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**Atonement in Leviticus and Hebrews: Convergences and Divergences**

BA BSTH Honours Thesis

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Biblical References to Atonement

*“For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me.” – John 5:46*

*“Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.” – Luke 24:27*

## Abstract

Leviticus describes cultic rituals within the historical context of the ancient Near East. In the biblical narrative, YHWH instructs Moses and the Levitical priesthood in various sacrificial offerings to provide atonement for violations against the covenant code between YHWH and the Israelite covenant community. The instructions they received distinguished them from contemporaneous cultic communities and established a systematic form of worship acceptable to YHWH. Levitical priests and offerings produced temporary atonement for unintentional sins; priests and offerings were co-dependent in their validity before YHWH. Blood atonement is the primary mode YHWH uses to reconcile humanity to himself. Leviticus foreshadows the detailed means of atonement fulfilled by Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ includes and transcends all Levitical atonement sacrifices. This thesis will focus on how the crucifixion of the incarnation of the Son of God fulfills the atonement models prefigured by Levitical offerings. This thesis will deepen the reader's understanding of the relationship between Old and New Testament views of atonement. First, I will analyze changes and consistencies in ancient Near East beliefs surrounding blood sacrifice between the time of the Sinaitic events described by Leviticus and the Christological events described by the epistle to the Hebrews, with special attention to the Exodus group and tabernacle atonement theology. I will compare the atonement models presented by sacrificial animals with those provided by Christ. Detailed descriptions will provide syntheses of Levitical atonement with Christological atonement. More specifically, I will compare the atonement models in Leviticus with those presented in the epistle to the Hebrews. After providing a theology of atonement in Leviticus and Hebrews, I will consider convergences and divergences between Leviticus and Hebrews. In conclusion, counterarguments and final

results will synthesize my findings by considering how our interpretations of atonement in Leviticus change in light of Christ in Hebrews.

## 1. Introduction & Methodologies

Blood atonement reconciled a transgressor with YHWH in so far as *lex talionis* was recognized, the offense(s) committed were known, death was considered an immediate or eventual consequence of sin, and innocent lifeblood was treated as a propitiatory and expiatory force prescribed in atonement procedures between YHWH and the Israelite covenant community. Both the Old and New Testaments address blood atonement as a necessary factor in reconciling humanity and divinity. There are similarities and differences in how the biblical literature refers to blood atonement. I will argue that there are more divergences than convergences between blood atonement in the two texts. Convergences of atonement between Leviticus and Hebrews include the ransom, satisfaction, and substitutionary models of atonement when blood atonement provides both a propitiatory covering over of sins, and an expiatory removal of sin and its emitted impurities. Divergences of atonement between Leviticus and Hebrews include priesthood requirements, diverse views in Messianism, and the absence of the recapitulation model of atonement in Leviticus. In this chapter, I will explain the approaches I will employ in my thesis to reach those conclusions.

### *The Historical-Critical-grammatical Approach*

The first approach I will use to analyze atonement in Leviticus and Hebrews is the historical-critical-grammatical approach. This approach is borrowed from Craig L. Blomberg's contribution to *Biblical Hermeneutics: Five Views* (2012).<sup>1</sup> This view aims at discovering what lies beneath and behind a text by first uncovering the historical context it first appeared within. This means the text can only be fully understood by understanding the original intended meaning of its author and the audience the text addresses by means of its historical milieu and

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<sup>1</sup> Craig L. Blomberg, "The Historical-Critical/Grammatical View," in *Biblical Hermeneutics: Five Views*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Beth M. Stovell (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 27-47.

grammatical-syntactical features.<sup>2</sup> First, I will consider the historical context of the text. Then, I will consider the special linguistic features that characterize the text. Finally, I will apply the information provided by the historical-critical-grammatical approach into a biblical theology.

Many proponents of this approach are text critical. Most biblical minimalists embrace this view because it offers analyses of the text without implicit biases under religious and theological pretexts and presuppositions. Often biblical minimalists do not believe biblical literature portrays real historical events with accuracy. However, this does not mean those who are not biblical minimalists should completely avoid the historical-critical grammatical approach. In reconstructing the historical context of the text to be analyzed, there is more detail offered in its final analysis. Additionally, not all theological pretexts and presuppositions must be abandoned in order to provide an accurate historical-critical assessment.

The historical-critical approach is descriptive and diachronic. When moving from event to event chronologically, detailed descriptions of the text, the world of the text, its author, and its audience are slowly revealed. These descriptions are sometimes difficult to establish when dealing with biblical literature because there might be conflicting evidence, a lack of material evidence directly in relation to the biblical text, or a system of indirect polemics against non-biblical worldviews contemporary to the world of the text that leads biblical scholars to think in apophatic terms. Nevertheless, there is always a vast amount of information to obtain to reconstruct the historical context in which both the text and the events the text describes first appeared.

### *Biblical-Theological Approach*

The second approach I will use in my study of atonement in Leviticus and Hebrews is the biblical-theological approach. This view is seldom used by biblical minimalists but openly

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<sup>2</sup> Blomberg, "Historical-Critical/Grammatical View," 27.

promoted by theologians. It often presupposes that biblical literature is divinely inspired, inerrant, infallible, and the highest authority on matters of Christian faith and practice. This approach focuses on the canonical, confessional theology of the Church universal. I will borrow the methods employed by Robin Routledge and John Sailhamer embraced in their respective Old Testament theologies.<sup>3</sup>

The biblical-theological approach presupposes that the text accurately describes real historical events. It describes two authors, divine and human, guided by divine providence throughout history. Within this framework, YHWH is the divine author guiding history as a witness to his glory and ultimate victory in redeeming humanity from the powers of sin, death, and devils. The human authors, acting as an amanuensis of YHWH, were scribes who could have been witnesses to or tradition receptors posthumous to the events the text describes.

This approach also emphasizes a synchronic and intertextual reading of biblical literature. Whereas the historical-critical/grammatical approach moves from event to event and text to text diachronically within a broken historical record chronology, the biblical-theological approach synchronizes all canonical texts as one unified whole. This continuity is holistic because it is theologically and historically consistent within Judeo-Christian worldviews. Multiple meanings beneath and behind the text testify to specific doctrines and conclusions pulled from the text. For example, these doctrines and conclusions might conclude that YHWH is one God, humanity is in a state of sin against or separation from YHWH, and that Jesus taught in parables so the mysteries of his kingdom would only be understood by those he had chosen to understand them.

I will use this approach after considering the historical-critical/grammatical parameters of Leviticus. When dealing with the theology of atonement in Leviticus, I will focus on in-textuality

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<sup>3</sup> Robin Routledge, *Old Testament Theology: A Thematic Approach* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008), 37-47; John H Sailhamer, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology: A Canonical Approach* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995).

and inner-textuality. In-textuality refers to the analysis of an isolated unit of text within a broader text and inner-textuality refers to the analysis of how the whole text refers to itself.<sup>4</sup> For example, my analysis of atonement in Leviticus 1-7 is an in-textual approach and my analysis of how Leviticus refers to atonement is an inner-textual approach. Finally, I will consider blood atonement in both Leviticus and Hebrews within the framework of an intertextual biblical-theological approach. Intertextuality is the analysis of how two or more texts refer to each other.<sup>5</sup> In biblical literature, this is often accomplished by analyzing typologies, covenant theology, and intertextual allusions and quotations.

### *My Integrated Approach*

The approach I will use in my thesis will be an integrated approach of both the historical-critical-grammatical approach and the biblical-theological approach. My integrated approach will also provide special references to biblical interpretations from the early church fathers when considering Christian interpretations of atonement in Leviticus and Hebrews in chapters three to six. I will emphasize the use of two authors, divine and human, YHWH and scribal amanuenses. I will analyze two texts, Leviticus and the epistle to the Hebrews, especially regarding how they interpret each other. I will maintain that the former lays the groundwork for the latter despite the latter interpreting the former within typological and Christological readings. I will embrace a historical-critical/grammatical reading of both texts without losing the presupposition that biblical literature is divinely inspired and holds theological continuity within its Christian interpretations.

There are both positive and negative ways in which I will discuss the text. These are borrowed from the approach presented by Greer and Walton in discussing the ancient Near

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<sup>4</sup> Sailhamer, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology*, 207-12.

<sup>5</sup> Sailhamer, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology*, 212-13.

Eastern historical context in which the Exodus group first appeared.<sup>6</sup> This group either reacted positively or negatively to the cultic systems contemporary to them. Through a process of dissemination and diffusion within multiple generations, the priestly traditions within the Israelite covenant community both contacted their deity YHWH directly and encountered foreign tribes who worshipped different deities in diverse manners. My integrated approach will present a henotheistic reconstruction in relation to the events in Leviticus and a monotheistic reconstruction in relation to the text of Leviticus. My integrated approach to the former will be more heavily historical-critical and to the latter, more open towards the biblical-theological approach.

There are several models used in scholarship for reconstructing these processes within the historical circumstances in which the theology behind the text first arose. Israelite literature could have arisen by borrowing, polemics, counter-texts, echoing, or diffusion. First, the borrowing model implies that the Tanakh borrowed from other ancient Near Eastern literature in the Iron age.<sup>7</sup> This means they took what they liked and left the rest behind. Second, the polemics model proposes that caricatures in the Tanakh refute or mock other well-known ancient Near Eastern literature.<sup>8</sup> For example, the ten plagues of the Exodus account mocked various Egyptian gods and goddesses. Third, the counter-texts model proposes that the Tanakh is primarily reactionary rather than a set of refutations.<sup>9</sup> Fourth, texts that echo the ancient Near East in the Tanakh propose an indirect borrowing of allusions and themes.<sup>10</sup> And fifth, the

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<sup>6</sup> John H. Walton, "Interactions in the Ancient Cognitive Environment," in *Behind the Scenes of the Old Testament: Cultural, Social, and Historical Contexts*, ed. Jonathan S. Greer, John W. Hilber, and John H. Walton (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2018), 415-422 (ebook page numbers). The "Exodus group" were these ancient Israelites who departed from Egypt in the Late Bronze Age.

<sup>7</sup> Walton, "Interactions," 415.

<sup>8</sup> Walton, "Interactions," 416. See also: Isaiah 44, Jeremiah 10.

<sup>9</sup> Walton, "Interactions," 416. See also: Genesis 1:1-2:3 and the Tower of Babel.

<sup>10</sup> Walton, "Interactions," 416-17. See also: the comparisons between Ezekiel and Erra & Ishum.

diffusion model states that the Tanakh arose from informal traditions founded upon oral traditions, both of which do not require knowledge of or contact with other ANE literature.<sup>11</sup>

Both the polemics and counter-texts models will be called negative reactionary in that they negate, present contrapositives, or demean ancient Near East practices deemed unworthy or immoral for the covenant community of YHWH. The borrowing and echoing models will be called positive reactionary in that they present a favourable view of broader ancient Near Eastern cultic practices embedded in the Tanakh. Diffusion is independent in that it does not necessarily discount the other models as untenable, but rather, emphasizes the possibility that oral and written traditions can develop independently of one another. Walton's view is most probable in that similarities between the Israelites and ancient Near East literature were mostly caused by diffusion.<sup>12</sup>

Oral traditions within the Israelite covenant community eventually became written traditions. The long-standing debate as to the extent of influence either the positive reactionary or negative reactionary models had in the development of Israelite traditions is inconclusive. Dogmatic responses emphasize a complete diffusion by theophany witnessed by divinely inspired writers of the text whereas biblical minimalists insist on a completely reactionary creation of text traditions without any divinely inspired authors. There is no data completely void of ideological influence and interpretation.<sup>13</sup> However, as I will demonstrate, proponents of pure biblical minimalism overlook a chimera model of reactionary diffusion which presents a unique uniformity in the theophanic theology in the early Exodus group. This theology was otherwise

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<sup>11</sup> Walton, "Interactions," 417.

<sup>12</sup> Walton, "Interactions," 422.

<sup>13</sup> Iain Provan, V. Philips Long, and Tremper Longman III, *A Biblical History of Israel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 62-63.

foreign to other ancient Near Eastern communities while still borrowing, echoing, countering, and prohibiting practices of those same ancient Near Eastern communities.

An addition to my integrated approach is the employment of the hermeneutical circle and the *regula fidei* (the rule of faith). These were both used by the hermeneutics of the author of Hebrews. For example, the hermeneutical circle is in effect in Matthew's rendering of Hosea 11:1, where the pre-conception is addressing God bringing Israel out of slavery in Egypt, but the informed modification is focused on Jesus returning from Egyptian refuge upon the death of Herod, Matthew 2:15.<sup>14</sup> The Christological interpretive framework, also known as *regula fidei*, insists on Christian interpretations since the earliest Christian churches. A proper interpretation of Hebrews requires an understanding of the *regula fidei* of the author embedded in the text. The epistle to the Hebrews insists on using a hermeneutic which views Christ as the *telos* of the Old Testament which at times has been treated as incompatible with the historical-critical hermeneutic. I will show how historical-critical and Christocentric hermeneutics can co-exist and must co-exist when interpreting Hebrews.

I will also use a variety of abbreviations sparingly throughout the length of my thesis. I will refer to God, the Lord, the deity of Israel, as YHWH. I will use BC (before Christ) and AD (anno domini) in reference to calendrical years. I will use the NASB translation when quoting biblical scripture in English alongside Greek and Hebrew exposition. I will also consider source, form, genre, and literary criticisms. I will be using the Society of Biblical Literature's (SBL) style of formatting and citation throughout the footnotes listed on each page. I will also emphasize biblical inerrancy, infallibility, and inspiration with regards to the biblical text itself in

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<sup>14</sup> J. Gordon McConville, "Messianic Interpretation of the Old Testament in Modern Context," in *The Lord's Anointed: Interpretation of Old Testament Messianic Texts*, ed. Philip E. Satterthwaite, Richard S. Hess, and Gordon J. Wenham (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1995), 13.

chapters three, four, five, and six, especially when deducing the theological convergences and divergences in blood atonement between Leviticus and Hebrews.

## 2. Historical-Critical Analysis of Atonement in Leviticus

The book of Leviticus gives witness to a development of atonement theology spanning from the Late Bronze Age, at the time of the exodus, to the Persian period, in the exilic and post-exilic context. Leviticus was first formed in the Exodus group, the ancient group of Israelites who left slavery in Egypt in the Late Bronze Age. In this chapter, I will present a historical movement from recent to ancient history, critically examining Leviticus and atonement. First, I will examine the Documentary Hypothesis with the differences between the text and the events it portrays. Then, I will use the historical contexts of both the Exodus group and the latest text redactions to reconstruct the specific circumstances in which atonement theology might have developed between YHWH and the Israelite covenant community. Finally, I will substantiate a theology of the Exodus group apart from other ancient Near East religions. Primarily, this theology will be imperative to understanding the broader biblical models of atonement comparative with atonement theology presented by later exilic and post-exilic redactions with stipulations for specificity.

### *Exordium Ethos* – The text-event disconnect of Leviticus

In this section, I will analyze the source material we find in the book of Leviticus. According to historical criticism, the text of Leviticus is entirely derived from the Priestly source, rather than from the Yahwist, Elohist, or Deuteronomist sources of the Pentateuch. These four sources together form what is commonly called the Documentary Hypothesis, championed by Julius Wellhausen.<sup>15</sup> Wellhausen believed Pentateuch authorship began in the monarchical

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<sup>15</sup> Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Israel with a reprint of the article 'Israel' from the Encyclopedia Britannica* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

period and culminated in a post-exilic priestly redactor.<sup>16</sup> From the earliest to latest sources, the priestly author(s) ordered the Pentateuch from pre-exilic Yahwist and Elohist to exilic and post-exilic Deuteronomist and Priestly sources.<sup>17</sup> Since Wellhausen, scholars have dated the Yahwist author from the tenth to fifth centuries BCE, the Elohist from the ninth to fifth centuries BCE, the Deuteronomist from eighth to fifth centuries BCE, and the Priestly from the sixth to fifth centuries BCE. It is often argued that most of the Pentateuch text reached its final form during and after the sixth century BCE exilic and post-exilic redaction phases.<sup>18</sup> Some scholars have also concluded that most of Exodus 19-Deuteronomy is composed of redactions during the exilic and post-exilic periods who based their writings on earlier cultic traditions.<sup>19</sup> These earlier cultic traditions can be found in the sacrifices of the patriarchs found in the Yahwist and Elohist authors.

There are also counterarguments that point to earlier events underpinning the Levitical writings. Wellhausen and Ginsberg argued that the Priestly source arose much later than the Deuteronomist author because of cultic centralization in Exodus 25-Leviticus 9, which vindicates Deuteronomy 12 and the later centralization reforms for worship from northern Israel, Hosea, Manasseh, and Josiah.<sup>20</sup> However, Wellhausen's hypothesis that the Priestly source was the latest source is challenged by an absence for this demand of centralized worship present in events that occurred much later.<sup>21</sup> The Deuteronomistic author added significant portions for specifying the duties and identities of the Levites formerly absent in the other sources, making

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<sup>16</sup> Thomas B. Dozeman, "The Authorship of the Pentateuch," *Dialogue* 32 (1999), 108.

<sup>17</sup> Rolf Rendtorff, *The Book of Leviticus: Composition and Reception* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2003), 13.

<sup>18</sup> T Desmond Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land: An Introduction to the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 43-54.

<sup>19</sup> Rainer Albertz, *A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1994), 42-43.

<sup>20</sup> Rendtorff, *Book of Leviticus*, 13-14.

<sup>21</sup> Dozeman, "Authorship", 107.

the Levites more central to a comprehensive system of worship by the time the Pentateuch text was finalized.<sup>22</sup>

One might argue, however, that the post-exilic Priestly source shows a strong continuity within pre-exilic priestly traditions kept since the Exodus group. These were probably passed down for the purpose of accurate event portrayals diffused for maintaining covenant and worship stipulations. Even by the time of second temple Judaism, more than a millennia after the events of Leviticus, the writings of the Qumran community represented continuity between the Levitical text and the events it portrays. Priestly uses of the priestly text traditions are found in Qumran scrolls that span across the entirety of second temple Judaism. There are seventeen Qumran scrolls that contain some form of Levitical worship. The largest of these Levitical fragments include 11QPaleoLev, 4Q17, 4Q23, 4Q26, 4Q119, and 4Q120. 11QPaleoLev represents a possibly pre-exilic fragment in Qumran which maintains a priestly tradition. There are other additional post-exilic sources for the Levitical text.<sup>23</sup>

The Priestly source may have had redactions in the exilic and post-exilic periods, but this does not exclude its use in defining worship before the exile in both the united monarchy and the Exodus group. The Qumran community, similar to the cultic demands of post-exilic Jerusalem, required a focus on ritual demands in which the earlier portions of Leviticus were emphasized over the Holiness Code of Leviticus 17-27, which has been often treated as a post-exilic

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<sup>22</sup> Albertz, *History of Israelite Religion*, 58.

<sup>23</sup> Rendtorff, *Book of Leviticus*, 325-38 provides an overview of other sources for the Levitical text. These sources include the Old Greek, the Masoretic text, the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Codex Alexandrinus, the Codex Vaticanus, the Codex Sinaiticus, the Septuagint, several Targums, and the Peshitta. Besides Qumran, the earliest of the sources for Priestly authorship are the Samaritan Pentateuch and Septuagint. Several fragments in Qumran match these other early sources. 4QExod-Lev (4Q17) contains Leviticus 1-2 and Exodus 38-40, and is closest to the Samaritan Pentateuch, dating to the early third century BCE. 4QLev-Num (4Q23) contains Leviticus 13-16, 18-19, 24, and 26-27, and is similar to the Samaritan Pentateuch and the Masoretic text, dating to the early second century BCE. 4QLev (4Q26) contains Lev.14, 15, and 17, and is closest to the Samaritan Pentateuch and the Septuagint, dating to the early first century BCE. 4QLXXLev (4Q119) contains Lev.26:2-6 and is critical to the Septuagint, dating to the late second century BCE. Finally, Pap4QLXXLev (4Q120) is closest to the Septuagint, and dates to the late first century BCE.

redaction of the Priestly source. The extent to which the Holiness Code is a redaction to the Priestly source is a secondary issue to understanding atonement in the broader biblical narrative because Levitical atonement is most frequent in Leviticus 1-16 atonement references, such as Leviticus 5 (sin offering), 14 (leper cleansing), and 16 (Day of Atonement). These references occur before the Holiness code. The term *kippur* itself, rendered ‘atonement’ in English, is most frequent in Leviticus 1-6 and 14-16.<sup>24</sup> Comparatively, Leviticus is a smaller text within the Priestly source which spans a millennium from pre-exilic cultic ritual until post-exilic canon compositions.

Although the text of the Pentateuch reached its final form during post-exilic Judaism, Pentateuch texts generally portrayed events that pre-date the texts themselves by at least a millennium. Some models for dating Leviticus treat the Priestly source as solely a post-exilic redaction to the other source materials in the Pentateuch. Other models for source criticism treat the Priestly source as a secondary early author alongside Elohist which receives later redactions in the Davidic community, the exilic community, and the post-exilic community.<sup>25</sup>

Indeed, there are several reasons why the Priestly source and its events are pre-exilic. First, there is both an absence of a ban on intermarriage present in the Deuteronomist as well as a multifaceted procession of repentance which is absent in the Deuteronomist.<sup>26</sup> Second, animal tithe laws were also found in pre-exilic Babylonia which predate the Deuteronomist and Ezra-Nehemiah priestly traditions.<sup>27</sup> Third, the Priestly author also references pre-monarchy rites

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<sup>24</sup> Rendtorff, *The Book of Leviticus*, 21. Additionally, Leviticus 22 addressing sacrificial animals is might not be original to the Holiness code and Leviticus 23 accommodates the ascendant mode of burnt offering to sacrifices that were once only presentational.

<sup>25</sup> Dozeman, “Authorship”, 100-107. The Priestly source may have begun with the Genesis 1 Elohist author and was then paralleled by the Yahwist source beginning in Genesis 2, with the Deuteronomist further expanding and redacting stipulations from the earlier source writings.

<sup>26</sup> Jacob Milgrom, “The Antiquity of the Priestly Source: A Reply to Joseph Blenkinsopp,” *ZAW*111 (1999): 12-14.

<sup>27</sup> Milgrom, “Antiquity of the Priestly Source,” 10-11.

which required a veil, not doors as Solomon would later use.<sup>28</sup> Thus, these reasons strengthen the traditional position that treats Moses as the primary author of the Pentateuch purported by Jewish Hellenists, Rabbis, and early Christian writings.<sup>29</sup>

The numerous sources for Leviticus point to a broader diffusion of Israelite literature passed down within the Levites as a covenant community since the Exodus group. To understand the origins and developments of the text as well as the theology it presents, it is imperative to reconstruct the historical circumstances in the textual historical record and the physical archaeological data. Both biblical and extra-biblical written testimony are equally valid for reconstructing a history of Israel because they present primary sources retelling stories influenced by contemporaneous ideologies which are almost completely unverifiable when tested outside of the received written data.<sup>30</sup>

The processes of writing down matters of history, belief, and practice within the cultic community was commonplace in Israelite society and throughout the ancient Near East. There are more than fifty treaties from Anatolia, Egypt, Syria-Palestine, and Mesopotamia spanning from the early second millennium to the middle first millennium BC,<sup>31</sup> as well as legal correspondences between Mittani, Babylonia, Assyria, Hatti, and Egypt during the late Bronze age.<sup>32</sup> Ancient Near Eastern laws in cuneiform collections include the Reform of Uru-inimigina, the laws of Ur-Nammu, the laws of Lipit-Ishtar, the laws of Eshnunna, the code of Hammurabi, the edict of Ammisaduqa, Middle Assyrian laws, and collections of old Hittite laws. There is undoubtedly significant overlap between these and Leviticus concerning content, form, and

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<sup>28</sup> Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1991), 1070.

<sup>29</sup> Dozeman, *Authorship*, 87-89.

<sup>30</sup> Provan, *Biblical History of Israel*, 73-74.

<sup>31</sup> John H. Walton, *Ancient Israelite Literature in its Cultural Context: A Survey of Parallels between Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Texts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1989), 95-99.

<sup>32</sup> Marc Van De Mieroop, *A History of the Ancient Near East 3000-323 BC* (Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, 2016), 138.

function. For example, the dispute (רִיב) and the trial proceeding (מִשְׁפָּט) would often involve gods, kings, priests, ruling judges, and two or more involved parties.<sup>33</sup>

The types of laws found in the biblical record and the ancient Near East cuneiform collection are generally contemporaneous with each other despite using motifs in the late Bronze Age that often predate Leviticus by several hundred years. For example, the majority of laws in both the ancient Near East and Leviticus are casuistic rather than apodictic.<sup>34</sup> Another example is the goring ox of Exodus 21:28-36, also found in *Eshnunna* and *Hammurabi*. Even so, both remain distinct because although Leviticus and ancient Near East laws took the form of covenant treaty stipulations, the covenant community maintained the claim that they communicated directly with their one king and one God, who administered a suzerain covenant intended for holiness rather than administering a civil society that appeased many leaders and many deities.<sup>35</sup>

It is probable that a fifteenth to fourteenth century BC Exodus group in Syria-Palestine would have corresponded with Egypt, Hatti, Mittani, and Canaan.<sup>36</sup> The probability of this Exodus group appearing as a subset of the Hyksos semites or Habiru people group remains inconclusive.<sup>37</sup> Legal correspondences between late Bronze age kingdoms in the ancient Near East often included succession clauses, taxes, military contingencies, extradition, vassal city-states, loyalties, marriages, and solemn gifts also found throughout the biblical narrative. The ancient Near East socio-economic demands would have affected the lives of the Exodus group in the wilderness.

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<sup>33</sup> David W. Baker, "Law and Legal Systems in Ancient Israel," in *Behind the Scenes of the Old Testament: Cultural, Social, and Historical Contexts*, ed. Jonathan S. Greer, John W. Hilber, and John H. Walton (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2018), 607-08 (ebook page numbers).

<sup>34</sup> Greer and Walton, David W. Baker, *Behind the Scenes of the Old Testament*, 602-04.

<sup>35</sup> Walton, *Ancient Israelite Literature*, 89-90.

<sup>36</sup> Mieroop, *History of the Ancient Near East 3000-323 BC*, 142.

<sup>37</sup> See Kenneth Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003).

The Levitical text itself is primarily a text of expansive stipulations for the suzerain treaty (covenant) given at Sinai through a theophany between YHWH and the Exodus group. Suzerain treaties were common codes found throughout the ancient Near East between monarchs and their vassals. However, biblical law is distinguishable from ancient Near Eastern law because it appeals to one transcendent source rather than many civil sources, while more frequently relying on specific prohibitive apodictic law with harsher penalties but remaining generally casuistic in form.<sup>38</sup> Ancient Near Eastern treaties formatted these documents with an introduction to the speaker, a historical prologue, various stipulations, a statement concerning the document, an appeal to divine witnesses, and a list of curses and blessings for disobedience and obedience respectively. In contrast to ancient Near Eastern law's formatting, Exodus and Leviticus omit introductory statements concerning the document and an appeal to divine witnesses whereas Deuteronomy and Joshua 24 include these.<sup>39</sup> Additionally, the Levitical prohibitions against mistreating vulnerable classes, standing against certain communal attitudes, prohibiting sorcery, and providing a final exhortation to show respect, are all textual elements absent in cuneiform laws.<sup>40</sup>

#### *Narratio Natura* – The Events in Leviticus and the Exodus group

The events described by Leviticus significantly predate the text. The wider Priestly source of Exodus 19-Numbers 10 contains the Sinaitic episode occurring sometime within the two years following the exodus event. The late date for the Exodus is typically placed at 1267BC and the early date at 1446BC. Between Exodus 25 and Numbers 10, there is a clear priestly

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<sup>38</sup> Walton, *Ancient Israelite Literature*, 80-81.

<sup>39</sup> Walton, *Ancient Israelite Literature*, 101-05.

<sup>40</sup> Walton, *Ancient Israelite Literature*, 78. Also see: Lev. 19:9-10, 13-18, 26, 31, 33-36, 20:6, 9.

agenda to link tabernacle worship to the Sinai theophany, referencing events which address the tent of meeting (אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד).<sup>41</sup>

Leviticus 1-16 focuses on the ritual commands required for carrying out regular sacrifices and the annual day of atonement, whereas Leviticus 17-27 focuses on legal stipulations for maintaining holiness within the covenant community. Levitical stipulations are aimed at maintaining the theophany in the tabernacle according to instructions given to the Israelites from YHWH. Although the Holiness Code is generally considered later than the Late Bronze Age ritual commands, liberty (קְרוּר, Lev.25:10), finality (צָמִיתָת, Lev.25:23), and arise (קוּם, Lev.19:32) all predate the exile etymologically despite being located within the Holiness Code.<sup>42</sup> More specifically, Leviticus 23 is included in a part of a later strata of redactions whose focus is primarily on priestly concerns. This may point to the Holiness Code as a later subset of Priestly literature concerning legal stipulations referencing much earlier customs.<sup>43</sup> Thus, the finalized Priestly source could be an exilic and post-exilic document with later redactions from the Holiness Code while retaining connections to Sinai theophany, pre-exilic cultic centralization, and the Day of Atonement procession reacting to Late Bronze Age rituals throughout the ancient Near East.

#### *Partitio Consequentia* – The Theology and Events of the Exodus group

Worship in the ancient Near East focused on systematic sacrifices. Sacrifices were primarily offerings and gifts from labours that mediated seeking and sustaining communion with divinity.<sup>44</sup> The particular focal point of Levitical worship was the burnt offering (עֹלָה). The burnt

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<sup>41</sup> Rendtorff, *Book of Leviticus*, 23.

<sup>42</sup> Rendtorff, *Book of Leviticus*, 19.

<sup>43</sup> Rendtorff, *Book of Leviticus*, 22.

<sup>44</sup> C.F. Keil and Delitzsch, F., *The Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1976), 275.

offering set the basis for the more frequent purification for sin offering within the Israelite community (Leviticus 1). The burnt offering was a widespread Late Bronze Age practice Leviticus innovated with the purpose of specificity for the Israelite covenant community.<sup>45</sup> Originally, the burnt offering represented human submission to YHWH through an entire consumption by fire and ascension to heaven accompanied by a sacrificial meal representing covenant fellowship between divinity and humanity.<sup>46</sup> Similar sacrifices existed since the time of the patriarchs, with both biblical and extra-biblical communities utilizing this theology. Keil and Delitzsch argued that sacrificial worship in Leviticus served to expand upon sacrifices previously established between YHWH and humans in the age of the patriarchs.<sup>47</sup> Within the biblical narrative, there are no clear allusions to sin atonement in pre-Mosaic sacrifices in the Old Testament.<sup>48</sup> Instead, pre-Mosaic burnt offerings focused on thanksgiving and supplications rather than atonement.<sup>49</sup> Burnt offerings existed before the Exodus group (Gen. 8:20; 12:8; 26:25), but sin and guilt offerings were probably developed further by the Sinaitic covenant.<sup>50</sup> So, the daily sacrifices that atoned, that is, the burnt, sin, and guilt offerings, were significantly developed by the Exodus group.

#### *Confirmatio Logica Logos* – Theology from the Exodus group

If the accounts of the events in the Priestly source are trusted, then the Exodus group was a group of approximately six hundred thousand semitic nomads from the progeny of Jacob who were subject to forced labor by the Egyptians during the nineteenth and eighteenth dynasties of

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<sup>45</sup> Rendtorff, *Book of Leviticus*, 18-19.

<sup>46</sup> Keil and Delitzsch, *Pentateuch*, 268.

<sup>47</sup> Keil and Delitzsch, *Pentateuch*, 266.

<sup>48</sup> Keil and Delitzsch, *Pentateuch*, 266-69.

<sup>49</sup> Keil and Delitzsch, *Pentateuch*, 267.

<sup>50</sup> Keil and Delitzsch, *Pentateuch*, 269.

new kingdom Egypt.<sup>51</sup> Written traditions comprised during and after the united monarchy of Israel were probably derived from the oral and written traditions of this Exodus group. Therefore, the burnt offering and the Day of Atonement were instituted much earlier than the finalized form of the Priestly texts. These two events, the offerings, and the festival day, point to a Late Bronze Age theology based on the historical experience and memory of the covenant community. We can then conclude that some form of atonement theology from the Exodus group was preserved in a priestly class within the covenant community since the Late Bronze Age.

*Peroratio Pathos* – The theologies of late Bronze age empires compared to the Exodus group

I will now describe ancient Near East rituals surrounding the early Exodus in order to better understand the atonement theology of that group. The great temporal chasm between the final Priestly texts and the events portrayed by Leviticus is enough to cast doubt upon, especially when considering the possible number of redactions. Although, there are only a few differences between the text and events besides later stipulations in redactions that aimed at greater specificity and application. There are numerous challenges in substantiating the original theology of atonement nascent in the Exodus group because of this text-event disconnect. However, offerings for atonement and the annual Day of Atonement certainly pre-date the text itself. Understanding the ancient Near Eastern rituals surrounding the early Exodus group will diminish the challenges to uncovering the atonement theology of the Exodus group.

There are several Late Bronze Age kingdoms that are relevant to reconstructing an atonement theology of the Exodus group. Egypt is by far the most important. The nation of Israel found themselves in Egypt as a Semitic subsect belonging to their God and their patriarchs

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<sup>51</sup> Albertz, *History of Israelite Religion*, 44-45. See also Carmen Imes, *Bearing God's Name: Why Sinai still matters* (Grand Rapids, MI: InterVarsity, 2019), 90-93.

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They subsisted under the rule of the late Middle Kingdom and early New Kingdom of Egypt sometime between 1800-1200BC. By accepting the early date of the Exodus and the accuracy of the supposed four hundred thirty years Israel spent in slavery during the Late Bronze Age detailed in Genesis 15 and Exodus 12:41, the timeframe in which the Exodus group existed narrows down to approximately 1770-1400BC. I will adopt W.F. Albright's Late Bronze Age divisions, focusing on LBIB and LBIIA 1470-1300BC as the approximate timeframe in which the Exodus group appeared in the wilderness from whom the original events portrayed by Leviticus and their accompanying theology originate.<sup>52</sup> The main events in the historical reconstruction of Israel's atonement theology focus on the Sinai theophany episode and the tabernacle worship system detailed in Exodus 25-Deuteronomy, which took place from 1446-1375BCE.<sup>53</sup>

### *Egyptians*

Egypt was the largest empire known to humanity during this time. During the fifteenth and fourteenth centuries BCE, the lands of Canaan and the wilderness wanderings were dominated by the Egyptians and Hittites with nomadic pastoralist tribes and vassal city-states existing within those respective empires.<sup>54</sup> The Middle Kingdom of Egypt occurred between the years 2050-1650BC, and the New Kingdom of Egypt occurred between the years 1580-1070BC. These kingdoms, as a rule, had state-operated religious centres. Early forms of worship in Egypt focused attention on a sacred location, its patron deity, and systematic worship. A location was designated sacred by divine oracles who constructed zones of sanctity, barriers between each

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<sup>52</sup> Amihai Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible 10000-586 BC* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1992), 238-39.

<sup>53</sup> It is important to note that even a late date for the Exodus would not significantly affect the theology of atonement I will later exposit.

<sup>54</sup> Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible*, 232-38.

zone, limitations on who can see each zone, and dedication ceremonies that commenced the traversing of the deity from heaven to earth.<sup>55</sup>

Theophanies of these deities would occur in the animation of a golem. Similarly with other Ancient Near East deities, the theophanies of deities like Amun and Ptah were only actualized after the icon was formed, erected, dedicated with rituals and ceremonies, and finally provided mediatory revelations that were considered legally binding.<sup>56</sup> Rituals and ceremonies would invoke an animating life force, called “ba” onto the golem icon which manifested through mysterious sense experiences. The “ba” then united with the icon image to manifest a characterization of the deity’s nature.<sup>57</sup> It is unclear whether these characterizations would have been simple sense experiences, zoomorphisms, anthropomorphisms, or mechanical movements. Again, similar to other ancient Near Eastern cults, images were believed to mediate the divine presence of the deity only when proper rituals allowed the deity’s favor to rest in the temple.<sup>58</sup>

### *Hittites*

The largest non-Egyptian empire during this timeframe was the Hittite empire of 1650-1178BCE. The Hittites also played a significant role in defining ancient Near Eastern cultic rituals concerning blood atonement. There is Late Bronze Age evidence of blood rituals in cultic ceremonies throughout the Hittite empire. In these Hittite rituals, the sacrificial object required transformation for transferral to the divine realm: liquid aspersion, broken bread, smashing vessels, and killing animals.<sup>59</sup> Hittites often used blood aspersions to appease chthonic deities

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<sup>55</sup> Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament*, 79-80.

<sup>56</sup> Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament*, 77-78.

<sup>57</sup> Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament*, 79.

<sup>58</sup> Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament*, 79.

<sup>59</sup> Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament*, 87.

and purify objects.<sup>60</sup> Similarly, rituals from the Mittani Hurrians record sacrificial oblations to the goddess Hepat using incense, incantations, cedar, a cup of water, oil, a dismembered goose, and a systematic procession of blood aspersions.<sup>61</sup> It is possible that these appeasements were believed to abate negative forces common to ancient Near Eastern theologies such as death, disease, famine, natural disasters, and war. Designated sacrificial animals were frequently killed, flayed, dismembered, burned, and then eaten by either the worshipper, priest, deity, a mix of these parties, or all of the above.

### *The Broader Ancient Near East*

Oblations of blood aspersions were not only limited to religious affairs. In Old Babylonian and Neo-Assyrian political covenants, shedding the blood of an animal symbolized a zoomorphism of the parties involved in the contract if they broke the political treaty, promising the bloodshed of their respective leaders.<sup>62</sup> The ideological intersection of religion and political affairs often required blood covenants to be overseen and sealed by one or more deities, two or more political leaders, and at least one mediating high priest.

These multi-faceted intersections of ancient Near Eastern life centred on the temple of the city. Ancient Near Eastern temples were considered cosmic focal points of divine residence with gradations of sanctity radiating from their centers.<sup>63</sup> Temples were treated as the centre of the cosmos because they symbolically represented a microcosm of creation wherein a deity would

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<sup>60</sup> Roy E. Gane, "Worship, Sacrifice, and Festivals in the Ancient Near East," in *Behind the Scenes of the Old Testament: Cultural, Social, and Historical Contexts*, ed. Jonathan S. Greer, John W. Hilber, and John H. Walton (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2018), 450 (ebook page number).

<sup>61</sup> Mieroop, *History of the Ancient Near East*, 165.

<sup>62</sup> Samuel Greengus, "Covenant and Treaty in the Hebrew Bible and in the Ancient Near East," in *Ancient Israel's History: An Introduction to Issues and Sources*, ed. Bill T. Arnold and Richard S. Hess (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014), 109-112.

<sup>63</sup> Matthew J. Lynch, "Monotheism in Ancient Israel," in *Behind the Scenes of the Old Testament: Cultural, Social, and Historical Contexts*, ed. Jonathan S. Greer, John W. Hilber, and John H. Walton (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2018), 431 (ebook page number).

dwelt at the holy intersection of heaven and earth.<sup>64</sup> In Babylon, Larsa, and Sippar, it was believed that deities traversed between the heavens, earth, and even the netherworlds.<sup>65</sup>

After designating and dedicating a location as the holy place where the temple would be built, construction materials were chosen meticulously. Late Bronze Age temples were often constructed with basalt, ivory, wood, gold, silver, and cloth.<sup>66</sup> This is attested to by the fourteenth century temple at Hazor dedicated to the storm god Baal Hadad, consisting mainly of large deposits of basalt.<sup>67</sup> Other Late Bronze Age Canaanite temples have been discovered at Hazor, Megiddo, Beth-Shem, Tel Mevorakh, Shechem, Lachish, Amman, Khamid El-Loz, and Alalakh.<sup>68</sup> The temples at Megiddo, Shechem, Beth-Shem, and Lachish were square building plans elevated by degrees of holiness with a central holy of holies opposite the temple entrance, a sacrificial altar in the courtyard, and various incorporations of Egyptian architectural elements such as stone friezes and papyrus-shaped capitals.<sup>69</sup> The temples at Megiddo and Shechem survived the Late Bronze Age collapse with the latter undergoing minor reconstruction projects afterwards.<sup>70</sup> These ancient Near Eastern temples also often contained gardens symbolizing fertility, features absent from the biblical narrative until the prophetic vision of Ezekiel looking towards the eschatological restoration of Eden.<sup>71</sup> The resilience of cultic symbolism and longstanding structures point to the importance of temple theology throughout the Late Bronze Age. Early similarities and differences between these systems and the Levitical system are apparent in requiring atonement rituals for divinity to rest in the appointed intersection between heaven and earth.

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<sup>64</sup> Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament*, 83-85.

<sup>65</sup> Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament*, 81-82.

<sup>66</sup> Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible*, 251-55.

<sup>67</sup> Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible*, 248-49.

<sup>68</sup> Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible*, 248.

<sup>69</sup> Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible*, 251-53.

<sup>70</sup> Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible*, 251.

<sup>71</sup> Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament*, 82.

### *Developments, Echoing, and Borrowing*

The Exodus group had many elements of worship that echoed and borrowed from surrounding ancient Near Eastern cults. Between the Exodus group and ancient Near East, they shared in the belief that humans were able to traverse closer to divine presence after rituals were performed, that there was divine favor in divine presence, and that there were divine purposes for blood sacrifice. They also both treated their priests and temples as holy mediators, embedded with microcosms, practicing the laying on of hands, imposing hierarchies of social stratification, and holding seasonal festivals.

The intersection of heaven and earth to encounter the divine was a commonplace belief. In the Ancient Near East, deities were considered to “rest” within a temple precinct so as to resemble the intersection between heaven and earth once chaotic threats to their being were dispelled.<sup>72</sup> The Holy of Holies in the Tent of Meeting also served as the holy place where the community mediator would encounter a theophany of YHWH.<sup>73</sup> These encounters often emphasized the power and transcendence of the deity characterized in the theophany.

Common rituals were performed for order and maintenance. As seen in the initiation of the Egyptian icons, cultic rituals and their consequences were considered legally binding. Likewise, ancient Near Eastern societies believed the presence and favor of their deities would bring fertility, prosperity, peace, justice, which became a fulcrum for societal success.<sup>74</sup> This recalls the numerous lists of blessings found in Levitical and ancient Near Eastern literature if the community adheres to covenant stipulations.

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<sup>72</sup> Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament*, 77.

<sup>73</sup> Albertz, *History of Israelite Religion*, 57.

<sup>74</sup> Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament*, 85.

Cults in the ancient Near East also limited sacrificial animals to domesticated animals with the fat, liver, heart, kidneys, and gall bladder as the preferred organs.<sup>75</sup> Domestication symbolized submission to a transcended authority and purity from lower carnality while each organ served a special purpose in meals. Annual rites that symbolically cleansed impurity by transferring sin to a vicarious substitute that made a propitiation and expiation are also found in Babylonian and Hittite rituals.<sup>76</sup> Both the ancient Near Eastern cultures and the Israelites utilized animal sacrifice in which blood was considered legally binding, sacred, and a container of the soul or life.

The validity of the sacrifices co-dependending on the validity of the priesthood is another positive reaction between the ancient Near East and Leviticus. Priests held high stations in society as their work was important to every class and member of the community. The common hierarchy of social stratification from lowest to highest classes in the Ancient Near East included serfs, craftsmen, scribes, cultic personnel, military elites, rulers, and deities.<sup>77</sup> Priests could delegate contractual agreements, disputes, education, and large-scale festivals. The laying on of hands in Leviticus was also practiced by contemporaneous Hittites, Tannaites, and Amorites.<sup>78</sup> This practice would identify the worshipper with the sacrificial offering, and the priest as a witness. In some pseudepigraphal literature, priestly consecration is treated as a microcosm prefiguration of ascent into heaven as a temple.<sup>79</sup> As such, the temple and the priest presented microcosms of the overhanging cosmos ruled by patron deities. Each patron deity had their own seasonal festivals which were tracked by the priests of the community. Both ancient Near

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<sup>75</sup> Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament*, 89.

<sup>76</sup> Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament*, 88.

<sup>77</sup> Mieroop, *History of the Ancient Near East*, 154-55.

<sup>78</sup> Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 150.

<sup>79</sup> Martha Himmelfarb, "What Goes on in the Heavenly Temple? Celestial Praise and Sacrifice in Ancient Judaism and Christianity," in *Atonement: Jewish and Christian Origins*, ed. Max Botner, Justin Harrison Duff, and Simon Dürr (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2020), 191-192.

Eastern and Israelite festivals took place seasonally and included honouring the deity, commemorating events, celebrating harvests, and enacting purification, but the ancient Near Eastern cults added elements of fertility and large idol processions.<sup>80</sup>

### *Polemics and Counter-Texts*

More important to the purpose of this thesis is the recognition of the Exodus group having negative reactionary developments to their worship system and legal stipulations that appear as polemics and counter-texts towards the Late Bronze Age. These negative reactions include a highly exclusive character and attributes of YHWH, his presence appearing as aniconic, personal, holy, and grounded in the historical experience of the community. These, alongside harsher penalties for covenant violations – sin, captures the negative reactions that makes Leviticus distinct and unique as a monolith of religious diffusion.

The revelation of YHWH to the Exodus group was inextricably linked to direct personal theophanies at indeterminate desert mountain regions (a theme that continues throughout the biblical narrative).<sup>81</sup> This led the worship theology of the Exodus group to be centred around a special personal relationship with YHWH, a theophany, and a history of liberation maintained by the group and their God.<sup>82</sup> Deliverance from oppressors and guidance in a desert wilderness demarcated the loving nature of YHWH to his covenant community. Thus, YHWH differed from other ANE deities in that he was monotheistic, aniconic, interior and exclusive to Israel, holy, communal, and covenantal.<sup>83</sup>

Comparatively, mediation between YHWH and the community was not made through icons and idols. Israelite worship distinguished their deity from other ancient Near Eastern

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<sup>80</sup> Gane, “Worship, Sacrifice, and Festivals,” 453.

<sup>81</sup> Albertz, *History of Israelite Religion*, 53-66. See also: Gen.22:1-19; 1 Kgs.19; Matt.17:1-13.

<sup>82</sup> Albertz, *History of Israelite Religion*, 66.

<sup>83</sup> Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament*, 75.

deities by focusing on YHWH's transcendence symbolized in ascending smoke, aniconic personal presence between the cherubim, and the absence of food and drink for consumption by the deity. They also burnt their offerings entirely or for consumption by the priests in communal meals.<sup>84</sup>

Furthermore, polytheism was viewed as an abomination. Fidelity to the Sinai covenant given by YHWH was imperative for life within the covenant community. Ancient Near Eastern rituals sometimes aimed at appeasing chthonic deities or winning the favor of multiple possible deities, but the Israelites appeased one transcendent heavenly deity who held complete aseity and impassibility. Neighbouring cultic communities in Late Bronze Age Syria-Palestine worshipped the storm god Baal in the Ugaritic language.<sup>85</sup> These pluralistic Canaanite tribes were presented as perpetual enemies to the monotheistic covenant community. Monotheism arose from the disregard of other deities, the reactionary experiences both internal and external to Israel, their unique iconoclasm, militant expressions of faith and practice, and a slow multifaceted progression through time.<sup>86</sup>

It is important to compare Israelite and ancient Near Eastern practices to better understand their worship systems. A marked feature of Israelite tabernacle worship was its humbler contrast with ancient Near Eastern worship in temples and ziggurats. Ancient Near Eastern deities were appeased with copious amounts of food and drink to meet their needful demands. This is in direct contrast to Israelite worship recalling Eden, YHWH's desire for

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<sup>84</sup> Gane, "Worship, Sacrifice, and Festivals," 447-48. See also: Lev.1:9; 16:12-16; Ps.50:12-13.

<sup>85</sup> Mieroop, *History of the Ancient Near East*, 178.

<sup>86</sup> Gane, "Worship, Sacrifice, and Festivals," 431.

personal relationship rather than a needs-based relationship, unparalleled standards for purity and holiness, the inseparability of law with worship, and the insistence on an aniconic sanctuary.<sup>87</sup>

Further, in contrast with the wider Ancient Near East, where blood sacrifice provided nourishment for the deity in a secret sacred place and sacrifice, in the Israelite covenant community, made atonement for sin publicly so YHWH could dwell with them corporately.<sup>88</sup> Likewise, whereas the Ancient Near Eastern atonement rituals were believed to remove real evils for individuals, usually royal, who sought aid from multiple wilderness deities, the Israelite covenant community's atonement rituals did not permanently remove independent evils and sought atonement for the whole group under the protection of YHWH.<sup>89</sup> Only the Israelite sacrificial system emphasized systematic applications of blood to provide atoning ransom. Thus, YHWH differed from other ancient Near Eastern deities in that he was monotheistic, aniconic, interior and exclusive to Israel, holy, communal, covenantal, and provided instructions in blood atonement that fundamentally differed from other beliefs in the ancient Near East.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> John H. Walton, "The Temple in Context," in *Behind the Scenes of the Old Testament: Cultural, Social, and Historical Contexts*, ed. Jonathan S. Greer, John W. Hilber, and John H. Walton (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2018), 436-438 (ebook page number).

<sup>88</sup> Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament*, 87.

<sup>89</sup> Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament*, 88.

<sup>90</sup> Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament*, 75.

### 3. Theology of Atonement in Leviticus

#### *Introduction*

Leviticus contains statutes and stipulations from the divine suzerain vassal treaty established through the Sinaitic theophany. These stipulations formed the basis of civil law and religious worship for the nation of Israel since the time of the Exodus group. Israelite cultic law superseded and pervaded their civil law. This characteristic was present in biblical laws yet nearly absent in ancient Near Eastern laws.<sup>91</sup> The underpinnings of their laws focused on holiness, cultic ritual, and continuing in the presence of YHWH. Their living space demanded holiness as it was conceived by avoiding transgressions against laws or otherwise providing recompense for any transgressions. After any transgression against the covenant commands was made aware, atonement would be made so the presence of YHWH could remain with the Israelites without serious consequences.

Atonement and worship were often done in conjunction to enter into and remain living within the presence of YHWH. The worship of YHWH in ancient Israel took place through keeping the Sabbath, celebrating the Passover, the Feast of Weeks, the Feast of Tabernacles, and maintaining the sacrificial system.<sup>92</sup> The sacrificial system had three daily sacrifices and one annual sacrifice. The daily burnt offerings (Lev 1:1-17; 6:8-13), purification for sin offerings (Lev 4:1-5:13; 6:24-30), reparation for guilt offerings (Lev 6:1-7; 7:1-10), and the annual Day of Atonement (Lev 16; 23:26-32; 25:8-22) emphasized blood atonement for reconciling transgressors with YHWH. These ritual processions were extremely important. Each sacrifice was expiatory in that it purged impurities from the presence of YHWH and propitiatory in that YHWH was appeased and sin was covered over. For modern readers, without prior historical

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<sup>91</sup> Walton, *Ancient Israelite Literature in its Cultural Context*, 76-78.

<sup>92</sup> J. I. Packer, *Concise Theology: A Guide to Historic Christian Beliefs* (Nottingham, UK: InterVarsity, 2011), 99-100.

context, these rituals seem peculiar and specific. In this chapter, I will analyze the text of Leviticus with reference to the underlying events portrayed by the text to outline a theology of atonement from Leviticus.

*The Burnt Offering (Leviticus 1:1-17; 6:8-13)*

The burnt offering in Leviticus 1:1-17 is the basic foundation for all other sacrifices. Each offering had its own special purpose and consequence, but each was built upon the first and simplest sacrifice, the burnt offering. This sacrifice atoned for general impurities emitted from transgressions and was presented as a ransom for unintentional sins. Burnt offerings reversed YHWH's attitude towards humanity by propitiating and appeasing wrath against the impurities and covering over sins hostile towards holiness. First, acts of sacrilege (לַעֲוֹן) came to represent transgressions from person to person, unfaithfulness to an oath, or general offenses between two or more parties. Then, iniquities (חַטָּאת) were impurities from the guilt closest to the offending party. Finally, more grievous sins (אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁחָטוּן) would emit impurities from the transgression's epicentre. These formulae denote a knowledge of an offense, the guilt incurred, and the emission of impurities from the offense. The burnt offering did not remove sins itself nor the sinful human nature, but rather turned away the wrath of YHWH, covering over the emissions of impurities from the original sin source.<sup>93</sup>

All sacrifices took place at the tabernacle complex. The tabernacle (אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד σκηνή) had three sections: the outdoor tent enclosure, the holy place, and the inner Holy of Holies (sanctum). The dwelling place (אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד κατοικητήριον) was the residence of YHWH within the inner sanctum. Each sacrifice (קָרְבָּן θυσία) included the object offered and the action of offering it upon the altar (אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד θυσιαστήριον). The sacrificial object was later accompanied by a libation or drink offering

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<sup>93</sup> Gordon J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), 57. See also: Lev.1:4; 14:20; 16:24.

(קָדָשׁ), appearing most frequently in the Holiness Code. The sacrifices were only valid if mediated by an anointed priest (חֹזֵן חֹדֵשׁ), who carried out the liquid aspersions (קָרַף, προσχεω, χέω). In short, an anointed Levitical priest made immolations, aspersions, sprinklings, and outpourings of blood and/or water according to the cultic instructions. They would also perform ablutions and rituals washings (סָבַף πλύνω), which did not atone for anything but offered various forms of cleanings and purifications (הִקָּדַשׁ, καθαρισμός) for persons after a sacrificial procession.

The purpose of the sacrifices to heal and protect from impurities allowed the carrying out of sacrifices on the Sabbath despite the designation of worship as a laborious act (הִקָּדַשׁ λατρεύω, ἔργον λατρεία). In critical terms, only in the Priestly source is cultic service not considered physical labour.<sup>94</sup> This might have been due to the sanctuary being considered the dwelling place of YHWH which required constant cleansing of its quarters and surroundings so YHWH could dwell with them. The offeror would bring the sacrificial animal before a priest, confess knowledge of his transgressions, and lay his hand on the animal for designation. During the laying on of hands in the burnt offering, only one hand was placed on the animal for the purpose of identification with the offeror, in contrast with the transference of sin onto a vicarious substitute as seen in the laying on of two hands in the Day of Atonement.<sup>95</sup> Then, the animal would be slaughtered, and the priest would make a series of blood aspersions according to its sacrificial designation. The priest would then butcher and burn the animal on the altar, concluding the ceremony with either disposing or eating various parts of the animal.

The act of qualification which preceded each sacrifice was the confession of sin. We see this in Leviticus 5:5 and 16:21, where the laying on of hands (hithpael הִקָּדַשׁ) was followed by a confession of iniquities (יָשָׁוּ), transgressions (לַעֲוֹנוֹתָי), and sins (אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתִי). This tripartite confession

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<sup>94</sup> Milgrom, "Antiquity," 11.

<sup>95</sup> Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 151-53.

formula in Leviticus 16 preceded a full atonement of both intentional and unintentional sins, popularized in post-exilic second temple literature.<sup>96</sup> However, in later post-exilic literature, the laying on of hands (hithpa'el הִתְּפַאֵל) paired with the act of contrition (niph'al נִפְגַּעַת) allowed intentional sins to become inadvertencies that could be atoned for.<sup>97</sup> This was not the case for the original burnt offering described in the text. The main focus of the confession was showing an act of contrition to be humble, the admission of a knowledge of sins committed (הִתְּפַאֵל), and the tripartite removal of the transgressions themselves, incurred guilt, or emitted impurities. The confession itself originated in the first section of Leviticus but was further developed in the post-exilic community for the purpose of converting intentional sins into inadvertencies.

The atoning blood rituals followed the general confession. With this background, we can see that the burnt offering was both expiatory and propitiatory in nature.<sup>98</sup> All offerings required a burning sublimation, but only atoning blood offerings required both a burning sublimation and blood aspersions.<sup>99</sup> It was imperative that the administering priest manipulated the blood to purge impurities by whipping, flicking, sprinkling, carrying, or rubbing the blood in the ways instructed by YHWH.<sup>100</sup> All remainders of sacrificial animals were then either carried outside of the camp for disposal or eaten in part by the priests.

The temporal order in which each sacrifice would be brought to the priest is more simply modeled by the Nazirite. The Nazirite who completed his vowed term would bring the sacrifices of the burnt offering (עֹלָה), sin offering (חַטָּאת), thanksgiving offering (זֶבַח), grain offering (מִנְחָה),

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<sup>96</sup> Richard J. Bautch, "The Formulary of Atonement (Lev 16:21) in Penitential Prayers of the Second Temple Period," in *The Day of Atonement: Its Interpretations in Early Jewish and Christian Traditions*, ed. Thomas Hieke and Tobias Nicklas (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 34-35.

<sup>97</sup> Bautch, "Formulary of Atonement," 35-36.

<sup>98</sup> Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 153-54. See also: Leviticus 1:4, 9:7, 14:20, 16:24, Job 1:5, 42:8. It did not remove the sinful human nature but did remove impurities emitted from a sin source, removed guilt incurred from an offence, and/or removed sin from sacred objects.

<sup>99</sup> Christian A. Eberhart, "Atonement: Amid Alexandria, Alamo, and Avatar," in *Atonement: Jewish and Christian Origins*, ed. Max Botner, Justin Harrison Duff, and Simon Dürr (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2020), 11.

<sup>100</sup> Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 1031-34.

and drink offering (תִּשְׂבֵּעַ). But note that these would be sacrificed by order of priority: sin, burnt, thanks, grain, and drink. The sanctuary needed to be purged with the purification for sin offering before YHWH would consider any other sacrifices as valid.<sup>101</sup> The only time the sin offering was not offered first was in cases of disease, here, the guilt offering (זִבְחֵי חַטָּאת) is offered first so that the offeror may enter the sanctuary precincts.<sup>102</sup> Thus, the burnt offering is the foundation for all other sacrifices but by the necessity of cleansing the altars and holy objects of impurities, the sin offering was often offered first and most frequently.

*The Offering for the Purification of Sin (Leviticus 4:1-5:13; 6:24-30)*

The purification for sin offering was the most frequent and therefore the primary offering in ancient Israel's blood atonement rites.<sup>103</sup> Purification offerings were frequently offered for ritual impurities from childbirth, skin diseases, and bodily discharges, and also served as consecration rites for the priests, the altar, and the Levites.<sup>104</sup> According to the instructions, two or more persons required a young bull, individuals required a goat or lamb, and poor persons required two doves, two pigeons, or one-tenth an ephah of flour. Like the burnt offering, the purification offering made a ransom for unintentional sins. The burnt offering atoned for general impurities whereas the purification offering purged impurities from special objects of worship.<sup>105</sup> The purification for sin offering in Leviticus 4:1-5:13 atoned for any thing considered unclean.

Purification offerings also had several different forms. In 4:30 and 6:19, the blood was sprinkled on the outer altar and the animal was eaten. However, in 4:6-7 and 4:11-12, the blood was sprinkled on the inner altar and the animal was burned. The purification offering from Lev.5:1-13 is distinct from its earlier forms because it provided atonement for the impurities

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<sup>101</sup> Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 488.

<sup>102</sup> Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 488-89.

<sup>103</sup> Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, 93.

<sup>104</sup> Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, 92.

<sup>105</sup> Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, 57.

proliferated after a long duration of time had passed since the first awareness of the sin source, so the impurities had been considered indirectly contracted rather than directly imparted.<sup>106</sup> There is, then, a clear movement from the simpler form of the burnt offering into the more specific applications of the purification offering.

*The Offering for the Reparation of Guilt, Leviticus 6:1-7; 7:1-10*

The reparation for guilt offering provided remedy for impurities caused by sins of fraud, false oaths, or the misuse of objects. This secondary gift offering (הַקָּדֹשׁ) was a reconciliatory tribute, providing a reparation for guilt (זָכַת) for someone who incurred liability for a sin and its impurity emissions.<sup>107</sup> More specifically, the reparation offering could be offered for inadvertent sins against the holy objects and the divine name.<sup>108</sup> Whereas the other offerings wiped away impurities from sin and were often accompanied with a non-atoning cereal or peace offering, this third form of the daily sacrifices would specifically absolve the guilt of the offeror. It provided restitution for anyone who incurred guilt upon becoming aware of the sin committed. It did not require the laying on of hands rite. The daily offerings, as presented in Leviticus, are progressively more specific in purpose and application, resulting in the need for a later Holiness Code to provide more specific stipulations. The purification and guilt offering, before the institutions of the priesthood and the Day of Atonement, exemplified this movement towards specificity.

*The Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16; 23:26-32; 25:8-22)*

The Day of Atonement in Leviticus 16-17; 23:26-32, and 25:8-22 was an annual culmination of the previously mentioned daily sacrifices. The Day of Atonement allowed the high priest to enter the Holy of Holies annually to atone for all sins. Atonement from the daily

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<sup>106</sup> Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 310.

<sup>107</sup> Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 339.

<sup>108</sup> Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, 109.

sacrifices only purged impurities and guilt from the offeror, depending on the sacrifice, whereas the Day of Atonement served as an annual restart for the entire community, sending away all their prior sin. The Day of Atonement provided atonement for all sins, even sins of apostasy.<sup>109</sup> The cleansing of all the Israelites, especially their priesthood, was the focal point of the Day of Atonement. Abstinence, sobriety, fasting, and learned disciplines of self-denial were also practiced for the Day of Atonement.<sup>110</sup>

On the Day of Atonement itself, first, a bull would be offered on behalf of Aaron and the priests. This was then followed by a casting of lots over two goats. One goat would be designated as a purification for sin offering and the other goat would be designated as an expiation to be dispatched into the wilderness. Unlike the daily sacrifices, the wilderness goat would receive a laying on of two hands by the priest, enacting the sin transference absent in the daily sacrifices.<sup>111</sup> The purification offering was presented on behalf of the entire community before YHWH and the other goat was sent to Azazel carrying the sins of the people. Some scholars argue that Azazel was a wilderness demon of Duden, synonymous with various extra-biblical Chthonic deities.<sup>112</sup> If so, appeasements towards YHWH and Azazel are unique to the Day of Atonement. More significantly, it was believed that only the Day of Atonement ritual removed actual sins, not only the impurities and guilt caused by sin. The extent to which the expiation on the Day of Atonement was purely symbolic or actually removed sin itself is inconclusive. In contrast with other sacrifices, the Day of Atonement was also valid for all

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<sup>109</sup> Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, 30.

<sup>110</sup> Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 1065. Although ascetic practices in Lev.23:26-32 might have been later additions, the Day of Atonement originated in the early Exodus group.

<sup>111</sup> Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 151.

<sup>112</sup> Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 1020-21. See also: 1 Enoch.10:4-5, 3 Enoch 4:6, Isa.13:21, 34:14, Bar.4:35, Tob.8:3, Mt.12:34, Lk.11:24, Rev.18:2.

people and all sins, not just specific classifications of people and sins as applied within the daily sacrifices.

### *Atonement Theology in Leviticus*

Atonement is a word from the English language translated from the Hebrew root *kippur* (כִּפֹּר) which conveys a wiping away, purgation, or expiation of offenses for the sake of reconciliation.<sup>113</sup> It is the verbal root of the entire sacrificial system, which allowed access into the presence of YHWH. Atonement (כִּפֹּר) covered any unholiness before a holy God, who could not co-exist with anything associated with sin and death.<sup>114</sup> When atonement (כִּפֹּר) is paired with sin in a passage (חָטָא), its scope of meaning is limited to purgation.<sup>115</sup> In this way, *kippur* (כִּפֹּר) is understood as “covering” for sin. As we will see, only Leviticus 17:11 emphasizes a ransom of a life from death, while propitiatory atonement models express how YHWH was at enmity towards sin, impurities, guilt, and death caused by those aforementioned.<sup>116</sup> Sin (חָטָא), which is the root of sinfulness (חַטָּאת), would emit impurities required to undergo purgatorial expiation (כִּפֹּר). Its aim was to give the covenant community purification (טְהַרָה) and a final peace, safety, and confirmation (שְׁלָמִים).<sup>117</sup>

Throughout the biblical narrative, atonement is most frequent in Leviticus 5, 14, and 16.<sup>118</sup> It provides an example of an early priestly tradition in the Exodus group which relied on the sacrificial system for keeping communion with YHWH. Atonement in biblical law presupposed a separation between YHWH and humanity caused by sin and its further covenant

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<sup>113</sup> Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 1079-81.

<sup>114</sup> Keil and Delitzsch, *The Pentateuch*, 277.

<sup>115</sup> Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 255.

<sup>116</sup> Stephen B. Chapman, “God’s Reconciling Work: Atonement in the Old Testament,” in *T&T Clark Companion to Atonement*, ed. Adam J. Johnson (New York: T&T Clark, 2017), 100-101.

<sup>117</sup> Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 303.

<sup>118</sup> More specifically, atonement appears in Lev. 1:4; 4:20, 26, 31, 35; 5:6, 10, 13, 16, 18; 6:7, 30; 7:7; 8:15, 34; 9:7; 10:17; 12:7-8; 14:18-21, 29, 31, 53; 15:15, 30; 16:6, 10-11, 16-18, 24, 27, 30, 32-34; 17:11; 19:22; 23:27-28; 25:9.

violations. Evidently, the Old Testament sacrificial system required an induced knowledge of sin, a need for pardon, a restraint from evil, and a guide to the converted.<sup>119</sup>

Atonement in early Levitical texts concerning the priesthood (8:5, 34; 9:7; 10:7; 12:7-8) combined the daily sacrifices for ordination into the priesthood. Atonement references in later sections of Leviticus are concerned with daily sacrifices, the Day of Atonement, and how those rituals could be applied within the scope of the year of Jubilee. The Holiness Code specifies the scope of application for the primary sacrificial system in Leviticus 1-16 (17:11; 19:22; 23:27-28; 25:9) by applying atonement for impurities emitted from bodily ailments, childbirth, offenses against holy objects, and offenses against the divine name. These later specifications are attributable to priestly traditions later than the Exodus group but flowing from the original Sinaitic covenant community. For example, the author of Leviticus 14 is probably from a proto-Holiness Code marked by its inclusion of nuances indicative of post-conquest stipulations.<sup>120</sup> Similar specifications concerning sacrifices and purifications can also be found in the Covenant Code (Exodus 20:22-23:19) and the laws of Deuteronomy 12-26.<sup>121</sup>

Each atoning sacrifice eventually required specifications and gradations of application, corresponding to each chamber of the tabernacle, which presented precise levels of superordinate and subordinate holiness. The tabernacle and the Israelites were considered “holy” but the tent, the Holy of Holies, the holy objects, and the priests were called “most holy.” Anything designated “most holy” was closer to the direct theophany of YHWH. To remain holy, impurities emitted from transgressions needed to be wiped away through atonement. Innocent lifeblood was treated as something like a ritual detergent to cover over impurities. Any sacrifice that was eaten purified the outer sanctuary, while any wholly burnt sacrifice purified the inner sanctuary. The

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<sup>119</sup> Packer, *Concise Theology*, 94-95.

<sup>120</sup> Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 886-87.

<sup>121</sup> Walton, *Ancient Israelite Literature*, 77.

latter presented a superordinate degree of atonement, which often purified the inside and outside of the tabernacle, accounting for sins of the priests and the community, whereas those that were not fully burnt atoned only for sins of the individual.<sup>122</sup> Priests and objects considered “most holy” required total purgation because encountering impurities was only dangerous when it came into contact with anything belonging to superordinate holiness.<sup>123</sup> This is also why the purification offering was offered first and most frequently in comparison to all other atoning sacrifices.

Since YHWH required a ritually pure sanctuary to dwell in, the *kippur* did not purge the sin from the offeror, but only from the whole sanctuary so it could be clean for use.<sup>124</sup> Sins and their emitted impurities contaminated the sanctuary and jeopardized the continual presence of YHWH. The impurities emitted from transgressions against the covenant commandments were believed to be dynamic, aerial, external and physical substances consequent of the sin from offending parties.<sup>125</sup> Impurities from sin polluted the sanctuary, and since the sanctuary was the focal point, not the person, as soon as a sin became known, an atonement sacrifice had to be offered to remain in the presence of YHWH. To be clear, the etiological focal point was the purgation of impurities of sin, not the removal of sin or humanity’s sinful desires. Purgation enabled the Israelites to continue in direct communion with YHWH. YHWH was present “by means of the cloud” only if atonement was enacted properly. This theophany was the gauge by which the sacrificial system revealed its proper maintenance and efficacy.

The daily offerings included the burnt offering, the purification for sin offering, the reparation for guilt offering, the cereal offering, and the peace offering. From these, only the

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<sup>122</sup> Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 263.

<sup>123</sup> Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 37.

<sup>124</sup> Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 256.

<sup>125</sup> Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 256.

offerings containing blood provided atonement. Cereal and peace offerings did not atone but could be offered alongside offerings, which did atone as an additional form of thanksgiving and peace after receiving reconciliation through the blood atonement rites. Every offering, then, provided a propitiation in some manner.

Innocent lifeblood appeased YHWH because it temporarily covered over sins and removed the emitted impurities. In other words, blood atoned for impurities, guilt, and sin by its use as an external ritual detergent, covering through propitiation and cleansing through expiation. Propitiation occurred by the shedding of an innocent animal's lifeblood, which accounted for the offender by the law of *lex talionis* remediation. Expiation occurred by way of a legal transaction which oversaw a ransom of the individual from their subservience to sin and death, and a partial purgation of impurities by symbolically sending them away on the scapegoat. Any culpable offender required propitiation between YHWH and himself as well as an expiation of impurities and sin, so the proliferation of and contamination from impurities could be either hindered or removed. The shedding of blood to account for sin placed the innocent sacrifice as the life covering for the guilty party.

Atonement also occurred during blood aspersions and fiery sublimation transferring the offering into an ascended ethereal heavenly sphere.<sup>126</sup> The form of blood atonement first appeared in the daily offerings. Craig argues that the Levitical sacrifices were primarily propitiatory.<sup>127</sup> Craig and Milgrom agree that the daily sacrifices expiated any sins that were not sins of apostasy, cleansing persons and objects.<sup>128</sup>

### *Models of Atonement in Leviticus*

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<sup>126</sup> Eberhart, "Atonement," 10-11.

<sup>127</sup> William Lane Craig, *Atonement and the Death of Christ: An Exegetical, Historical, and Philosophical Exploration* (Waco, TX: Baylor University, 2020), 19.

<sup>128</sup> Craig, *Atonement*, 22-27.

The three models which explain atonement in Leviticus include ransom theory, substitution, and satisfaction. In this section, I will introduce each model and show how it is presented in the book of Leviticus.

The ransom model or theory of atonement is popular in Christian interpretations of biblical blood atonement, especially with regards to early church writings and Gustaf Aulen's *Christus Victor*.<sup>129</sup> Though these interpretations are more concerned with the cosmic battle between good and evil in which Jesus Christ ransoms the entirety of humanity from the powers of sin and death, the ransom model within Leviticus is more concerned with the legalistic applications of cultic law with regards to a ransom price for an individual guilty of sin. In view of a legal transaction between YHWH and the Israelites, comparative with suzerain vassal treaties of supposed divine rulers in the ancient Near East, daily offerings ransomed individuals, then the Day of Atonement ransomed the entire Israelite covenant community.<sup>130</sup>

Although a ransom could occur outside of blood atonement rituals for poorer persons, all blood atonement sacrifices provided ransom.<sup>131</sup> The Israelites presented their sacrifices as a ransom indicative of the laying on of hands, a prayerful leaning into the animal that identified the offering with the worshipper.<sup>132</sup> Craig and Skylar agree that the innocent lifeblood of the animal presented an expiatory ransom for sin.<sup>133</sup> This means a person was ransomed from their sin, emitted impurities, guilt for the sin, and further culpability upon offering a sacrifice which atoned.

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<sup>129</sup> Gustaf Aulen, *Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main types of the idea of Atonement* (London, UK: SPCK, 2010).

<sup>130</sup> Gane, "Worship, Sacrifice, and Festivals," 451. See also: Lev.4:26; 16:16.

<sup>131</sup> Craig, *Atonement*, 28-29.

<sup>132</sup> Wenham, *Book of Leviticus*, 62.

<sup>133</sup> Craig, *Atonement*, 26-27.

The ransom model is also found in several other places throughout the biblical narrative. An exact reiteration of the form of atonement ritual can be found in Numbers 5:6-8, mimicking the same procession of events: “[...] when a man or woman commits any of the sins [...] and that person is guilty, then he shall confess his sins which he has committed.” The offender then goes on to make financial restitution to the party he offended or otherwise brings a ram to the priest for atonement. The emphasis on settling offenses especially when they are between interpersonal relationships, is reiterated by Matthew 5:22-23, as well as Zacchaeus’ conviction for remedying any defraud in Luke 19:8-9. The ministry of reconciliation, which performs the service or worship that atones for sin and impurities, was further vindicated as a work that could be performed on the Sabbath (Luke 13:10-17).

The second model of atonement in Leviticus is the substitutionary model, which understands atonement as an animal’s lifeblood as a substitution for the transgressor.<sup>134</sup> The Exodus group would not have been foreign to this idea as it was present in the Day of Atonement. Only the Day of Atonement transferred the sin away from the community on a vicarious substitute whereas the daily offerings only covered over impurities emitted from sins with the innocent lifeblood. The dual laying on of hands also indicated identification with the worshipper who understood death as the penalty for sin.<sup>135</sup> This form of expiation was accomplished by showing the community the scapegoat as a restitution which sent away the debt or impurities placed upon it for that year.

Keil and Delitzsch argue against the sacrificial animal as a vicarious substitute or as an expiatory sin remover, but rather an innocent soul fully surrendered to God.<sup>136</sup> On the other hand, Milgrom and Dodd agree that blood atonement in Leviticus was treated as a ritual detergent that

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<sup>134</sup> Genesis 9:4-6, Exodus 21:12, 28, Leviticus 17:11, Deuteronomy 12:16.

<sup>135</sup> Craig, *Atonement*, 25.

<sup>136</sup> Keil and Delitzsch, *The Pentateuch*, 278.

could expiate sin from the sanctuary directly and remove it from the worshipper indirectly.<sup>137</sup>

This latter view had greater consequences in the Day of Atonement where both a purification for sin offering and a vicarious substitutionary scapegoat would be sacrificed in conjunction with a communal rather than individual procession. These early practices set the basis for later uses of sin transference and atonement. For example, the public penitential confession in Leviticus 16:21 that would transfer the entire covenant community's sins onto the scapegoat also has parallel formulas in Nehemiah 9:6-37; Ezra 9:6-15; Danial 9:4b-19a; Baruch 3:1-8; 4Q512; and 4Q414.<sup>138</sup>

The third model of atonement in Leviticus is the satisfaction model, which focuses on appeasement and release. The sending away, or expiation, of impurities, sin, guilt, and death which were incompatible with the holiness of YHWH would allow the nation of Israel to remain in his presence. There was a high degree of precision and caution when approaching YHWH even after sacrifices were given because harsh punishments were inflicted on intentional sins that were knowingly defiant as rebellious actions resulting in exile or death. YHWH was considered so holy, that anything unclean or impure was not allowed anywhere near him, his people, or objects deemed holy. Before Leviticus, Abel, Noah, and the patriarchs offered sacrifices when entering into close fellowship with YHWH in order to encounter the one holy God. YHWH consequently had a wrath against sin and death which could only be propitiated by innocent lifeblood of animals. The sin and death which offended him inflicted an offence against the divine hierarchy of being embedded within all creation by YHWH and the innocent lifeblood reversed the divisive attitude towards the offense by providing a cover over it.

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<sup>137</sup> Chapman, "God's Reconciling Work," 98-99.

<sup>138</sup> Bautch, "Formulary of Atonement," 33.

Each sacrifice was both propitiatory and expiatory by expiating uncleanness and abating or propitiating the wrath of YHWH towards uncleanness contaminating things deemed holy and most holy. At that time, blood sacrifices were primarily considered expiatory sacrifices rather than substitutionary. Not only were impurities and guilt removed, but the debt owed to the victim parties and the debt towards YHWH as covenant mediator were also both removed by atonement. The aroma from burnt offerings also pleased YHWH because it signified a complete submission to the covenant by a contrite heart, and not because the expiatory sacrifices had any inherent power to appease God.<sup>139</sup> Wenham goes further by positing that the ram offered in the guilt offering is most likely representing a satisfaction or compensation owed to God upon becoming aware of sin.<sup>140</sup>

Keil and Delitzsch argue that Gen 32:20 and Ex 32:30 attest to an earlier pre-Leviticus propitiatory satisfaction model of atonement.<sup>141</sup> Propitiation linguistically conveys personal appeasement, atonement conveys a spatial encounter, and the modus operandi of both of atonement is a combination of propitiation and expiation working together.<sup>142</sup> The ram offered in the guilt offering is most likely representing a satisfaction or compensation owed to God upon becoming aware of sin.<sup>143</sup> Thus, sacrifices resulted in satisfying the debt owed to and propitiating the enmity from YHWH with the community. Leviticus offerings also temporarily satisfied YHWH's wrath against the sin, but in no way substituted for the human or changed their heart's desires.

In conclusion, the daily sacrifices presented the ransom and satisfaction models of atonement. They temporarily covered over impurities emitted from a sin source, removed guilt,

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<sup>139</sup> Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 252.

<sup>140</sup> Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, 111.

<sup>141</sup> Keil and Delitzsch, *The Pentateuch*, 277. See also: Gen.32:20; Ex.32:30; Num.17:11-12; 25:11-13.

<sup>142</sup> Eberhart, "Atonement," 4.

<sup>143</sup> Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, 111.

and ritually cleansed holy objects. The Day of Atonement, however, emphasized substitution in the scapegoat expiating the sins the of the nation annually. Each sacrifice had a specific purpose and result within the covenant community, but the overarching meaning behind each sacrifice was to provide atonement, so sin and death could not creep into the community through uncleanness, jeopardizing their ability to ascent into the presence of YHWH.

#### 4. Theology of Atonement in Hebrews

##### *Exordium Ethos* – Historical-Critical Context of Christ as the Final Transcendent Sacrifice

The epistle to the Hebrews is one of the few New Testament writings with an unknown author. Traditionally, authorship was attributed to the apostle Paul, but many doubts have been cast on that hypothesis. Nonetheless, there remains a wealth of information regarding the author and their context. Hebrews is more of a theological tract, rather than an epistle. It intends to show how Jesus presents a superior blood atonement, priesthood, promises, and tabernacle worship system fulfilling and transcending the Old Testament system.<sup>144</sup> These topics covered in Hebrews also intend to give various reasons for remaining steadfast in the faith. The author of Hebrews maintains the Old Testament mystery of blood atonement as a substitution of life for life, which both propitiates for and expiates away sins and impurities.<sup>145</sup> Hebrews reveals the purpose and means behind Christ as high priest and once-for-all final sacrifice. Some scholars have argued that he attains to this final sacrifice and high priesthood by his resurrection and ascension. Moffitt argues that the author of Hebrews presents Christ's atoning work through his presenting himself before God in his resurrection and ascension, rather than treating only his crucifixion strictly as an appropriation of Yom Kippur.<sup>146</sup>

In Hebrews, Jesus atones for the sin of all humanity by living a human life of obedience to YHWH as an acceptable representative of all humans and ratifies a new covenant based on the grace of faith in the power of his blood to atone in ways unforeseen by the old sacrifices that

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<sup>144</sup> John Stott and Alister McGrath, *The Cross of Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 37.

<sup>145</sup> Thomas F. Torrance, *Atonement: The Person and Work of Christ* (Downs Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009), 88.

<sup>146</sup> David M. Moffitt, "Blood, Life, and Atonement: Reassessing Hebrews' Christological Appropriation of Yom Kippur," in *The Day of Atonement: Its Interpretations in Early Jewish and Christian Traditions*, ed. Thomas Hieke and Tobias Nicklas (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 211-12.

were meaningless had they been given without devotion and obedience to YHWH.<sup>147</sup> This reveals how YHWH always desires the surrender of the heart and denial of natural carnal life rather than bloody sacrifices.<sup>148</sup> In this chapter, I will explain how Hebrews frames atonement within a typological framework which develops a hermeneutical circle with Christ at the center of the priesthood, tabernacle, sacrifices, and day of atonement as types.

### *Narratio Natura* – Linguistic-Grammatical Analysis of Atonement in Hebrews

Blood atonement is frequently mentioned in the epistle (1:3; 2:14-17; 5:3; 7:27; 9:12-10:22; 13:11-16). Jesus is referred to as the high priest who offers the sacrifice (4:14; 5:6; 6:20; 7:11-21), the sacrifice itself (7:27; 9:12-14), and the one who fulfills every demand of the old covenant in order to establish the new covenant (8:6-13). Each role that Jesus takes on in the epistle points to a type laying nascent in the Levitical system. Early Jewish Christians and early church liturgies relied heavily on the high Christology presented by the epistle to the Hebrews for that very reason: its rich theology of daily sacrifices and the Day of Atonement fulfilled by Christ.

As noted in the previous chapter, the anointed priests in the old covenant took on the role of saving others from their sins by mediating and offering atoning sacrifices between YHWH and the covenant community. The Greek verb for the anointed one (ἁγιάζω) is χρίω, referring to the anointing in the consecration of a valid priest (Luke 4:18; Acts 4:27; 10:38; 2 Corinthians 1:21;

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<sup>147</sup> Joel B. Green, “Theologies of the Atonement in the New Testament,” in *T&T Companion to Atonement*, ed. Adam J. Johnson (New York: T&T Clark, 2017), 131.

<sup>148</sup> Erik M. Heen and Philip D. W. Krey, eds., *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament X: Hebrews* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2005), 237. “In the words of the prophet Micah, a distinction is clearly drawn between the fact that God does not require sacrifices as they are in themselves and the fact that God does desire the offerings that are symbolized by these sacrifices. [...] That is why the words ‘For I desire mercy and not sacrifice’ must be understood to mean that one sacrifice is to be preferred to another, since what is commonly called a sacrifice is merely a symbol of the true sacrifice. For, mercy is the true sacrifice. Hence, ‘such sacrifices are pleasing to God.’” - Augustine, *City of God* 10.5.

Hebrews 1:9; 1 John 2:20, 27). It also forms the basis for words like Christ and *chrism*. This anointing would later be passed on to the Church more broadly when they were later named Christians (χριστιανός) at Antioch (Acts 11:26). This word also shares the same semantic field as the title ‘Christ’ given to Jesus of Nazareth, the anointed one in the New Testament. Hebrews 3:1-2 further identifies the Christ as the one who received a unique emissary role (ἡλιψ) formerly reserved for the Old Testament high priest on the Day of Atonement.<sup>149</sup> The emissary was divinely appointed to a special high position sent as a personal ambassador of YHWH.

Terminology addressing sacrifice is also essential to a full understanding of how Hebrews presents Christ as (1) the anointed high priest offering up a sacrifice and (2) the final sacrificial object which appears within the heavenly tabernacle. The old covenant sacrificial system released a person from guilt and impurities by blood atonement rituals, not the sin from which those impurities and guilt originated nor the underlying sin nature inherent in humanity. The new covenant accomplishes much more. This is expressed by Christ’s once-for-all blood atonement, which is established through a propitiatory and expiatory offering fundamentally different from those offered in the old system. The word used in Hebrews 2:15 for delivering a sinner from bondage to their sin (ἀπαλλάξῃ) appears in the subjunctive mood which might denote the future hypothetical possibility of enabling humanity through Jesus to be ransomed from the powers of death. Thus, Jesus is not just temporarily releasing one individual from guilt and ritual impurities, but rather any who believe in him from sin and death. The powers of death include the fear of death and the punishments towards sin prescribed by the Old Testament laws. Thus, the author of Hebrews believes the sacrifice of Christ was truly atoning in a way much greater than anything the Levitical system had offered.

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<sup>149</sup> Torrance, *Atonement: The Person and Work of Christ*, 78.

Hebrews 2:17 states that Jesus made atonement for all the people. Josephus and Philo interpret “to make atonement” as an expression signifying appeasement between YHWH and humanity through his appointed representatives.<sup>150</sup> The appearance of offerings (προσφέρω) in Hebrews repeatedly points to Jesus Christ offering his prayers, life of obedience, and sacrifice on the cross as an effectual offering to YHWH which fully unites divinity with humanity for an eternity.<sup>151</sup> More specifically, Hebrews 7:27 refers to the many repeated offerings (παῖ, θυσία) in the Old Testament to contrast their ineffectiveness with the effectiveness of Christ’s once-for-all offering of himself. The word signifying propitiation appears five times in the New Testament and in each appearance, it is mentioned alongside the mercy of YHWH on a guilty sinner.<sup>152</sup> Hebrews 10:2 mentions an expiation of guilt within a rhetorical question about the imperfection of Old Testament blood sacrifices (κεκαθαρισμένους).

Alongside supplanting the old priesthood and the old sacrifices as the God-incarnate final sacrifice, Hebrews also presents Jesus Christ as one entering into the heavenly tabernacle upon his resurrection and ascension. There are many possible interpretations of what the holy places could be referring to with regards to the heavenly tabernacle Christ entered into (ᾠτήριον, κατοικητήριον, ἱερόσολον, σκηνή). The typology of the innermost mercy seat (ἱλαστήριον, ἱλαστήριον) might refer to either the place or the means of propitiation but in either case, the type is situated near Christ himself because his blood is the source of propitiation.<sup>153</sup> Some interpret the holy places through which Christ entered into as the various places he went during his death, descent,

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<sup>150</sup> Gareth Lee Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 150-51.

<sup>151</sup> Hebrews 5:3, 7; 8:3-4; 9:7-9, 14, 25, 28; 10:1-2, 8, 11-12.

<sup>152</sup> The verbal root ‘to propitiate’ (ἱλάσθητι) and the two interchangeable adjectival forms (ἱλασμός, ἱλαστήριος) Luke 18:13 presents propitiation as an Aorist passive form (ἱλάσθητι) during a tax collector’s plea for YHWH’s mercy. In Romans 3:25, it appears as an adjectival neuter for in describing Christ’s blood. Hebrews 2:17 describes propitiation as an infinitive paired with the main verbal clause describing his priestly service approved by YHWH. The final two references to propitiation in the New Testament are found in 1 John 2:2 and 4:10 in reference to the kind of sacrifice he made out of love and for whom he made it for.

<sup>153</sup> Stott and McGrath, *The Cross of Christ*, 172.

resurrection, and ascension. In light of Hebrews 9:27, it is likely that the holy places Christ atones within are the places he went during his death, descent, and resurrection. In conclusion, rather than focusing on the many immolations and aspersions of blood and water (קִרְיָ, προσχέω, χέω) that were performed in the Old Testament system, the New Testament focuses on one ablution that achieves a washing and inward purification for individuals and the whole world (סִבְבָּ, πλύνω, ἡλῆψ, καθαρισμός).<sup>154</sup>

### *Partitio Consequentia* – The General Effects of Christ’s Blood Atonement

The effects of Christ’s blood atonement were still being realized at the time the epistle to the Hebrews was being authored. The ways in which the author depicts Christ in relation to the Old Testament priesthood, daily sacrifices, and Day of Atonement established early Christian theologies that affected liturgy and worship. The general effects of Christ’s blood atonement presented in Hebrews is that Jesus offered a once-for-all sacrifice, established a new eternal covenant by his blood, and shows his love for humanity by fully uniting humanity and divinity.

His once-for-all sacrifice is mentioned in Hebrews 7:25; 9:25; and 10:1-18. Out of the fifteen times ‘once’ (ἄπαξ) appears in the New Testament, eight of those occurrences are in Hebrews. This further emphasizes that the blood atonement of Christ is fundamentally different and more valuable than the Old Testament sacrifices because of the type of blood rather than the form of the ritual.<sup>155</sup> Christ’s once-for-all offering is explicated in Hebrews 9:12-10:22. This section adds the qualifier of eternality to the person of Jesus Christ (9:11-14; 10:12), the effects

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<sup>154</sup> Luke 2:22; 5:14, John 2:6; 3:25; Hebrews 1:3; 2 Peter 1:9; Revelation 7:14; 22:14.

<sup>155</sup> Heen and Krey, eds., *Hebrews*, 135. “And Paul well said, “not without taking blood.” [...] He signifies that there shall be a sacrifice, not consumed by fire but rather distinguished by blood. For inasmuch as he called the cross a sacrifice, though it had neither fire nor logs nor was offered many times but had been offered in blood once for all, he shows that the ancient sacrifice also was of this kind, offered ‘once for all’ in blood.” - Chrysostom, On the Epistle to the Hebrews 15.2.

of his offering (10:13-22), and the covenant he established upon his death (9:15-22). This makes the implication that his offering is at once timeless and eternally binding. Christ's sinlessness solidifies his once-for-all sacrifice that obtained eternal redemption and vindicates God's love for us in giving himself for us rather than for himself. This contrasts with the Old Testament priests who were sinful, who offered for themselves and others while they were not always offering sacrifices out of love.

Whereas the blood of bulls and goats inaugurated the old covenant sacrifices, the blood of Christ dedicated the new covenant sacrifice in order that sacrifices would cease. YHWH accepts sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving from those who have faith in Jesus because their innermost parts are cleansed rather than merely providing an outward ritual purity (Heb 9:17-23). The type of bulls and goats in relation to humanity was foreshadowing the human nature being taken up into the heavenly temple as a type of humility and lowering of oneself in full innocence and submission to a higher realm. In this case, the second person of the Trinity takes on a human nature and descends into human form. This union of divine and human natures also opened the true veil into the Holy of holies, the full heavenly presence of YHWH in the hereafter, where Christ is currently enthroned and continuously ministers on behalf of humanity (Heb 6:19-20; 8:1-8). The heavenly temple also appears as a full union between Christ and his bride, the church, in the eschatological fulfillment in Revelation.<sup>156</sup> This also recalls the ancient Near Eastern practice when kings would represent the other in a covenant agreement by means of an animal sacrifice. YHWH was using animals for the Israelites to represent humanity in relation to divinity. This uniting of human and divine natures within the person of Jesus Christ allows him to sympathize with those who are tempted and weak and took on the human nature to destroy sin

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<sup>156</sup> G.K. Beale and Mitchell Kim, *God Dwells among Us: Expanding Eden to the Ends of the Earth* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 128-32.

and death which was tainted by sin and death because the divine nature could neither sin nor die (Heb 2:14-16, 18; 4:15).

In summary, the author of Hebrews extensively discusses covenantal theology in this passage. In this passage, the new eternal covenant which Christians partake of was said to have been established by Christ's blood. So, as the blood of bulls and goats was used to inaugurate the old covenant, the blood of Christ dedicates and seals the new covenant. This new covenant is eternally binding in that it was established by the blood of Jesus who shared fully in the eternal divine nature while making propitiation for and expiation of sin and death. This can also be expressed by the present tense infinitive of propitiation in Hebrews 2:17, implying a continual application of the benefits of the sacrifice.<sup>157</sup> These benefits are enjoyed by Christians both now and the hereafter.

*Confirmatio Logica Logos* – Christological Atonement models from propitiation and expiation

As we saw, the three atonement models presented by Leviticus were the ransom, satisfaction, and substitutionary models. These were also figures foreshadowing Christ because Levitical atonement was never final but had to be repeated. Arguments have also been made that these never removed sin but rather covered sin, removed guilt, and removed emitted impurities. Both presentations of blood atonement in Leviticus and Hebrews were considered propitiatory and expiatory, yet only in Hebrews is blood atonement treated as fully efficacious and final. In Hebrews, a fuller picture of atonement theory is in view. In addition to the ransom, satisfaction, and substitutionary models of atonement, it also adds the recapitulation model.

The recapitulation model of atonement was championed by Irenaeus of Lyons. He posited that atonement began at the incarnation, when divine and human natures were united in Christ. This union reiterates a perfected humanity because it is distinct but inseparable from

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<sup>157</sup> Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 150.

perfect divinity within one person. Several passages of scripture refer to this as the “second Adam” and recalls the adage that God became human so humans may become like God.<sup>158</sup>

In sum, the blood of Christ is treated as an expiatory sacrifice because it removes sin and impurities by those who put their faith in him. It propitiates by paying the debt and suffering death for the sake of the transgressors. He stands as a substitution because his humanity suffers for humanity’s sake while also recapitulating in perfection every area the human nature of Adam failed.

There are numerous theological traditions that claim the satisfaction model of atonement was a heretical innovation invented by Anselm. However, several early Church fathers describe atonement of Christ as satisfying a debt and satisfying the wrath of YHWH against sin. This interpretation is also consistent with how the covenant community viewed the nature of YHWH against sin and the legalistic implications of humanity’s guilt and proliferation of transgressing his commands. Satisfying the debt owed to YHWH for transgressing his commandments was a view within the early theologians who professed the ransom model of atonement. Some theologians also interpreted the satisfaction model as a debt owed to Satan because humanity subjected themselves to his authority by transgressing the commands of YHWH.

#### *Peroratio Pathos – The Priestly Office of Christ as the Offeror, Mediator, and Perfect Sacrifice*

The role of Christ as the offeror of sacrifice is tied to his description as the high priest after the order of Melchizedek. Unlike Levitical priests, Jesus was sinless and one with divine nature. Additionally, Jesus was a Judahite, a distinction not allowed within the old covenant priesthood except in the case of David.<sup>159</sup> However, he is still a priest because he makes an

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<sup>158</sup> See Rom.5:14, 1 Cor.15:45-49, Phil.3:21, Heb.2:5-18, 1 Jn.3:2.

<sup>159</sup> See 1 Sam.21:1-6, Lk.6:3-4.

offering and mediates a relationship between humanity and divinity.<sup>160</sup> His sinlessness also made him offer one sacrifice that was absent of the imperfections and temporality the old sacrifices were hindered by.<sup>161</sup> Christ also approaches God through God by having a divine nature in himself.<sup>162</sup> This allowed him to enter into the true or heavenly tabernacle, which could either refer to the coupling of divine and human in his flesh<sup>163</sup> or in reference to his ascending once into the heavenly realm at the end of his earthly ministry.<sup>164</sup> Therefore, his priesthood, sinlessness, divine nature, and ascension make his offering better than those prescribed by the old sacrifices.

Christ also mediates between YHWH and humanity by offering a sacrifice within the hypostatic union of the divine and the human. Jesus stands at the pinnacle of humanity and

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<sup>160</sup> Heen and Krey, eds., *Hebrews*, 123. “That you may understand that he used the word minister of humanity, observe how he again indicates it: ‘For,’ he says, ‘every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices; hence it is necessary for this priest also to have something to offer.’ Do not now, because you hear that he sits, suppose that his being called high priest is mere idle talk. For clearly the former-his sitting-belongs to the dignity of the Godhead, but this (his being a priest) to his great lovingkindness and his tender care for us. On this account, he repeatedly urges this very thing and dwells more upon it, for he feared lest the other truth should overthrow it. Therefore, he again brings his discourse down to this since some were inquiring why he died. He was a priest. But there is no priest without a sacrifice. It is necessary then that he also should have a sacrifice.” - Chrysostom, *On the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 14.2.

<sup>161</sup> Joseph T Lienhard and Ronnie J. Rombs, eds., *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture Old Testament III: Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 170. “The priest who offers the holocaust is the Lord who is himself accustomed to kindle in us the fire of his charity and through it to make the sacrifices of our good actions acceptable to himself. And he is clothed in linen garments when he does these things because in order that he may excite us to works of virtue, he sets before us the example of his own incarnation, passion and death which can be signified by linen, as we have frequently said.” – S. Bede, *On the Tabernacle* 2.11, The priest who offers is the Lord.

<sup>162</sup> Daniel Keating, “Thomas Aquinas and the Epistle to the Hebrews : ‘The Excellence of Christ,’” in *Christology, Hermeneutics, and Hebrews: Profiles from the History of Interpretation*, eds. Job C. Laansma (London: T&T Clark, 2012), 96.

<sup>163</sup> Heen and Krey, eds., *Hebrews*, 121. “He calls the heavens ‘the tent’ in this passage. In my opinion he seems to then call the flesh of the Lord ‘the true tent,’ which also the Lord himself fashioned when he was not yet man, considering that immaculate flesh did not come into existence by human coupling but by the Holy Spirit.” - Arethas of Caesarea, *Fragments on the Epistle to the Hebrews* 8:2. See also: Heen and Krey, eds., *Hebrews*, 160. “Taking a hint from what has been said by Paul, who partially uncovered the mystery of these things, we say that Moses was earlier instructed by a type in the mystery of the tabernacle that encompasses the universe. This tabernacle would be ‘Christ who is the power and the wisdom of God,’ who in his own nature was not made with hands, yet capable of being made when it became necessary for this tabernacle to be erected among us. Thus, the same tabernacle is in a way both unfashioned and fashioned, uncreated in pre-existence but created in having received this material composition.” – S. Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Moses* 2.174.

<sup>164</sup> Heen and Krey, eds., *Hebrews*, 145. “The statement that ‘he entered into the heaven itself’ must be taken by common agreement as this: ‘And so that he might not offer himself often, he entered into the very heaven.’ For it is characteristic of those entering the ‘antitypes of the true things’ to bear sacrifices ‘often’ and ‘with blood,’ but not of the one entering ‘into heaven itself.’” - Photius, *Fragments on the Epistle to the Hebrews*.

divinity because of his consubstantiality. The fullness (πλήρωμα) of divinity dwelling in Jesus proved his ministry as mediator between YHWH and humanity because of his continual ability to sympathize and suffer with humanity (Col 1:19; 2:9). The focus of his willingness to suffer and sympathize with humanity as a sibling is always on his love for humanity.<sup>165</sup> His ability to mediate the new covenant is intimately tied with his ability to perfectly love himself as he has now taken on a human nature.

Christ also had the quality of incorruptibility. Whereas the old sacrifices were corruptible and eventually the Israelites were not providing their best to worship YHWH, Christ is incorruptible and perfect, giving his utmost in his life, death, and resurrection. There were no defects or pollution, spiritually or physically. This quality fulfills the demand for unblemished domesticated animals in Old Testament sacrifices by offering something incorruptible inwardly and outwardly. Athanasius more fully expounds the concept of the Word, the perfect divine nature through whom all things were created, really suffered a bodily death.<sup>166</sup>

In conclusion, the epistle to Hebrews treats the Levitical system as a shadow and a type of Christ's sacrifice. Whereas the daily and annual Levitical sacrifices offered an external ritual

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<sup>165</sup> Heen and Krey, eds., *Hebrews*, 49. "He that is so great, he that is 'the brightness of his glory,' he that is 'the express image of his person,' he that 'made the worlds,' he that 'sits on the right hand of the Father,' he was willing and earnest to become our sibling in all things, and for this cause did he leave the angels and the other powers and come down to us; he took hold of us and wrought innumerable good things. He destroyed death, he cast out the devil from his tyranny, he freed us from bondage. Not as a sibling alone did he honor us, but also in other ways beyond number. For he was willing also to become our high priest with the Father; for he adds, 'that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God.' For this cause, he means, he took on himself our flesh, only for love to humankind, that he might have mercy upon us. For neither is there any other cause of the economy, but this alone. For he saw us cast on the ground, perishing, tyrannized over by death, and he had compassion on us." - Chrysostom, *On the Epistle to the Hebrews* 5.1-2.

<sup>166</sup> Heen and Krey, eds., *Hebrews*, 122. "I am very much surprised how they have ventured to entertain the idea that the Word became man in consequence of his nature. For, if this were so, the commemoration of Mary would be superfluous. For nature has no conception of a virgin bearing apart from a man. By the good pleasure of the Father, being true God, and Word and Wisdom of the Father by nature, he became man in the body for our salvation in order that, having something to offer for us he might save us all, 'as many as through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.' For it was not some man that gave himself up for us; since every man is under sentence of death, according to what was said to all in Adam, 'earth you are and unto earth you shall return.' Nor was it any other of the creatures, since every creature is liable to change. But the Word himself offered his own body on our behalf that our faith and hope might not be in man, but that we might have our faith in God the Word himself." - Athanasius, *Letter 61, To Maximus* 3.

washing, Christ's once-for-all sacrifice cleanses the innermost parts of the human conscience and heart. Accordingly, the priesthood and sacrifice Christ attains transcends the demands and expands on the atoning consequences of the old covenant system. The epistle to the Hebrews thus presents the ransom, substitutionary, and satisfaction models of atonement but adds the recapitulation model as a rejuvenation of human nature only Christ could accomplish.

## 5. Convergences and Divergences in Atonement from Hebrews interpreting Leviticus

### *Exordium Ethos* – Comparing the Historical Milieu of Leviticus and Hebrews

Levitical precepts were casuistic laws following the suzerain treaty of Sinai to separate the Israelites from others so they could have a relationship with YHWH and so YHWH could provide a typological framework for Christ's sacrifice.<sup>167</sup> The portrayal of Levitical precepts in the epistle to the Hebrews emphasizes the priesthood and sacrifice of Christ alongside the insufficiencies of the Levitical system. For example, according to Hebrews 8:5 and 9:23, the Old Testament sacrificial system never fully achieved complete atonement and therefore only served as a pattern, shadow, and type. Similarly, Origen believed the sole purpose of the law was to impose forms, figures, and shadows serving as types before fulfillment in Christ.<sup>168</sup> When interpreting Vanhoye's writing on Old Testament priests, Joslin writes that Leviticus could even function as prophecy when focusing on its pedagogical and typological designs extrapolated in Hebrews 9:1-10:18.<sup>169</sup> So, early Church theologians and modern scholars agree on the typological framework interacting between Leviticus and Hebrews. It is evident that the old sacrifices were believed to accomplish something substantial, though temporary. This means that they types of Christ and truly propitiated and expiated.

### *Narratio Natura* – The Purposes and Means of Atonement

The purpose of atonement (εξιλασις, καταλλαγη) was to reconcile two or more parties by offering apocatastasis. This means some sort of prescribed restitution would restore the

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<sup>167</sup> Packer, *Concise Theology*, 88.

<sup>168</sup> Gary Wayne Barkley, et al., *Origen: Homilies on Leviticus* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press of America, 1990), homily 10.

<sup>169</sup> Barry C. Joslin, "Hebrews 7-10 and the Transformation of the Law," in Richard Bauckham, Barry C. Joslin, *A Cloud of Witnesses: The Theology of Hebrews in its Ancient Contexts*, eds. Richard Bauckham, Daniel Driver, Trevor Hart, and Nathan MacDonald (London, UK: T&T Clark, 2008), 115.

relationship between the parties to a perfected primal state. Within the Israelite covenant community, the prescribed restitution took the form of a propitiatory (ἱλασκομαι, ἱλασμος) sacrifice (θυσια, θυσια, וזבח) which would offer up (προσφορα, קרבן) a ransom (λυτρον, αντιλυτρον, כפר, פדה) for the guilt and impurities emitted from the sins and transgressions committed by the offending party. Lifeblood was required for the ransom because a life-for-life *lex talionis* principle was enacted within the community, by YHWH's instruction, in a substitutionary role. Thus, forgiveness of sins was and is the primary prerequisite for worshipping YHWH in his presence due to the inherent separation between humanity and divinity caused by sin and death. The ultimate purpose of atonement is to reconcile a sinner to YHWH so they can live in his presence.

Blood was always the means of atonement prescribed throughout the biblical narrative. Leviticus 1:4 is the first time it is prescribed for atonement. It is also important to note that before the priestly Sinaitic literature, animal sacrifices were only used for thanksgiving after YHWH had carried out some act of deliverance. Leviticus 17:11 and Hebrews 9:22 further detail the reasons YHWH commanded blood sacrifice as a means of atonement under the Levitical laws. The lifeblood of the sacrifice effects atonement and anything that has contact with that lifeblood undergoes purification.<sup>170</sup> Ritual purification was obligatory for atonement. The blood would offer a propitiatory appeasement towards a debt owed because of violating the covenant regulations given by YHWH.

Now, under the new covenant framework, the blood sacrifice appears as though it was performed through *ichor*, the blood of a god, which is a motif found in various myths and religions. Some have interpreted the beginning of Christ's atonement at the incarnation and

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<sup>170</sup> David M. Moffitt, "Blood, Life, and Atonement: Reassessing Hebrews' Christological Appropriation of Yom Kippur," in *The Day of Atonement: Its Interpretations in Early Jewish and Christian Traditions*, eds. Thomas Hieke and Tobias Nicklas (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2011), 218-19.

others at the cross. Origen's conception of atonement focused on a reunion between the One and the many by a remarriage of divinity with creation through Christ as the incarnate *logos*.<sup>171</sup> Similarly, Athanasius believed the incarnation atoned in that divinity took on humanity so humanity might become divine.<sup>172</sup> Irenaeus, who anticipated this Christology, found special focus on a recapitulation of perfected humanity.<sup>173</sup> Nevertheless, the blood of Christ, also containing his soul which atones (according to the requirements of Leviticus 1:4 and 17:11), is the new prescribed means of atonement in the new covenant. This is further revealed by the names given to Jesus. In Origen's commentary on the Gospel of John, these titles include Saviour, Propitiation, Redemption, Messiah, Christ, and Lamb of God.<sup>174</sup>

#### *Partitio Consequentia* – Comparisons of Atonement between Leviticus and Hebrews

There are several ways to compare atonement between Leviticus and Hebrews. First, I will compare the spatial elements of atonement in both Leviticus and Hebrews. Then, I will consider the temporal consequences of those spatial limitations on carrying out atonement in Leviticus and Hebrews. Finally, I will consider the theological comparisons between the two texts.

#### *Spatial*

The spatial comparisons of atonement between Leviticus and Hebrews include the persons carrying out atonement, the tribes from which those persons originate, and the worship spaces in which atonement takes place through a procession of events. First, the person of Jesus Christ is fundamentally different from the priesthood of Aaron. The word made flesh is infinite,

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<sup>171</sup> Frances Young, *God's Presence: A Contemporary Recapitulation of Early Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 239.

<sup>172</sup> Young, *God's Presence*, 240-41.

<sup>173</sup> Young, *God's Presence*, 242.

<sup>174</sup> Young, *God's Presence*, 238.

whereas the old covenant priests were limited in their application of atoning for individuals. Jesus retains the attribute of omnipresence by virtue of his being eternal in hypostatic union with YHWH. That is, the old priesthood could only atone for individuals in a specific place with the blood of animals at any one time, whereas Hebrews presents Jesus Christ as a high priest who can atone for anyone, anywhere, and at any time.<sup>175</sup> Jesus can also sanctify the inner nature of humanity in ways animals could not.<sup>176</sup> So, the limitations of the atonement provided in Leviticus are lifted in Hebrews by means of the incarnation of YHWH in the person of Jesus Christ.

Jesus was also from the tribe of Judah rather than Levi. He attained the office of high priest in the order of Melchizedek rather than the office of high priest of the Levites. He takes on infinite priesthood marked by cosmic kingship instead of earthly priestly ordinances. Moreover, the tabernacle in which he carries out the atonement is celestial. The author of Hebrews emphasizes Christ offering himself in heaven (Heb 6:19-20; 7:26; 8:2; 9:11; 23-25; 10:12), rather than offering himself on earth.<sup>177</sup> This is contrary to most interpretations, which emphasize the cross as a sacrifice of Christ on earth. His offering himself in heaven points to Melchizedek and Judah being fundamentally different from Aaron and Levi. The primacy of the king over the high priest was established through David. The primacy of Melchizedek over Levi is established by

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<sup>175</sup> Lienhard and Rombs, eds., *Ancient Christian Commentary Leviticus*, 186. "In the case of the human person: first its body is created from the dust, and afterward the power of life is given to it, and this is the being of the soul. Accordingly, Moses said about the beasts, 'Its blood is its life.' But in the case of the human person its being is incorporeal and immortal and has a great superiority over the body, to the same extent as incorporeal form surpasses the corporeal." – S. John Chrysostom Homilies in Genesis 13.10, the life is in the blood and the human soul.

<sup>176</sup> Lienhard and Rombs, eds., *Ancient Christian Commentary Leviticus*, 196. "The Old Covenant had its loaves of proposition, but they, as belonging to that covenant, have come to an end. The New Covenant, has its heavenly bread and cup of salvation to sanctify both body and soul. For as the bread is for the body, the Word suits the soul." – S. Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lecture 4.5., the fine flour for making cakes and the two covenants.

<sup>177</sup> Moffitt, "Blood, Life, and Atonement," 220-21.

his title to Abraham (Heb 7:1-4), his pre-existing the Levites (Heb 7:5-10), and his focus on heavenly righteousness rather than earthly legal ordinances (Heb 7:11-22).

### *Temporal*

The temporal comparisons of the two atonement systems focus on the way they were established and how they progress throughout history. The old covenant established a temporary system that eventually broke down because of the compromise of the Israelites due to the sinful corruption of human nature (e.g., insincere sacrifices, idol processions, ritual abuses). In Hebrews, the new covenant is eternally sealed by Christ's blood, which cannot be changed or corrupted by fallen human nature or a defective priesthood. Jesus is also the true, eternally binding, once-for-all sacrifice abundantly more effective in its propitiation and expiation of sin in comparison to the blood of many animal sacrifices.<sup>178</sup> As the new covenant progresses throughout history, the new system is inherently expanding and preserving rather than decaying and vanishing like the old sacrificial system. This is plainly evident in the expansion of Christianity and the absence of a central Old Testament sacrificial system or location.

### *Theological*

The theological implications of atonement in Leviticus and Hebrews are concerned with covenantal theology. These implications appear in Hebrews 7:21-22 and 8:7-9 wherein the new covenant was made with an eternal oath, sealed by the surety of Christ's blood, and remains faultless in cleansing the internal and external parts of humanity.<sup>179</sup> The sufficiency of Christ's

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<sup>178</sup> Barkley, *Origen: Homilies on Leviticus*, 203. "First there was a high priest who purified the people 'by the blood of bulls and goats'; but when the true high priest who 'sanctifies' believers 'by his own blood', came, that first high priest exists no more and neither was any place left for him. First there was the altar and sacrifices were being celebrated; but when the true lamb came, who 'offered' himself as an offering to God, all these other, as it were, temporary institutions ceased." – Origen, Homily 10.1(4).

<sup>179</sup> Heen and Krey, eds., *Hebrews*, 140. "For he says, if 'the blood of bulls' is able to purify the flesh, much more shall the blood of Christ wipe away the defilement of the soul. Because you may not suppose when you hear the word sanctifies that it is some great thing, he marks out and shows the difference between each of these

blood atonement to cleanse the inner parts of a human's soul is reflected in his teachings in Matthew 23:26.<sup>180</sup> Hebrews 7:12 also describes the fulfillment of Jeremiah 31:31-34 which the Levitical covenant could not achieve because of its built-in insufficiencies to cleanse, inner sins—it merely covered over the guilt and impurities emitted from inadvertent sins and annually removed the sins of the community. The sacrifice of Christ achieves a supererogatory atonement in comparison. He fulfills and transcends the demands of Old Testament blood atonement rites.<sup>181</sup> Whereas the old system was only sufficient for some sin, the new system is sufficient for all sin, cleansing both the inner and outer parts.

### *Confirmatio Logica Logos – Convergences*

The main convergences in atonement theology between Leviticus and Hebrews are found in their focus on sacrifice and the importance of the Day of Atonement. Sacrificial imagery referencing Leviticus can be found in Hebrews 2:10-17; 3:1-11; 5; 7-10:4; and 13:11-16. Both texts share similarities. The shedding of innocent lifeblood inaugurated both the old and new covenants.<sup>182</sup> Firstling domesticated male animals also became the preferable objects of Levitical sacrifices recalling Passover and the first-born of Israel becoming sanctified when God struck the first-born of Egypt dead.<sup>183</sup> Firstborn males were considered the most important to dedicate in vows to YHWH. Jesus Christ was the firstborn of Mary and the firstborn of the new creation by way of his resurrection. The author of Hebrews also views Christ's crucifixion as fulfilling the

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purifications and how he says it is so with good reason, since that is 'the blood of bulls' and this 'the blood of Christ.'" – S. John Chrysostom, *On the Epistle to the Hebrews* 15:5.

<sup>180</sup> "[...] first clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, so that the outside of it may become clean also."

<sup>181</sup> Nicholas P. Lunn, et al., *The Fathers of the Church: St. Cyril of Alexandria Glaphyra on the Pentateuch, Volume 2 Exodus through Deuteronomy* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America, 2019), Glaphyra 11, 157. In reference to Hebrews 13:20, Cyril of Alexandria also argued that the blood of Christ completely perfects those in covenant with YHWH through Christ.

<sup>182</sup> Himmelfarb, "What goes on in the Heavenly Temple?", 189.

<sup>183</sup> Gershon Brin, *Studies in Biblical Law: From the Hebrew Bible to the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1994), 181-82. See also: Exodus 13, Numbers 3:13, 8:17.

slaughter of sacrificial animals. Hebrews 13:11 compares Christ's dying outside the city's gates as a fulfillment of the commands of Leviticus 4:12 and 6:30 with regards to the animals which were not to be eaten, to be disposed of outside of the camp.

### *Day of Atonement Convergences*

Through Christ's sacrifice, the cosmos has entered into the Day of Atonement, which is not annual, but a perpetual age of grace. There are several differing interpretations of the fulfillment of the Day of Atonement as presented in Hebrews. Interpretations offered by Origen are by far the most diverse. Origen compares the two goats on the Day of Atonement to the two thieves on either side of the cross of Christ whereby Jesus Christ the priest leads the unrepentant thief into the desolate wilderness upon his harrowing of hell.<sup>184</sup> Even Barrabas was considered a fulfillment of the goat sent into the wilderness.<sup>185</sup> Origen also compares the two goats on the Day of Atonement to the rich man and Lazarus. The goat slaughtered for the Lord is Lazarus who represents those who do good and the goat that is sent into the wilderness carrying the sins of the people is the rich man suffering in desolation who represents those who do evil.<sup>186</sup> Origen, seeing the fulfillment of the law of the Day of Atonement in the Church age in covenant with the gospel of grace, states that upon Christ's return he will not make any reference to atoning for the wilderness goat.<sup>187</sup> These interpretations do not agree with the consensus of other Church Fathers. For example, Tertullian treats the two natures of Christ, divine and human, as the purification offering and the expiated scapegoat, respectively.<sup>188</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, as well,

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<sup>184</sup> Barkley, et al. *Origen: Homilies on Leviticus*, Homily 9.4 (2-4).

<sup>185</sup> Barkley, et al. *Origen: Homilies on Leviticus*, Homily 10.2 (2).

<sup>186</sup> Barkley, et al. *Origen: Homilies on Leviticus*, 182.

<sup>187</sup> Barkley, et al. *Origen: Homilies on Leviticus*, Homily 9.4 (9), 187.

<sup>188</sup> Lienhard and Rombs, eds., *Ancient Christian Commentary Leviticus*, 185. "May I offer, moreover, an interpretation of the two goats which were presented on 'the great day of atonement'? Do they not also prefigure the two natures of Christ? They were of like size and very similar in appearance, owing to the Lord's identity of aspect. He is not to come in any other form. He had to be recognized by those by whom he was also wounded and pierced. One of these goats was bound with scarlet and driven by the people out of the camp into the wilderness, amid

argues that Christ was the scapegoat sent into the wilderness in reference to Isaiah 53:4.<sup>189</sup> The early church fathers seemed to have never reached a consensus view on how exactly Christ fulfilled the Day of Atonement.

What we can say, though, is that Hebrews borrows the imagery of the Day of Atonement and uses it as a central typology of blood atonement offered by Christ. Hebrews 9:7 stands in reference to Leviticus 16:2, 6, and 34, and Hebrews 9:13 and 10:4 references to Leviticus 16:14. In these verses, the author treats Christ's ascension into and exaltation within heaven as a fulfillment of the annual presentation of the sacrificial blood in the Holy of Holies, making purification forever. The author portrays the fulfillment of the high priest entering behind the veil into the Holy of Holies as Christ passing through the heavens into the inner shrine of God, purifying and perfecting humanity forever. This collection of interrelated texts points to the need for purgation of sin itself and a purification of the formerly sinful nature in order to be in right relation to YHWH. There are also some details left out of the typological interpretation in Hebrews. For example, although the author of Hebrews states that Christ died outside the camp, the Levitical text does not specify whether the goat for Azazel was required to die; it was only required to be sent out into the wilderness. Nevertheless, the atonement of Christ allows those with faith in the propitiatory power of his blood to enter into a final eternal day of atonement and rest with YHWH.

### *Refutatio Contra Rationem – Divergences*

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cursing, and spitting, and pulling, and piercing, being thus marked with all the signs of the Lord's own passion. The other, by being offered up for sins and given to the priests of the temple for meat, afforded proofs of his second appearance, when (after all sins have been expiated) the priests of the spiritual temple, that is, the Church, are to enjoy the flesh, as it were, of the Lord's own grace. The rest will deport from salvation without testing it." – Tertullian, *Against Marcion* 3.7.7, the two goats and Christ's two natures.

<sup>189</sup> Lunn, et al. *The Fathers of the Church: St. Cyril of Alexandria Glaphyra on the Pentateuch*, Glaphyra 11, 167.

There are two main divergences that are problematic for Christological interpretations of Leviticus. First, the priesthoods are fundamentally different. Jesus springs forth from Melchizedek and Judah, but the Levitical laws required the high priest to be a Levite. Second, the messianic role of the high priest to save the people from their sins and reconcile humanity with YHWH has always held diverse interpretations, especially during the second temple period. There are a plethora of issues within both the priesthood and messianic expectations in the atonement theology of Leviticus and Hebrews. In this section I will discuss these divergences, showing how there are more divergences than convergences between the atonement theologies presented in the texts. I will first explain the old covenant requirements for the priesthood and then the new covenant's changes to those requirements through Melchizedek and resurrection. In conclusion, I will discuss how the differences between the events, texts, and schools of thought attached to messianism affect how one interprets blood atonement in Leviticus and Hebrews.

### *Priesthood Divergences*

The anointed ones who carried out priestly duties undoubtedly would have required some preliminary knowledge of the theology of the Exodus group in order to support their understanding of the worship system. The atonement theology of the Exodus group is the foundation for atonement in Leviticus and later messianic prophecies, not solely the theology presented by later exilic and post-exilic redactions. The motif of an anointed high priest who held a high position in the covenant community grounded itself in the community's historical memory, persisting for thousands of years. Though the priesthoods in Leviticus and Hebrews are fundamentally different from each other, their need and understanding of atonement was the same. However, when Christ appeared as a high priest after the order of Melchizedek, earthly priests already existed. Jesus did not qualify for the earthly Levitical priesthood although he

supersedes the Levitical priesthood according to Hebrews. According to Hebrews 5:6, 10; 6:20; and 7:1-28, the priesthood of Melchizedek is earlier and greater than the Levitical priesthood.<sup>190</sup>

Another priesthood divergence is the differences between the Melchizedekian and Levitical priesthoods. By introducing the superiority of Melchizedek's priesthood to the Levitical priesthood, Hebrews 7-10 explains how Jesus fulfills the demands of the Old Testament sacrificial system by transcending it.<sup>191</sup> Additionally, the Levitical high priest offered for himself and others repeatedly, but Christ offers for others only once. Hebrews cancels the requirement of earthly priestly lineage from Aaron by making a distinction between *εντολη* and *νομος* wherein the former denotes a specific commandment, and the latter refers to a collection of commandments, abrogating the Levitical requirements and standing on the Melchizedekian oath of God found in Psalm 110:4.<sup>192</sup> This new priesthood is eternal, existing as an immediate instantaneous mediator of atonement, which provides an atoning sacrifice without limitation.<sup>193</sup> The new covenant sets a new sacrifice on the grounds of Calvary, as opposed to Mount Zion, supplanting Mount Sinai with a voice that causes mercy and peace rather than fear and quaking.<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> Hebrews 5:6, 10; 6:2; 7:1-28.

<sup>191</sup> Peter Schmiechen, *Saving Power: Theories of Atonement and forms of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 32-33.

<sup>192</sup> Joslin, "Hebrews 7-10," 103-105.

<sup>193</sup> Heen and Krey, eds., *Hebrews*, 97. "Just as our Redeemer, when he appeared in the flesh, deigned to become like a king to us by bestowing a heavenly kingdom, so too did he become a high priest by offering himself for us as a sacrifice to God with an odor of sweetness. Hence it is written, "The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, 'You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.'" Melchizedek, as we read, was a priest of the Most High God long before the time of the priesthood of the law, and he offered bread and wine to the Lord. Our Redeemer is said to be a priest "after the order of Melchizedek" because he put aside the sacrificial victims stipulated by the law and instituted the same type of sacrifice to be offered in the new covenant in the mystery of his own body and blood." – S.Bede, *Homilies on the Gospels* 2.19.

<sup>194</sup> Torrance, *Atonement: The Person and Work of Christ*, 84-85. See also: Heen and Krey, eds., *Hebrews*, 96. "On receiving this promise Abraham moved on and stayed in another place in the same land, Hebron, near the Oak of Mamre [...] but he received at the same time a public blessing from Melchizedek, who was "a priest of the Most High God." Many important things are written about Melchizedek in the epistle entitled "To the Hebrews," which the majority attribute to the apostle Paul, though many deny the attribution. Here we certainly see the first manifestation of the sacrifice which is now offered to God by Christians in the whole world, in which is fulfilled what was said in prophecy, long after this event, to Christ who was yet to come in the flesh: "you are a priest

The focus of resurrection as Christ's event of ordination to the office high priest is another divergence in atonement theology between Leviticus and Hebrews. Hebrews 7:15-16 uses ἀνίστημι in a way that denotes resurrection in conjunction with its use in Hebrews 7:11, referring to someone being elevated to an office.<sup>195</sup> Both Levites and Christ experienced death, but Jesus is appointed to the eternal priesthood as high priest, not by genealogy but by resurrection unto eternal life.<sup>196</sup> Many scholars argue in favor of this divergence. For instance, Joslin argues that Christ fulfills, cancels, and escalates the Levitical law according to Hebrews' 7:12, 18-19 use of μεταθεσις, affirmed by Philo's rendering of Enoch's and Abraham's transformations, Thucydides' and Polybius' use of μεταθεσις (9:12, 18-19), and its appearance in the letters of Aristeas in describing transformation, alteration, or transposition in an ascended form.<sup>197</sup> Moffitt also argues that Christ's resurrection is the precise moment Jesus attains to an enduring perfected life as High Priest after Melchizedek.<sup>198</sup>

*Messianism Divergences in Events, Texts, and Schools of Thought*

The way in which messianism affects atonement theology is in the ministry of reconciliation given to the priesthood. The Messiah ("anointed one") had specific prophesied roles. For example, recall the Exodus group: YHWH gave specific instructions for atonement to the covenant community so they might be reconciled to him. Another important element to theologizing the Exodus group was their need for valid priests to offer valid sacrifices. The priest offering sacrifices was anointed at his initiation into the priestly office, and so, was connected to futuristic messianism wherein a warrior priest was expected to lead the covenant community out

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forever, after the order of Melchizedek." Not, it is observed, in the line of Aaron, for that line was to be abolished when the events prefigured by these shadows came to the light of day." – S. Augustine, *City of God*.

<sup>195</sup> Moffitt, "Blood, Life, and Atonement," 218.

<sup>196</sup> David M. Moffitt, "If another priest arises" Jesus' Resurrection and the High Priestly Christology of Hebrews," in *A Cloud of Witnesses: The Theology of Hebrews in its Ancient Contexts*, eds., Richard Bauckham, Daniel Driver, Trevor Hart, and Nathan MacDonald (London, UK: T&T Clark, 2008), 75-76.

<sup>197</sup> Joslin, "Hebrews 7-10," 102-03.

<sup>198</sup> Moffitt, "If another priest arises'," 67.

of oppression and into sustained liberty. For the Exodus group, Moses and Aaron were those who were anointed and commissioned by YHWH to form a mobile guild of priests that traces its history back to the Exodus group in the wilderness of sin.<sup>199</sup> These priests held the ministries of leading to liberty, reconciliation to YHWH, and mediating covenant demands. Each priest was required to have physical lineage from the Levite Aaron, the first anointed high priest to carry out ritual commands. The priests who were to offer sacrifices were anointed at initiation into the priestly office, and so, were inevitably connected to later conceptions futuristic messianism.

From the Late Bronze Age to the late Second Temple period, the anointing of priestly Levites was associated with the priestly ministry of a coming Messiah. This is why the coming Messiah was expected to hold a valid priestly office of ordination according to the earthly Levite ordinance. However, the biblical narrative attests to the falling away of the Israelite priesthood's validity due to their corruption, idolatry, intermarriage, and killing of the prophets.<sup>200</sup> So, although Jesus was not considered a valid priest under the Levite lineage, he still undertook a priestly office according to an oath made by YHWH in the Psalms 110:4, which stands over and above the Levitical ordinance.

Messianism in Old Testament literature is best interpreted with the promise-fulfillment model within a hermeneutical circle wherein a pre-conceived understanding informs the text, the text re-informs the understanding, then modifications are made to the community's understanding over time.<sup>201</sup> In the Pentateuch, anointing (משע) is limited to the tabernacle, its furnishings, its priests, and the king.<sup>202</sup> Approximately half of the Old Testament uses of the

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<sup>199</sup> Albertz, *History of Israelite Religion*, 59.

<sup>200</sup> Ezr.9:12, Ezek.44:12, Matt.23:37.

<sup>201</sup> J. Gordon McConville, "Messianic Interpretation of the Old Testament in Modern Context" in *The Lord's Anointed: Interpretation of Old Testament Messianic Texts*, eds. Philip E. Satterthwaite, Richard Hess, and Gordon Wenham (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1995), 12.

<sup>202</sup> Tremper Longman, "The Messiah: Explorations in the Law and Writings," in *The Messiah in the Old and New Testaments*, ed., Stanley E. Porter (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 29-30.

anointed (משיח) are concerned with the anointing of Aaron, his sons, the priests, altars, and holy cultic objects for consecration in service to YHWH, otherwise it is mentioned in anointing historical kings.<sup>203</sup> The verbal root משה of the adjectival משיח appears adjectivally in Leviticus as הכהן המשיח.<sup>204</sup> So, the anointed or messianic role of the priesthood anticipates the later development of an anointed monarchy. These appearances also prefigure the role Christ plays in being an anointed priest who offers atonement.<sup>205</sup> These types are further revealed by his being named the Christ, the anointed one, or the Messiah.<sup>206</sup>

Despite later prophetic literature anticipating a Messiah as an individual born in Bethlehem from the Judahite-Davidic lineage, there is also evidence in second temple pseudepigraphal literature that some believed the Messiah would come through the Hasmonean Levites, the line of Joseph, or even the line of Ephraim.<sup>207</sup> The Testament of Reuben, Testament of Levi, Maccabees, and Jubilees, alongside the status of Simon Maccabeus, denote that second temple messianism was focused on a messiah from Levite lineage.<sup>208</sup> These camps usually emphasized the kingship and sovereignty of the Messiah rather than his role in suffering on behalf of a community to make atonement for them. The Apocalypse of Ezra, 1 Enoch, and the

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<sup>203</sup> Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The One who is to Come* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 9.

<sup>204</sup> Lev. 4:3, 5, 6; 6:15; 8:10-12.

<sup>205</sup> Lienhard and Rombs, eds., *Ancient Christian Commentary Leviticus*, 173. “You must know that this chrism (chrismation) is prefigured in the Old Testament. When Moses, conferring on his brother the divine appointment, was ordering him high priest, he anointed him after he had bathed in water, and thenceforward he was called ‘christ’ (anointed).” – S. Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lecture 3.6., Moses anointed Aaron, Christ confers the anointing.

<sup>206</sup> Lienhard and Rombs, eds., *Ancient Christian Commentary Leviticus*, 167. “He is called by two names, Jesus Christ; Jesus because he is a saviour, Christ because he is a priest. With this in mind the divinely inspired prophet Moses gave these two titles to two men eminent above all, changing the name of his own successor in the sovereignty, Auses to Jesus, and giving his own brother, Aaron, the surname Christ, that through these two chosen men he might represent at once the high priesthood and the kingship of the one Jesus Christ who was to come.” – S. Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical lecture 10.11., according to Num.13:16, Moses changed Hoshea’s name to Joshua; Auses and Iesous are the Greek forms of these names, Aaron as priest was anointed which in Greek is Christos, Joshua and Aaron prefigure Christ.

<sup>207</sup> Sigmund Mowinckel, *He that cometh: The Messiah Concept in the Old Testament and later Judaism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 287-91.

<sup>208</sup> David Smyne Russell, *The Method & Message of Jewish Apocalyptic 200BC-AD100* (London, UK: SCM Press, 1964), 310-15.

servant songs of Deutero-Isaiah suggest a suffering and atoning Messiah despite emphasizing the messianic role of righteous judge who destroys the enemies of YHWH.<sup>209</sup> Sometimes these messianic expectations would take the form of multiple advents of the same person or there was more than one person expected to fulfill messianic expectations. For example, the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, Testament of Judah, and the Testament of Naphtali mention a second messianic figure arising from Judah.<sup>210</sup> The proliferation of diverse opinions regarding messianism continued throughout second temple Judaism and was further attested to in the Qumran community.

The mentions of the Messiah as an atoning figure are sparse in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Messianism is often presented as the fulcrum of the final judgment in apocalyptic narratives. Each Qumran scroll mentions a singular messiah, either a priestly Levite or kingly Judahite who plays an important role in judgment and apocalypse.<sup>211</sup> Closer to Christological interpretations is 1QS 9:10-11 which shows an expectation of three messiahs; a prophet, priest, and king.<sup>212</sup> 4Q521 8:9 also addresses a plurality of temple messiahs.<sup>213</sup> Thus, there was certainly some role in providing atonement in the expected duties of the coming Messiah in both biblical and extra-biblical literature throughout the second temple period.

Messianism as a school of thought arose in development approximately a century or so before the birth of Christ.<sup>214</sup> As Routledge notes, “With the restoration of Israel under the Hasmoneans, Simon, the brother of Judas Maccabeus, is described in messianic terms (1 Macc.14:8-15). Because Simon was from the tribe of Levi, not Judah, this may have led to a

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<sup>209</sup> Mowinckel, *He that cometh*, 410-14.

<sup>210</sup> Russell, *The Method & Message*, 312-15.

<sup>211</sup> Fitzmyer, *The One who is to Come*, 92-98. See also: 1QSa 2:11-21, CD 12:23-13:1, 14:18-19, 19:10-11, 4QPgGen 6:3-4, 4Q521 4:1-14, 11QMelch 11Q13, and 4QFlor 4Q174 1-2.

<sup>212</sup> Fitzmyer, *The One who is to Come*, 89.

<sup>213</sup> Fitzmyer, *The One who is to Come*, 92.

<sup>214</sup> McConville, “Messianic Interpretation,” 9.

development of the Messiah's priestly role into the idea of a Levitical Messiah. Texts from Qumran also point to two Messiahs, from Aaron and from Israel, and also to a prophetic figure, probably identified with the 'prophet like Moses' (Deut.18:18).<sup>215</sup> The Hasmoneans believed that if there were to be two messiahs, the priestly messiah would be given precedence over the Davidic king.<sup>216</sup> As evident by the aforementioned texts, there were many opinions regarding the Messiah which proliferated in and around the time of Jesus. Once Jesus arrives, a sect of his followers takes up his teachings and interpretations with regards to Messianism.

Post-exilic messianism is found in a marginal movement of theocratic proponents drawn from Chronicles and the priestly traditions.<sup>217</sup> Increased diversification of stimuli on the diaspora during and after the Persian period, like gnosticism and apocalypticism, definitely contributed to the lack of one certain interpretation of the expected messiah. Some communities conceived the coming messiah as a priest, a royal, a warrior, a combination, or otherwise did not at all expect a messiah.<sup>218</sup> Pre-Christian Judaism was alien to a suffering, dying, and atoning Son of Man Messiah and had sparse literature on the idea.<sup>219</sup> This is also evident by the harsh reactions against Christ's suffering and dying from Peter and the disciples.<sup>220</sup>

Scholars have yet to reach a consensus on the impact of expectations of a suffering and atoning priestly messiah in second temple literature. Sigmund Mowinckel defended the idea that an atoning Messiah was completely absent in second temple Judaism and Old Testament theology.<sup>221</sup> Comparatively, N.T. Wright concluded that Judaic messianism arose in the Qumran community, the Psalms of Solomon, Josephus, and apocalyptic literature with specific ties to

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<sup>215</sup> Robin Routledge, *Old Testament Theology: A Thematic Approach* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008), 298.

<sup>216</sup> Russell, *The Method & Message*, 312.

<sup>217</sup> McConville, "Messianic Interpretation," 11.

<sup>218</sup> Longman, "The Messiah," 29-30.

<sup>219</sup> Mowinckel, *He that cometh*, 414.

<sup>220</sup> Mowinckel, *He that cometh*, 415.

<sup>221</sup> McConville, "Messianic Interpretation," 3-5.

Davidic overtones.<sup>222</sup> Conversely, Westfall argues that a suffering and atoning priestly messiah in Christ is glaringly obvious in Hebrews 5:1-10:18.<sup>223</sup> So, Hebrews presents some overlap of messianic and kingly roles in Jesus as high priest but does not demand that all forms of messianism in the second-temple period required atonement upon the appearance of messiah.

### *Peroratio Pathos* – Synthesis of the Models Proposed in Leviticus and Hebrews

The models I will be focusing on include the ransom, substitutionary, satisfaction, and recapitulation models of atonement as demonstrated in both Leviticus and Hebrews. I will argue that Leviticus presents earlier forms of the ransom, substitution, and satisfaction models and Hebrews presents final forms of ransom, substitution, satisfaction, and recapitulation models. Hebrews shows how Christ fulfills the old laws by exceeding its demands. This position is also embraced by Thomas Aquinas.<sup>224</sup> I will not be arguing for the supremacy or accuracy of one atonement theory over any other, but I will argue that Hebrews explains how Christ accomplishes more than what the Levitical system required.

### *Ransom*

The ransom model of atonement focuses on Christ releasing humanity from bondage to sin, death, and the devil.<sup>225</sup> The majority of Patristic authors held to the ransom model of atonement. Anselm, Martin Luther, and many liberation theologians preferred the ransom model

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<sup>222</sup> McConville, "Messianic Interpretation," 10.

<sup>223</sup> Cynthia Long Westfall, "Messianic Themes of Temple, Enthronement, and Victory in Hebrews and the General Epistles," in *The Messiah in the Old and New Testaments*, ed. Stanley E. Porter (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 218-19.

<sup>224</sup> Peter J. Leithart, *Delivered from the Elements of the World: Atonement, Justification, Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2016), 316-17.

<sup>225</sup> Oliver D. Crisp, "Original Sin and Atonement," in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophical Theology*, eds., Thomas P. Flint, and Michael C. Rea (Oxford, UK: Oxford University, 2009), 431-32. See also: Mark 10:45, Romans 3:24-25, Titus 2:14.

of atonement.<sup>226</sup> Gustaf Aulen revisited this theory in his infamous work, *Christus Victor*.<sup>227</sup> This model explains how Jesus provided a ransom for many, releasing those from the legal bondage of sin and death in their life. In Leviticus, this is presented by the individual bringing remediation for an offence which inadvertently subverted their person to bring them under the authority of sin and death, rather than YHWH.

### *Substitution*

The substitutionary model of atonement focuses on the adage that Jesus died for our sins, taking on our punishment. This has also been framed within the terms of double imputation. By placing our faith in Jesus, he receives our sin, and we receive his righteousness. This imputation is applied to both the individual and the group. The accrued and inherited original sin and guilt within the one metaphysical entity of Adamic people (i.e., humans) undergoes the double imputation, redeeming a limited number of humans.<sup>228</sup> Augustine of Hippo and Karl Barth held penal substitution as the primary atonement model. Substitutionary atonement as a transference of guilt, rather than only sin, was defended by John Calvin, Hugo Grotius, Francis Turretin, and Herman Bavinck.<sup>229</sup> In Leviticus, the animal is presented as a substitution for the life of the transgressor. In Hebrews, Christ serves the same function but for all of humanity instead of individuals within the Israelite covenant community.

### *Satisfaction*

The satisfaction model of atonement focuses on the removal of the wrath of YHWH towards sin. Accordingly, Christ satisfied the wrath and punishment due to sin because of the

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<sup>226</sup> Adam Kotsko, "The Persistence of the Ransom Theory of Atonement," in *T&T Clark Companion to Atonement*, ed. Adam J. Johnson (New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2017), 277-80.

<sup>227</sup> Aulen, *Christus Victor*.

<sup>228</sup> Crisp, "Original Sin," 437-43.

<sup>229</sup> Stephen R. Holmes, "Penal Substitution," in *T&T Clark Companion to Atonement*, ed. Adam J. Johnson (New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2017), 297-99.

holiness and justice of YHWH setup against sin by nature.<sup>230</sup> Augustine, Anselm, Thomas Aquinas, and Richard Swinburne each purported some form of the satisfaction model of atonement.<sup>231</sup> Anselm was certainly perfected this theory in light of earlier writings which pioneered it. In *Cur Deus Homo*, he argued that God's aseity separates him from being affected by sin, but the honor creation owes to God is frustrated so God then acts in atonement to restore the purpose of creation to glorify God.<sup>232</sup> In Leviticus, the satisfaction model is presented by the innocent lifeblood covering over impurities and guilt so YHWH would not immediately destroy the source of the sin because of his inherent separation from sin and death. In Hebrews, satisfaction is framed in a way in which atonement satisfies a debt owed rather than satisfying the wrath YHWH has towards sin and death.

### *Recapitulation*

The recapitulation model of atonement is often tied in with ransom theory. Proponents of both models argue for an atonement which begins at the incarnation of the logos rather than the presentation of Jesus as a sacrifice on Calvary. Irenaeus especially emphasized the incarnation to such an extent that he applied the recapitulation model of atonement to Mary perfecting Eve in addition to Christ perfecting Adam.<sup>233</sup> Irenaeus and Origen agree that Old Testament worship was an earthly temporal shadow of things fulfilled in Christ according to Hebrews 8:5 and 10:1.<sup>234</sup> In this way, Christ recapitulates the types nascent in the Old Testament sacrificial system.<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>230</sup> Crisp, "Original Sin," 432-34.

<sup>231</sup> Leithart, *Delivered from the Elements of the World*, 313-16.

<sup>232</sup> Holmes, "Penal Substitution," 296-97.

<sup>233</sup> D. Jeffrey Bingham, "Irenaeus and Hebrews," in *Christology, Hermeneutics, and Hebrews: Profiles from the History of Interpretation*, eds., John C. Laansma and Daniel J. Treier (London: T&T Clark, 2012), 61-63.

<sup>234</sup> Bingham, "Irenaeus," 65-66.

<sup>235</sup> Lienhard and Rombs, eds., *Ancient Christian Commentary Leviticus*, 179. "The Lord commanded in the Law that those who could were to offer two turtledoves or two young pigeons. Therefore, the Lord, mindful in everything in our salvation, not only deigned for our sake to become a human being, though he was God, but also he

Simultaneously, Christ recapitulates the Adamic nature by perfecting humanity in uniting it to divinity within one person. This latter perfecting of human nature is the crux of the recapitulation model which is totally absent in the old sacrificial system. Animals could not remove the inner sinful nature of humanity because their blood could not perfect human nature. Rather, the blood of animals merely temporarily covered impurities and guilt emitted from sins. Furthermore, the new nature reborn within a person by the supernatural work of faith in Christ, who in the incarnation took on our flesh nature to perfect it, is the new man, the second Adam, the ascended heavenly human. When someone is united with Christ, they experience a new nature working within them to cleanse them from the powers of sin and death. This union begins with faith in Christ given and perfected by God.

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deigned to become poor for us, though he was rich, so that by his poverty along with his humanity he might grant us to become sharers in his riches and his divinity.” – S. Bede Homily 18, If she cannot afford a Lamb, the Lord became poor for us.

## 6. Final Conclusions

Christian applications of blood atonement as it is presented in Leviticus and Hebrews requires a *regula fidei* with a Christological framework to make applications ‘Christian’. This means every Levitical requirement can be treated as a type and shadow of Christ. The ways in which Christians apply blood atonement in matters of faith and practice heavily rely on soteriology, ecclesiology, and divine presence in addition to what kinds of sacrifices Christians are commanded to make. These sacrifices include prayers, works of mercy, and praise and thanksgiving towards YHWH for the blood atonement freely given by Christ once-for-all.

### *Ecclesiology and Divine Presence*

Hebrews devotes most of its pages to understanding how the new covenant is established by faith in the priesthood and the sacrifice of Christ. This new covenant initiated what some refer to as the ‘Church age’ which is the age commonly known as *anno domini* (AD). Cyril of Alexandria referred to the church age as the age of restoration and Origen called the church age the “time of correction”. This age inaugurates an era in which a preordained set of people are made into a priesthood solely on the merit of Christ given to them through faith in Christ.<sup>236</sup> These people are united with the divine presence because of their living in faith.<sup>237</sup> The spiritual

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<sup>236</sup> 1 Peter 2:4-5.

<sup>237</sup> Heen and Krey, eds., *Hebrews*, 159. “‘For the entrance into the sanctuary.’ What does he mean here by ‘entrance’? Heaven and the access to spiritual things. ‘Which he opened,’ that is, which he prepared and which he began. For the beginning of using it thereafter called the opening, which he prepared, he means, and by which he himself passed. ‘The new and living way.’ Here he expresses ‘the full assurance of hope.’ ‘New,’ he says. He is anxious to show that we have all things greater; since now the gates of heaven have been opened, which was not done even for Abraham. ‘The new and living way,’ he says, for the first was a way of death, leading to Hades, but this of life. And yet he did not say, ‘of life,’ but called it indeed ‘living’ namely, that which persists by God’s own command. ‘Through the curtain,’ he says, ‘of his flesh.’ [...] And with good reason did he call the flesh ‘a curtain.’ For when it was lifted up on high, then things in heaven appeared.” – S. John Chrysostom, *On the Epistle to the Hebrews* 19:2.

nourishment of this new priesthood builds them up as though they were stones in a building project or individual parts of a body undergoing rigorous training.<sup>238</sup>

Whereas Moses, Aaron, and the Levites were mediators between God and Israel in the old covenant, Jesus Christ is now the only mediator between YHWH and humanity.<sup>239</sup> The veil blocking the mystery of the theophany of YHWH, serving as a reminder of the blockade caused by sin, was torn as a consequence of the death of Jesus Christ. This serves as a reminder that there is no longer any need to perform animal sacrifices to attain to the presence of the divine. Instead, those who put their faith in Jesus Christ enjoy immediate presence with him. The constant presence of YHWH abides in and around those who possess faith and confidently enter into a sanctuary of prayer, direct communication with divinity.<sup>240</sup> This communication in prayer and a faithful abiding in the instructions given to those who believe changes the nature of humanity from the inside out.<sup>241</sup>

### *Sacrifices of Mercy, Praise, and Thanksgiving*

Christians are commanded under the new covenant to offer sacrifices of mercy, praise, and thanksgiving.<sup>242</sup> Hebrews 13:15-16 specifies that now that the old sacrificial system has

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<sup>238</sup> Lienhard and Rombs, eds., *Ancient Christian Commentary Leviticus*, 196-97. “And that which is added in conclusion, ‘And they shall be for Aaron and his sons,’ contains a mystery which can be understood in two ways. For surely Aaron in company with his sons eats the holy loaves that are taken from the table of the tabernacle when our High Priest takes his elect out of this life and leads them into the increase of his body which is in heaven (that is, the whole multitude of his elect). Or perhaps the holy loaves belong to Aaron and his sons when all the leaders and the peoples who are subjected to them in the Lord nourished unto life eternal by the examples of the fathers who have gone before.” – S. Bede On the Tabernacle 1.7., for Aaron and his sons, the High Priest. See also: 1 Corinthians 12:12-27, 1 Peter 2:4-6.

<sup>239</sup> Packer, *Concise Theology*, 131-33.

<sup>240</sup> Heen and Krey, eds., *Hebrews*, 159. “‘Therefore, brethren, we have confidence to enter the sanctuary,’ which is faith. In his blood he renewed for us the way of faith that the former priests had already. But since it had become obsolete among them, he renewed it for us at that time ‘through the curtain, that is, through his flesh.’” – S. Ephrem the Syrian, *Commentary on the Epistles to the Hebrews*.

<sup>241</sup> Heen and Krey, eds., *Hebrews*, 180. “Thus he wished us to understand that the man who is changed from his formal carnal state to the whiteness of faith (which the world considers a blemish and a stain) and who is completely renewed is clean. He is no longer mottled with both the old and the new.” – Tertullian On Purity 20.1, a person is clean, the cleansing of faith.

<sup>242</sup> See Hosea 6:6, Micah 6:6-8, Matthew 9:13, 12:7, Mark 12:33, and Hebrews 13:15-16.

ended, Christian sacrifice entails prayers of thanksgiving and doing good works. In other words, the sacrifice of Christ has changed our sacrifices into spiritual thanksgiving offerings rather than material propitiatory offerings.<sup>243</sup> This posture of thanksgiving for the gift of Jesus Christ also exhorts us to perform works of mercy in conformation to the example of Christ.

Thanksgiving (ευχαριστω) has also taken the form of holy communion, also known as the Eucharist to some Christian traditions, in which Christians offer up the bread and wine in an act of thanksgiving. This act has been interpreted many ways and has proved detrimental when the Eucharist is treated as a propitiatory offering. The imagery of Christ as a sacrifice is retained in Eucharistic liturgy, but its later presentation in the Roman mass was criticized by Luther, Calvin, and Barth, who each subordinated sacrificial atonement that intended to offer something to YHWH to achieve salvation by the offering (i.e. transubstantiation) in the mass.<sup>244</sup>

Arguably, YHWH never originally desired blood atonement rituals to continue perpetually. The material focus of the sacrifice and its purpose of atonement rather than thanksgiving, pointed to the corruptibility of the flesh and the imperfection of the law to perfect a human soul.<sup>245</sup> There was an inherent weakness in the old sacrificial system because it never removed the root of the problem.<sup>246</sup> Whereas the old covenant removed only external ritual

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<sup>243</sup> Stott and McGrath, *The Cross of Christ*, 263.

<sup>244</sup> Peter Schmiechen, *Saving Power: Theories of Atonement and forms of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 36-37.

<sup>245</sup> Heen and Krey, eds., *Hebrews*, 154. "If they had become perfect, their priesthood would have ceased, because they should have abstained from their sacrifices. And if their conscience was cleansed from sin, at the same time they would have been cleansed from impurity of flesh. But 'in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sin' every day. 'For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sin.' Therefore our Lord, who came to this world, said through the mouth of David, 'Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me,' so that the victims of sacrifices might be abolished through sacrifice." – S. Ephrem the Syrian, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*.

<sup>246</sup> Heen and Krey, eds., *Hebrews*, 155. "Here he does not blame those who offer, showing that it is not because of their wickedness that he does not accept them, as he says elsewhere, but because the thing itself has been convicted for the future and shown to have no strength or any suitableness to the times. What then has this to do with 'sacrifices' being offered 'oftentimes'? Not only from their being 'oftentimes' offered, he means, is it manifest that they are weak and that they effected nothing, but also from God's not accepting them, as being unprofitable and useless. And in another place it is said, 'If you have desired sacrifice, I would have given it.' Therefore by this also

impurities emitted from various sins and transgressions of the prescribed moral law, the new covenant cleanses an individual from the inside out by the grace of faith in Christ. This is the source of the new Christian sacrifices of mercy, praise, and thanksgiving.

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he makes it plain that he does not desire it. Therefore sacrifices are not God's will, but the abolition of sacrifices. Wherefore they sacrifice contrary to his will." - Chrysostom, On the Epistle to the Hebrews.

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