identity is no mere human intuition, but a revelation from my Father in heaven” (ibid.). See also Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John (I-XII)*, The Anchor Bible, vol. 29 (New York: Doubleday, 1966), 12. Brown points out here that “the word for ‘blood’ is plural. This is curious against a background of Hebrew mentality for there the plural of ‘blood’ means bloodshed. Bernard suggests a background of Greek physiology where the embryo was thought to be made of the mother’s blood and the father’s seed. In this interpretation, the three negatives in the verse rule out woman, lust, and man” (ibid.).



Paul, asserting and claiming divine guidance in his call to ministry, explains that when he was beset with some difficulties he did not consult with “flesh and blood.” In connection with this incident, Samuel Williams has observed that the syntax of Paul’s sentence throws his stress not on his conversion experience itself, but on how he responded to that happening and what he did immediately thereafter. He did not right away confer with any human being (“flesh and blood”), he says, nor did he go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before him.<sup>163</sup> Again, Paul employs the phrase when he insists that the kingdom of God cannot be inherited by carnally minded human beings of flesh and blood.<sup>164</sup>

When he writes the letter to the Ephesians, Paul provides a cosmic and spiritual dimension to the nature of the Christian’s struggle for existence as he talks about wrestling not “against flesh and blood but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>163</sup>Gal 1:16. See also Samuel K. Williams, *Galatians*, Abingdon New Testament Commentaries (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1997), 47. See also Ben Witherington III, *Grace in Galatia* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 116. The author argues that the disturbing aspects of Paul’s Gospel were not received in consultation with any human beings (flesh and blood), and so the expression is deliberately used to make clear that no human being was involved in the giving of the Gospel.

<sup>164</sup>1 Cor 15:20.

<sup>165</sup>Eph 6:12. See also PHEME PERKINS, *Ephesians*, Abingdon New Testament Commentaries (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1997), 144. Perkins says that “on account of the reality of the authorities inspired by the spirit of the father of truth, the great apostle referring to the ‘authorities of darkness’ told us that our contest is not against flesh and blood; rather the authorities of the universe and the spirits of wickedness” (ibid.). See also Snodgrass, 339-40. The author shows that “‘flesh and blood’ is a Semitism for ‘human.’ What Paul means therefore is ‘our struggle is not with human beings, but with evil spiritual forces’” (ibid.). See also Von Speyr, 256. The author argues that our fight is “against the principalities and the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against every evil thing that not only wages battle against us but is in battle against God himself” (ibid.).

## Symbolic Use of Blood

The New Testament writers also made symbolic use of the term *αἷμα* (“blood”). A case in point is Judas’ confession when he felt the onus of the betrayal pressing upon his mind and he cried out in despair before the council of the high priest and elders, “I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood.” Accordingly, Daniel Hagner argues that “Judas is painfully aware of the injustice he has committed against Jesus. He thus declares that he ‘has sinned’ in his betraying of ‘*αἷμα ἄθωον*’ (“innocent blood”), a common expression in the OT denoting a guiltless person. A specific injunction against doing just what he did is found in Deut 27:25.”<sup>166</sup>

Later, Luke records that the betrayal money was used to purchase a field where the purchaser had committed suicide and the place became known as the “field of blood.”<sup>167</sup> According to H. Benedict Green, it has been proposed that the field’s real name was *Akeldamak* (“field of sleep”). Green, however, suggests Matthew’s account is based on a conflation of Jer 18:1-6 and 19:1 and connecting the conflation with Zech 11:13 and Jer 32:6-8. Thus the expression ‘to bury strangers in’ might reflect the idea of the ‘field of sleep’.<sup>168</sup> But Daniel Patte argues “that the guilt of betraying innocent blood cannot be contained and isolated in the person of Judas. It contaminates what is around it. The money is contaminated; what was the ‘potter’s field’ now becomes the field of blood.”<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>166</sup>Matt 27:4. See also Hagner, 812.

<sup>167</sup>Acts 1:19. In Matt 27:6-8, the ‘potter’s field’ is known by this name and it was the burial ground for strangers. The money used in purchasing it is called the “Price of blood.”

<sup>168</sup>H. Benedict Green, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, New Clarendon Bible (New Testament), vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 219.

<sup>169</sup>Daniel Patte, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1987), 377.

In the statement, “His blood be on us and on our children,” the religious leaders of the Jewish nation invoked a curse both upon themselves and their people.<sup>170</sup> Floyd Filson ironically maintains that on the one hand, by a symbolic ritual and in words, Pilate declares he is innocent of the blood about to be shed; on the other hand, the Jewish religious leaders accept the responsibility, and any guilt involved, for themselves and their children.<sup>171</sup> Timothy Cargal sees more than meets the eye in the cry of the Jewish elders invoking the blood of Christ upon themselves and their progeny. He notes that Matthew employs a double entendre in that statement, thus giving two levels of understanding. In the light of Deut 21:8, even though Pilate seeks to express his innocence, he is nonetheless guilty. However, by the same token, Israel, who are God’s redeemed, covertly prays for divine forgiveness for shedding innocent blood. Viewed

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<sup>170</sup>Matt 27:25. The idea of blood-guiltiness is reflected in other parts of the NT. See also Acts 5:28. F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of the Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964), 121. Here, Bruce points out that the words of the disciples are couched “as if they were determined to fasten the responsibility for Jesus’ death on the leaders of the Sanhedrin” (ibid.). See also Ajith Fernando, *Acts*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998), 211. Fernando speaks from the perspective of the Sanhedrin who accuse the disciples (Peter and John) of disobeying the orders to stop teaching and of making the Jewish hierarchy “guilty of this man’s blood.” It is possible that their words reveal a lingering fear of a popular uprising. See also Acts 18:6, where Paul invokes a similar curse upon the Jews of Corinth who were opposed to the Gospel. See also ibid., 492. Here the author states that Paul “shook out his clothes in protest of their blasphemous attitude and as an expression of his exemption from further responsibility for them. He then explicitly stated this exemption with the familiar words” (ibid.). Again in Acts 20:26-28, Paul points out that he is guiltless of the blood of all men since he has done his duty. See also Robert H. Smith, *Concordia Commentary: Acts* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1970), 307. Smith comments that “the flock is not the property of the apostles or of their appointees but only of the Lord Jesus, who saved or ‘obtained’ it dearly ‘with his own blood.’ . . . The blood of Jesus may here be seen as foreordained by the blood painted onto doorposts and lintels of Israelite houses in Egypt on the eve of the Exodus (Exod 12:7, 13). Because of that blood the slaves escaped their bonds and became God’s own people” (ibid.).

<sup>171</sup>Floyd V. Filson, *A Commentary the Gospel According to St. Matthew*, Black’s New Testament Commentaries (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1960), 291.

against Matt 1:21 and 27:25, the concept forgiveness through the blood of Christ makes sense.<sup>172</sup>

The sixth chapter of John's Gospel deals with a miraculous situation in which Jesus feeds a hungry multitude with bread and fish, an act which sets the stage for the subsequent discourse, in which his body and blood are presented as food and drink to be consumed by the one who believes in him.<sup>173</sup> Jon Paulien, commenting on the well-known passage in John, says, "This 'cannibalistic' language is certainly not intended to express that physical eating and drinking of Christ's flesh and blood are necessary in order to sustain temporal life. Rather, it is a graphic way of expressing that only through intimate relationship with Jesus, as close as food that has been eaten in to the body, can one gain the life that He promises."<sup>174</sup>

On the day of Pentecost, Peter refers to prophetic symbolism in the course of his preaching in which, among other things, he predicts that the sun and moon will be turned into darkness and blood, respectively, before the great day of the Lord.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>172</sup>Cargal, 110-12.

<sup>173</sup>John 6:53-56.

<sup>174</sup>Jon Paulien, *John, The Abundant Life Bible Amplifier* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1995), 142. See also George R. Beasley-Murray, *John, Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 36 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), 95. The author says "the eating and drinking of Christ's flesh and blood result in mutual 'abiding' of the believer and Christ. This is very close to the Pauline conception of *κοινωνία* (cf. Gal 2:19-20), and indicates a personal relationship of faith. Schlatter's statement on this passage warrants pondering: 'What we have to do with his flesh and blood is not chew and swallow, but that we recognize in his crucified body and poured out blood the ground of our life, that we hang our faith and hope on that body and blood and draw from there our thinking and our willing'" (ibid.).

<sup>175</sup>Acts 2:19-20. In the Apocalypse, John uses similar eschatological symbolic language in connection with fire, the sea, and rivers; see Rev 8:7, 8; 16:3-6. He also speaks of the judgment of the "great whore" who is satiated with the blood of the saints, Rev 17:6; 18:24. See also Gerhard A. Krodel, *Revelation, Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1989), 197. Here, Krodel says, "the reference to the blood probably comes from Joel's picture of the last day (Joel 2:31, Acts

The point should also be noted that in the Johannine Epistles, the salvific function of Christ on earth and its heavenly implications are spoken of in terms of blood and water.<sup>176</sup> David Rensberger affirms that the expression ‘Water and Blood’ is often thought to refer to the Christian sacraments of baptism and Eucharist. By citing these two elements namely, blood, as well as water, John probably means that Jesus’ death as well as His baptism brought revelation and salvation. In this way John insists that Jesus Christ came to make God known in both water and blood, that He accomplished both revelation and salvation not simply through a glorious epiphany of Spirit but in the bloody sacrifice of His own life.<sup>177</sup>

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2:19)” (ibid.). For the eschatological note on blood, see also Gregory K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 818. Beale comments, “The pronouncement of God’s righteousness and holiness is based on his judgment of persecutors according to the principle that ‘the punishment should fit the crime’ because the ungodly have poured out the blood of saints and prophets, you have also given them blood to drink” (ibid.). See also ibid., 860. Beale continues, “That the woman was ‘drunk with the blood’ of Christians suggests that the contents of the cup ‘full of abominations and the unclean things of her fornication included figuratively the saints’ blood (i.e. persecution which especially intoxicated her).” See also ibid., 923. Again he says, “God will chasten the ungodly world community because it persecuted the community of the faithful: ‘in her was found the blood of prophets and saints and all who were slain on the earth.’ The vile world city collapsed for the same reason as Niniveh, who not only ‘was skilled in sorcery’ and dealt with people ‘by her sorceries’ but was also indicted for being a ‘city of blood’” (ibid.).

<sup>176</sup>1 John 5:6-8. See also I. Howard Marshall, *The Epistles of John*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978), 231-32. Marshall confirms that John “is thinking of the total act of his coming into the world. This enables us to understand what he means by Jesus coming ‘by water and blood.’ In all probability, he is referring to the water of Jesus’ baptism and the blood of His death. He is claiming that Jesus Christ truly was baptized and truly died on the cross” (ibid.). See also Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Johannine Epistles*, trans. Reginald Fuller and Ilse Fuller (New York: Crossroads, 1992), 233. Here, Schnackenburg gives a gnostic dimension to the issue at stake when he says, “Apparently the heretics attached a certain importance to Jesus’ baptism. This comes out often in the teaching of Cerinthus. Jesus was born like any other human being, but after his baptism he became holier and wiser through the Supreme Power (*authentia*). The Christ descended upon Jesus in the form of a dove, but left him again before the passion” (ibid.).

<sup>177</sup>David Rensberger, *1 John, 2 John, 3 John*, Abingdon New Testament Commentaries (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1997), 132.

## Physiological Meaning of Blood

In addition to all the different senses previously cited, the word “blood” is also used in its plain physiological meaning in the New Testament. Luke depicts the scene of agony in the garden of Gethsemane, as Jesus wrestled with the Father in prayer. He observes that “His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.”<sup>178</sup> Joseph Fitzmyer points out, however, that “the comparison is made between profuse perspiration and copious drops of blood splashing to the ground; the text does not hint at a comparison of color.”<sup>179</sup> Joel Green argues to the point when he asserts that “the image Luke employs is of sweat dripping so profusely that it was like drops of blood, not that Jesus was actually sweating blood.”<sup>180</sup>

Mark also recounts the healing of a woman who had been plagued by a condition of hemorrhage for twelve years, and whose “fountain of blood” dried up after an encounter with Jesus.<sup>181</sup>

In the crucifixion narrative, John claims that as one of the soldiers thrust his spear into Jesus’ side on the cross, immediately there gushed forth blood and water.<sup>182</sup>

Hermann Ridderbos does not see anything more in this incident than the mere fact that out of the spear wound on Jesus’ side, there came a bloody and watery substance which,

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<sup>178</sup>Luke 22:44.

<sup>179</sup>Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (X-XXIV)*, The Anchor Bible, vol. 28-28A (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985), 1444.

<sup>180</sup>Joel Green, 780.

<sup>181</sup>Mark 5:29. See also Luke 8:43-44. 22:44.

<sup>182</sup>John 19:34.

to those present, confirmed that Jesus was dead. It is doubtful that the occurrence conceals any deeper meaning.<sup>183</sup> Barnabas Lindars brings out another dimension of the issue when he argues that if John “is writing against Docetists, who accepted the baptism but not the reality of the death, the emphasis on ‘not with water only’ is readily explained (cf. 1 John 5:6-8).”<sup>184</sup>

At the first great council of the infant church in Jerusalem, the decision was taken to encourage the Gentile Christians to uphold the teaching of Scripture that forbids the consumption of blood.<sup>185</sup> Paul Walaskay proposes that the prohibition against using blood for food underlies the ban on strangulation and is derived from the Noachic covenant (Gen 9:4), which was assumed to involve all mankind, since Noah was technically a Gentile. Therefore the Hebrews regarded the blood of a man or an animal as containing his, or its life; even animal blood was therefore in some sense sacred and mysterious and must not be eaten (Deut 12:16, 23-25).<sup>186</sup>

In the context of apocalyptic, John speaks symbolically of the “two witnesses” who, among other things, have the power to turn water into blood.<sup>187</sup> Furthermore, in the Apocalypse, John employs the imagery of the winepress to describe the eschatological

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<sup>183</sup>Hermann N. Ridderbos, *The Gospel According to John*, trans. J. Vriend (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 619.

<sup>184</sup>Barnabas Lindars, *The Gospel of John*, New Century Bible (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1972), 588.

<sup>185</sup>Acts 15:20, 29; 21:25.

<sup>186</sup>Paul W. Walaskay, *Acts*, Westminster Bible Companion (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1998), 174.

<sup>187</sup>Rev 11:6.

carnage inflicted by God on the wicked. It is such a gory scene, so much so that the blood that comes out is “even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.”<sup>188</sup> George Ladd observes that the apocalyptic “metaphor suddenly changes from the treading of grapes to a military slaughter. The flow of blood is incredible, literally conceived; one thousand six hundred and eighty four miles—the entire length of Palestine. The entire land is pictured as being inundated in blood to a depth of about four feet. The thought is clear; a radical judgment that crushes every vestige of evil and hostility to the reign of God.”<sup>189</sup> Looking at the scenario as portrayed, Gregory Beale sees an expression of hyperbole underscoring the extent of destruction of the nations occurring outside Jerusalem.<sup>190</sup> However in the instances cited, what I would like us to remember is the fact that the NT writers are simply using the term “blood” in a purely physiological sense.

### Blood Signifying the Vicarious Death of Christ

The vicarious death of Jesus Christ is also encapsulated in the term “blood” in the New Testament. For instance, at the institution of the Last Supper, Jesus refers to His death by the expression “the blood of the covenant.” Martin Hengel demonstrates by his most informative research that the Graeco-Roman world was very familiar with the idea of vicarious death. He cites such figures as Heracles and Achilles as examples. Hengel

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<sup>188</sup>Rev 14:20.

<sup>189</sup>George E. Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972), 202.

<sup>190</sup>Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 782.



contends that the idea of dying for one's native city, one's friends, one's family and sometimes for philosophical truth gave birth to expressions such as ἀποθνήσκειν ὑπέρ (“to die on behalf of”) and also ἐπιδίδωναι ἑαυτὸν ὑπέρ (“to give one's self on behalf of [others]”). Indeed, he points out that in order to express this concept of dying on behalf of others, the composite verb ὑπεραποθνήσκειν was even formed, and used in some of Euripides' plays. Hengel gives impressive instances where eulogies are showered on fallen heroes and honorific inscriptions and epitaphs sing the praises of the glorious dead--men who were supposed to have laid down their lives for the sake of others.<sup>191</sup>

### **Possible Roots of the Blood Debate**

In the literature review of the dissertation, it has been established that blood is the subject of theological debate among Bible scholars. As a result, there are two schools of thought in this debate. On the one hand, the first school claims that the phrase “the blood of Christ”, stands not for His death but rather for His life released through death, and thus set free to be used for new purposes, and made available for man's appropriation, particularly, as some would say, in the Eucharist.”<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>191</sup>See Martin Hengel, *The Atonement*, trans. John Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1981), 4, 5, 9, 10, passim.

<sup>192</sup>Stibbs, 7, 8. Here Stibbs refers to the work of Brooke F. Westcott. Stibbs says, “In his commentary on the Epistles of St. John, first published in 1883, there is an additional note on 1 John 1:7, entitled, “The Idea of Christ's Blood in the New Testament.” It seems desirable to quote a selection of his statements to indicate his teaching. With reference to the Old Testament sacrificial system he observes: ‘By the outpouring of the blood the life which was in it was not destroyed, though it was separated from the organism which it had before quickened. . . . Thus two distinct ideas were included in the sacrifice of a victim, the death of the victim by the shedding of its blood, and the liberation, so to speak, of the principle of life by which it had been animated, so that this life became available for another end’” (ibid.). Other scholars supporting Brooke F. Westcott are Vincent Taylor, C. H. Dodd, Oliver C. Quick, and Peter T.

On the other hand, the second school contends that the expression “‘the blood of Christ’ is, like the word ‘Cross,’ ‘only a more vivid expression for the death of Christ in its redemptive significance.’”<sup>193</sup>

The first theological school seems to have an affinity with ideas about blood in the setting of the background of the New Testament, particularly, in Philo.

Philo regards blood as the essence of the soul and, for this reason, he frowns on the strangling of animals for cultic purposes. He maintains that by such a practice, men “entomb in the carcass the blood which is the essence of the soul” thus preventing its free flow.<sup>194</sup> He calls the blood that is poured at the altar “a libation of the life-principle.”<sup>195</sup>

Furthermore Philo justifies the shedding of a murderer’s blood because he believes there is a close relationship between blood and the image of God in man. He observes, “The soul’s likeness to God the lawgiver has shown elsewhere, by saying ‘God made man, after the image of God made He him’ (Gen 1:27), and again in the law enacted against murderers, ‘he that sheddeth man’s blood, in requital for his blood shall there blood be shed, because in the image of God made I man’ (Gen 9:6).”<sup>196</sup>

Again, he refers to the mind as the “vital faculty . . . whose essence is blood.”<sup>197</sup>

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Forsyth.

<sup>193</sup>Ibid., 32. Alan M. Stibbs, who espouses this view, is backed by J. A. Robinson, Johannes Behm, and James Denney.

<sup>194</sup>Philo *Spec* 4.122.

<sup>195</sup>Philo *Spec*. 1.205.

<sup>196</sup>Philo *Somn*. 1.74.

<sup>197</sup>Philo, *Det*. 92. See also the following references where blood is used in the same sense: *Somn*. 1.30; *Her*. 56, 57; *Det*. 80, 81, 83, 100.

Philo's view about blood almost seems to give it a tangible personality, especially when he affirms a close relationship between blood and the image of God in man. It appears there is a semblance of the Philonic idea to Westcott's argument that "by the outpouring of the blood the life which was in it was not destroyed, though it was separated from the organism which it had before quickened."<sup>198</sup>

This idea is articulated perhaps more sharply by William Milligan, a member of his school, when he says of bloodshed in sacrifice,

No reflecting person can imagine for a moment that blood, simply as blood, could be acceptable to God. What made the blood acceptable was that, as it flowed, it 'cried,' confessing sin and desert of punishment. It could thus not be dead. It was alive. Not indeed that it was physically alive. It was rather ideally alive—alive with a life which now assumed its true attitude towards God, with a life which confessed, as it flowed forth in the blood, that it was surrendered freely and in harmony with the demands of God's law.<sup>199</sup>

Alan Stibbs refutes this idea about blood and asserts that this kind of argument is "surely a serious misunderstanding of metaphorical language and a completely unjustified attempt to suggest a very far-reaching conclusion on wholly inadequate grounds."<sup>200</sup>

Thus Stibbs poses the question, "How can 'life' in the full personal, rational and responsible sense be attributed to blood, which has no power of independent personal action?"<sup>201</sup>

Owing to the mysterious quality of the very nature of blood, there is the tendency

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<sup>198</sup>Stibbs, 7.

<sup>199</sup>Ibid., 12.

<sup>200</sup>Ibid.

<sup>201</sup>Ibid.

to ascribe some magical or supernatural powers to it. It appears that such an inclination finds its roots in the mystery religions of New Testament times.

As Ronald Nash discusses the development of the *taurobolium*, he notes that there came a time when “the blood of the bull became increasingly important.”<sup>202</sup> In fact, the blood was caught in a cup and given to the dedicator because it came to be associated with the power of purification.<sup>203</sup> Perhaps some *ex opere operato* powers were attributed to it.

Based on the foregoing points, I would like to argue that the idea that blood per se has intrinsic virtue has evolved from extrabiblical sources. It is true that the blood of murdered Abel is said to be crying from the ground, but that is an example of metaphoric imagery. I maintain that it is nowhere indicated in biblical literature that blood has personality.

The cultic use of blood in the Bible is commanded by God and is the only justification for its use. For this reason, anyone arguing from a biblical perspective will find it impossible to attribute inordinate and extraordinary powers to blood.

In closing, another important point one must bear in mind is the ambiguity or ambivalence of blood. The Bible makes it abundantly clear that there is a close connection between ‘life’ and ‘blood’ (Gen 9:4; Lev 17:10, 11; Mark 14:24; Heb 2:14, 15). For this reason ‘blood’ could mean life or death or both.

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<sup>202</sup>Nash, *The Gospel and the Greeks*, 155.

<sup>203</sup>Ibid.

## Summary and Conclusion

A cursory examination of the literature on blood in the context of the New Testament world reveals that the concept of blood is fraught with rich meaning. Even though it appears the term has a wide range of meaning, it seems all the literary works that have been examined and studied in this chapter have displayed certain basic commonalities in relation to the use of the term.

First, the general pattern that covers the five senses in which the term “blood” is used in the foregoing works can be identified as follows:

- a. Blood is used in the sense of life/death/murder.
- b. Blood is used in the context of cult.
- c. Blood is used to designate humanity.
- d. Blood is used in the symbolic context.
- e. Blood is used purely in the physiological sense.

Second, it has been noticed that the pattern of usage is also reflected in the New Testament. This observation may lead one to think that the *auctor ad Hebraeos* was indeed a child of his time who shared common ideas with his contemporaries.

Third, the categories of usage of the term “blood” in the extrabiblical sources cited are not only found in the New Testament but they also go back to the Old Testament, which is older than all the sources that have been studied in this chapter. However, in the extrabiblical sources, there is a certain dimension that seeks to ascribe personality to blood, and such an idea is foreign to the Bible. Blood, per se, has neither

personality nor intrinsic cultic worth. Its use in terms of the cult is based solely on a divine command.

Fourth, since the term “blood” is infused with such an elasticity of meaning, I would say it is not surprising that the *auctor ad Hebraeos* took advantage of its multivocality to communicate an essential theological message to his readership.

Fifth and finally, I would like to assert in the light of the foregoing evidence that the *auctor ad Hebraeos* found in the term “blood” a multivalent and most eloquent medium for expressing and encapsulating the work of Christ in the epistle. The building up of such a case to support the evidence is discussed in chapter 5.

## CHAPTER V

### *Αἷμα* IN THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

The present chapter focuses attention on the term *αἷμα* (“blood”) in the book of Hebrews. The chapter is organized around three main headings. The first is an overview of the message of the Epistle. The second considers the place of *αἷμα* in the thought of the writer of Hebrews. The third provides a summary of the discussion.

#### **Overview of the Argument of Hebrews**

Even though the book of Hebrews is generally regarded as an epistle, one would not receive that impression from the way it begins.<sup>1</sup> However, its last three verses seem to give it an epistolary conclusion. Moreover, the author’s reference to the document as *ὁ λόγος τῆς παρακλήσεως* (“a word of exhortation”) has caused some to conclude that it is a sermon.<sup>2</sup> Again, the main body of the material, that is, chaps. 1-12, appears to be of a homiletical nature, while chap. 13 constitutes an appendage bearing a summary and pieces of pastoral advice, and an epistolary conclusion.

The *auctor ad Hebraeos* is an accomplished rhetorician. His style of Greek,

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<sup>1</sup>Gerald L. Borchert, “A Superior Book: Hebrews,” *Review and Expositor* 82 (1985): 327. See also F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Reprint, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), xxiii.

<sup>2</sup>Frank B. Holbrook, ed., *Issues in the Book of Hebrews*, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series 4 (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1989), 13.

which is the most accomplished in the New Testament, strongly points to exposure and some training in the art of rhetoric.<sup>3</sup> Thus, in this letter, he uses the rhetorical resources at his disposal to press home his point regarding the invaluable quality of the blood of Jesus. Rhetoric is the art of persuasion, and Hebrews is a work of persuasion from start to finish. It has been suggested that Hebrews “falls in the category of deliberative rhetoric with its advising and dissuading.”<sup>4</sup> One sees here a highly systematized form of rhetoric, extensively documented in the educational handbooks of that era reflected in the books of the New Testament. In such a cultural environment, the writers of the New Testament who may have not received formal training in rhetoric would have been exposed to and influenced by public speeches. Patterns of rhetorical argumentation as explained in the

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<sup>3</sup>Barnabas Lindars, *The Theology of the Letter to the Hebrews*, New Testament Theology (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 2. See also C. H. Dodd, “The Old Testament in the New,” in *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts*, ed. Gregory K. Beale (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994), 168. See also Michael R. Cosby who observes: “Although no one today knows the identity of the author of Hebrews, many recognize and appreciate his rhetorical ability.” *The Rhetorical Composition and Function of Hebrews 11* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1988), 1. Cosby adds: “Adolf Deissmann states that Hebrews ‘is historically the earliest example of artistic Christian literature. . . . This epistle strives to rise above the stratum in which Christianity had its origin towards a higher level and culture.’ Paul Wendland places Hebrews in a literary class by itself among other New Testament documents. And James W. Thompson calls attention to the ‘extraordinarily sophisticated Greek style throughout’ and asserts that ‘it is thus undisputed that Hebrews is a unique form of early Christian literature’” (ibid., 2). See also Andrew H. Trotter, *Interpreting the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1997), 163-84, where the author provides an exhaustive discussion of the rhetoric style of Hebrews. R. E. Omark also points out: “Of all the epistolary literature of the New Testament, there is no more intellectually intriguing and heart engaging letter than the anonymous Epistle to the Hebrews. Its literary sophistication, its theological profundity, its solemn exhortation, and its emotional overtones must have challenged its original readers who were censured for being ‘dull of hearing.’” “The Saving of the Savior: Exegesis and Christology in Hebrews 5:7-10,” *Int* 12 (1958): 39. “Among the books of the New Testament, the Epistle to the Hebrews stands out as both strange and fascinating. Unique in style and content, as a piece of literature it is simply unlike any of the other epistles.” Long, *Hebrews*, 1. See also Pamela M. Eisenbaum who asserts: “Hebrews’ heroes are listed. Indeed what the author of Hebrews does seem to have inherited from the Graeco-Roman tradition was the ability to see the biblical figures in a more human, less heroic light, and the rhetorical sophistication to express this while still maintaining the figures as models of behavior.” *The Jewish Heroes of Christian History: Hebrews 11 in Literary Context* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1997), 87. The author of the Epistle was undoubtedly a learned man.

<sup>4</sup>G. H. Guthrie, *The Structure of Hebrews: A Text-Linguistic Analysis* (New York: E. J. Brill, 1994), 31.



Graeco-Roman handbooks can be identified in the New Testament, and especially in the book of Hebrews.<sup>5</sup>

As a master rhetorician, the author of Hebrews intertwines protrepsis and paraenesis effectively to drive his message home.<sup>6</sup> The following outline illustrates this point very well:

1. Exposition (Heb 1:1-14)
2. Exhortation (Heb 2:14)
3. Exposition (Heb 2:5-3:6a)
4. Exhortation (Heb 3:6b-4:16)
5. Exposition (Heb 5:1-10)
6. Exhortation (Heb 5:11-6:20)
7. Exposition (Heb 7:1-10:18)
8. Exhortation (Heb 10:19-13:25).

#### Paraenetic Passages

Four passages of the Epistle are hortatory. They are calculated to exhort and encourage the recipients on their Christian pilgrimage. The content of each passage is indicative of a problem that threatens the readership. In the first hortatory passage (Heb

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid. One should be careful not to read the epistle solely through Greek eyes. However, since every writer is a child of his time, I am simply drawing attention to literary influences that may have helped in forming and shaping the thoughts and literary style of the writer of Hebrews.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid. Other scholars have written with respect to the structure of overview of Hebrews. See, e.g., F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Reprint, xix-xxii; Albert Vanhoye, *A Structured Translation of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, trans. James Swetnam (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1964), 1-7; and G. H. Guthrie, *The Structure of Hebrews: A Text-Linguistic Analysis*. However, I have found William G. Johnsson's overview most helpful to my understanding and grasp of the message of Hebrews. It is well structured and very informative, providing a bird's-eye view of the entire Epistle.

2:1-4), the author employs the verb *παραρρέω* (Heb 2:1; “drift away”), a nautical image which suggests a moving away from the spiritual moorings of an established position. Furthermore, he calls to mind and admonishes his readers against an attitude of neglect or a lack of concern for important things (*ἀμελέω*; Heb 2:3).

In the second hortatory passage (Heb 3:6b-4:16), the author appeals to his readers by referring to the experience of ancient Israel during the Exodus from Egypt. The problem that plagued the pilgrims was that of unbelief (*ἀπιστία*) which led to a hardening (*σκληρύνω*) of the heart. Such a process of hardening eventually led to a state of rebellion (*παραπικραίνω*; Heb 3:16), disobedience (*ἀπειθέω*; Heb 3:18), and finally apostasy (*ἀποστῆναι*; Heb 3:12). Consequently the corpses of the disobedient pilgrims littered the wilderness.

A third passage (Heb 5:11-6:20) rebukes the recipients of the epistle for becoming otiose (*νωθροὶ*). Unfaithfulness and rebellion have borne such fruit that the community has lost its taste for the word of truth. Some are therefore in danger of crucifying (*ἀνασταυρόω*) afresh the Son of God and exposing Him to open shame (*παραδειγματίζω*; Heb 6:6).

The fourth and final exhortation (Heb 10:19-13:25) constitutes a climactic point in a series of vices that the community has acquired through neglect and unfaithfulness to the word of truth and the voice of the Holy Spirit. They have wavered to the extent that they are neglecting the assembly of themselves together (Heb 10:25) even as the day of redemption or judgment draws nigh. Since they have cast away their confidence in the word of truth, they are now sinning deliberately (*ἔκουσίως*) and stand in the danger of

committing the unpardonable sin against the Holy Spirit (Heb 10:26). In this condition they are just like Esau who is described as profane, godless, and irreligious (*βέβηλος*; Heb 12:16). Rejecting God is a very serious situation to be in, and for such people, there remains only an expectation of fiery judgment calculated to consume the adversaries of God (Heb 10:27). The author reminds his readers that God is not only a Judge of the unrighteous, but He Himself is also a consuming fire (*πῦρ καταναλίσκον*; Heb 10:30; 12:29).

### Protrepic Passages

These expository passages are constructed to present the theological rationale of the author. They not only show what the writer's teaching is, but are also designed to be persuasive. Their aim is to help confirm the readers in the truth from which they stand in danger of falling away.

The first protrepic passage (Heb 1:1-14) introduces the Hero of the book, the Son through whom the Father has finally spoken. The Son is put on the same footing with the Father. He shares Creatorship with Him. He is of the same *ὑπόστασις* ("essence") as the Father and He is the very *χαρακτήρ* ("impression") of His image (Heb 1:3). In fact, the Father Himself addresses Him as God (Heb 1:8). He is superior to the angels who are mere ministering spirits who attend to the heirs of salvation (Heb 1:14). It is the Son who effects *καθαρισμός* ("cleansing") by His own blood and subsequently sits on the right hand of Majesty, attaining a name that is higher than that of any other being (Heb 1:3, 4).

The second expository passage (Heb 2:5-3:6a) portrays the Son as one who is interested in the seed of Abraham. For this reason, He is the *ἀρχηγός* ("captain") who

identifies with them and champions their cause through suffering to sanctify and perfect them (Heb 2:10). Through death, He destroys the devil who has the power of death and who wields the same mercilessly over humanity. By His death, He also becomes a High Priest who is able to help men continually in their predicament (Heb 2:14-18). This is why He is far superior to Moses who, in spite of his greatness, was just a mere servant in God's household, whereas Christ the Son is the builder and overseer of the household (Heb 3:1-6).

A third expository passage (Heb 5:1-10) takes further the concept of Christ's High Priesthood introduced earlier on. The author discusses why the office of high priesthood is necessary, but he proceeds to show that Christ did not arrogate this honor to Himself. Rather, He was appointed by God the Father Himself. Even though being the Son, He learned obedience through suffering and, for this reason, He has been appointed High Priest after the order of Melchizedek.

The fourth and final expository passage (Heb 7:1-10:18) unveils the core of the Christological/theological exposition of the author for the benefit of his readership. He expatiates the idea of Christ's Melchizedekian high priesthood, fully affirming its authenticity by God's promise and oath (Heb 7:16-21). Unlike the Levitical priests who were continually replaced by reason of death, Jesus has a High Priesthood established on the power of inalienable life (*ζωῆς ἀκατάλυτου*). Christ's position as High Priest also makes Him the *Μεσίτης* ("Mediator") of a better covenant (Heb 7:22-8:13). In Heb 9, he provides an in-depth treatment of Christ's High Priesthood with reference to the OT cultus of the sanctuary of ancient Israel. He sees the vicarious sacrifice of Christ as a

fulfillment of the types and symbolism of the ancient cult of Israel. The bloody sacrifices of the OT cultus all pointed to the Cross-event (Heb 9:11-14). Just as it was necessary to cleanse the earthly sanctuary with blood, so also the heavenly things which needed to be cleansed were cleansed with the blood of Christ (Heb 9:23-28). This became necessary because the blood of animals can never take away sin, but the blood of Christ which He offered in His once-and-for-all sacrifice does take away the stain of sin, thus purifying the conscience (Heb 10:4-10).

### *Αἷμα* Passages in Hebrews

There must be a compelling reason why the author of Hebrews focuses so much attention on the concept of blood for his theological argument in the Epistle. He does this because he is very much aware of the rich field of meaning that the concept encompasses. An exegetical study of the verses in which the writer of Hebrews employs the term *αἷμα* (“blood”) will help ascertain the meaning of the term within the context of the message of Hebrews. It is important to recognize the fact that out of the ninety-seven occurrences of the word *αἷμα* (“blood”) in the NT, twenty-one appear in the Epistle to the Hebrews. At the core of the theological argument found in chaps. 9 and 10 alone, the word is employed fourteen times.<sup>7</sup> Hence, it is not surprising that William G. Johnsson calls blood the “leitmotif of (Hebrews 9-10).”<sup>8</sup> The method I have chosen will explore each passage at

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<sup>7</sup>Bachmann and Slaby, 50-53. See also Colin Brown, ed., *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1986), 1:221. See also Johnsson, “Defilement and Purgation in the Book of Hebrews,” 223. I recognize the important warning that Johnsson gives that theology does not consist in statistics. However, it is also not wise to ignore such data.

<sup>8</sup>Johnsson, “Defilement and Purgation in the Book of Hebrews,” 222. In fact, from pp. 222-232 Johnsson indicates a strong and impressive case for blood as the “leitmotif” of Heb 9-10.

three levels. The first level provides the Greek text and its English translation. The second level is the exegesis of the text. Finally, the third level explores the significance of αἷμα (“blood”) in the given passage.

### *Αἷμα* as a Designation for the Human Family: Hebrews 2:14

#### **Text and Translation**

ἐπεὶ οὖν τὰ παιδιά κεκονώνηκεν αἵματος καὶ σαρκός,  
καὶ αὐτός παραπλησίως μετέσχευ τῶν αὐτῶν, ἵνα διὰ  
τοῦ θανάτου καταργήσῃ τὸν τὸ κράτος ἔχοντα τοῦ θανάτου,  
τοῦτ' ἔστιν τὸν διάβολον.

Since the children share in flesh and blood, He himself likewise took part in the same in order that through death He might overcome the One who has the power of death, that is the devil.

#### **Exegetical Considerations**

The *auctor ad Hebraeos* establishes the basis for the Incarnation in this verse of Scripture. He asserts that the Son identifies with humanity because the reason for the Incarnation is the benefit it affords the children of men. In order to carry out His work of redemption, Jesus deliberately chose to become human. That the Incarnation was an act stemming from the willingness of the Son is firmly rooted in the author’s mind. Thus the words *παραπλησίως* (“likewise”) and *μετέσχευ* (“share in”) denote determined willingness on the part of Jesus to assume humanity.<sup>9</sup> This is the reason for the author’s choice of the

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<sup>9</sup>Lane notes: “Since ‘the children’ share a common human nature (*αἵματος καὶ σαρκός*, lit., ‘blood and flesh’), it was necessary for the one who identified himself with them to assume the same full humanity (*μετέσχευ τῶν αὐτῶν*). This assertion grounds the bond of unity between Christ and his people in the reality of the incarnation. In the incarnation the transcendent Son accepted the mode of existence common to all humanity.” Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 60. As E. G. White comments: “The Son of God had laid aside His glory, voluntarily subjecting Himself to the conditions of human nature, and then had humbled Himself as a servant, becoming obedient unto death, ‘even the death of the cross’ (Phil 2:8), that He might lift fallen man from degradation to hope and joy and heaven.” *The Acts of the Apostles* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1989),

expression “flesh and blood.”<sup>10</sup> Elsewhere in the NT, the Apostle Paul is noted for the Christological hymn known as the “kenosis” which expounds this very idea (Phil 2:5-11). The text fits well into the main argument of the author. This choice not only puts Him in the same condition as His “brothers” with whom He is not ashamed to be identified (Heb 2:11), but also makes it possible for Him to defeat and destroy Satan who has held humanity in bondage and perpetual fear of death. The author of Hebrews employs the purpose clause indicated by ἵνα (“in order that”) plus the clause διὰ τοῦ θανάτου καταργήσῃ τὸν τὸ κράτος ἔχοντα τοῦ θανάτου (“through death he might destroy him who had the power of death”) to underscore the necessity of His humanity and the intimate connection of this humanity with His death. He became human in order to die.

The *auctor ad Hebraeos* identifies himself with other writers in the New Testament in using αἷμα (“blood”) as a designation for humanity.<sup>11</sup> He deliberately chooses words that connote blood to formulate his Christological/theological argument. He is notably insistent that Jesus’ humanity is essential, both for His solidarity with the

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<sup>10</sup>This expression is not used in the OT. It stems from the Intertestamental period. It is found in the extra-canonical works of Sir 14.18 and Enoch 14.4. In the Genesis account of creation Adam exclaims with excitement when he saw Eve for the first time: וְאֵת הַפֶּעַם עֵצִים מֵעֲצָמַי וּבָשָׂר מִבְּשָׂרִי. Adam refers to the woman as “bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” (Gen 2:23). However, in the NT the expression “flesh and blood” or “flesh” as a designation for humanity is found in Matt 16:17; John 1:13; 1 Cor 15:50.

<sup>11</sup>Again Behm points out: “The notion that blood is the material of conception, ‘the bearer of the ongoing life of the species,’ underlies the expression in John 1:13: ἐξ αἱμάτων ἐγενήθησαν, ‘born of blood,’ the distinctive plural αἱματα indicating the union of the life bearing both parents in the child.” Johannes Behm, “αἷμα,” *TDNT* (1964), 1:172-73. “The same thought is found in Acts 17:26: ἐποίησεν ἐξ ἑνὸς αἵματος πᾶν ἔθνος ἀνθρώπων κατοικεῖν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, the blood of the progenitor of the race being the bond which unites humanity” (ibid.).

human race and for the reality and veracity of His sacrificial death.<sup>12</sup> For this reason, he seeks to establish the identity of the Son with the common bond of humanity. As man, He possessed the same intellectual and emotional qualities that are found in other men: He thought, reasoned, and felt.<sup>13</sup>

Christ “was bound to become man if he was to deal adequately with the relations of sinful mankind to a holy God.”<sup>14</sup> To reinforce the necessity of Christ’s humanity, the author of Hebrews quotes from Isa 8:18 where the LXX refers to the prophet’s family as *τὰ παιδιά* (“the children”), and he employs the very term as a representation of the race (Heb 2:13,14). Since the “world of man is the world of flesh, the impact of personality on the world of man will necessarily be clothed in fleshly action and manifestation.”<sup>15</sup> The children whom God has given to Christ are men and women, creatures of flesh and blood, and since His solidarity with them is real, He must partake of flesh and blood “in like manner with them—that is to say, by the gateway of birth.”<sup>16</sup>

The use of the word *σπέρμα* (“sperm”) in Heb 2:16 involving the expression “seed of Abraham” is a designation for the human family.<sup>17</sup> Hence according to Hebrews, it is

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<sup>12</sup>Lindars, *The Theology of the Letter to the Hebrews*, 40.

<sup>13</sup>Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004), 725.

<sup>14</sup>Donald G. Miller, “Why God Became Man,” *Int* 23, no. 4 (October 1969): 408-24.

<sup>15</sup>James Barr, “The Word Became Flesh: The Incarnation in the New Testament,” *Int* 10 (1956): 17.

<sup>16</sup>F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, rev. ed., The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 84.

<sup>17</sup>G. Quell, “σπέρμα,” *TDNT* (1993), 7:538. The author notes: “The terms of the group are used metaphorically at a higher level for more or less fundamental, mostly positive and occasionally negative statements about the forms of organic life, e.g., those referring to family and national life, such as the ‘seed of Abraham’ (Isa 41:8), the ‘seed of Jacob’ (Isa 45:19) and the like” (ibid.). Even though the author looks at



the members of the human family who benefit as the recipients of the much-needed divine help from Jesus, their representative and High Priest (Heb 4:16).

The word *ασθένεια* (“weakness”) is another term associated with humanity in Hebrews (Heb 5:2). This word connotes “(flesh and) blood” because it points to human suffering and limitation. In the New Testament, the word and its cognates “are hardly ever used of purely physical weakness, but frequently in the comprehensive sense of the whole man” (1 Pet 3:7).<sup>18</sup> Here, Peter uses the expression *ἀσθενεστέρῳ σκεύει τῷ γυναικείῳ* (“as unto the weaker vessel”) in his counsel to husbands with respect to relating to wives. It is also significant to note that both Jesus and Paul associate the word with both *σῶμα* and *σάρξ* and therefore, implicitly, with “(flesh and) blood” (Matt 26:41; Rom 6:19; 1 Cor 15:43-44).<sup>19</sup>

The phrase *ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ* (“in the days of His flesh”; Heb 5:7) is fraught with heavy implications for the stark reality of Jesus’ humanity and, therefore, for blood in the Epistle. The verse of which these words are a part constitutes the “kerygmatic summary of Jesus’ earthly ministry” and “provides content to the assurance, that He participated fully in the human condition (Heb 2:14-18), and was tested in every

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it critically, he points out the fact that *σπέρμα* is used for *רשד* in the *LXX* version of Isa 58:7b. See also S. Schulz, “σπέρμα,” *TDNT* (1993), 7:545. He points out that “the Synoptic story of the question of the Sadducees uses the term more than once in the transferred sense of ‘progeny,’ ‘offspring,’ ‘child’ (Mark 12:19-22).” Furthermore he asserts in the Johannine corpus, *σπέρμα* is used 5 times. However, “the use is always transferred. The Christ promised by the OT will be the ‘descendant of David’ (John 7:42). The Jews are ‘Abraham’s seed’ according to their own saying in John 8:33 and that of Jesus in John 8:37. The sense is the same in Rev 12:17: the demon-dragon wages war on the ‘progeny’ of the woman, i.e., Christian Martyrs” (ibid., 545).

<sup>18</sup>G. Stählin, “ασθένεια,” *TDNT* (1993), 1:491.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

respect like we are, in order to become a High Priest who was capable of feeling what we feel (Heb 4:15).”<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, the setting of the human condition provides a meaningful expression in the context of blood for such words as *μετὰ κραυγῆς ἰσχυρᾶς καὶ δακρύων* (“with strong crying and tears”) and *θάνατος* (“death”). They encapsulate the existential reality of the human predicament as experienced by the earthly Jesus.

The certainty of Jesus’ human condition is further reiterated and emphasized by the use of the second aorist verb forms *ἔμαθεν* (he learned”) and *ἔπαθεν* (“He suffered”), not only alliteratively, but also for Christological effect.<sup>21</sup> Here, it is evident that the author of Hebrews speaks proverbially as a rhetorician, because “learning” and “suffering” connote “(flesh and) blood.” The author covertly reinforces and emphasizes the fact that Jesus became flesh and blood in verity.

Further evidence for the connotation of “(flesh and) blood” is provided by the writer’s usage of more words associated with the human family such as *ἄνθρωπος*; (“man”) *υἱός*; (“son”) *ἀδελφός*, (“brother”) and *πρωτότοκος*. (“firstborn”). The word

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<sup>20</sup>Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 119. Héring, too, speaks of Heb 5:7-9 as verses “which are also most characteristic of the Christology of the Epistle” (Héring, 39). Such words are very significant indeed.

<sup>21</sup>J. Thompson, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, Living Word Commentary 15 (Austin, TX: R. B. Sweet, 1975), 78. According to Thompson, “The phrase is a play on words in Greek (*emathen aph’ hon epathen*) which had attained proverbial status in Greek writings. One has no difficulty in understanding this phrase when it refers to the ordinary experiences of mankind” (ibid.). See also David L. Meadland, “The Christology of the Epistle to the Hebrews,” *MCM* 22, no. 4 (1978-79): 180-87. Meadland says, “Yet this Epistle does achieve something which the Fourth Gospel never quite attained. This is a clear statement of the humanity of Jesus, which balances the equally strong emphasis upon his divinity. Not only does this writer remain faithful to the memory of the historic humanity of Jesus; he also employs the tradition to theological advantage. He alludes to the scene in the garden of Gethsemane (Heb 5:7), and he makes effective use of the theme of temptation. Jesus suffered and was tested, and so is able to help those who are tempted (Heb 2:18). . . . The author does not, of course, regard temptation as itself evil, but does wish to emphasize the genuine humanity of Jesus. He adds that because Jesus has been tempted he can sympathize with human weakness. He even goes further and applies to Jesus the idea of learning through suffering (Heb 5:8), a motif which has been popular with the Greeks since the time of Aeschylus and Herodotus” (ibid., 181).

“man” is actually connected with “son” in the phrase “son of man” found in Ps 8:4, which is quoted here in Heb 2:6. The term was a favorite self-designation of Jesus in the Gospels.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, it is evident that the word υἱός (“son”) in relationship with γεγέννηκά (“begotten”) constitutes an allusion to the Incarnation (Heb 5:5). Thus, the allusion gives weight of meaning to the word πρωτότοκον<sup>23</sup> in Heb 1:6, at least indirectly.

The idea of family and blood relationship finds further expression in the Epistle through the ingenious use of the word ἀδελφός.<sup>24</sup> Not only did Jesus suffer and taste death on behalf of all, but He is depicted as one who is not ashamed of His “brothers” (ἀδελφοῦς) and so He identifies Himself with them and calls them His own kith and kin (Heb 2:9-10). He even declares His intention to praise God together with them in the church, a family where He is the “Firstborn” (Heb 2:12; 12:23).

Again, the feeling for family and solidarity with humanity is undoubtedly the

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<sup>22</sup>R. McL. Wilson, *Hebrews*, New Century Bible Commentaries (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 49. The author asserts: “Verse 6 shows the parallelism of Hebrew poetry, the second line matching the first with a slight change in the form of expression. Son of man is simply equivalent to man in the preceding line. Psalm 8 is part of the Old Testament background for this sometimes enigmatic phrase, which in the Gospels appears only on the lips of Jesus and apparently a self-designation” (ibid.). See also F. F. Bruce, who observes, “Our author, however, applies these words not to the first Adam but to Christ as the last Adam, the head of the new creation and the ruler of the world to come. . . . The fact remains that, ever since Jesus spoke of himself as the Son of Man, this expression has had for Christians a connotation beyond its etymological force, and it had this connotation for the writer to the Hebrews” (*The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Reprint, 72-73).

<sup>23</sup>Westcott points out: “The word is used absolutely of Christ here only. . . . It represents the Son in His relation to the whole family, the whole order, which is united with Him. His triumph, His new birth, is theirs also. The thought lies deep in the foundations of social life. The privileges and the responsibilities of the firstborn son were distinctly recognized in the Old Testament (Deut 21:15 passim) . . . as they form a most important element in the primitive conception of the family, the true unit of society. The eldest son, according to early ideas, was the representative of his generation, by whom the property and offices of the father, after his death, were administered for the good of the family.” Brooke F. Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: The Greek Text with Notes and Essays* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1955), 23.

<sup>24</sup>Patrick Gray, 335-51. In this brilliant essay, citing from contemporary extrabiblical sources, Gray establishes the close connection between Jesus’ role as “Brother” and “High Priest” in Hebrews.

inspiration behind the writer's exhortation to the "brothers" to consider Jesus "the Apostle and High Priest of our confession" (Heb 3:1). Moreover, it is important to emphasize the point that the author makes a deliberate use of the name Jesus (the personal name rather than the title "Christ") to highlight the idea of family solidarity with the fallen human race.<sup>25</sup>

Undoubtedly, the humanity of the Son is crucial for the argument of Hebrews, so before the contents of this verse (Heb 2:14), the author has already laid a biblical foundation by citing Ps 8:4-6 LXX, where Jesus is described as having been made a little lower than the angels. Furthermore, reference to the expression "Son of Man" in relation to Heb 2:14 is reminiscent of the favorite self-designation of Jesus in the Gospels. Moreover, the term wraps up both divinity and humanity in one common package, because the titular term "Son of Man" resonates with the heavenly "Son of Man" in the apocalyptic vision of Dan 7.<sup>26</sup> In other words the author of Hebrews is reiterating the

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<sup>25</sup>Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (1955), 51. Commenting on the conflated texts from Isaiah and the Psalms in Heb 2:12-13, Westcott writes, "The thought of 'brotherhood' is extended in the two following quotations and placed in its essential connection with the thoughts of 'fatherhood' and 'sonship'. Brothers are supported by the trust in which they repose on one above them and by the love which meets the trust" (ibid.). See also Lindars, who says, "For the solidarity of Jesus with humanity makes him a representative figure. He is the 'pioneer' (Heb 2:10) of the way of salvation for the whole human race. As such he has completed the process through his death, resurrection, and exaltation." *The Theology of the Letter to the Hebrews*, 40. Furthermore, it is also significant to note that the name *Ἰησοῦς* is used 14 times in the entire Epistle and 10 times out of this the name is used without any title attached to it. This is a clear indication of the author's interest in Jesus as a man.

<sup>26</sup>Leschert says, "This understanding of the phrase 'son of man' as a title for Christ in Heb 2:6 may have been encouraged by its use in Dan 7:13, which was a better established messianic title. Mark 14:62 uses the phrase 'the Son of Man' as a messianic title, in a context where it evidently comes from Dan 7:13, together with an allusion to the session at God's right hand in Ps 110:1 (cf. par. Matt 26:64; Luke 22:69). Since we have already seen that Psalms 110 and 8 were frequently tied together, we may have a theological link here between Dan 7:13 and Ps 8:4. It is possible that the 'the Son of Man' was seen as a messianic title at an early date in both OT passages." Dale F. Leschert, *Hermeneutical Foundations of Hebrews: A Study in the Validity of the Epistle's Interpretation of Some Core Citations from the Psalms*, NABPR Dissertation Series, no. 10 (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1995), 104.

point that the divine Son was the very one who died as man to redeem men.<sup>27</sup>

Patrick Gray has ably demonstrated how the author of Hebrews deliberately draws on the metaphor of the family in the cultural environment of the contemporary world to affirm and emphasize the role of Christ as the elder brother of the human family. For the author of Hebrews, the concept of Jesus as the elder brother is very important and this may underlie the exhortation to “let brotherly love (*φιλαδελφία*) continue” (Heb 13:1). Thus, Gray sees in the Roman legal institution of *tutela impuberum* which provided for minors, under the care of elder brothers, a reflection of Heb 2:11 where Jesus the Guardian of the human family is not ashamed to identify with His “siblings,”<sup>28</sup> for they are under His protective, loving care.

Other motifs dealing with the problems of brotherhood well known in Graeco-Roman society are also reflected in Hebrews. For instance, a common experience among brothers is sibling rivalry, which naturally leads to discord and discontentment. In view of this phenomenon, the author of Hebrews draws on the idea of ‘participation’ with reference to Jesus’ dealings with His “siblings” to offset sibling rivalry, so to speak. In the first place Jesus willingly chooses to participate (*μετέχω*) in flesh and blood in order to be like His siblings. In this sense, both Jesus and His siblings have a common root; they are all of one source (*ἐξ ἑνὸς πάντες*). In the second place, as a result of His

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<sup>27</sup>According to Lussier, “We thus see again the reason why the writer of Hebrews puts such stress on the Incarnation and the real human experience of Christ. Jesus becomes man not merely that he may sympathize with us, but that he may offer himself for us. Vicarious sacrifice is a principle profoundly true and valid, but he who sacrifices himself for others must first be one with them. He must also be one with God . . . to whom the sacrifice is directed; and this is the heart of the matter of Christ’s priestly mediation, his eternal priesthood.” Ernest Lussier, *Christ’s Priesthood According to the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1975), 68.

<sup>28</sup>Patrick Gray, 336.

discipline, they (“his siblings” i.e., believers) partake (*μεταλαβεῖν*) of His holiness (Heb 12:10).

The idea of participation is given further affirmation when all the Old Testament heroes of Heb 11 are said to constitute a ‘cloud of witnesses’ (*νέφος μαρτύρων*) in an eschatological sense. They are also the very ones who have proleptically come to mount Zion of the Living God, to join the innumerable company of angels and saints who also participate in the sprinkled blood (*ἅματι ῥαντισμοῦ*) of Jesus which speaks of better things than that of Abel (Heb 12:21-24). On the note of possible sibling rivalry, the author of Hebrews issues a stern indirect warning to his readers concerning Cain and Esau (in the family setting), who by their actions, chose, to their detriment, not to participate in the Divine grace at their disposal (Heb 12:14-17).

The relationship between Christ’s humanity and office of High Priesthood deserves notice because He was appointed to that position by God to help His own family (Heb 5:5-6; 4:14-16). Even though fully human, He was tempted in all things, and yet, He was without sin. In fact, the quality of His priesthood is compared to that of mysterious Melchizedek without any genealogy, who suddenly appears and disappears in Hebrews. As a man, Jesus did not hail from the tribe of Levi, but as a man from Judah, God proclaimed Him a Priest after the order of Melchizedek (Heb 5:10). The point of the writer of Hebrews in citing the Melchizedekian priesthood in relation to Christ is to show how different the quality of His priesthood is from that of the Aaronic order. Not only that, but God swore and made Him a Priest forever (Heb 7:21). In this respect, He outclasses the priesthood of the Levitical order.

One cannot think of priesthood in Hebrews without reference to “(flesh and blood.” Jesus is qualified to be high priest because He became human (flesh and blood), and in that capacity, He not only relates to the human predicament, but is also part and parcel of it because He is also a faithful and merciful High Priest (Heb 2:17). The human family finds comfort and solidarity in His humanity. He is a High Priest who does not only identify with His flock, but sympathizes and empathizes with them.<sup>29</sup>

Furthermore, it is only in Hebrews that Jesus is specifically designated by the term *ἀπόστολος* (“apostle”). However, the term is not strange to the New Testament.<sup>30</sup> The author of Hebrews appeals passionately to his readers whose courage is about to flag to consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of “our confession” (Heb 3:1).

It is significant that the terms “apostle” and “high priest” are employed side by side, and both are in apposition to Jesus in the construction of the sentence. Both terms, while pointing to different functions, are still closely related because they have to do with flesh and blood in their relationship to Jesus as a person. Montefiore explains that Jesus is both *Envoy* and *High Priest* as these titles indicate. Both offices are unique because the former refers primarily to the Incarnation, for the Son was sent into the world, while the latter applies mostly to His death, when, as High Priest, He made expiation for sins.

To cap it all, Jesus the High Priest, who identifies with His own, offered Himself

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<sup>29</sup>M. Cleary, “Jesus, Pioneer and Source of Salvation: The Christology of Hebrews 1-6,” *BibT* 67 (October 1967): 1243.

<sup>30</sup>The Fourth Gospel is noted for the usage of the idea by Jesus Himself in His relationship to the Father. Many times, He refers to the Father as the “One who sent me.” In His high priestly prayer, He acknowledges the fact that as the Father has sent Him, so He sends the disciples into the world (John 17:18). See also Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 75. Lane indicates: “Although the conception of Jesus as ‘the one sent’ by the Father is familiar from the Fourth Gospel, he is never called *ὁ ἀπόστολος*, ‘the apostle/the sent one.’ That term is applied to Jesus only here in the NT” (ibid.).

to atone for the sin of humanity. The *auctor ad Hebraeos* asserts that the main point of his Christological argument is that we have a great High Priest who is seated on the right hand of the throne of the heavenly Majesty. He is also a Minister of the sanctuary which the Lord Himself pitched, and just as the human high priests were appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices pertaining to their office, this One also must have something to offer (Heb 8:1, 2). One may note here the subtle and yet effective way the *auctor ad Hebraeos* employs the accusative and infinitive construction to focus on “blood” without using the word in Heb 8:3. He states the general fact that every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices. Therefore this High Priest (*τοῦτον* accusative), of necessity (*ἀναγκαῖον*), must have (*ἔχειν* pres. infinitive) something (*τι*) that He might offer (*προσενέγκη*). This is an example of his skill as a rhetorician. However, above all, the point is that Jesus the Man, partaking of flesh and blood, is also the High Priest par excellence.

### **The Significance of Αἷμα in the Text**

The employment of *αἷμα* in this passage is reflective of the multivalent quality of the term. Here, it is coupled with *σάρξ* (flesh) to confirm the humanity of the eternal Son. The reality of the Son’s humanity is reiterated in the context of the Isaianic hymn (Isa 8:17 LXX) quoted in Heb 2:12-13, and by the use of words that allude to blood, namely *ἀδελφός* (“brother”) and *παιδία* (“children”). Furthermore, when the Son shared in flesh and blood, it was in order that He might become subject to death by choice. However, by dying, the Son overcame both death and its author the devil. The point of the paradoxical situation is that Jesus, clothed in the garb of humanity, subjects Himself to death, and by



the very act of dying destroys the power of the devil whereby he holds the human race captive. Therefore, on one hand the blood of Jesus denotes death, but on the other hand, it is the very source of life for the human race. It is extremely important for the *auctor ad Hebraeos* to establish the true humanity of Jesus. Certainly, this rules out all docetic views of Christ. The humanity of Christ is in full accord with his argument and it resonates with the idea that Jesus identified Himself with the human race whom He came to save. So, here, the writer of Hebrews couples blood with flesh to underscore the veracity of the Incarnation. Blood, in this context, is like a tensive symbol that can be filled with meaning.

Jesus' identification with humanity has great significance for the concept of blood in Hebrews. It resonates with the flow of the Christological argument of Hebrews that the Eternal Son, by whom God has finally spoken to the human race, actually participated in the painful lot of humanity in order to die, and, by dying, destroy Satan the originator and instigator of sin, and the very one who wields the power of death over the human race. By virtue of His humanity, He also became a sympathetic High Priest to help the human family of which He became part and parcel. In spite of the fact that the expression "flesh and blood" was a common first-century term for humanity, it can be asserted that the fact that Jesus became man has a deep theological significance for the argument of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

### **Text and Translation**

εἰς δὲ τὴν δευτέραν ἅπαξ τοῦ ἐνιαυτοῦ μόνος ὁ ἀρχιερεὺς οὐ  
χωρὶς αἵματος ὃ προσφέρει ὑπὲρ ἑαυτοῦ καὶ τῶν τοῦ λαοῦ  
ἀγνοημάτων.

But only the high priest enters the second apartment once every year,  
not without blood which he offers for himself and on behalf of the  
inadvertent sins (errors) of the people.

### **Exegetical Considerations**

The *auctor ad Hebraeos*' knowledge of the ancient Israelite cultus is remarkable and he draws upon this vast knowledge for the benefit of his main argument in support of the High Priesthood of Christ. The verse deals with the importance of blood aspersion as it relates to the priestly function of the high priest in the second compartment of the earthly sanctuary on the Day of Atonement. The first five verses of Heb 9 provide a somewhat detailed description of the earthly sanctuary and its furniture. The sixth verse refers to the daily priestly and liturgical activity of the first compartment of the sanctuary, thus setting the stage for the discussion of the high priest's unique ministry on the Day of Atonement. What the *auctor ad Hebraeos* accomplishes here is the emphasis he places on the superiority of Jesus' high priestly ministry, which sacred activity was typified in that of the earthly high priest in ancient Israel (Lev 16:16-20 LXX).

The word *μόνος* ("only") specifies that it is only the high priest who was permitted in the sight of God on that day to make atonement for himself and the entire congregation of Israel. Even though the entering of the high priest into the Holy of Holies was a yearly event, yet it must be noted that the word *ἅπαξ* ("once") does not necessarily

limit the high priest's entry into the most holy place to a single entrance. The writer of Hebrews later on plays upon this word to underscore the finality of Christ's sacrifice (Heb 9:12, 28; 10:10).

The word ἀγνοημάτων (“inadvertent sins/errors”) distinguishes these from presumptuous sins. The very tone of the Epistle shows the degree of seriousness by which the author of Hebrews looks at sin. Presumptuous sin is abhorrent to God because it is done with a high hand. It is against this kind of sin that the writer warns. There is no escape from the consequences of such sin (Heb 2:3). Again, this sin is brought to mind in Heb 6:4-6 where some people are said to crucify Christ anew and expose Him to open shame. Those who sin wilfully (ἔκουσίως) cannot be forgiven (Heb 10:26). Such people have nothing to expect than fearful divine retribution for their sin. However, the good news is that Jesus took care of sin and sat down on the right hand of the Heavenly Majesty and anyone who puts his trust in Him is free from the penalty of sin. This is the passionate cry of the *auctor ad Hebraeos*. But one should never lose sight of the main thrust of the verse, which is the fact that the high priest appears before God on behalf of the people *not without blood*.<sup>31</sup>

### **The Significance of Αἷμα in the Text**

The expression οὐ χωρὶς αἵματος (“not without blood”) carries great significance

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<sup>31</sup>Wilson, 146. Wilson says, “The high priest was first to offer atonement for himself and his family with the blood of a bull, and then make the sin-offering for the people with the blood of a goat. He thus entered the inmost sanctuary at least twice on this day. Our author seems to telescope the whole procedure into one entrance when he writes ‘and not without taking blood which he offers for himself and for the errors of the people.’ This is however due once more to the compression of his statement: the main point is that the high priest entered only once a year, and not without blood. Jesus on the other hand is permanently in the heavenly sanctuary, and has no need of atonement sacrifice: he accomplished the necessary sacrifice once and for all when he offered himself (Heb 7:27)” (ibid.).

for the concept of blood in this passage. It reiterates the idea that blood is the means of access to God. In order to purify both the people and the sanctuary and its appurtenances, blood aspersion was necessary. Here blood is an agent of purification. This was the very blood ritual which the high priest performed on the Day of Atonement. First, the author's reference to the OT cultus and the blood rites ensures continuity and legitimacy of the High Priesthood of Jesus with the OT system. Second, by the role of blood, he is setting up a stage for a later argument to prove and assert the superior quality of Christ's priesthood over the Levitical system. The blood of Jesus is the medium of power and, as such, it is able to effect access to the Divine Presence. It is also the means of attaining purgation.

Christ Obtained Eternal Redemption by  
His Own Blood: Hebrews 9:12

**Text and Translation**

*οὐδὲ δι' αἵματος τράγων καὶ μόσχων διὰ δὲ τοῦ ἰδίου  
αἵματος εἰσῆλθεν ἐφάπαξ εἰς τὰ ἅγια αἰωνίαν λύτρωσιν  
εὐράμενος.*

Neither by means of the blood of goats and calves but by His own blood,  
He entered the sanctuary. Having obtained once for all eternal redemption.

**Exegetical Considerations**

In accordance with the blood rites of the OT cultus, the high priest appeared before God in the numinous place of the sanctuary with the blood of animals. Here, the contrast is drawn between the earthly high priest and Christ the heavenly High Priest. Whereas the former entered the earthly sanctuary by means of animal blood, the latter,

who is a superior Officiant, came before God by means of His own blood, hence the phrase (ἰδίον αἵματος). Thus, in Himself He constitutes both “Priest” and “Sacrifice.” The blood of animals pertained to a system that was a mere shadow (σκιᾶ) of reality (Heb 10:1). The *auctor ad Hebraeos* thus puts emphasis on the vicarious nature of Christ’s self-sacrifice.

Moreover, Christ’s manner of entry is designated by the word ἐφάπαξ (“once and for all”). The word also indicates the idea of finality involved in the sacerdotal act accomplished to deal with the problem of sin. Moreover, the aorist participle (εὐράμενος) must be a reference to an event that has been accomplished in the past. This act can be identified with the Cross-event which provided the cultic right for Christ’s appearance before God on behalf of humanity, because the cross constituted the final sacrifice which took care of sin once and for all. What Jesus obtained for the human family by His vicarious death on the cross is eternal redemption. This is eternal freedom from the terrible consequences of sin.

Commentators have usually seen Heb 9:12 in the context of the Day of Atonement. However, Richard Davidson and Felix Cortez advance an argument in favor of the inauguration of the sanctuary, which should not be taken lightly or overlooked.<sup>32</sup> It is stated that Christ entered the τὰ ἅγια through His own blood having obtained eternal redemption. In the LXX which furnishes the background of Hebrews, τὰ ἅγια is regularly used as a representation of the entire sanctuary and never the Most Holy Place in

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<sup>32</sup>Richard M. Davidson, “Christ’s Entry ‘Within the Veil’ in Hebrews 6:19-20: The Old Testament Background,” *AUSS* 39, no. 2 (Autumn 2001): 182-85; Felix H. Cortez, “The Anchor of the Soul That Enters within the Veil: The Ascension of the ‘Son’ in the Letter to the Hebrews” (Ph.D. dissertation, Andrews University, 2008), 341-62.

particular. Moreover, the mention of *τράγων καὶ μόσχων* (“goats and calves”) by the author of Hebrews calls attention to the LXX usage of these terms. For instance the word *τράγος* (“goat”) appears thirteen times in connection with the sanctuary in LXX Num 7. It is also striking that the number of times all can be found in the same chapter.<sup>33</sup> This very chapter also contains *ἐγκαινίσμος* (the nominal form of *ἐγκαινίζω*) which refers to the inauguration rituals of the sanctuary (Num 7:10 LXX). Moreover, the Hebrew word עֵזוֹ (“goat”), translated as *τράγος* in the LXX, also appears only in Num 7 in the cultic sections of the Pentateuch. However, in the LXX, the word *χίμαρος* (‘goat’) is used thirteen times in the context of the Day of Atonement blood rituals (Lev 16 LXX) and not *τράγος*. The Hebrew equivalent of the former is שְׂעִיר. However, *χίμαρος* was well-established and a frequently used term for ‘goat’ in the first century AD. It is also found in the Pseudepigrapha, Philo, and Josephus as the choice word of a specific LXX Pentateuchal term pointing to inauguration, and not to a synonym which could refer to the Day of Atonement. Therefore its use seems to be significant.<sup>34</sup>

Thus, from the foregoing, the evidence shows that when the *auctor ad Hebraeos* deliberately uses two cultic inaugural terms found in the same chapter of a book in the Pentateuch dealing with blood ritual to advance his Christological argument, this is an intentional reference not to be taken for granted. Furthermore by the deliberate linkage of the two cultic terms found only in the same inaugural setting in the entire OT, the author of Hebrews intertextually connects with the OT inauguration service and not the Day of

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<sup>33</sup>Davidson, “Christ’s Entry ‘Within the Veil’ in Hebrews 6:19-20,” 184.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid. See also *BDAG*, 1085.

Atonement. To cap it all, the presence of these two cultic terms in the Original Greek of Heb 9:19, which undoubtedly is an inaugural setting, confirms the force of the argument in favor of inauguration and not the Day of Atonement.<sup>35</sup>

### **The Significance of *Αἷμα* in the Text**

In the ancient Israelite cultus, atonement was achieved through blood (Lev 17:10, 11). In Heb 9:10, 11, the *auctor ad Hebraeos* refers to food and drink offerings and various ablutions in the ancient cult which served only as substitutes and cleansed the worshiper only with respect to the flesh. However, Christ, who is the High Priest of the good things that have come, has by His own blood entered into the sanctuary of the greater and more perfect tabernacle, having obtained eternal redemption. Here, the significance of blood is twofold. First, it is the means of access to God. Second, it is the means of atonement. Hence, the redemption (*λύτρωσις*) that He has gained is eternal. The blood of the cross is a type of the blood of Christ by which He gained access to God in the greater and more perfect tent.<sup>36</sup> It must be admitted that blood in this context can only be understood metaphorically, because Jesus could not offer physical blood in heaven. “Blood belongs to this world, and can find no place in heaven. But an analogy can be established between Christ and Aaron by conceiving of blood as the means of gaining admission into the sanctuary. The blood in either case may be regarded as a key

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<sup>35</sup>Davidson, “Christ’s Entry ‘Within the Veil’ in Hebrews 6:19-20,” 185.

<sup>36</sup>Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (1955), 256. Westcott indicates: “In this work it must be observed that Christ is said to make use not of ‘a greater tabernacle’ but of ‘the greater tabernacle’, ‘the true, ideal, tabernacle’ (Heb 8:2). The thought of the reader is thus carried back to the heavenly pattern which Moses followed (Heb 8:5; Exod 25:9). The earthly Tabernacle witnessed not only to some nobler revelation of God’s Presence, but definitely to the archetype after which it was fashioned” (ibid.).

opening the door of the holiest.”<sup>37</sup> Hence, it is the powerful medium of access which leads to securing eternal redemption for the entire human race. Here, the equivocality of the blood of Christ is evident, in that while it spells death, it is also, at the same time, a life-giving agent in the face of certain doom and death. The point that blood in this context is not a material substance is justified in the sense that the discussion deals with a comparison of two sanctuaries, namely a heavenly and an earthly. One is spiritual and the other is physical. Whereas in the physical sanctuary a material bloody substance is applied to appointed appurtenances, in the heavenly realm it is not necessarily so because the environment is different.

Christ’s Blood Is Superior to That of Bulls and Goats: 9:13, 14

### **Text and Translation**

εἰ γὰρ τὸ αἷμα τράγων καὶ ταύρων καὶ σποδὸς δαμάλεως  
ῥαντίζουσα τοὺς κεκοινωμένους ἀγιάζει πρὸς τὴν τῆς  
σαρκὸς καθαρότητα, πόσω μᾶλλον τὸ αἷμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ,  
ὃς διὰ πνεύματος αἰωνίου ἑαυτὸν προσήνεγκεν ἄμωμον  
τῷ Θεῷ, καθαρῶς τὴν συνείδησιν ἡμῶν ἀπὸ νεκρῶν ἔργων  
εἰς τὸ λατρεύειν Θεῷ ζῶντι.

For if the blood of goats and bulls and the sprinkling of the ashes of a heifer sanctifies those who have been defiled to a state of purity in accordance with the flesh, how much more the blood of Christ which through His eternal spirit, He offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse our conscience from dead works in order to serve the Living God.

### **Exegetical Considerations**

In Heb 9:13-14, the *auctor ad Hebraeos* develops and brings to a climax the

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<sup>37</sup>Alexander B. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1899), 331.



argument that he began in Heb 9:11 by means of a rabbinic *argumentum ad minore ad maius*. The imagery evoked here is not only that of the Day of Atonement, but of the whole OT sacrificial system,<sup>38</sup> including the red heifer ceremony of Lev 16 and Num 19. He shows the uniqueness and the exceptional power of the blood of Christ as a means of expiation. Furthermore, he contrasts its purifying potency with that of the expiatory animal victims of the OT cultus. So the force of his reasoning is that if the blood of dumb animals such as bulls and goats and the ashes of a red heifer could effect ritual purification according to the flesh, how much more efficacious is the blood of Christ.<sup>39</sup> Here the comparison between the two kinds of blood is heightened by the phrase *διὰ πνεύματος αἰωνίου*<sup>40</sup> (“through [His] eternal spirit”) which qualifies the nature of Christ and points to His sacred person. The employment of the phrase with respect to the

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<sup>38</sup>The reference to “bulls and goats” alludes to the LXX use of these terms together to summarize the entire sacrificial system (Isa 1:11 and Ps 49 [LXX; 50, Hebrew and English]: 13). See Davidson, “Christ’s Entry ‘Within the Veil’ in Hebrews 6:19-20,” 184, n. 27. Cf. Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, 239: “By grouping ‘the blood of goats and bulls’ and ‘the sprinkled ashes of a red heifer’, the writer implies that all the sacrifices of the old covenant were able to provide merely an external and symbolic removal of defilement. They sanctify . . . ‘to the extent of purging of the flesh.’” Moreover the word ‘flesh’ takes one back to the OT בשר which has a strong connection with blood.

<sup>39</sup>Alberto R. Treiyer, *The Day of Atonement and the Heavenly Judgment* (Siloam Springs, AR: Creation Enterprises International, 1992), 436. Treiyer notes that “the ancient worship, as a whole, can never reach something definitive, because unless the prefigured reality arrived, it would be interminably repeated. The shadows are not permanent. They point to a superior reality. . . . While the old regime repeated interminably its cycles year after year, the prefigured reality fulfils it now, in only one cycle, and for ever. In that rests its superiority and greatest efficacy” (ibid.).

<sup>40</sup>Montefiore, 154-55. See also Westcott, who indicates that “the absence of the article from *πνεῦμα αἰώνιον* marks the spirit here as a power possessed by Christ, His ‘Spirit.’ It could not be said of any man absolutely that his spirit is eternal; but Christ’s Spirit is in virtue of His Divine Personality eternal. By this, while truly man, He remained in unbroken connection with God.” Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (1955), 261. See also A. Nairne, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1921), 74. Here Nairne asserts that in Heb 9:14, the author of Hebrews touches the very heart of things. “He abandons even the sacred imagery of the blood, and substitutes the sublime phrase ‘through the eternal spirit,’ which might be feebly paraphrased ‘through the spiritual virtue of the divine holiness of life’. And in Heb 9:24, Christ enters the true sanctuary simply ‘to appear before the presence of God on our behalf’; even the offering of ‘himself’ is left unmentioned; in profoundest, naked truth there is no gift of any kind which God requires” (ibid.).

sanctity of Christ is an indication that the *auctor ad Hebraeos* has moved to the higher plane of metaphysics. The juxtaposition of animal blood and the blood of Christ by the author of Hebrews serves to identify Jesus' death as the inauguration of a new covenant. Furthermore, it emphasizes the superiority of His death over all the sacrificial systems of the Israelite cult.<sup>41</sup>

Christ's priestly ministration in the greater and more perfect tent in heaven does not call for earthly/material things. Ministry in that super-numinous realm transcends mundane/material things such as blood. The sacrifice without blemish offered "through His eternal spirit" is a designation of the very sacred Being of Christ Himself. However, this oblation is rooted historically in the Cross-event of Calvary. Thus, the only way the *auctor ad Hebraeos* could communicate this most important truth to his audience is through the language of metaphysics. Another point worthy of note is that since Jesus the Son is also divine, His self-oblation was a deep spiritual act to God whereby He obtained eternal redemption for mankind and gained access to God. His blood is the means of access to the very throne of God—a thing which animal blood will not, and cannot, do.

At this juncture, consideration must be given to another dimension of the argument of the author of Hebrews with respect to the *πόσω μᾶλλον* ("how much more") argument in connection with the blood of Christ. Johnsson points out how the leitmotif of "better blood" is set out vividly and forcefully in Heb 9 and 10. Thus he sees, here, a balancing of the old cultus against the new. Even though both systems rest on blood, the

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<sup>41</sup>Cortez, 371-72.

new has “better blood.”<sup>42</sup> He also calls attention to the word ἄμωμον (“without blemish”) to show how it focuses on the humanness of Christ; yet at the same time, Hebrews bears a pronounced accent on His obedience to the will of God.<sup>43</sup> Despite the fact that Christ is human, His blood is efficacious because it is of a different quality. In fact, He is spotless. Furthermore, Johnsson claims the phrase διὰ πνεύματος αἰωνίου (“through [His] eternal spirit”) points to the heavenly sphere of its offering in contrast to the earthly sphere (τῆς σαρκὸς) of the animal blood offering.<sup>44</sup> I think this insight is worth considering because, even though it focuses on blood—a material substance—yet, in a way, it holds the divinity and humanity of the Son in delicate balance as the *auctor ad Hebraeos* would have it. In this way, it resonates with the Christological argument of Hebrews.

### **The Significance of Αἷμα in the Text**

Blood in this context is clearly a reference to the sacrificial blood of Christ which was shed on Calvary for the redemption of mankind. However, the importance and significance of the blood as expressed by the author should not be overlooked. Its spiritual potency is such that unlike the blood of animal victims, it is able to cleanse the conscience<sup>45</sup> (συνείδησις) of dead works (νεκρῶν ἔργων) so that the believer is able to

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<sup>42</sup>Johnsson, “Defilement and Purgation in the Book of Hebrews,” 299.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., 302.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 302, 303.

<sup>45</sup>Lane says: “‘Conscience’ . . . is the human organ of the religious life embracing the whole person in relationship to God. . . . It is the point at which a person confronts God’s holiness. The ability of the defiled conscience to disqualify someone from serving God has been superseded by the power of the blood of Christ to cleanse the conscience from defilement. The purpose of this purgation is that the community may be renewed in the worship of God.” Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, 240-41. See also Héring, who emphasizes, “Here the author breaks with the magical conception of religion, which can have no effect on the conscience

serve the Living God. Dead works point to anything (including rituals) which takes away or draws attention from the supreme bloody sacrifice of Christ. The blood of Christ removes such impediments so that men and women who have been liberated from inward bondage may worship God in spirit and truth. The blood of Christ has both salvific and moral value and, as such, it is by far superior to that of dumb animals. Blood, in this context, is a life-giving agent from Christ which revives the conscience and turns it towards the living God. Since bloodshed results in death, there is the tendency to be overwhelmed with the tragedy of death to such an extent that blood is equated with death. Johnsson maintains that such a view misses the *auctor ad Hebraeos*' stance because his concern is not so much with the *means* of obtaining blood as with the *life-giving* power that the symbol indicates.<sup>46</sup> Seen from this perspective, it strengthens the Christological argument of the author.

Once again, the significance of blood is heightened by the word ῥαντίζω (“sprinkle”) which draws attention to blood aspersion, the very climactic act of the cultus. The sprinkling of blood resonates with ἐξιλάσκεισθαι (“to make atonement”) in Lev 17:11 LXX. Moreover, the phrase ἀγιάζει πρὸς τὴν σαρκὸς (“consecrates according to the flesh”) is a reminder that animal blood cleanses only ceremonially, whereas the blood of Christ has such potency that it is even able to cleanse the conscience. The word ἀγιάζω (“consecrate” or “sanctify”) brings to mind the work of Christ as the ἀγιάζων

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of the believer. What holds all his attention is the sense of guilt which crushes the conscience of the sinner. In this way the Epistle implicitly puts us on our guard against the magical interpretation of the death of Christ. He did not set a magic mechanism in motion. It was a wholly personal work which he carried out on earth and in heaven.” Héring, 78.

<sup>46</sup>Johnsson, “Defilement and Purgation in the Book of Hebrews,” 233.

(“Sanctifier”) in Heb 2:11 and His relationship with the *ἀγιαζόμενοι* (“those who are sanctified”). This is an important concept for the writer of Hebrews. Moreover, the expression *κεκοινωμένους*, perfect passive participle of *κοινόω* (“defile” or “render unclean ceremonially”), must be seen as a contrast to the self-oblation of Christ described as *ἄμωμον* (“without blemish”), thus emphasizing a qualitative difference between the blood of Christ and that of dumb animals. The significance of the blood of Christ in this context lies in its power as a most powerful medium to bring about sanctification and purgation, thus strengthening the Christological argument of Hebrews.

The First Covenant Was Inaugurated Not without Blood: 9:18-22

### **Text and Translation**

*ὅθεν οὐδε ἡπρώτη χωρὶς αἵματος ἐγκεκαίνισται.  
λαληθείσης γὰρ πάσης ἐντολῆς κατὰ τὸν νόμον  
ὑπὸ Μωυσέως 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 ἐράντισεν λέγων, Τοῦτο τὸ αἷμα τῆς διαθήκης  
ἧς ἐνετείλατο πρὸς ὑμᾶς ὁ Θεός . καὶ τὴν σκηνὴν δὲ καὶ  
πάντα τὰ σκεύη τῆς λειτουργίας τῷ αἵματι ὁμοίως  
ἐράντισεν. καὶ σχεδὸν ἐν αἵματι πάντα καθαρίζεται  
κατὰ τὸν νόμον καὶ χωρὶς αἱματεκχυσίας οὐ γίνεται  
ἄφεσις.*

Wherefore the first covenant was not inaugurated without blood. For when all the commandments had been spoken by Moses to All the people, he took the blood of calves and goats with water and Red wool and hyssop and sprinkled the book itself and all the people. Saying this is the blood of the covenant which God has commanded you. And likewise, he sprinkled the tent and all the vessels of the sacred ministry with blood. And almost all things are cleansed with blood, according to the law, *but* without the blood aspersion, there is no decisive purgation (of sin).

### **Exegetical Considerations**

The pericope deals with blood and the implications of sacrificial bloodshed. In fact, the three preceding verses are about Jesus who is the Mediator of the New Covenant. It is striking to note that both words “Mediator” (*Μεσίτης*) and “covenant” (*διαθήκη*) conjure a mental picture of sacrificial blood. The meaning of covenant is grounded on four facts with respect to ANE covenant practice. First, covenant-making invariably involved the swearing of an oath. Second, this oath was a conditional self-malediction or curse. Third, the self-malediction referred to the death of the covenant maker. Fourth, the curse of death was often ritually enacted, often through the sacrifice of animals.<sup>47</sup> The *auctor ad Hebraeos* develops his blood theology further by stating clearly the necessity of bloodshed for the ratification of the covenant, and so he points out that just as the first covenant (i.e., the Sinatic covenant) was ratified with blood, so was the second. Thus the importance and necessity of Christ’s death are affirmed. Since the only way to enforce a covenant after its contravention is to enforce its punishment, the infliction of punishment on Jesus justifies the validity of the first covenant. He died as a representative of those who breached the covenant. Thus Jesus’ sacrifice has a two-pronged benefit: It redeems from the penalties under the first covenant and it mediates a new covenant with better promises.<sup>48</sup>

A connection is established between the two covenants when Moses’ reading of the law and subsequent sprinkling of sacrificial blood on both the people and liturgical objects is described. Even more so is the quotation of the words: τὸ αἷμα τῆς διαθήκης

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<sup>47</sup>Cortez, 378-79.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., 382-83.

ἥς ἐνετείλατο πρὸς ὑμᾶς ὁ Θεός (“the blood of the covenant which God has commanded you”; Heb 9:20). The expression is reminiscent of the words spoken by Jesus at the institution of the Eucharist (Mark 14:24).

The reflection of the words of Jesus at the institution of the Eucharist here may be pointing to an early Christian tradition known to the author of Hebrews. This must be a tradition which considered the death of Jesus on the cross as a counterpart of a תודה (“thanksgiving sacrifice”). Such a sacrifice was a bloody offering made to show appreciation for God’s deliverance. Thus, in a sense, Jesus celebrates the victory of the Eucharist with the disciples and lives out the Cross-event which is its bloody counterpart proleptically in faith and trust. This is a strong indication of the overwhelming cultic flavor of the entire Epistle.<sup>49</sup>

The cultic flavor of the pericope is further accentuated by the strong allusion the *auctor ad Hebraeos* makes to the purification-inauguration-consecration-rites complex of the Torah (Lev 14:4-7 and Num 19 LXX). In his mind, blood is the purification agent par excellence, but he includes other elements that accompany blood in the process of ritual purification. This is the reason for his insistence that the Sinaitic covenant was inaugurated (ἐγκεκαίνισται) not without blood (Heb 9:18). Furthermore, his employment of the phrase “red wool and hyssop” (ἐρίου κοκκίνου καὶ ὑσσώπου) with water (μετὰ ὕδατος) is a direct reference to the purification rites for the cleansing of leprosy, the red heifer ceremony, and broad general cathartic rites of the Torah. It is obvious that he does this to rivet attention to blood as a powerful medium of cleansing, and more especially, to

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<sup>49</sup>James Swetnam, “The Crux at Hebrews 5:7-8,” *Biblica* 81 (2000): 360.

the blood of Christ which cleanses from sin and purifies the conscience.

A point worth noting here is that the writer of Hebrews' reference to Exod 24 has some changes in the text. Whereas the account in Exodus refers to *μωσχάρια* ("young bulls"), Hebrews has *μόσχων* ("calves") *καὶ τῶν τράγων* ("and goats"). Hebrews inserts the words "with water and scarlet wool and hyssop." Again, whereas the Exodus account is silent on the sprinkling of the scroll, Hebrews is not. Furthermore, Hebrews changes *Ἴδοὺ τὸ αἷμα* ("behold, the blood") to *Τοῦτο τὸ αἷμα* ("This is the blood"). It appears Hebrews follows a later Jewish view that Moses used blood to sprinkle the tent and the sacred vessels. However, Exod 40:9, 10 and Lev 8:10, 11 refer to the use of oil. The most outstanding deviation is the fact that the *auctor ad Hebraeos* conflates the ratification ceremony of the first covenant and the ceremony for the consecration of the tent found in Num 7:1. These deviations are calculated to point to the complexity of Christ's sacrifice which, in addition to its bonding and expiatory functions, also included the consecration of the heavenly sanctuary (Heb 9:23) and the inauguration of the believers' priestly access to the presence of God.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup>Cortez, 387-88. See also Mary R. D'Angelo, *Moses in the Letter to the Hebrews*, Society of Biblical Literature, Dissertation Series, no. 42 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1979), 244. D'Angelo comments with respect to the knowledge of the author of Hebrews of a later Jewish tradition: "The most striking element of the revision is that the inauguration of the covenant and the inauguration of the tent and the worship have become a single event; the covenant ceremony of 24:1-8 has as its end the ceremony of consecration described in Nu. 7.1. In a sense, the covenant ceremony is the beginning of the ceremony which culminates in Nu. 7.1, which begins the religious life of the people. Even if the author of Hebrews is not trying to suggest that the consecration of the tent took place as part of the ceremony, he certainly intends it to be understood as an extension of that ceremony." Ibid. This may explain the alterations of the Pentateuchal narrative in the account of Hebrews. James Moffatt, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments 40 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1963), 130. Moffatt cites a later Jewish tradition which appears in Josephus (Ant. iii. 8.6) where Moses cleansed Aaron and his sons. Moses used blood to sprinkle the tent (Exod 40:9, 10) with the oil sprinkling at the consecration of the priests (Lev 8:10ff.) which was followed by a blood sprinkling of the altar alone. Philo had previously combined the oil-dedication of the tent with the consecration of the priests (*Vit. Mos.* iii. 17); but he was careful to confine any blood-



Even though the blood aspersion is necessary for purification, the author employs the word *σχεδόν* to indicate that there are instances in the OT where purification was effected through other means. The use of water, fire, oil, or cereal offerings has been employed for cleansing from leprosy and from legal uncleanness (Lev 22:6; 14:1-15). Again, Num 31:22, 23 provides instruction for the purification of booty using something other than blood. However, it cannot be overemphasized that the cleansing agent par excellence is blood.

### **The Significance of Αἷμα in the Text**

It appears there are three important issues in interpreting Heb 9:22 that deserve attention: the force of *κατὰ τὸν νόμον* (“according to the law”), the translation of *αἱματεκχυσία* (“blood aspersion”), and the meaning of *ἄφεσις* (“no decisive purgation [of sin]”).

Johnsson points out that since the expression “according to the law” preceded by *καὶ* indicates limitation in the sentence, the second *καὶ* is therefore adversative.<sup>51</sup> This is a very important observation because Heb 9:22a states the normal procedure. However the phrase *καὶ σχεδόν* (“and almost”) indicates the extent to which that is possible. The second *καὶ* (“but”) in Heb 9:22b is therefore adversative because it shows contrariety. It constitutes an affirmation with respect to the importance of the role of *αἱματεκχυσία* as it relates to *ἄφεσις*. This strengthens the *auctor ad Hebraeos*’ argument concerning blood.

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sprinkling to the altar. However, the author of Hebrews with his predilection for blood as a cathartic, omitted the oil altogether, extending the blood to everything.

<sup>51</sup>Johnsson, “Defilement and Purgation in the Book of Hebrews,” 319.

The *auctor ad Hebraeos*’ argument with respect to the cultic significance of blood is climaxed by the statement that “without the blood aspersion there is no decisive purgation (of sin)” (Heb 9:22). He reinforces this position in relation to blood in the sacrificial context so much so that he coins the word (*αἱματεκχυσία*)<sup>52</sup> to drive his point home.

In Heb 9:22, we have the earliest known occurrence of the word *αἱματεκχυσία*, which is crucial for understanding the role of blood in the context of sacrifice. The word is usually translated (“blood aspersion”), and many commentators accept the position that it refers to the slaying of sacrificial victims. It is noted that on eight occasions the LXX employs the words *ἐκχεῖν* (“pour out”) and *αἷμα* (“blood”) to indicate the pouring out of the blood of a sin offering upon the base of the altar. This meaning, denoting the act of ‘pouring out of blood’ in the sacrificial context, is the only meaning of *ἐκχεῖν αἷμα* in Jewish cultic rites in the Septuagint.<sup>53</sup> Furthermore, there is no proof that any Jews in the NT environment held that the slaughter of the victim per se constituted the essential act of sacrifice that effected atonement. On the contrary, it was common belief that it was the application of sacrificial blood to the altar, rather than any other part of the sacrificial ritual that effected atonement.<sup>54</sup> Here, the significance of blood in this particular text under discussion reaches its apogee. In fact, the sacrificial role of blood presented in the OT is strongly affirmed by the author of Hebrews. Thus the efficacy of the unique

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<sup>52</sup>Thornton, 63, 64.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., 65.

vicarious sacrifice of Jesus in terms of the atonement is given full vent, finding its rightful place in the main argument of Hebrews.

Regarding the meaning of ἄφεσις, Johnsson argues that the translation and interpretation as “forgiveness of sins” as found in the RSV and NEB is unfounded and insupportable. Not only is the usual phrase τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν (“of sins”) absent here, but the total view of the work of Christ in Hebrews also has no view of sin as debt or broken relationship.<sup>55</sup> For these reasons, Johnsson seeks for the right interpretation of the word in the context of Hebrews and its use in Leviticus (LXX). He points out that ἄφεσις appears to be the climax of the previous benefits available by means of blood (access, inauguration, purgation) as found in Heb 9:7, 18, 22. This seems to be in harmony with Heb 9:22b in the total argument and with the comprehensive nature of ἀίματεκχυσία. Consequently, it seems likely that ἄφεσις in this context means, on the one hand, inauguration and access, and, on the other, purgation with finality. Thus the word encompasses all the benefits of the blood of Christ. Therefore the following verse (Heb 9:23) proceeds with οὖν (“therefore”)—to talk about the purgation of the heavenly things.<sup>56</sup>

Furthermore, Johnsson avers that almost half of the occurrences of ἄφεσις in the LXX are to be found in Leviticus alone, and the meaning of the word in the context of Leviticus conforms to the root idea of “letting go,” “sending away,” or “release.”<sup>57</sup> It is difficult to find a single English word to portray the comprehensive sense of the word in

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<sup>55</sup>Johnsson, “Defilement and Purgation in the Book of Hebrews,” 325.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., 326.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., 326, 327.

Heb 9:22. However, the *auctor ad Hebraeos*’ juxtaposition of *καθαρίζειν* (“to cleanse”) with *ἄφεσις* in the text and the immediate return to *καθαρίζειν* in (Heb 9:23) indicate the close connection in meaning of the two words. Thus, the meaning of *ἄφεσις* would be “definitive putting away” or “decisive purgation.” This idea is affirmed by the only other occurrence of *ἄφεσις* (“decisive purgation of sins”) in Heb 10:18.<sup>58</sup> I find Johnsson’s argument to be sound. The finality of tone in *ἄφεσις* finds correspondence in *ἐφάπαξ* (“once and for all”) with respect to the vicarious and bloody sacrifice of Christ (Heb 9:12, 26; 10:10). Since Christ’s self-oblation is the end of all sacrifices, this is an affirmation of the crux of the Christological argument in Hebrews.

#### Christ’s Blood Purges Heavenly Things: 9:23

##### **Text and Translation**

*Ἐνάγκη οὖν τὰ μὲν ὑποδέγματα τῶν ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς τούτοις καθαρίζεσθαι, αὐτὰ δὲ τὰ ἐπουράνια κρείττοσιν θυσίαις παρὰ ταύτας.*

Thus it was necessary that the copies of the heavenly things be cleansed by these things, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

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<sup>58</sup>Ibid., 327, 328.

## Exegetical Considerations

Even though the term *αἷμα* is not mentioned in this verse, the text is fraught with weighty implications with respect to blood as an integral part of the argument in Hebrews. In the previous verse (Heb 9:22) the *auctor ad Hebraeos* establishes the pouring of sacrificial blood as a *sine qua non* to effect atonement.

The question that this text poses is how the heavenly things are cleansed. If one follows the argument of the author of Hebrews in chap. 9, it is clear that he speaks of two sanctuaries. One sanctuary is the earthly, the ministration of which he describes in Heb 9:1-10. He refers to both the structure and its liturgy as a *παραβολή* (“symbol”). Thus it was a copy or physical representation of a heavenly reality. The antithesis between the first and second apartments of the earthly sanctuary is the basis for a more important antithesis between the ministries in the first and second apartments introduced in Heb 9:6-7 and interpreted in Heb 9:8-10. Thus Heb 9:6-10 constitutes a carefully constructed ‘period’—a rhetorical device employed to introduce or conclude an argument by summarizing the points that preceded or followed the sentence itself.<sup>59</sup> The use of the ‘period’ in this instance confirms that the *auctor ad Hebraeos* was indeed a rhetorician. The other sanctuary is described as the greater (*μείζωνος*) and more perfect tent (*τελειότερας σκηνῆς*, Heb 9:11). This edifice is not man-made. In fact, it is not of this creation. The minister of this sanctuary is Christ Himself. This is why the *auctor of Hebraeos* speaks of Jesus as One who has not entered a man-made sanctuary, but into heaven itself (*αὐτὸν τὸν οὐρανόν*) to appear before God on our behalf (Heb 9:24). I

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<sup>59</sup>Cortez, 342.

would agree with Luke T. Johnson that the poles, earth/heaven, correspond to less real/more real. Therefore the heavenly sanctuary must logically have better sacrifices.<sup>60</sup>

In the OT cultus, it became necessary to cleanse both the earthly sanctuary and the people once a year on the Day of Atonement, and blood was the cleansing agent. The author uses the word *ἀνάγκη* (“necessary”) to underscore the logical and utmost need for ritual cleansing. He employs the instrumental dative (*τούτοις*) with respect to the cleansing of the copies of the heavenly things. Since the earthly sanctuary and its ministration was based on the heavenly one, it would mean that the heavenly sanctuary also called for cleansing.<sup>61</sup> The fact that the heavenly sanctuary needed purgation implies that it was previously defiled. The OT cultus makes clear that the earthly sanctuary was defiled by blood as the agent of transfer of sins from the repentant individual to the sanctuary (see chapter 3 above and especially Gane, *Cult and Character*). However, what would the cleansing agent be?

This is a crucial point in the thinking of the *auctor ad Hebraeos*, because he states that the heavenly realities needed to be cleansed with *κρείττοσιν θυσίαις* (“better sacrifices”). As he tackles this problem, his thinking shifts and crosses over from physics into the realm of metaphysics. The heavenly objects require a better sacrifice than the blood of calves and goats (Heb 10:4). The idea that heavenly things need to be cleansed with better sacrifices has caused some to look for Platonic concepts regarding eternal

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<sup>60</sup>Luke T. Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary*, The New Testament Library (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 243.

<sup>61</sup>While in the OT blood is an agent both of defilement and purgation, the author of the book of Hebrews focuses solely on the purgation quality of blood (with the possible exception of Heb 10:26–31; see discussion in Johnson, “Defilement and Purgation in the Book of Hebrews,” 357-60).

things and their earthly copies in the thought of the author of Hebrews. It appears the choice of his diction seems to point in that direction. However, reflection of such language or ideas in Hebrews simply confirms that the author was also a child of his time, but the conviction that he expresses is totally un-Platonic.<sup>62</sup>

Furthermore, elsewhere in the NT, it is categorically stated that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor 15:50). By logical extension, what Paul says in relation to man and the new divine order would be applicable in the situation posed here by the *auctor ad Hebraeos*. Spiritual matters such as Jesus' ministering in a sanctuary not made with hands cannot be conceived of in earthly/material terms. This enhances the high spiritual quality of Jesus' sacrifice, which is in harmony with the argument of Hebrews, thus ruling out any crass materialistic ideas of sacrifice.

In fact, in Heb 8:5, 6, where the *auctor ad Hebraeos* speaks about Jesus' high priesthood in the context of the new covenant, he refers to the earthly sanctuary as a *ὑπόδειγμα καὶ σκιᾶ* ("copy and shadow") of the heavenly reality. This concept involves a form of metaphysical dualism combined with his own eschatological dualism. The communication of such an idea "goes beyond Plato and Philo in an eschatological

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<sup>62</sup>Richard M. Davidson, *Typology in Scripture: A Study of Hermeneutical Typos Structures*, Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series 2 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1981), 340-42. In this work, Davidson gives a number of cogent reasons why the author of Hebrews, even though he uses Platonic language, cannot be considered a Platonist. See also Ronald H. Nash, "Was the New Testament Influenced by Pagan Philosophy?" Christian Research Institute, <http://www.equip.org/articles/was-the-new-testament-influenced-by-pagan-philosophy-> (accessed 11 December 2003). Nash observes that the writer of Hebrews deserves to be called the first Christian philosopher since he was clearly trained in the details of Alexandrian philosophy. However, he does not use his knowledge to introduce Alexandrian philosophy into Christian thinking. He does just the opposite, in that he employs Christian thinking to reject his former views.

direction without simply ignoring or dismissing metaphysical dualism.”<sup>63</sup> Moreover, our author’s expression of ideas in such terms is in harmony with its contemporary environment because “it was not at all uncommon in early Judaism to think of the earthly tabernacle or temple as having a heavenly counterpart (1 Enoch 14.10-20; 2 Baruch 4; Wisdom of Solomon 9.8).<sup>64</sup>

Once more, it is interesting to note that the antithesis between an earthly and a heavenly sanctuary in Hebrews has led to the creation of an antithesis between a materialistic view of blood on one hand, and a spiritual view of blood on the other. Thus, tension has been raised between animal blood and the blood of Christ in Heb 9 and 10. However, the argument of Hebrews has no place for such tension at all. It appears that the problem has been created by modern man to whom physical blood tends to be repulsive. It is true the *auctor ad Hebraeos* leans heavily toward blood in his Christological argument, but he does not introduce a dichotomy between “material blood” (i.e., the blood of animals) and “spiritualized blood” (i.e., the blood of Christ). Yes, it could be argued that Heb 9:14 employs the phrase *διὰ πνεύματος αἰωνίου* (“through [His] eternal spirit”), but that is not a reference to the blood of Christ; rather, it points to the spirituality of His self-oblation. In fact, the question regarding the nature of blood that modern man raises was never in the mind of the *auctor ad Hebraeos* and it would be wrong to attribute that to him. His concern is the fact that the blood of Christ cleanses from sin. The author of Hebrews tackles an existential problem confronting man and

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<sup>63</sup>Ben Witherington III, *Letters and Homilies for Jewish Christians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on Hebrews, James and Jude* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 252.

<sup>64</sup>*Ibid.*, 253.



how Christ deals with the solution of that problem.

The problem regarding the supposed dichotomy of blood is resolved when blood is seen as a meaningful religious symbol from the perspective of religious phenomena. Any attempt to decode the blood of Christ in Heb 9 and 10 should not be encouraged. I would agree with William Johnsson that the author of Hebrews “does not intend some spiritual or mystical connotation: the language is religious rather than theological. That is, it is essentially mythopoetic.”<sup>65</sup>

### **The Significance of *Αἷμα* in the Text**

The *auctor ad Hebraeos* argues that Christ’s ministration as High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary transcends the earthly/physical realm. The basis of that sacrificial cleansing is rooted in the historical event of the cross of Calvary where His blood was shed for the forgiveness of the sin of mankind. In the earthly sanctuary, the high priest appeared in the most holy place with animal blood which he sprinkled on the mercy seat. Christ, however, had a better sacrifice before God (Heb 8:3). He came into the Divine Presence by means of His own blood as a cleansing agent atoning for the sin of mankind. As such, He is both High Priest and Sacrifice at the same time.

The blood of Christ has great significance in this context. First, the author of Hebrews talks about two sanctuaries, namely, an earthly and a heavenly. One is man-made, the other is not made with hands; it is not of this creation. In the earthly sanctuary, the blood of dumb animals was used for atonement; in the heavenly sanctuary, the

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<sup>65</sup>Johnsson, “Defilement and Purgation in Hebrews,” 250. William Johnsson provides a lively discussion on this problem of “materialistic” and “spiritualistic” view of blood in the dissertation cited, 245-50.

cleansing agent was Christ's own blood which was offered ἄμωμον ("flawlessly") and through πνεύματος αἰωνίου ("[His] eternal spirit"). Second, as High Priest, Christ is unique and His offering was offered ἐφάπαξ ("once and for all"). It was not a repetitious process year in and year out. Third, His bloody sacrifice purified the συνείδησις ("conscience"). For this reason, His blood is able to save those who come to Him εἰς τὸ παντελὲς ("to the uttermost," Heb 7:25). Finally, Christ's blood in this context is not a physical/material substance. Blood is a synecdochic reference to the very core of His being by which He effected a sacrifice that was pleasing and acceptable to God. During the Incarnation the Father Himself said of Him, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased" (Οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός ἐν ᾧ εὐδόκησα, Matt 3:17). This prediction at His baptism is to find fulfillment in His unique self-oblation at Calvary where His blood was physically shed for the sin of mankind. It finds further fulfillment in the on-going ministry in the heavenly sanctuary where the numinous nature of the environment calls for that which is purely spiritual and not material. This is in no way calculated to demean what took place on Calvary's hill that Friday afternoon. However, since sin did not physically and materially accumulate in the heavenly sanctuary, the cleansing of the same constitutes, in the metaphysical sense, a highly and deeply spiritual activity which defies physical explanation.

It is not surprising, therefore, that Christ's supreme sacrifice transcends and supercedes all sacrifices and brings the entire sacrificial system to an end. However, it must be said that His heavenly ministry is firmly grounded in the historical Cross-event of Calvary. Herein lies the significance of the blood that was once shed for sin. The blood

of Christ is presented as a most powerful medium that effects cleansing and purgation. His blood in this context is connected with life, albeit it is life rooted in death. The evidence shows that even though blood is multivalent, it still helps to promote the superiority of Christ in the argumentation of Hebrews.

Having Shed His Blood Once Christ  
Will Appear Again: 9:24-28

**Text and Translation**

*οὐ γὰρ εἰς χειροποίητα εἰσῆλθεν ἅγια Χριστός,  
ἀντίτυπα τῶν ἀληθινῶν, ἀλλ' εἰς αὐτὸν τὸν οὐρανόν,  
νῦν ἐμφανισθῆναι τῷ προσώπῳ τοῦ Θεοῦ ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν.  
οὐδ' ἵνα πολλάκις προσφέρῃ ἑαυτόν, ὥσπερ ὁ ἀρχιερεὺς  
εἰσέρχεται εἰς τὰ ἅγια κατ' ἐνιαυτὸν, ἐν αἵματι ἀλλοτρίῳ,  
ἐπεὶ ἔδει αὐτὸν πολλάκις παθεῖν ἀπὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου.  
νυνὶ δὲ ἅπαξ ἐπὶ συντελείᾳ τῶν αἰώνων εἰς ἀθέτησιν [τῆς]  
ἁμαρτίας διὰ τῆς θυσίας αὐτοῦ πεφανέρωται. καὶ καθ'  
ὅσον ἀπόκειται τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἅπαξ ἀποθανεῖν, μετὰ δὲ  
τοῦτο κρίσις, οὕτως καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς ἅπαξ προσενεχθεὶς εἰς  
τὸ πολλῶν ἀνενεγκεῖν ἁμαρτίας, ἐκ δευτέρου χωρὶς ἁμαρτίας  
ὀφθήσεται τοῖς αὐτὸν ἀπεκδεχομένοις εἰς σωτηρίαν.*

For Christ has not entered a sanctuary made with hands a copy of the true sanctuary but into heaven itself, now to appear before God on our behalf. Not in order to offer Himself repeatedly just as the high priest goes into the sanctuary yearly with another's blood. Since in that case it would have been necessary for Him to suffer from the Foundation of the world. But now once upon the consummation of the ages, He has appeared to abolish sin by means of His self sacrifice. And just as it is appointed for men to die once, and after that the judgment, even so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, but to those who eagerly expect Him, shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

**Exegetical Considerations**

The passage under consideration continues the *auctor ad Hebraeos*' development

of the theology of blood. In highlighting the role of blood in the cultus, he deals with the ministrations of the earthly and heavenly high priests in their respective sanctuaries. Jesus, unlike the earthly high priest, has not entered a sanctuary made with hands, but into heaven itself (αὐτὸν τὸν οὐρανόν). The purpose of His entry is to appear before God Himself on our behalf. Appearing before God corresponds to His heavenly session that the author speaks about in Heb 1:3. It is important to note that historically, the session takes place after His self-oblation. Christ appears before the Father by virtue of His own blood, not like the high priest of the earthly tabernacle who appears with another's blood. Moreover, He does not appear before the Divine Majesty to offer Himself repeatedly as a sacrifice. His sacrifice on the cross constituted a final sacrifice for sin at the *συντελεία τῶν αἰώνων*, "consummation of the ages." The expression corresponds to the phrase *καταβολῆς κόσμου* ("the foundation of the world") which designates the plan of salvation as something that originated in the mind of God before the foundation of the world (1 Pet 1:18-20; Titus 1:2; Rev 13:8). The two expressions also point to the significance of the speaking by the Son ἐπ' ἐσχάτου τῶν ἡμερῶν τούτων ("the last of these days," Heb 1:2). Thus the speaking by the Son, His vicarious death, and the abolition of sin at the consummation of the ages give an eschatological dimension to the high priestly role of Christ and His blood in the passage.

The eschatological tone is heightened further by the analogy the *auctor ad Hebraeos* draws between death and subsequent judgment and the finality of Christ's sacrifice followed by the *parousia*, which marks the end of the present order. Just as in the ancient Israelite cultus the people waited anxiously and patiently on the Day of

Atonement for the appearance of the high priest from the holy of holies, so also will Christ come and grant eternal salvation to all who eagerly wait for His *parousia*.

However, the thoughts that have been expressed about Christ's blood in relation to His ministry in the heavenly sanctuary and the eschatological dimension thereof can be better appreciated by considering the parallel between Heb 6:19-20 and 9:24. The OT background to these texts should be taken into consideration. The preceding verses (i.e., Heb 9:16-21) describe the inauguration ceremony of the OT covenant ratification officiated by Moses in the wilderness. It is significant to note how the ceremony is consistent with LXX ratification/inauguration terminology.<sup>66</sup> The idea of inauguration spills over into the following verses, Heb 9:23-24. In fact Heb 9:22 designates the inauguration of both the sancta and all the vessels thereof as a work of cleansing (*καθαρίζεται*). Consequently, the principle is enunciated that all things were cleansed by blood and without the shedding of blood there is no decisive purgation (Heb 9:23). Then the author returns to the idea of cleansing involving the heavenly things (*τὰ ἐπουράνια*) and their copies (*τὰ ὑποδείγματα*) on earth. The word *ἀνάγκη* ("necessity") is a noun and *καθαρίζεσθαι* ("to be cleansed") is an infinitive, but neither of these terms indicates time present, past, or future. Therefore, in the light of the discussion regarding ratification of covenant and sancta inauguration, it seems reasonable to accept that the *auctor ad Hebraeos* is simply drawing a parallel between the cleansing or purifying in connection with the inauguration of the OT sanctuary in the wilderness (Exod 29:12, 36 LXX,

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<sup>66</sup>Davidson, "Christ's Entry 'Within the Veil' in Hebrews 6:19-20," 186.

*καθαρισμοῦ* and *καθριεῖς*) and the inauguration of the heavenly realities.<sup>67</sup> The following verse (Heb 9:24) is linked by *γὰρ* (“for”) to the preceding verse and continues the parallel between the heavenly and the earthly inauguration. The narrative asserts that Christ, the Great High Priest, has not entered a man-made sanctuary but into heaven itself (*εἰς αὐτὸν τὸν οὐρανόν*) to appear before the Father on our behalf.

It is obvious that the discussion resonates with the LXX ideas of inaugural services; however, Day of Atonement elements are also reflected. Christ’s sacrifice is indeed a typological fulfillment of the Day of Atonement sacrifices. The finality (“once-for-all-ness” *ἄπαξ*) of His supreme sacrifice coupled with the superior quality of His blood supercedes all sacrifices of the OT cultus. Thus, justification for this assertion is found in the author’s citation of Ps 40:6-8 in Heb 10:5-10<sup>68</sup> where Jesus, as the Incarnated Son, vows to do the will of the Father.

The eschatological implications and benefits of the heavenly cleansing can be seen in Heb 9:27-28. However, it should be noted that the sudden shift from inauguration to a future day of judgment parallels a similar movement in Heb 10:19-24. In the latter passage, the author of Hebrews celebrates Christ’s cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary which has opened up “a new and living way” (*ὁδὸν πρόσφατον καὶ ζῶσαν*) and other spiritual benefits for believers. This is immediately followed by a warning to hold fast the faith and not to forsake the assembling of the community frequently in view of the “day” (*ἡμέρα*) that is fast approaching. In fact, the mention of the “day” is

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<sup>67</sup>Ibid.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., 187.

reminiscent of יום יהוה (“the day of the Lord”) in Hebrew prophetic literature (Joel 2:1, 2; Amos 5:18; Mal 3:2). The term “day” was also a technical term for the Day of Atonement in the Mishnah and may be a reference to the Day of Atonement in Heb 9:25.<sup>69</sup>

### **The Significance of Αἷμα in the Text**

Throughout the passage, it is significant that the *auctor ad Hebraeos* lays great emphasis on the concept of blood by means of verbal association.<sup>70</sup> Moreover the self-oblation of Christ which constitutes the finality of all sacrifices as the means of atonement is underscored by the use of the word ἅπαξ or ἐφάπαξ (“once and for all”). The idea is further accentuated by the author’s analogy that just as it is appointed for men to die once, even so Christ was offered once (*προσενεχθεῖς*; the aorist passive participle is significant here in the light of the Cross-event) to bear the sins of many. Again comparing the appearing of the earthly high priest from the sanctuary after presenting the blood of animals before God to bless the people who eagerly waited for him, the *parousia* of Christ will likewise be a blessing to all who expect it. The eschatological tension which characterizes NT theology, namely, the “now” and the “not yet,” is beautifully portrayed here. With the coming of Christ as High Priest, the blessings of the future have broken into the present (Heb 9:11). However, the best is still yet to come. The faithful

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<sup>69</sup>Ibid., 188.

<sup>70</sup>One cannot underestimate the influence and importance of the author’s diction. As a rhetorician, he deliberately uses words such as *θυσίας* (“sacrifices”), *ἀποθανεῖν* (“to die”), *προσενεχθεῖς* (“to offer sacrifice”), and *ἁμαρτίας* (“sins”) to connote sacrificial blood. In fact the diction is cultic. Therefore the cultic and theological implications of such words must be recognized in order for one to appreciate fully blood theology in Hebrews.

will be the full beneficiaries of His bloody sacrifice, once offered for sin, at the *parousia*. In this context, blood denotes life that is poured out in death to effect atonement. It embodies all the rich sacrificial imagery of the OT, thus focusing the mind on the divine directive that God has provided blood to be the means of propitiation at the altar (ἐξιλάσκειται περὶ τῶν ψυχῶν ὑμῶν; “to make atonement for your souls,” LXX Lev 17:11).

The shed blood of Christ, however, lends *gravitas* to the judgment to come. This judgment will deal with the issue of sin which caused the blood to be shed in the first place. From the perspective of the writer of Hebrews, the judgment is both investigative (testimony of two or three witnesses, Heb 10:28) and executive (fearful expectation of judgment and fiery indignation, Heb 10:27) involving God’s professed people as the object of judgment (“The Lord will judge His people, Heb 10:30, citing the covenant lawsuit of Deut 32:32-36 LXX).<sup>71</sup> Here again the equivocal quality of blood is evident: both death and life lie in it and, as such, it falls in line with the argument of Hebrews. Again, the blood of Christ could be seen as a powerful medium in its relationship with effecting purgation, providing access to God, as well as the means of inauguration. It could also be considered as an element affirming the certainty of divine judgment.

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<sup>71</sup>Ibid.



The Blood of Bulls and Goats Cannot  
Take Away Sins: 10:4

**Text and Translation**

ἀδύνατον γὰρ αἷμα ταύρων καὶ τράγων ἀφαιρεῖν  
ἁμαρτίας·

For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take  
away sins.

**Exegetical Considerations**

The *auctor ad Hebraeos* makes the categorical statement that the blood of bulls and goats (a coupling of terms denoting the entire OT sacrificial system)<sup>72</sup> cannot and does not take away sins. The veracity of the statement is reinforced by the position of ἀδύνατον (“impossible”) in the structure of the sentence. Furthermore, his use of the present active infinitive ἀφαιρεῖν (“take away”) indicates that which is always true. The justification for this statement can be seen in the preceding verses where he exposes the inadequacies of the Levitical system. The entire scheme is called a σκιά (“shadow”) of good things to come. Finally, these good things have arrived in the Person and ministry of Jesus the High Priest (Heb 9:11). The repetitious cycle of cultic ceremonies was impotent because they could neither cleanse nor perfect the conscience of the worshipers. In fact, the very sacrifices were a constant reminder of sin (Heb 10:3). However, the good news of the Gospel is that, even though on the one hand, the incessant flow of animal blood could never remove sin, on the other, the final self-oblation of Jesus has solved the sin problem once and for all.

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<sup>72</sup>See this chapter, note 37.

Moreover, in the word *ἀδύνατον*, the severe limitations of the sacrificial system are clearly revealed. The impotency of the Levitical system could be ascribed to the following reasons. First, the law which mandated it was a mere shadow pointing to something greater. Second, sacrifices were a repeated process. Third, these sacrifices never perfected the worshipers, because they always reminded one of sin. Fourth, the sacrifices could never cleanse the conscience.

### **The Significance of *Αἷμα* in the Text**

Even though atonement demands the shedding of blood, it has been emphasized forcefully in the text under consideration that it is impossible for animal blood to remove sin. The *auctor ad Hebraeos* has argued cogently that the blood which removes sin and purifies the conscience is that of Jesus the High Priest, which was shed once and for all to take care of the human predicament (Heb 9:13, 14). This resolves the tension raised by the inadequacy of animal blood rites prescribed in the OT cultus, because the theological significance of blood reaches its apogee in the unique self-sacrifice of Christ on Calvary. William Johnsson correctly states that the “leitmotif of blood is not to be subsumed or superceded—it gathers all talk of sacrifice, offering, and Day of Atonement; it alone can bring cleansing from the basic human problem of defilement that the book of Hebrews sets forth.”<sup>73</sup>

The fact that animal blood is inadequate in the face of sin underscores the point that the blood of Christ is superior. This is the blood that was prefigured by animal blood

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<sup>73</sup>William G. Johnsson, “Day of Atonement Allusions,” in Holbrook, 118.

sacrifice in the OT. Once again, the powerful argument in favor of the unusual potency of the blood of Christ is sustained by the author of Hebrews. The blood of dumb animals is only a type of the true blood of Jesus. Again, the argument is strongly upheld in favor of the blood of Christ as the only powerful living medium which effects purgation. This is the crux of the Christological argument in Hebrews.

### Christ's Blood Provides Access to the Heavenly Sanctuary: 10:19-25

#### **Text and Translation**

*Ἔχοντες οὖν, ἀδελφοί, παρρησίαν εἰς τὴν εἴσοδον τῶν  
ἀγίων ἐν τῷ αἵματι Ἰησοῦ, ἣν ἐνεκαίνισεν ἡμῖν ὁδὸν  
πρόσφατον καὶ ζῶσαν διὰ τοῦ κατπετάσματος, 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· κατέχωμεν  
τὴν ὁμολογίαν τῆς ἐλπίδος ἀκλινῆ, πιστὸς  
γὰρ ὁ ἐπαγγειλάμενος, καὶ κατανοῶμεν ἀλλήλους εἰς παροξυσμὸν  
ἀγάπης καὶ καλῶν ἔργων, μὴ ἐγκαταλείποντες τὴν ἐπισυναγωγὴν  
ἑαυτῶν, καθὼς ἔθος τισίν, ἀλλὰ παρακαλοῦντες, καὶ  
τοσοῦτω μᾶλλον ὅσω βλέπετε ἐγγίζουσαν τὴν ἡμέραν·*

Therefore, brothers, having boldness to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, which He has inaugurated for us a new and living way through the veil that is His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith with hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast our confession of hope without wavering, for He is faithful who has promised, let us consider stimulating one another in love of good works, not forsaking the gathering of ourselves as the practice of some, but exhorting one another and so much the more as you see the day drawing near.

#### **Exegetical Considerations**

Hebrews 10:19 states a very important fact. The point is that believers have now

obtained access to the heavenly sanctuary by virtue of Christ's blood which has been shed to atone for sin. This point is reminiscent of the *auctor ad Hebraeos*' assertion that Christ our High Priest and *πρόδρομος* ("Forerunner") has gone beyond the veil into the very presence of God, where, unlike the earthly high priest, His followers could follow Him (Heb 6:19, 20).<sup>74</sup> The following five verses serve as a commentary on this important point. One is reminded of what the author says earlier about the good things that have come with Christ as High Priest (Heb 9:11; 10:1). By means of His blood, He has penetrated beyond the veil and made a way into the sanctuary. He has demonstrated that in His body, "a new and living way" has been inaugurated, whereas before, in the services of the earthly sanctuary, the Holy Spirit has shown that the way was not yet open (Heb 9:8). Now, however, through Christ, "a new and living way" (*ὁδὸν πρόσφατον καὶ ζῶσαν*) leading through the curtain into the real Holy of Holies has been inaugurated (*ἐνεκαίνισεν*).

Richard Davidson and Felix Cortez argue effectively, citing the LXX background of the Hebrews passage, that the imagery employed here is one of inauguration/dedication of the new covenant sanctuary.<sup>75</sup> The term *ἐνεκαίνισεν*, the aorist form of *ἐγκαίνιζω* ("to bring about the beginning of something"), is frequently employed as a cultic term throughout the LXX to denote inauguration of a temple or sanctuary, and is never used

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<sup>74</sup>See Davidson, "Christ's Entry 'Within the Veil' in Hebrews 6:19-20," 179.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., 177-82; Cortez, 421-24. Contra Alwyn P. Salom, "Sanctuary Theology," in Holbrook, 200, who argues that the author of Hebrews uses Day of Atonement imagery to drive home the fact that Christ's death and priesthood have opened a new and living way into the presence of God.

with reference to the Day of Atonement.<sup>76</sup> In the Pentateuchal cultic material, this root occurs only in Num 7, describing the inauguration of the sanctuary. So what the writer of Hebrews indicates is the fact that Christ's entry into the sanctuary by a new and living way through the veil constitutes the inauguration of the heavenly sanctuary.<sup>77</sup>

The word *παρρησία* ("boldness") characterizes access, which is the result of Christ's blood that was shed for sin. In fact, the three verses immediately following (i.e., Heb 10:20-23) elaborate further on the nature of the access made possible by the shed blood. By virtue of the office of Christ's High Priesthood, the people of God are exhorted to step out boldly and avail themselves of the invaluable benefits that accrue from His supreme vicarious sacrifice. The "boldness" by which believers are encouraged to enter into the presence of God is set in contrast with the restrictions and limitations of the Levitical system.

In the OT cultus, even though the people had access somewhat through their high priest, he could not exercise this privilege at any time he chose. He had to operate at fixed times and under fixed conditions. Now, however, through the shed blood of Christ, believers who have been cleansed, consecrated, and made perfect have received a free right of access into the Holy Presence. Thus, the previous invitation to come boldly before the throne of Grace to receive help in time of need (Heb 4:16) is once again reiterated (Heb 10:22).

A particular blood rite that comes to mind is the purification rite of the red heifer

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<sup>76</sup>Davidson, "Christ's Entry 'Within the Veil' in Hebrews 6:19-20," 179.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., 180.

in Num 19:1-10. The slaying of the red heifer before Eleazar the priest, the sprinkling of its blood before the door of the tabernacle, and finally, the burning of the blood together with the body and dung and cedar wood, hyssop, and scarlet to ashes are reflected here in Heb 10:19-22.

The elements of correspondence make this both interesting and enlightening. The reference to Jesus as *ιερέα μέγαν* (“great High Priest”) in Heb 10:21 corresponds with *Ἐλεάζαρ τὸν ἱερέα* in the LXX (Num 19:3). The expression in Heb 10:22 describing the condition of the purified heart—*ῥεραντισμένοι τὰς καρδίας ἀπὸ συνειδήσεως πονηρᾶς*—likewise matches the sprinkling of the heifer’s blood before the entrance of the tabernacle, *αἵματος αὐτῆς καὶ ῥανεῖ* in LXX (Num 19:4). Again, it is striking to note what is said about the priest who is responsible for burning the red heifer. Such a priest is instructed to wash himself as an act of cleansing—*λούσεται τὸ σῶμα αὐτοῦ* LXX (Num 19:8). This corresponds to believers having been cleansed with the water of purification as a result of Jesus’ shedding His blood in Heb 10:22—*λελουσμένοι τὸ σῶμα ὕδατι καθαρῶ*.

The diction of the writer of Hebrews is a deliberate choice. The words he employs also evoke cultic scenes from Exod 29 and Num 7, which portray the ordination of Aaron and his sons to the office of priesthood and the dedication/inauguration of the tabernacle, respectively. A careful study of these OT passages reveals that the sacrifices and blood rites that God commanded Moses to perform were to effect acts of inauguration/dedication.

Although there are other cultic acts or rites such as anointing and ablutions, the

center of these ceremonies is the blood rite. As a matter of fact, this is the point the author of Hebrews is interested in. As far as he is concerned, the sacrificial blood which is shed in the ritual constitutes a type of the blood of Christ. Thus, it seems the *auctor ad Hebraeos* utilizes all the skill of rhetoric at his command to emphasize this very point.

### **The Significance of Αἷμα in the Text**

Once more, the *auctor ad Hebraeos*' choice of words and the very context of the passage show a remarkable significance for blood. His diction evokes the cultic imagery of the OT. A case in point is his use of the word ἐνεκαίνισεν ("inaugurated").<sup>78</sup> The point is further reiterated by the employment of words such as ἱερέα μέγαν ("high priest"), προσεχώμεθα ("let us draw near"), ῥεραντισμένοι ("having been sprinkled"), συνειδήσις πονηρᾶς ("evil conscience"), λελουσμένοι ("having been washed"), and ὕδατι καθαρῶ ("with pure water"); all call to mind the role of sacrificial blood within the framework of the OT cultus.

The expression τοῦτ' ἔστιν τοῦ σαρκῶς αὐτοῦ ("that is, his flesh") is a subtle reference by a rhetorician to sacrificial blood. Norman Young has argued forcefully that the phrase should be taken as an appositional explicative to καταπέτασμα ("veil"). He maintains scholars tend to avoid this grammatical approach to the expression because the

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<sup>78</sup>See Montefiore, 172. Montefiore explains: "The word ἐνεκαίνισεν, translated inaugurated, is a sacrificial term. The new and living way was inaugurated in the same kind of manner as a sanctuary is consecrated by a sacrifice. Jesus opened this way by passing through the curtain which marks off the heavenly sanctuary (Heb 6:19). Through this curtain Jesus passed at death (cf. Mark 15:38), and in the power of His sacrificial blood He entered the heavenly sanctuary (Heb 9:12). This way which He inaugurated was a way through death: it was a new and living way which consisted in the sacrifice of His flesh-and-blood humanity, a self-oblation symbolized in the offering of His blood" (ibid.).

daring poetical touch of the *auctor ad Hebraeos* is too much for the modern mind.<sup>79</sup>

James Moffatt also deepens this thought by reference to the argument of the author of Hebrews involving the symbolism of the earthly tabernacle whose very existence and hanging veil clearly showed that access to God's presence was as yet imperfectly realized (Heb 9:8).<sup>80</sup> Furthermore, Moffatt points out here that the writer of Hebrews "allegorizes the veil here as the flesh of Christ; this has to be rent before the blood could be shed, which enabled Him to enter and open God's presence for the people."<sup>81</sup> I see here the complexity of thought which characterizes the writer of Hebrews. In his reference to the blood of Christ he draws on several cultic rites of the OT to rivet attention on the supreme and final blood sacrifice. This is in line with the Christological argument, yet at the same time, it is a reference to the multivalent quality of blood. Jesus shed His own blood to open a new and living way for His own. Hence, the blood of Christ in this context is not only a medium of access but also a means of inauguration. This is what His High Priesthood is all about.

#### Punishment for the One Who Despises the Blood of the Covenant: 10:29

#### **Text and Translation**

*πόσω δοκεῖτε χείρονος ἀξιωθήσεται τιμωρίας ὁ τὸν  
υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ καταπατήσας καὶ τὸ αἷμα τῆς διαθήκης*

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<sup>79</sup>Norman H. Young, "ΤΟΥΤ' ΕΣΤΙΝ ΤΗΣ ΣΑΡΚΟΣ ΑΥΤΟΥ (Heb 10:20): Apposition Dependent or Explicative?" *NTS* 20 (1973-74): 100-04.

<sup>80</sup>James Moffatt, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments 40 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1957), 143.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid.



κοινὸν ἡγησάμενος, ἐν ᾧ ἡγιάσθη, καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς  
χάριτος ἐνοβρίσας;

How much worse a punishment do you suppose will he be deemed to merit, he who treats with utmost contempt the Son of God, and regards the blood of the covenant by which he is consecrated a profane thing, having insulted the Spirit of grace?

### **Exegetical Considerations**

The stern warning expressed in this text may lead some to brand *Hebrews* a “rigorist” book. However, any criticism that does not fully take into consideration the thrust and force of the argument of the entire Epistle misses the mark. I would like to submit that those who look at Hebrews this way have ignored Heb 6:4-6. In that passage, the writer of Hebrews looks at the spiritual plight of those who fall away from their knowledge of Jesus whom they once admired. Such people have tasted of the wonderful blessings of the age to come, mediated through the Holy Spirit. However, as they turned their backs deliberately on Christ, they, in a sense, crucify the Son of God afresh (ἀνασταυροῦντας) and expose Him to open shame. In fact, the writer of Hebrews says it is impossible (ἀδύνατον) for such people to repent as long as they sin willfully (ἐκουσίως). Anyone who sins willfully rejects the cultus itself and, with that, the provision it makes for cleansing. Such a person “has become a permanent ‘no man,’ a being without hope, without social or cultic privileges and benefits.”<sup>82</sup> Consequently, they have nothing to look forward to but a fearful expectation of judgment and fire (Heb 10:26, 27; 12:29).

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<sup>82</sup>Johnsson, “Defilement and Purgation in the Book of Hebrews,” 359.

The author is genuinely concerned about the fate of the person who rejects the spiritual benefits that accrue from Christ's death on the cross and willfully indulges in sin. What awaits such a person is the prospect of fearful divine judgment calculated to destroy the enemies of God. Such a punishment is justified because one has despised the Son of God and treated the blood<sup>83</sup> of the covenant as merely common, while slighting the Holy Spirit through whom God sends the gift of grace.

Again resorting to the rabbinic *ad minore ad maius* form of argument, the *auctor ad Hebraeos* asserts that if one received a drastic punishment for contravening the law of Moses, how much more (*πόσω μᾶλλον*) would it be for rejecting the blood of the covenant!<sup>84</sup> His reasoning is very forceful because he has already established the fact that Jesus is the Mediator of a better covenant. Moreover, Jesus Himself warns hearers in the Gospels that any one who sins deliberately against the Holy Spirit cannot be forgiven,

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<sup>83</sup>Spicq observes: "Le sang du Christ a une vertu bien superieure *πόσω μᾶλλον* (cf Heb 10:29; Matt 7:11; Rom 11:24). Pourquoi? Peut-être parce que les animaux n'étaient que des intermédiaires, moyens indirects de purifications, alors que le Christ donne son propre sang. Plus sûrement: dans un cas, des bêtes; dans l'autre, le Fils de Dieu! Mais l'auteur accuse lui-même le contraste. D'un côté, des animaux poussés de force à l'immolation, massacrés; de l'autre, la victime se présente d'elle-même et se porte, s'offre volontairement à la mort; *ἐαυτὸν προσήνεγκεν* répond à *παραγενόμενος* du Heb 9:11. Les bêtes immolées devaient être 'intègres,' sans aucun défaut corporel (*ἄμωμος* *ἁγία*, désignation technique de la pureté rituelle dans la langue des sacrifices, Exod 24:1; mais susceptible d'une signification morale, Heb 7:26; 1 Pet 1:19), mais le Christ, sans péché (Heb 4:15) était la sainteté même; aucune victime n'a jamais eu cette perfection, et ne pouvait donc être offerte avec plus de fruit." Spicq, *L'Épître aux Hébreux*, 2:258.

<sup>84</sup>See Moffatt, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (1957), 151. Moffatt indicates, "Another aspect of the sin is that a man has thereby *κοινὸν ἡγῆσάμενος* the sacrifice of Jesus; his action means that it is no more to him than an ordinary death (*communem*), instead of divine sacrifice which makes him a partaker of the divine fellowship. Where Christ is rejected, he is first despised; outward abandonment of him springs from some inward depreciation or disparagement" (ibid.). See also Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 423. Hughes says: "Throughout this Epistle 'the blood of Christ' is synonymous with his sacrificial death on the cross, where he offered himself as a propitiatory victim in our place. It is the blood of the covenant because the Son's sacrifice of himself effected the fulfillment of the promises of the new covenant announced by the prophets centuries before his advent (cf. Heb 8:6-13; 9:15-28; 10:11-18)" (ibid.).

neither in this world, nor in the world to come (Matt 12:31, 32). Furthermore, this type of sin is tantamount to a total rejection of the Sanctifier who has identified Himself with the sanctified because they have a common bond (ἐξ ἐνὸς πάντες, Heb 2:11).

### **The Significance of Αἷμα in the Text**

When the *auctor ad Hebraeos* advocates a severe punishment for the culprit who despises the blood of the covenant in the text, he draws attention to the significance of the Cross-event and to the fact that, by shedding His blood, Jesus is the Mediator of a better covenant, long heralded by the prophets of old in the OT. The author has already made his point that in order for a will to be effective, the death of the testator must be established. Thus, Christ's self-oblation is a legitimate event (Heb 9:16-18). Here, it becomes very clear that the 'blood of Christ' is synonymous with His death of the cross. Therefore, despising His blood constitutes a total repudiation of His Person and ministry.

It is also remarkable to note how the word ἀποθνήσκω ("die") and its cognates have been employed in Deut 17:6 LXX which is cited in Heb 10:29. First, the word appears three times in that verse. Second, the idea of dying cannot help but draw attention to bloodshed. Thus, in a subtle way, the original readers of Hebrews are reminded that he who despises the blood of the covenant will cause his own blood to be shed. The reasoning in connection with the rejection of the blood of Christ and its dire consequences fall in line with the Christological argument in Hebrews. One is also reminded of the apotropaic power of blood in the celebration of the Passover in the OT. Just as those firstborn sons of Israelites and Egyptians who were not under the protection of the blood perished, so also will anybody who fails to avail himself of the wonderful

blessings of the blood of Christ perish. The multivalent quality of blood is also evident here.

Furthermore, a very significant point with respect to the equivocality of blood is brought out in this text under scrutiny. For while blood is the most potent cleansing agent, at the same time, it is also the greatest defiling substance. The argument of Hebrews demonstrates beyond any shadow of doubt that the blood of Christ cleanses from sin to such an extent that it even purifies the conscience. However, presumptuous sin cannot be forgiven because it is committed with a high hand. The person guilty in this respect is warned that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God because God is a consuming fire (*πῦρ καταναλίσκον*). Here is the exceptional case where blood that effects reconciliation turns upon the one who has defiantly despised it with death-dealing potency. The gravity of such offence is accentuated by the *auctor ad Hebraeos*' employment of three verbs in Heb 10:29, namely, *καταπατέω* ("trample, treat with contempt, to think unworthy"), *ἡγέομαι* ("to consider, to count as"), *ἐνυβρίζω* ("to treat with utter contempt, to arrogantly insult"). Such a scurrilous and sacrilegious act committed against the blood of the covenant inevitably evokes disaster and, eventually, death.

As one recalls the *argumentum ad minorem ad maius πόσω μάλλον* ("how much more") in favor of the super potency of Christ's blood in Heb 9:14, the author reverts here to the same force of argument in a negative sense *πόσω δοκεῖτε χείρονος* ("how much worse do you think") as a warning against blasphemy with respect to the blood of the covenant. Not only does he warn against the dreadfulness of falling into the hand of the

Living God, but he also reminds the sinner of divine retribution and the certainty of judgment (Heb 10:30). This is the unique instance where blood despised and defiled becomes destructive.

Moses Observed the Blood of the Passover: 11:28

### **Text and Translation**

*Πίστει πεποιήκεν τὸ πάσχα καὶ τὴν πρόσχυσιν τοῦ αἵματος,  
ἵνα μὴ ὁ ὀλοθρεύων τὰ πρωτότοκα θίγῃ αὐτῶν·*

By faith he celebrated the Passover and the sprinkling of blood so that the one who destroys the firstborn might not touch them.

### **Exegetical Considerations**

This text (Heb 11:28) is part and parcel of faith's hall of fame. The anaphoric expression *πίστει* ("by faith"), a distinguished characteristic of Heb 11, is designed to show that the patriarch Moses put his trust in the divine salvific plan and thus helped to preserve the firstborn of God's people from certain destruction. Moses is commended as a worthy example of the faithful believer. The *auctor ad Hebraeos* describes him as faithful (*πιστὸς*) in the house of God. This is significant because the people of ancient Israel perished in the wilderness on account of their faithlessness (*ἀπιστία*). The author exhorts his hearers to faithfulness because without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb 11:6). God was not pleased with those who perished in the wilderness since their daily lives were not mingled (*συγκεκρασμένους*) with faith. Again, those expecting the parousia are reminded that the righteous one shall live by faith (Heb 10:38). This is a warning that righteousness is born of faith in the blood of Christ. The word *πρωτότοκα*

("firstborn") is also reminiscent of Israel's status before God (Jer 31:9). The purpose clause introduced by ἵνα serves as a literary device to underscore the personal faith that Moses reposed in God and for which he received a high commendation from the *auctor ad Hebraeos*. Moses' keeping of the Passover lay in his application of the blood<sup>85</sup> of the slain lamb to the doorpost. In the context of Hebrews, it is clear that the blood of the lamb prefigured the sacrificial death of Christ on Calvary. This is reminiscent of the experience of the saints in the Apocalypse, where they are described as overcoming the dragon by the blood of the Lamb (Rev 12:11).

### **The Significance of Αἷμα in the Text**

It is of special interest to note the ambivalence of blood in this text. On one hand it is death, but, on the other hand, by it, lives are spared. This is also strong evidence that the *auctor ad Hebraeos*'s theology of blood is derived from the Old Testament. For him blood has a bi-polar value. Moreover the expression *πρόσχυσιν τοῦ αἵματος* ("sprinkling of blood") evokes all the rich sacrificial imagery of the OT cultus.

The LXX account of the Passover celebration is replete with words fraught with cultic implications. The word *αἷμα* is not only employed three times in the passage of Exod 12:21-30 LXX, but there are also other words which highlight the cult. The diction of the passage reflects cultic words such as *πρόβατον* ("sheep"), *πάσχα* ("Passover"),

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<sup>85</sup>See Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*. Lane observes, "The action of sprinkling the blood with a sprig of hyssop, however, is prescribed explicitly in Exod 12:22. The reference to 'blood' in v 28 is wholly casual, yet it conforms precisely to the function of blood as a life-affirming medium, as elsewhere in Hebrews" (ibid.). See also Johnsson, "Defilement and Purgation in the Book of Hebrews," 362. Johnsson explains, "As before, the blood is mentioned as having been applied (*πρόσχυσις* equals pouring, sprinkling, spreading). The specific benefit imparted by blood is an addition to those which were seen in chapters 9-10: it is here apotropaic" (ibid.).

*λατρεία* (“service”), *θυσία* (“sacrifice”), *προσκυνέω* (“worship”), and *πρωτότοκος* (“firstborn”). The choice of such vocabulary is a deliberate design and it puts emphasis on *αἷμα* as a cultic agent. Therefore it is no wonder that the writer of Hebrews refers to such an OT passage to buttress arguments in favor of the cultic significance of blood.

Another significant point for blood in the text indicates its apotropaic quality as a powerful medium. In the story of the Passover, the dubbing of blood on the door posts of Israelite homes was a protective device against the activity of the *ὄλοθρεύων* (“destroying angel”). This resonates with what the *auctor ad Hebraeos* says about Jesus in Heb 2:14. The reason for the Incarnation, according to him, is that Jesus takes on flesh and blood in order to die and thereby destroy Satan who has the power of death and wields the same over those who, for fear of that power, have become slaves all their lives. Just as the power of the angel of destruction is nullified by the blood smear, so also both Satan and the power of death are destroyed by the blood of Jesus shed on Calvary’s cross (1 Cor 15:54-55). Therefore, the blood of Christ, prefigured by the blood of the Paschal lamb, is able to protect all who have faith in Christ the Lamb of God. This is the very crux of the matter in the Christological argument of Hebrews.

Believers Have Not Yet Shed Their Own Blood: 12:4

### **Text and Translation**

*Οὐπω μέχρις αἵματος ἀντικατέστητε πρὸς τὴν  
ἁμαρτίαν ἀνταγωνιζόμενοι·*

You have not yet resisted unto blood in your struggling against sin.

## Exegetical Considerations

The twelfth chapter of Hebrews opens with an exhortation to endure suffering and hardship as believers focus on Jesus as the ἀρχηγός (“Pioneer”) and τελειωτής (“Perfector”) of faith, who gave a worthy example of overcoming suffering and shame at the cross (Heb 12:2).

The Christological title Ἀρχηγός should be seen in this hortatory respect. The word appears only four times in the entire New Testament.<sup>86</sup> It is used two times in Hebrews (Heb 2:10; 12:2), and it is translated “author,” “captain,” or “pioneer.”<sup>87</sup> Moreover it is well noted that this term “is closely associated with the early Church’s understanding of faith within salvation history (*Heilsgeschichte*).”<sup>88</sup>

It is posited that “the specific situation faced by the intended audience and the solution proposed by the writer made ἀρχηγός, when employed in its broadest sense, a most appropriate concept around which to present the person and work of Christ in Hebrews.”<sup>89</sup> In both Heb 2:10 and Heb 12:2, the term is used within the context of the dual themes of “suffering” and “glory.”<sup>90</sup> Both the immediate and the larger contexts

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<sup>86</sup>Bachmann and Slaby, 228. Apart from the writer to the Hebrews, Luke is the only other New Testament writer who uses the word (Acts 3:15; 5:31).

<sup>87</sup>Vincent Taylor, *The Names of Jesus* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1953), 91. Taylor points out that “in Acts 3:15 Jesus is ‘the pioneer’ or ‘author of life,’ and in Acts 5:31 ‘a pioneer and savior.’ Heb 2:10 declares that it became God, in bringing many sons to glory, to make ‘the pioneer of their salvation perfect through sufferings,’ and Heb 12:2 describes him as ‘the pioneer and perfecter of faith’” (ibid.).

<sup>88</sup>J. J. Scott, Jr., “Archégos in the Salvation History of the Epistle to the Hebrews,” *JETS* 29, no. 1 (March 1986): 47-54.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid., 48.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid., 50.



associate ἀρχηγός with the type of dramatic reversal of fortune characteristic of both Old and New Testaments.<sup>91</sup>

Furthermore, one should note the association of ἀρχηγός with σωτηρία, which basically means “rescue from danger” and which also refers to “the final realization of God’s work of redemption at the culmination of the eschatological drama”<sup>92</sup> (Heb 9:28). This may help one to see another dimension of meaning. Such is the meaning that equates the “ἀρχηγός of salvation” with “ἀρχηγός of the new age.” Jesus is hailed as “the one through whose sufferings . . . the new age becomes a reality and whose personal honor and glory, which is shared with his ‘sons,’ is a major characteristic of it.”<sup>93</sup>

In the light of these data, I agree with J. J. Scott who maintains that the full range of the meaning of ἀρχηγός designates an individual “who opened the way into a new area for others to follow, founded a city in which they dwelt, gave his name to the community, fought its battles and secured the victory, and remained as the leader-ruler-hero of his people.”<sup>94</sup>

Furthermore, the context of ἀρχηγός in Heb 12:1-3 makes it clear that enduring suffering on the cross precedes session at the right hand of God. Therefore, it stands to reason that the blood of the cross must be related to the glory of the heavenly session. In this way, it is significant that the *auctor ad Hebraeos* “makes the session a capstone to

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<sup>91</sup>Ibid.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid., 52.

the past redemptive activity of Christ.”<sup>95</sup> Thus, the blood of the cross and the subsequent glory of Christ’s heavenly session at the right hand of Majesty are intimately related.

In Jesus, one finds the ἀρχηγός<sup>96</sup> who “is the leader and example in an action, who stirs others to follow.”<sup>97</sup> In Him, believers “whose πολίτευμα (“citizenship”) is not of this world, answer the question of their eponymous hero. Because they bear His name, they may be certain not merely that He regards their affairs as His, but also that He gives them a share in His power and glory.”<sup>98</sup>

As the ultimate object of faith, Jesus is called *Τελειωτής*. The *auctor ad Hebraeos* describes him<sup>99</sup> as the “beginning” and “end” of faith (Heb 12:2). The latter title can also be translated (“Perfecter”). The idea of something having a beginning and an end does bear a direct relationship to human experience, for all men have a beginning and an end. This is a subtle reference to human finitude, and a reminder of the self-imposed limitation of the Son in the Incarnation. Moreover, the concept describes a learning process in this particular context. Faith starts out in a rudimentary form and gradually matures as it grows. This constitutes a challenge and a call to faith and

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<sup>95</sup>M. Saucy, “Exaltation Christology in Hebrews: What Kind of Reign?” *TrinJ*, n.s., 14, no. 1 (Spring 1993): 41-62.

<sup>96</sup>According to Sabourin, “In Philo the cognate term *archêgêtês* is often predicated of Adam, Noah, or the patriarchs, especially Abraham. The notion behind *archêgos*, independently of the term, is one which suits well leaders like Moses and Joshua, whose vocation it was to bring the chosen people to the Promised Land.” Leopold Sabourin, *Christology: Basic Texts in Focus* (New York: Alba House, 1984), 137.

<sup>97</sup>G. Delling, “ἀρχηγός,” *TDNT* (1993), 1:487.

<sup>98</sup>*Ibid.*, 1:487-88.

<sup>99</sup>D. Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 169. Peterson rightly observes that “the use of the name Jesus suggests that the focus should be on his experiences as a man (cf. Heb 2:9; 3:1). Such concentrated attention on the person of Jesus and his achievement on behalf of his ‘brothers’ epitomizes the fundamental challenge of Hebrews” (*ibid.*).

commitment on the part of the writer's audience (Heb 12:5-13) who are exhorted to be steadfast under adverse circumstances.

The idea is not strange to the New Testament where elsewhere in the teaching of Jesus, the beginning of faith is compared to a tiny mustard seed that eventually develops into a mighty giant. Readers of the Epistle are reminded that the earthly life of Jesus had to do with the process whereby He learned obedience through suffering, and being made "perfect" (τελειωθεὶς; Heb 5:8-9), He became the cause or source (αἴτιος) of eternal salvation for all who obey Him. Because of His experience, He plays the part of a role model for every believer.

This is the thought that comes to mind as the author comforts his readers that, after all, they have not yet shed blood<sup>100</sup> in their struggle against sin. Both the words ἀντικαθίστημι ("oppose") and ἀνταγωνίζομαι ("struggle") strongly suggest that the Christian life is a battle. Owing to the fact that church history is littered with remarkable cases of martyrdom, there is a temptation to conclude that the mention of blood here is intended by the *auctor ad Hebraeos* to point to martyrdom. However, this may not necessarily be the case. James Moffatt sees the writer throwing down the gauntlet before his beleaguered audience and challenging them to develop a spirit of endurance in suffering. Along the same line of thinking, Harold Attridge sees the author employing the athletic imagery of boxing as a means of encouragement to boost the morale of these believers who are under the stress of social ostracism and humiliation imposed by hostile agents. I agree with both scholars that the life of faith is a battle with the forces of evil

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<sup>100</sup>See Moffatt, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (1957), 199. See also Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 360.

and that the Christian must be ready at all times to fight and, perhaps, in the process lose his life (Luke 9:23, 24; Eph 6:10-18). Yet, one must always remember what Jesus promised about losing one's life for the sake of the Gospel and gaining eternal life in the end (Luke 9:24).

### **The Significance of Αἷμα in the Text**

The idea of believers struggling against sin which might result in bloodshed is an indirect way of referring to the gruesome suffering of Jesus who is the “Captain” and “Perfecter” of their salvation by whose blood they have been redeemed (Heb 2:10-11; 12:1-3). It could also be said that the writer of Hebrews, who is well versed in the Old Testament cultus, has both the rich background of the Mosaic cult and the “suffering servant” of Isaiah to back the force of his argument (Lev 16; Isa 52; 53). For these reasons, his exhortation to endure suffering is done with the full realization that his audience is made up of people who are not strangers to suffering. They have been persecuted openly. They have been exposed to ridicule and shame in the process of which they lost their earthly possessions and property (Heb 10:32-34). Yet despite their predicament, they must look up to Jesus who, though a Son, learned obedience by the things He suffered, and when He cried in agonizing prayer with a loud voice and in tears, He put His trust in the One who was able to deliver Him (Heb 5:7-9). During His agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, His sweat was like blood, testifying of the extreme emotional and physical trauma that He experienced (Luke 22:44). The *auctor ad Hebraeos* wants this to be a means of encouragement to his readers then and now. The blood of Christ the *τελειωτής* (“Perfecter”) shed in the midst of excruciating pain is a

living medium that perfects the saints in their struggling and gruesome circumstances.

Once again, the salvific importance of blood in relation to the death of Christ is reiterated. The literary genius of the writer is his ability to do this covertly. Even though blood in this instance points to the physical sanguinary substance, one is reminded of its spiritual implications. However, it should be stated that the real point the author of Hebrews wants to give his persecuted readers is the importance of the imitation of Christ with respect to shedding His own blood. Therefore, he purposely refers to the passion of Christ for their benefit. But he does not in anyway imply that a believer's shed blood has any meritorious value. Thus the *auctor ad Hebraeos*, a seasoned rhetorician, concisely confirms his argument in favor of blood.

#### The Blood of Christ Speaks Better Things Than Abel's: 12:24

##### **Text and Translation**

*καὶ διαθήκης νέας μεσίτη Ἰησοῦ καὶ αἵματι ῥαντισμοῦ  
κρεῖττον λαλοῦντι παρὰ τὸν Ἀβελ.*

And Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant and the blood of sprinkling which speaks better things than that of Abel.

##### **Exegetical Considerations**

The text unravels the glorious privileges of the church with respect to fellowship with the saints and the illustrious company of innumerable heavenly beings. The believer is also called into fellowship with Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, whose blood speaks better things than that of Abel. One of the cardinal arguments that the author of Hebrews makes concerning Jesus is that He is the Mediator of a better covenant by virtue

of His better blood (Heb 9:15-17). Since His blood by far surpasses the blood of dumb animals, the covenant enacted thereof is none other than the new covenant God promised through the prophets in the OT (Jer 31:31-34; Ezek 37:26-28; Heb 8:8-13).

There is a close link between the High Priesthood of Jesus and the concept of covenant (*διαθήκη*) relationship in Hebrews. For this reason, the title *Μεσίτης* gives us another dimension of His function in Hebrews. The word appears six times in the entire New Testament<sup>101</sup> and it means (“mediator,” “intermediary”).<sup>102</sup> It has been observed that, in the New Testament, every instance of its usage has to do with either God or Jesus Christ. In a sense, this is not surprising because the word is closely tied in with the concept of covenant, and from time immemorial, God has always dealt with man on the basis of a covenant relationship.

In the two short texts under consideration here, the *auctor ad Hebraeos* takes his readers back to the Genesis account of the murder of Abel. The fact that Abel’s blood is said to be “crying from the dust” means it is seeking redress for a wrongful act he has suffered. Of course, the blood crying from the dust is a metaphoric expression. The contrast drawn between Abel’s blood and the blood of Christ is worthy of notice because both men suffered wrongly at the hands of their murderers, but whereas the blood of Abel “cried out for vengeance . . . that of Christ speaks more graciously.”<sup>103</sup> In fact, the blood

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<sup>101</sup>The term is found in Gal 3:19, 20; 1 Tim 2:5; Heb 8:6; 9:15; 12:24.

<sup>102</sup>*A Concise Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament* (1971), s.v. “μεσίτης.”

<sup>103</sup>Wilson, 231. Wilson says of the blood of Christ that “it speaks of acceptance and forgiveness, perpetually available to those who draw near to God through Christ (cf. Heb 7:25; 4:16). It speaks of the opening of the heavenly sanctuary for immediate encounter with God (Heb 10:19ff) and as a hope to be grasped for the future (Heb 6:18-20).’ . . . ‘The assurance that believers have been perfected by the one sacrifice of Christ (Heb 10:14; 12:23) and that Christ’s blood continually avails for the forgiveness of sins

of Christ speaks of reconciliation and forgiveness. Jesus is the One who makes peace through the blood of His cross (Col 1:20). For this reason, His blood is by far superior to that of Abel.

As indicated above, the text under consideration here is part of a thought expressing welcome to the people of God into a special fellowship gathering with ethereal beings in an eschatological setting. This is why the expression *αἵματι ῥαντισμοῦ* (“to the sprinkled blood”) is significant. The *auctor ad Hebraeos* puts *αἵματι* syntactically into the locative of sphere<sup>104</sup> here, because the believers are being invited into a certain sphere of influence as beneficiaries of blessings from the sprinkled blood of Christ. This blood is described by the word *ῥαντισμοῦ* which is a genitive of description expressing what kind of blood. The word *ῥαντισμοῦ* is fraught with heavy cultic implications because it goes back to *רָגַז* (“sprinkle”; Exod 24:8) to the inauguration of the covenant at Sinai when Moses sprinkled the tent and the people with the blood (Heb 9:19). It is important because it is the sprinkled blood that atones for sin and effects reconciliation and forgiveness. Thus, it is a direct reference to the precious sacrificial blood of Christ. This is the point the author wants to establish.

### **The Significance of *Αἶμα* in the Text**

Jesus’ blood speaking better things than that of Abel affirms the Christological argument of Hebrews very effectively. His main argument is the affirmation of the

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(Heb 12:24) means that Christians on the march to the heavenly city have the greatest encouragement to hold fast the confession of their hope without wavering” (ibid.).

<sup>104</sup>James A. Brooks and Carlton L. Winbery, *Syntax of New Testament Greek* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1988), 38.

superiority of the Person and ministry of Jesus. He is insistent that the blood of Jesus by far surpasses that of righteous Abel, whose blood only calls attention to an act of injustice committed against him whereas the spilt blood of Jesus unlawfully shed by His blood-thirsty persecutors addresses the need of humanity. Hence, it is “better blood” speaking “better things.” The personification of blood magnifies the view of blood as a positive, highly potent medium so often found in Heb 9 and 10.<sup>105</sup> Here, the evidence points to the redemptive power of the blood of Jesus, but the expression *αἵματι ῥαντισμοῦ* (“to the blood of sprinkling”) is that which speaks of better things. Once again the language is cultic, because in the author’s mind, the blood of Christ is the medium of power that effects reconciliation. This certainly resonates with the Christological argument in Hebrews.

Christ Shed His Blood Outside the Gate: 13:11, 12

### **Text and Translation**

*ὧν γὰρ εἰσφέρεται ζώων τὸ αἷμα περὶ ἁμαρτίας  
εἰς τὰ ἅγια διὰ τοῦ ἀρχιερέως, τούτων τὰ σώματα  
κατκαίεται ἔξω τῆς παρεμβολῆς. διὸ καὶ Ἰησοῦς, ἵνα  
ἀγιάσῃ διὰ τοῦ ἰδίου αἵματος τὸν λαόν, ἔξω τῆς πύλης  
ἔπαθεν.*

For the blood of those animals which are brought into the sanctuary by the high priest with respect to sin have their bodies burnt outside the camp. Therefore, Jesus in order that He might sanctify the people by His own blood, suffered outside the gate.

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<sup>105</sup>Johnsson, “Defilement and Purgation in the Book of Hebrews,” 363.



## Exegetical Considerations

Once more, in these two verses, the *auctor ad Hebraeos* draws upon his vast knowledge of the Old Testament cultus to make an important point about the Hero of his Epistle, namely, Jesus. Again, he cites the ceremony of the red heifer and the disposal of the carcasses<sup>106</sup> of the bull and goat used for the sin offering of the Day of Atonement (Num 19:2; Lev 16:27). Alberto Treiyer also sees here a reference to Lev 4:16-21, which deals with the sin sacrifice offered on behalf of the entire congregation. Just as the blood of the slain victim was applied to the horns of the inner altar, so also the blood of Christ was offered on the heavenly altar in a symbolic fashion. In like manner, just as the carcasses were burnt outside the camp, even so Jesus suffered outside the camp for the sake of sinners.<sup>107</sup> In effect, this comparison points to Christ's self-oblation as the real sacrifice for the sin of mankind.

These two verses not only show the relationship between type and anti-type but also demonstrate the connection between blood and the suffering which results in death in the words *τοῦ ἰδίου αἵματος* ("by His own blood") and *ἔπαθεν* ("He suffered"). Just as in the Levitical system the blood of animals purged ritual uncleanness, so Jesus sanctified all believers through suffering by means of His shed blood.<sup>108</sup> As noted above, the death of Jesus outside the camp suggests a parallel with the burning of the carcasses of animal victims outside the camp (Lev 4:21), even though the parallel may not be exact inasmuch

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<sup>106</sup>Alberto R. Treiyer, *The Glorious Fulfillments of the Sanctuary* (Siloam Springs, AR: Creation Enterprises International, 1997), 228.

<sup>107</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>108</sup>See F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Reprint, 402.

as the animals for the sin offering were slain within the camp. The author of Hebrews may also had in mind the red heifer, which was a kind of sin offering slaughtered outside the camp.<sup>109</sup> F. F. Bruce adds a striking point of contrast to the effect that, even though on one hand, the bodies of the animal victims were burned outside the camp, on the other hand, “Jesus lives, a priest forever, seated at the right hand of the throne of God.”<sup>110</sup>

What really matters to the author of Hebrews is the assertion that the blood of Jesus has both salvific and moral value, and as such, it constitutes an infinite blessing to humanity.

Another point to note is that the ashes of the red heifer, which are mixed with water for purification rites, are kept outside the camp. The expression used in the LXX (Num 19:9) ἔξω τῆς παρεμβολῆς (“outside the camp”) is also employed in Heb 13:13, but here, the expression finds correspondence in the phrase ἔξω τῆς πύλης (“outside the gate”). Thus, the point is made that Jesus effected sanctification for all believers by shedding His blood outside the gates of Jerusalem. By virtue of His position as spiritual captain and leader, Jesus sanctifies His own, because He is the Sanctifier (ἀγιαζων). By His vicarious suffering, He who has been perfected grooms His own for perfection, and He is not ashamed to identify Himself with them. He endears Himself to them as a Father, and calls them children (παιδία), a family term that denotes blood relationship (Heb 2:13, 14).

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<sup>109</sup>Ibid.

<sup>110</sup>Ibid.

## The Significance of *Αἷμα* in the Text

A significant point that the *auctor ad Hebraeos* makes about his Hero Jesus is the fact that He is the *ἀγιάζων* (“Sanctifier”) who sanctifies His own, that is, *ἀγιαζόμενοι* (“those who are sanctified”; Heb 2:11). The author of Hebrews indicates this important aspect of Christ’s work by showing the means of sanctification. Thus, he employs the purpose clause *ἵνα* plus the subjunctive *ἵνα ἀγιάσῃ διὰ τοῦ ἰδίου αἵματος* (“that He might sanctify by His own blood”) to express his idea. He confirms the Christological argument as he reiterates the point that Jesus sanctified His people by means of His own blood in accordance with a divine purpose, just as He deliberately assumed humanity to destroy the devil (Heb 2:14). This is brought out effectively by the word *ἰδίου* (“His own”) which qualifies *αἵματος* (“blood”). Jesus shed His own blood and not another’s blood like the earthly high priest. Blood here is a salvific medium—the means of sanctification. This is the reason why He died outside the camp, that is, outside the city gates of Jerusalem. The language here is heavily fraught with Jewish cultic imagery.

Christ the Shepherd and the Blood of  
the Eternal Covenant: 13:20, 21

### Text and Translation

*Ὁ δὲ Θεὸς τῆς εἰρήνης, ὁ ἀναγαγὼν ἐκ νεκρῶν τὸν  
ποιμένα τῶν προβάτων τὸν μέγαν ἐν αἵματι διαθήκης  
αἰωνίου, τὸν κύριον ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦν, καταρτίσαι ὑμᾶς ἐν  
παντὶ ἀγαθῷ εἰς τὸ ποῆσαι τὸ θέλημα αὐτοῦ ποιῶν ἐν  
ἡμῖν τὸ εὐάρεστον ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ διὰ Ἰησοῦ  
Χριστοῦ, ᾧ ἡ δόξα εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας [τῶν αἰώνων] ἀμήν.*

Now the God of peace who brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus that great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you in every good work to do the will of Him who

works in us that which is pleasing before Him through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever, amen.

### **Exegetical Considerations**

This Epistle has one of the most impressive benedictions recorded in the New Testament: “the great shepherd of the sheep” whom the “God of peace” resurrected “by the blood of the eternal covenant.”<sup>111</sup> God is the God of peace; in other words, He is the very source of peace. The genitive here is one of source (*Ὁ Θεὸς τῆς εἰρήνης*). The fact of God’s being the source of peace resonates with what the angelic choir sang over Bethlehem’s hills the night Jesus was born (Luke 2:14). One needs to recognize that the ground of the transcendental peace which believers enjoy is to be found in the fact that Jesus shed His blood for the establishment of the new covenant. The Apostle Paul asserts that Jesus made peace through the blood of His cross (Col 1:20). The reason for the resurrection and the position of Christ as the “Great Shepherd” of the sheep rests on His blood that was shed.<sup>112</sup> The author’s coupling of the resurrection with the blood of the covenant enhances the position of Jesus as “Surety” and “Guarantor of the new covenant.”<sup>113</sup> The fact that Jesus is the Shepherd who lays His life down for the sheep (cf. John 10:11) is significant for the work of Christ in Hebrews. Once more, blood in this

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<sup>111</sup>Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 588. See also Floyd V. Filson, *Yesterday* (London: S. C. M. Press, 1967), 60. Filson says of Christ with regard to the new covenant, “He is the ‘mediator’ who actually negotiates and inaugurates it. He guarantees its validity and effectiveness. By shedding his blood, he has brought men into this blessed relationship to God since he always lives to make intercession for them” (ibid.).

<sup>112</sup>Ibid.

<sup>113</sup>Robert H. Smith, *Hebrews* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1984), 117.

context encapsulates both ideas of life and death, especially as it is connected with the eternal covenant.

Furthermore, the expressions “The Great Shepherd of the sheep” and the “the blood of the eternal covenant” are very provocative. They are replete with rich Old Testament imagery. In the LXX, Isa 63:11-12 speaks of God in very lofty terms within the context of Israelite history with respect to the Exodus from Egypt. Here, God is presented as the Shepherd of the sheep (*ποιμένα τῶν προβάτων*), which expression is also reflected in 1 Pet 2:25 and John 10:11. The author of Hebrews ascribes outstanding leadership to God who works through Moses to bring the children of Israel to the promised land. In like manner, the author of Hebrews invokes the blessing of the Shepherd Jesus on His own church.

The blood is also the means of edification and perfection of the church. Members of the body of Christ—the church—are expected to show forth His greatness before an unbelieving world. By the light of Gospel truth, they shine before the world through good works, thus giving glory to God who has called them out of darkness into His marvelous light (Matt 5:16; 1 Pet 2:9). The first aorist optative *καταρτίσαι* “equip” does not simply express a wish but it also includes the supply of that which is defective. By the power of the blood, the church is equipped for witnessing to the world.<sup>114</sup> Just as when the Son came into the world, His sole desire was to do the will of the Father, even so will the church, in a spirit of willful submission, be enabled to do (*ποιῆσαι*) His will (*θέλημα*). All this will be accomplished to the glory of God because it is He who works in us (*ποιῶν*

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<sup>114</sup>Fritz Rienecker, *A Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1980), 720.

ἐν ἡμῖν). Thus, in a sense, blood becomes a yoke that harnesses the Divine and the human in the work of evangelism.

### **The Significance of Αἷμα in the Text**

Jesus the Shepherd has to do with the making of the eternal covenant. Again drawing on the imagery of the Old Testament, the author connects Jesus with the blood of the eternal covenant, thus deepening the significance of blood in the Epistle. He refers to the writing of the prophet Zechariah where the expression αἵματι διαθήκης (“by the blood of the covenant”) is employed (Zech 9:11 LXX).

Once more, the Old Testament imagery of Israel’s deliverance is evoked. Just as the prisoners of hope are released from a waterless pit and brought to a place of plenty, so also should the readers of the Epistle regard themselves as people who have been set at liberty by means of the supreme sacrifice of the blood of Christ (Luke 4:18; Heb 2:3). They have been delivered from a dry, unprofitable religious system into a new covenantal relationship with God through the blood of Christ (Heb 9:14). Moreover, the *auctor ad Hebraeos* evokes the imagery of the wilderness wanderings of the people of God so effectively here to serve his purpose.

Furthermore, in Isa 55:3 (LXX), God extends a call to Israel to become a part of His everlasting covenant (*διαθήκην αἰώνιον*). It is also significant to note that Isaiah connects this covenant with David whose most famous descendant is Jesus (“the son of David,” Mark 12:35-37), the Hero of Hebrews. In Ezek 37:26, the covenant is not only eternal, it is also a covenant of peace (*διθήκην εἰρήνης*). There are no words better suited to confirm the sacrificial and sacerdotal work of Christ in Hebrews than these (Heb 7:22-

28). By His bloody vicarious sacrifice, Christ not only established an eternal covenant, but He also brought about peace between Creator and creature (Col 1:20). The blood of Christ is not only a means of access to God, but, even more, creates a bond that gives a sense of belonging. Most effective of all, blood is the medium of resurrection.<sup>115</sup> This says much for both the Christological argument and for the significance of blood in Hebrews.

### Summary

What I have attempted to demonstrate in this chapter is that the concept of blood is deep-seated in the thinking of the *auctor ad Hebraeos*. For him, the term “blood” encapsulates and connotes all that has to do with the vicarious self-oblation of Jesus in the Epistle to the Hebrews. For the *auctor ad Hebraeos*, blood constitutes the medium of approach to God. This is why he draws from the entire sacrificial complex of the OT to advance his argument for the role and importance of blood. In fact, for him, the rubric of “better blood”<sup>116</sup> overarches the entire argumentation in Hebrews. In his estimation, the common denominator of all the various sacrifices is blood: Blood provides the medium of drawing near to God.

Another quality of blood is that it is the sanguinary substance that constitutes the medium of power. It is potent because it provides access to God (Heb 9:7, 12, 25; 10:19). Blood sanctifies, or consecrates (Heb 9:13). Blood has the power to cleanse or purify (Heb 9:14, 22), and by it the covenant is inaugurated (Heb 9:20; 10:29). Blood effects

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<sup>115</sup>Johnsson, “Defilement and Purgation in the Book of Hebrews,” 366.

<sup>116</sup>*Ibid.*, 222.

perfection (Heb 9:9, 14; 10:14). Moreover blood brings about ἄφεσις (“decisive purgation” Heb 9:22).

From the religious perspective, the phenomenology of blood shows that blood is a medium of power. However, the *auctor ad Hebraeos* avers that this particular blood, namely, the blood of Christ per se, is the most powerful medium. Thus he justifies his stance with an *argumentum ad minore ad maius*—πόσω μᾶλλον (“how much more”; Heb 9:13, 14). He demonstrates and corroborates this point by drawing a contrast between the blood of animals and that of Christ. Animal blood provides access to God to a limited extent, whereas the blood of Christ opens a new and living way for all believers to draw near to heaven itself at any point in time (Heb 9:6, 7, 25; 10:18-22). Whereas in the sacrificial system of the OT animal blood is offered repeatedly, Christ’s blood was offered ἐφάπαξ (“once and for all”). Again, whereas animal blood purged inadvertent sins only in a ceremonial sense, the blood of Christ purges and perfects the συνείδησις (“conscience”; Heb :9, 14; 10:2-4, 15-18, 22). The author of Hebrews emphasizes the point that blood is the medium of power rather than an agent. Thus his use of ἐν (“in”) with αἷμα (“blood”) which carries a sense of the locative in Heb 9:22, 25; 10:19, 29 is remarkable. “The original locative of ἐν has not been wholly taken over by the instrumental sense.”<sup>117</sup>

Another striking point of interest in the *auctor ad Hebraeos*’ thought is the connection he makes between blood and life. In Heb 10:19, he asserts that by the death of Christ an ὁδὸν πρόσφατον καὶ ζῶσαν (“a new and living way”) has been made

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<sup>117</sup>Ibid., 231. However it should be noted that διὰ (“through”) is used in Heb 9:12.



available to all believers. He also posits that the blood of Christ delivers us from *νεκρῶν ἔργων* (“dead works”) to enable us to serve the *Θεῶ ζῶντι* (“the Living God”; Heb 9:14). We are also reminded by him that Christ’s powerful position as our High Priest is ensured by the fact that He has the *δύναμιν ζωῆς ἀκαταλύτου* (“the power of inalienable life”; Heb 7:16) because He is the One who offers His own blood. Thus, as important as it is, the death of Christ is not the focus of the author of Hebrews. His chief interest is life, which is the result of Christ’s death.

This first-century author comes across as a brilliant rhetorician whose primary aim is to call attention to the vicarious self-sacrifice of Jesus and all the benefits that accrue from that sacrifice to a community of believers who stand in danger of losing their focus on Christ. Since they are drifting away from their spiritual moorings on the perilous ocean of unbelief, the author compares them to the wandering people of God in the wilderness as they traveled from Egypt into Canaan, the promised land. Through paenetic and proteptic passages that make up the Epistle, he draws invaluable lessons that are timeless for all men and women of faith everywhere and in every age.

For the *auctor ad Hebraeos*, *αἷμα* (“blood”) is a word fraught with rich meaning. It is an elastic cultic term—a vehicle of expression that would help rivet attention on Christ and the Cross-event of Calvary and its subsequent action of His on-going high priestly ministry in the heavenly sanctuary. The author of Hebrews uses his rhetorical gift to show the role and significance of blood. He utilizes verbal association and allusion to focus attention on the concept of blood. At the very beginning of the Epistle, the proem speaks about Christ who, having made purification for sin, sits down on the right hand of

the heavenly Majesty—a very heavy allusion to sacrificial blood (Heb 1:3). He concludes the Epistle with one of the most beautiful benedictions found in holy writ, which describes Jesus as the Great Shepherd of the sheep whom the God of peace brought back from the dead through the blood of the everlasting covenant (Heb 13:20, 21).

In between these two bloody-liquid borders, he employs the imageries of priesthood, Day of Atonement, covenant, and inauguration/consecration ceremonies, drawing from his vast encyclopedic knowledge of the OT cultus of ancient Israel to make his case. He uses the term blood in an oblique sense in the expression “flesh and blood” (Heb 2:14) to underscore the reality of the Incarnation and to affirm the point that Jesus had to become man in order to qualify as High Priest of the human family, and to destroy the devil. He asserts the efficacy of Christ’s superior blood (over that of dumb animals) which was shed once and for all to atone for sin. In fact of the twenty-one times that blood is used in the entire Epistle, fourteen can be found in chaps. 9 and 10 which embody the main Christological/theological argument of Hebrews alone.

The author of Hebrews avers that the blood of Jesus, the Hero of the Epistle, is the only cleansing agent for the conscience of man. In all the fifteen verses or passages which contain the word or term “blood,” the *auctor ad Hebraeos*’ primary objective is to show how significant and important the blood of Christ is in salvific terms. Yet, the author does not fail to mention that blood also defiles and could also be an instrument of death to the one who despises it (Heb 10:29).

In the *auctor of Hebraeos*’ estimation, blood has an multivalent quality; it could mean both life and death. According to him, even though Christ shed His blood and died,

when the God of peace brought Him back from the dead through the blood of the eternal covenant as the Source of salvation (*αἷτιος σωτηρίας*, Heb 5:9), His blood became the source of life-giving power (despite its multivalent quality), equipping and perfecting the church for service approved by God. Consequently, the author of Heb 11 employs anaphora to make a clarion call to all his readers, as well as others, to faith, trusting only in the merits of the blood that was once shed for sin. In the writer's mind, the blood of Christ is synonymous with His sacrificial death on the cross.

This outstanding theologian and accomplished rhetorician of the first century should be recognized for establishing *αἷμα* as the common denominator of the OT cultus and the *Christus-Ereignis* of the NT. By his work, a strong link is forged between the two Testaments. One can clearly see the continuity between the OT and NT and thereby find fulfillment of the former in the latter, thus making a strong case for biblical typology. Hebrews is a masterpiece as far as the Christology of the NT is concerned. The delicate balance struck between the divinity and humanity of Christ is a great testimony of the scholarly skill of the writer. Jesus is the Son who bears the express image (*χαρακτήρ*) of the Father by whom also the world was created, and yet He was the very One who became man and shed His own blood to atone for man's sin. Christology is further enhanced by the presentation of Jesus as both High Priest and Sacrifice for the human race. The entire sacrificial system of the Jewish economy typified His ministry. Herein lies the author's unique contribution to the Christology of the NT. In this respect, he stands head and shoulders above other NT writers as a *primus inter pares*.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

In the first chapter of this dissertation it was indicated that *αἷμα* (“blood”) is a significant term in the NT and especially in the book of Hebrews, and an exegetical methodology was set forth in order to deal with the concept of blood in the theological argument of the *auctor ad Hebraeos*.

The second chapter of the dissertation dealt with the literature review of biblical scholars on the subject of blood. The positions of a formidable array of scholars were surveyed on the matter of the blood debate, which began in the last decade of the nineteenth century and extended well into the first half of the twentieth. Some scholars argued that blood was symbolic of life, while others asserted that it signified death.

Those scholars who identified blood with life belonged to the camp of B. F. Westcott. They maintained that blood as life was able to effect atonement. Divergent strands could be found within the main thought that identified blood with life. One such strand was promoted by Henry Trumbull when he argued that sacrificial blood was life released for the benefit of others. Nugent Hicks, C. H. Dodd, and Vincent Taylor shared this concept. Monro Gibson suggested that blood was life which had passed through death, and this proposal was further elaborated by William Milligan, Sydney Gayford, and Oliver Quick. E. P. Boyce-Smith found a relationship between the OT Passover

blood and the NT Eucharist. P. T. Forsyth's argument that Christ's sacrifice constituted a total oblation of His total life was later shared by William Sanday and Arthur Headlam.

James Denney may be considered the champion of the school which held that blood symbolized death. He upheld the apostolic view that the death of Christ is firmly rooted in Scripture and dominates both the Gospels and the Epistles of the NT. He insisted that the Eucharist stemmed from the Messianic consciousness of Christ and for this reason it foreshadowed the eschatological feast. Johannes Behm supported this position by affirming the soteriological significance of the blood of Christ. The idea was further confirmed by J. Armitage Robinson's reference to the blood aspersion of the Mosaic ritual of the O.T. without which there was no forgiveness for sin. Nathaniel Micklem argued that the blood of the cross constituted not only an eschatological victory over all the forces of evil, but also a means of sanctification of creation. Leon Morris assembled an array of OT texts to indicate that blood symbolized death. He also pointed out that, in Hebrews, the author employed the term blood twelve times in relation to Christ's vicarious sacrifice. For Allan M. Stibbs, Christ's blood has redemptive implications for mankind. Hugh D. McDonald focused on bloodshed as the alpha and omega of God's scheme for the salvation of mankind.

Besides the two schools engaged in the blood debate, some scholars argued that blood could be multivalent and ambiguous. Lindsay Dewar, among others, contended that the antithesis between "death" and "life" in blood theology is not valid. He advanced an argument on the grounds of ambiguity to show that both concepts of "life" and "death" play an important role to help one understand the vicarious sacrifice of Christ in the NT.

He found a worthy supporter in Leon Morris on this very point. These two scholars put the final nails in the coffin of the blood debate in the early fifties.

From the 1960s onwards, the investigation revealed that the number of NT scholars who have written on the subject of blood in the NT is surprisingly small, and those who have written have focused attention on the term in relationship with soteriology. Most of these scholars come from a Catholic background. Gaspar Lefebvre provided both Scriptural and patristic evidence to underscore the importance of Christ's blood in redemption of the human race. Patrick J. Sena espoused the argument of ambiguity with respect to blood, and promoted the idea that blood constitutes a universal symbol for all peoples. Robert Schreier saw blood from the point of intersection with three images of redemption: the blood of the covenant, the blood of the cross, and the blood of the chalice. Carlo Molan showed the relationship of blood to both the cross and Eucharist, and he also saw, in blood, symbols of Jesus and the Kingdom of God, of love, of sacrifice and victory in spite of violent opposition and rejection. Along with their common Catholic background reflecting the "Most Precious Blood Spirituality," these scholars also hold in common the ambiguity of blood symbology.

Other scholars reflected the multi-faceted nature of the symbolism of blood terminology. Margaret Barker maintained the position that blood effects cosmic atonement, and F. Laubach claimed that blood denotes man's whole existence. Timothy Cargal discusses the paradox of forgiveness posed by the blood of Christ in the self-evoked imprecation of the leaders of the Jewish nation and their progeny. For Richard Prassel, blood has both a cathartic and contaminating quality. Francis Carpinelli asserts

that the wine of the Eucharist is symbolic of bloody expiation. What emerges from this discussion is the fact that among both Catholic and other scholars, the general idea of ambiguity and ambivalence of blood undergirds the variety of the ideas expressed. It seems that after the demise of the blood debate, the focus of scholars with respect to blood has been limited to the salvific work of Christ.

The evidence presented from the works of scholars who wrote specifically on the book of Heb shows that the stamp of blood is upon the theological argument of the epistle. At the core of the theological argument advanced by the *auctor ad Hebraeos* in Heb 9 and 10, blood is employed twelve times out of the thirty-one times it is used in the entire Epistle. Therefore it is not a surprise when William Johnsson referred to blood as the leitmotif of the theological argument in this section of the epistle.

According to Hebrews scholars, blood is also linked with secondary and tertiary themes of the Epistle. Anthony Snell saw a correspondence between the cross, the Christian altar, and the altar of bloody sacrifice of the OT cultus. Leland Elhard pointed to blood as a direct indicator of the real humanity of Christ. James Scullion maintained that *Yom Kippur* helps one not only to understand the cross in the NT, but also to come to grips with the reality of the bloody event in Hebrews. For John Kleinig the references to blood in the Epistle are traceable to the Levitical rites. Within the confines of Greco-Roman society, Patrick Gray deepened the meaning of blood for the high priesthood of Christ, while Richard Nelson called attention to the invaluable benefits and blessings that accrue to all believers as a result of Christ's blood that was shed on Calvary. Ceslas Spicq concluded that the bloodshed of Christ constitutes a divine mystery, which is the

highest form of achievement in human history.

The literature review made apparent that no previous study has appeared which deals with the various issues and numerous passages concerning blood in Hebrews in a comprehensive and systematic way on the doctoral level of scholarship. Such comprehensive examination is the focus of this dissertation.

The third chapter of the dissertation dealt with the background of the term blood in the context of ANE and the OT environment. It is abundantly clear, from the scholarly works examined in connection with blood, that among ancient Israel's neighbors there was a different understanding of the role and function of blood in the religious sacrificial context. Since the gods were viewed from the anthropological perspective, blood was for alimentation. It had no expiatory function. There is no record of blood manipulation. Even in the case of covenant ratification, the role of blood was simply calculated to inspire obedience and fear on the part of the vassal to his overlord. Moreover, in the ANE environment, blood was deemed to have magical qualities. Černy's reference to Herodotus' account of a Persian blood pact was a good illustration of this superstitious attitude toward blood. Thus, in non-Israelite communities, it was common to make blood pacts in which participants partook of each other's blood—a thing which is strictly forbidden in the OT.

In the OT cultus, blood had a unique role. It was the means of atonement. It was closely connected with life and, for that reason, its consumption was strictly forbidden. Such an offense was punishable by ostracism and, ultimately, death. It belonged to the Deity and so great care was taken in handling it. Consequently, the book of Leviticus is



replete with terms of cultic procedure with respect to the manipulation of blood. Blood has an apotropaic quality. While it was an agent employed in inaugural and consecration rites, it also played a significant role in covenant making. By blood, both Yahweh and His covenant people were bound together in a unique covenantal relationship.

Blood manipulation was an important aspect of the OT cultus. The book of Leviticus provided elaborate instruction in this regard. Roy Gane riveted attention to the complexity of blood rites with respect to the cult. He provided a very helpful and elaborate discussion about blood aspersion in the cult of the sanctuary. The daubing of blood on the horns of the altar and his explanation of the role of Azazel afforded a great insight into the cult of ancient Israel. The role of sacrificial blood in Lev 17:10, 11 furnished the hermeneutic key for atonement ritual. A close connection existed between נפש (“life”) and דם (“blood”)—a crucial factor for understanding sacrificial blood in the OT. Other factors related to blood manipulation, such as the principle of the gradation of holiness in connection with the sanctuary cultus as well as the application of blood to the specific parts of the body in the consecration of priests, were a constant reminder of the holiness of Yahweh. Therefore, it is not strange that the abuse of the sacred use of blood evoked such strong prophetic condemnation on the part of the prophets of the eighth century B.C.E.

The ambivalence of blood is given a forceful expression in recent feminist treatments of OT passages. The works of Deborah Ellens, Kathleen O’Grady, and Mayer I. Gruber are outstanding in this respect. These scholars have pointed out the equivocality of blood in the context of Lev 15 with respect to genital emissions of both male and

female. Though blood is a cleansing agent par excellence, it is also capable of defilement. One must also acknowledge the contributions of Carol Meyers and Richard Whitekettle, who have highlighted the OT emphasis upon the fact that blood belongs to the Deity. They, among others, have also demonstrated the ambivalence of blood—that it symbolizes both life and death, that it both defiles and cleanses.

The fourth chapter of the dissertation called attention to the background of the term blood in the environment of the New Testament world. This environment encompasses writings of the OT Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, Philo, Josephus, Rabbinical works, and the Graeco-Roman world itself. Examination of the evidence revealed that the term blood carried a very rich meaning within these various contexts. In spite of the varied understanding of the term, certain basic commonalities have been identified. Apart from being a cultic term, blood was used in the complex sense of life-murder-death. It was also employed as a designation for humanity. Sometimes it was used in a symbolic or purely physiological sense.

The concept of blood in the NT was also examined in this chapter. The NT reflects some of the shades of meaning from its environment with respect to blood, but the major ideas about blood reflected in the New Testament can also be traced back to the Old Testament. Some extrabiblical sources attribute intrinsic worth to blood per se or attempt to give blood personality, but such ideas are foreign to biblical thought. In the Bible, the use of blood for cultic purposes is solely based on divine command and nothing more.

The fifth chapter of the dissertation examines the role and significance of blood in

the Epistle to the Hebrews. From an exegetical analysis of the passages of the twenty-one occurrences of *αἷμα* in the Epistle, it became apparent that in the multivalent as well as ambiguous quality of blood, the *auctor ad Hebraeos* found the most suitable and eloquent vehicle of expression to convey the indelible message of the story of the cross to an audience that needed it very desperately. Blood was the best medium to couch the language expressing the unique work of Christ as the self-sacrificing High Priest for humanity.

The concept of blood is deeply rooted in the thinking of the *auctor ad Hebraeos*, so much so that of the more than ninety times that the word is used in the entire New Testament, one third of that number is found in Hebrews alone. For the writer of Hebrews, the term connotes all that has to do with the vicarious self-sacrifice of Jesus. Blood is the medium of approach to God and, as such, it overarches the argumentation in Hebrews. Blood also constitutes the medium of power because it sanctifies, consecrates, purifies, and, by it, the covenant is inaugurated. Furthermore blood effects perfection and brings about decisive purgation resulting in forgiveness.

The *auctor ad Hebraeos* avers that the blood of Christ is the most powerful medium. By an *argumentum ad minore ad maius* he asserts that the blood of Christ, which was once-for-all offered to take care of the sin of humanity, far surpasses the inadequate blood of dumb animals, which was offered incessantly in the Hebrew cultus as a type of Christ's blood. These impotent animal sacrifices purified only according to the flesh, whereas the unique self-sacrifice of Christ cleansed the conscience. Animal blood

provided only a limited access to God but the blood of Christ opened a new and living way into the very presence of God.

The connection between blood and life is asserted by the *auctor ad Hebraeos* because the blood of Christ liberates the sinner from dead works to serve the Living God in the new and living way now made available. This resonates with the fact that Christ has the power of inalienable life. Moreover, the powerful blood of Christ constitutes an indelible reminder of His humanity and His subsequent death, which brings life to the entire human race that was doomed to die because of Adam's sin. However, if the blood of Christ which ratified the new covenant is despised, its power has the ability to effect death with a devastating vengeance.

In the ambiguity, ambivalence, and multivocality of blood, the *auctor ad Hebraeos* finds a most powerful medium of expression for his Christology. For him, blood could mean both life and death. It is no wonder that he confirms the divine paradox of Jesus' resurrection from the dead as having been effected by God through the blood of the everlasting covenant.

Further research in another study is needed to explore in detail the relationship of blood to the Christology of the Epistle. However, some preliminary implications from the present study for Christology may be suggested. That the *auctor ad Hebraeos* was well versed in Christology is attested by the fact that the Epistle contains more Christological titles than any other book in the entire New Testament.<sup>1</sup> It seems such proliferation of

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<sup>1</sup>There is a striking number of Christological titles in the Epistle to the Hebrews such as: *Αἴτιος σωτηρίας αἰωνίου*; *Ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης*; *Ἀπόστολος*; *Ἀρχηγός*; *Ἀρχιερέυς*; *Ἔγγυος*; *Κληρονόμος*; *Κύριος*; *Λειτουργός*; *Μεσίτης*; *Ποιμένα*; *Πρόδρομος*; *Πρωτότοκος*; *Τελειωτής*; *Χριστός*; *Υἱός*.

Christological titles in the Epistle is a deliberate design on the author's part. Very early in the proem, he states that, as a result of shedding His own blood to effect purification of the sin of humanity, Jesus sat at the right hand of the Heavenly Majesty. Not only that, but by His unique self-sacrifice, He has inherited a name (*κεκληρονόμηκεν ὄνομα*, Heb 1:4; Phil 2:9-11) that is superior. In this respect, He outshines all the angelic host. The term *ὄνομα* ("name") can also be translated ("title"), and since a title sets one apart and puts one in a special category, the *auctor ad Hebraeos* seems to have purposely employed the term as a distinguishing factor to project the special image of the Son and His role, as well as the focus of his work. This also may have been the reason for the *auctor ad Hebraeos*' coining of the *hapx legomenon*--*αἱματεκχυσία* ("the shedding of blood").

The capacity in which the Son functions in terms of soteriology seems to be largely what has engendered these titles. The question naturally arises, what is the purpose of all these Christological titles? It is also significant to note that these titles, by which the Son has surpassed all the angels, have to do with His having made purification for sins (*καθαρισμὸν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν*, Heb 1:3). Therefore, what emerges here is that there must be a relationship between these honorific titles and *αἷμα* ("blood") to justify their prolific use by the *auctor ad Hebraeos* in his work. This could furnish the ground for further research in the Christology of Hebrews.

In sum, taking into consideration the findings of this dissertation, one may safely conclude that the term blood is imbued with such a rich elasticity of meaning that it furnished the *auctor ad Hebraeos* with a powerful linguistic tool to help him express the depths of his theological argument, including his understanding of Christology, thereby

making a very significant contribution to the message of the New Testament.

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