

Christ Bore the Sins of Many: Substitution and the Atonement in Hebrews

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Introduction

In recent decades there has been a significant reassessment of the atonement within the theological guild, and long-held views such as substitutionary atonement have especially become out of step with many in current scholarship. Accompanying such a reassessment have been a bevy of charges, such as substitutionary atonement is little more than divine child abuse, or that it leads to the oppression of the poor and weak, or that it paints a picture of God as being vindictive and blood thirsty.¹ Further, within evangelicalism itself there is a significant difference of opinion over the very nature of the atonement.² Given this, it should come as little surprise that this topic is garnering more interest and reevaluation.³ We should welcome such reassessment, especially when the topic is as essential to the Christian faith as the death of Christ. It is incumbent on every generation to return to the Scriptures so as to test the veracity of the claims of its theological forebears.

There are many voices within the chorus of New Testament writers, and there is a need for each voice to be heard in its own right. This is never more true than when the issue is the NT writers' interpretations of the death of Christ. Yet quite often in such discussions, Paul's epistles receive star treatment and the spotlight while other writings such as Hebrews are

relegated to a "junior varsity" or "special teams" status.

What follows is an assessment of the doctrine of the atonement in the epistle to the Hebrews, with specific attention given to the question of substitution. Does Hebrews affirm this doctrine? What does the author say about the work of Christ with regards to his death as it relates to human sin? If it is true that "atonement through the death of Christ is a more obvious and pervasive theme in Hebrews than in any other New Testament book,"⁴ then such a study is more than warranted.

My purpose in the following pages is specifically to focus on the question of substitutionary atonement in Hebrews and to demonstrate that the idea of substitution lies at the heart of the writer's theology of Christ's death. To be sure, substitution is not the only thing that could be said concerning Hebrews and the atonement, but I hope to persuade the reader that substitution is of central importance for the writer of Hebrews. The discussion will proceed in the following manner: First, I will exegete the two primary OT texts, Lev 16:1-34 and to a smaller degree 17:11. Second I will focus on Hebrews 9. In no other portion of the epistle to the Hebrews is the death of Christ more discussed than in 9:1-28. Therefore, significant attention will be given to these verses and to the broader covenantal context of 8:1-10:18. Third, since

the writer of Hebrews arguably cites from the important atonement text of Isaiah 53 in Heb 9:28, this important text must be part of the discussion. Fourth, if Isaiah 53 depicts a measure of wrath-bearing, the question naturally arises as to whether Hebrews has the same in mind in 9:28. Fifth, if such an element is present, then the matter of God's wrath against sin in Hebrews must support such a claim. This will be followed by a brief summary and conclusion.

Biblical Data: Lev 16:1-34 and 17:11 *Introductory Matters*

In Hebrews, the clear references to the Day of Atonement shed much light on the writer's atonement theology given that he identifies the death of Christ as the fulfillment of the sacrificial system. To be sure, there are more OT sacrifices than those seen in the Day of Atonement, but there are none as significant. With Hebrews' emphasis on blood and purgation from sin, it is clear that the matter of sin and its removal from the covenant people is essential. Such forgiveness and removal is at the heart of the New Covenant, and thus the writer of Hebrews argues that in the death of Christ sins are forgiven. Further, this issue of atonement is found throughout Hebrews, beginning with the epistle's introduction in which Christ's priestly atonement is first mentioned, "when he had made purification of sins" (1:3; cf. 2:17; 5:1-3; 6:19-20).

Regarding the key texts in Leviticus and Hebrews, it seems that at every turn there are questions and disagreements among today's scholars (such as the meaning of *kipper* and the debate over expiation vs. propitiation), but such debate does not mean that answers are impossible. Rather, what is called for is a reexamination of

the biblical evidence in order to answer the fundamental hermeneutical question as to what the writer of Hebrews means when he describes Christ's death in terms of the Day of Atonement. Given that most scholars see chapter 9 as the fundamental section to ascertain the writer's atonement theology, and given that there is near unanimity concerning his Christological reading of Leviticus 16 in these verses, it is logical to begin with the OT text that stands at the center of the discussion.

Leviticus 16:1-34

This climactic chapter of Leviticus concludes a lengthy section dealing with matters of purification, and crowns the discussion with directions as to how the people's sins could be atoned for. Ross notes that the central idea of this chapter is "God's gracious provision to provide complete atonement."⁵ Verse 34 concludes the passage, "'Now you shall have this as a permanent statute, to make atonement for the sons of Israel for all their sins once every year.' And just as the Lord had commanded Moses, so he did." The people offered sacrifices throughout the year, but it is on this special day that humanity could enter the presence of God (via the representative high priest) and find the mercy and grace of God that provides cleansing from sin's defilement. The deaths of the sacrifices are visible portrayals of what sin requires—the death of the sinner. This identification, Wenham argues, was well understood in OT times, and the idea of substitution is at the heart of the entire sacrificial system. He writes, "In the symbolic system of Israel, clean animals offered in sacrifice represented the Israelite worshipper."⁶ No matter the sacrifice, there is a common procedure at the core of the ceremony: the laying on

of hand(s), killing the animal, collecting and using the blood, and burning at least part of the body on the altar.⁷ Thus, at the core of each sacrifice is the principle of substitution, and its “immolation on the altar quietens God’s anger at human sin.”⁸ Theologically, what is seen in Leviticus 16 is the gracious provision of God that satisfies the holiness of God and demonstrates his love for and desire for fellowship with his covenant people. By his acceptance of the sacrifices to cleanse the priest and those he represents, it is possible for God the holy one to dwell among a people riddled with sin. His antecedent grace is presupposed in the sacrificial system.

Yet such can only be had on God’s terms. After Nadab and Abihu lost their lives in Leviticus 10, Aaron and all subsequent high priests were warned that they were to enter the Holy Place only by means of strict adherence to Yahweh’s instructions (1-2). It is noteworthy that Lev 16:1-2 puts the entire ceremony described in vv. 3-34 into a context of “wrath aversion.” Though some have suggested that the Day of Atonement does not avert the anger of God over human sin, this view seems difficult to maintain in light of how this climactic chapter begins. The description of the ceremony begins by recalling the tragic events of Leviticus 10, and states that if the priest, the people’s representative, does not wish to receive the same treatment as Nadab and Abihu, then all of the following specifics (vv. 3-34) must be obeyed. We see, then, that sin defiles, and God’s judgment follows as retribution. “Indeed, the cleanliness regulations and the elaborate ritual required for sacrifices and entrance into God’s temple indicate that human beings are unworthy as sinners to enter into God’s awesome presence.”⁹ The presence of sin defiles

the holiness of God and brings retributive judgment. As such, the introductory verses set the tone for the ritual. God is angry at sin (vv. 1-2), yet his anger is averted through the bloody sacrifice that cleanses and atones for sin (vv. 3-34).

Some might object that the offense of Aaron’s sons is unique, and thus should not be used as evidence for the argument concerning sin and wrath in Leviticus 16. Yet such an objection is answerable from the context. The principle that sin demands death is seen not just in Leviticus 10 or 16:1-2, but arguably throughout the Day of Atonement ritual. What is different is that instead of the sinner himself being killed for his own sins, it is the substitutionary sacrifice of the animal that suffers the fate of death. The difference is that Nadab and Abihu had no substitute for their sin (and thus bore their own penalty), but the principle is still operative quite consistently: sin brings death. Will the sinner pay (as in Nadab and Abihu) or will a substitute pay the penalty? This current flows throughout the chapter.

In verses 3-6, the high priest, dressed in a simple linen tunic, undergarments, sash, and turban first had to be cleansed along with the other priests by offering a bull (v. 6; 11-14). Tidball persuasively suggests that the reason why the high priest dressed so simply was due to the humility required for him to enter the presence of God. When addressing the people as the spokesman from God, he wore the much more elaborate dress of God’s authoritative representative to the people, but when addressing God as the people’s representative, making atonement for the people in the very presence of God, he came in humble dress as one having no authority.¹⁰ He had to bathe and put on clean garments since he was to enter

the heart of God's sanctuary. Purity was demanded or death was certain. Aaron had to approach God's majestic presence with extreme caution lest his fate parallel that of his two sons.¹¹ Sin brought death, and this was seen in the sacrificial death of the animal. The blood of the slain bull was to be taken into the innermost sanctuary and sprinkled there on the mercy seat, which atones for the sins of Aaron and the other priests. The young bull was slain instead of Aaron and the priests; their sins must first be atoned for before Aaron can make atonement for the sins of the people. As such, notions of substitution are likely present here.¹² Conversely, one could ask the question of what would be the option if sins were not atoned for by the blood of the animal? What would happen if Aaron were not to slay the bull and offer its blood for sin (Lev 17:11)? From the context, it seems that God's wrath could strike out against Aaron for his sins, were he not to pay heed to the words of the Lord. Thus, it seems that at least at this point there is an element of expiation of sin as well as propitiation of divine wrath. As evidence of the latter, one could point to the events surrounding the burning of the sacrifice. This burning becomes a "soothing aroma" to the Lord (see Lev 1:9; 2:2; 3:5; 4:31). The term translated as "soothing" suggests a divine uneasiness that is quieted by sacrifice.¹³ All of the sacrifices detailed elsewhere in Leviticus (particularly Lev 1-5) reached their annual climax in the Day of Atonement ritual,¹⁴ and what was true of the sacrifices on an individual scale (such as the burnt offering and purification offering) reaches its zenith in Leviticus 16. Similarly, Tidball states that all of the instructions about dress, the cleansing of Aaron, the young bull, and the selection of the goats leave one with the powerful

impression of God, who is majestic in his holiness, yet who has been "offended in manifold ways by his people."¹⁵ This is what the Day of Atonement was designed to correct.

This action is followed by casting lots for the two goats, one of whom would be sacrificed to the Lord for the sins of the people ("for the Lord," vv. 7-8; 15-19), the other as the scapegoat ("for Azazel," vv. 7-8; 20-22). The first goat ("for the Lord") is then slaughtered as a purification offering for the people (vv. 15-19), and its blood sprinkled in the Holy of Holies on and in front of the mercy seat (v. 15). E. Nicole has shown that the death of this first goat "represented, by its slaughtering and the handling of its blood, the atonement of sin *through substitution*."¹⁶ The mixed blood of both the bull and goat is also used to cleanse the tent of meeting itself along with the sanctuary and the altar (cf. Exod 30:10), having become impure due to the defilements of both priests and people. Wenham notes that the purpose for all of this blood cleansing was to purify the pollution brought into the tabernacle by the people. It was to "cleanse and sanctify the sanctuary and altars from the uncleanness of the Israelites These atonement-day rituals make the impossible possible. By cleansing the sanctuary they permit the holy God to dwell among an unholy people Under both testaments there is but one mediator between God and man."¹⁷

Concerning the second goat, there is much discussion of the meaning of the term "Azazel" in the literature, but the purpose is clear enough despite the various proposals: the goat "for Azazel" symbolically carried away the sins of the people. As Wenham notes, "The symbolism of this ceremony is transparent."¹⁸

The priest symbolically transfers the sins of the people onto the head of the second goat. Verses 21-22 state,

Then Aaron shall lay both of his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over it all the iniquities of the sons of Israel and all their transgressions in regard to all their sins; and he shall lay them on the head of the goat and send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a man who stands in readiness. The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to a solitary land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness.

Vos rightly argues that both of the goats must be taken together in order for the reader to grasp the totality of what is being conveyed. He states that in the symbolism of the ceremony, though there were two goats, the scapegoat

formed with the other goat in reality one sacrificial object; the distribution of suffering death and of dismissal into a remote place simply serving the purpose of clearer expression, in visible form, of removal of sin after expiation had been made, something which the ordinary sacrificial animal could not well express, since it died in the process of expiation.¹⁹

Peterson adds, "Both parts of this movement together restore harmony between God and Israel."²⁰ What is seen in the two goats is a single act of atonement. One dies at the center of the camp, and one is sent to die outside of the camp. Tidball avers, "Both their roles were necessary on this special day. *Both would act as substitutes for the people of Israel. Both would bear the sins of Israel. Both would make for full atonement.*"²¹ Thus, the two goats symbolize the cleansing of the people's impurities as well as the removal of their sins. It is one atoning sacrifice in two parts.

This substitution is seen by means of the sins being symbolically transferred

via the laying on of hands.²² This laying on of the high priest's hands points to the fact that the scapegoat bears the sins of the people as a God-ordained substitute, and not mere identification. This is evidenced by the Hebrew term *sāmak* ("to press, lean") in Lev 16:21, where there is an identity between worshipper and victim.²³ Additionally, Lev 16:22 is the only place in the OT in which the sins of the people are explicitly said to be born by an animal. It is in the sending away of the goat to die that one sees a vicarious punishment being carried out. Leach writes, "the plain implication is that, in some metaphysical sense, the victim is a vicarious substitution for the donor himself."²⁴ Further, it should come as little surprise to find that the Servant of Yahweh in the fourth servant song in Isaiah 52:13-53:12 is the only *person* in the OT who bears the sins of others.²⁵ To this we will return below. In each of the sacrifices we see that the principle of substitution is at work, the life of the animal instead of the life of the people. The innocent and unblemished dies in place of the sinful and unclean.²⁶ As such, the people will be forgiven (Lev 4:20).

Yet some such as Jacob Milgrom²⁷ argue that what is primarily in view here is merely the cleansing or "wiping" of the tabernacle itself. Over time, it becomes polluted, and therefore the meaning of *kipper* should be rendered "to wipe," and in this case, to "wipe clean" the holy place because of ritual uncleanness. Once the uncleanness reaches a certain point, God will no longer dwell there and the people would become the recipients of God's curses. For Milgrom, it is not the sinner that is "wiped clean," but the sanctuary. As such, he sees two different rites involved on the Day of Atonement, one

that purifies the sanctuary via an offering of purification, and one that atones for the moral guilt of the people in the scapegoat. Yet, as many OT scholars note, this is an insufficient reading of the data. The extensive studies of both Kiuchi²⁸ and Sklar²⁹ have, in my view, seriously undermined Milgrom's thesis. Concerning the two sacrificial goats, Kiuchi and Sklar each conclude that there is in fact one sin offering in view here with two forms (see above), and that each form deals with the moral guilt of the people. Tidball notes that both atonement offerings removed moral guilt and that the blood does not merely act as a "spiritual detergent," cleaning up what had been unfortunately made dirty.³⁰ To be sure, the sanctuary is cleansed, but it is so because Aaron momentarily bears the sins and guilt of the people as their representative, and subsequently transfers them onto the live goat by laying his hands on it. When the moral guilt of the people is taken away, the people and sanctuary are clean from the stain brought by the people's rebellion, wickedness, sins, and wrongdoings (Lev 16:16, 21). Guilt is a major concern in the sacrificial system, and blood substitution makes *atonement*, not mere *washing*.³¹ In this statement one can see parallels to Hebrews 9 in which the blood of Christ cleanses the guilty conscience in a permanent, non-repeatable way (Heb 9:14; 10:2; cf. 9:9-10). In sum, "the goat that was killed both purifies the sanctuary and atones for people, no less than the goat that was released."³² One goat is the *means* for propitiation and expiation of Israel's sins while the other goat demonstrates the *effects* of that propitiation and expiation, as Kaiser observes.³³

After the ceremony participants wash themselves and change their attire (vv.

23-24a, 26, 28), the burnt offerings are then made on behalf of the high priest as well as the people (v. 24b), and the fat of the sin offering is offered up in smoke (v. 25). The bull and the goat whose blood was mixed for the sin offering and sprinkled in the Holy Place are then taken outside the camp to be burned (v. 27). In the final section (vv. 29-34), Moses writes that the ceremony must be kept annually as a permanent rule (vv. 31, 34), and the emphasis here is on the duties of the people. The whole nation must cease from work, and for the ceremony and all of the elaborate efforts of the priest to be effective, all the people must demonstrate true penitence.³⁴

Leviticus 17:11

One further text from Leviticus merits discussion. The same principle at work in Leviticus 17:11 ("For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement") is arguably at work in Hebrews 9:22 ("without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness").³⁵ In his recent doctoral work on the term *kipper*, Sklar concludes that Lev 17:11 "identifies a general theological principle that applies to the atoning sacrifices: the life-blood of the sacrificial animal atones for the life of the offerer. . . . Thus . . . *kipper* in this verse is best taken in the sense of 'ransom.'" He adds, "the traditional reading of this verse . . . is correct, that is, it is stating a general theological principle that applies to all atoning sacrifices, namely, the purification, guilt, and burnt offerings."³⁶ Similarly, in his work on this verse, E. Nicole rightly argues that substitution is in view, and that *kipper* cannot be reduced simply to the purification of something that is

defiled. Compensation is in view, “which implies God.”³⁷ Such ransom and compensation, paid substitutionally by the sacrifice, turns away that which accounts for the distance between God and people, viz., his wrath towards their sin. Leviticus 17:11 ought to be viewed in terms of averting the destruction of God’s wrath due to sin.³⁸ This is in contrast to Milgrom, who states that while *kipper* does in fact refer to the placation of God’s wrath, it only does so *in certain texts*, and argues that ransom from the wrath of God is *not* present in cultic texts such as Leviticus 16 and 17.³⁹ In his treatment of 17:11, Milgrom argues that only the peace offerings are in view.⁴⁰ Yet his attempts to segregate cultic from non-cultic texts in Leviticus are, as Schreiner notes, ultimately dissatisfying in light of the biblical evidence and context.⁴¹ Nicole concludes, “Therefore, in *kipper* rites, purification cannot be disconnected from compensation: through compensation given to God, purification and forgiveness were granted.”⁴² So, we see that along with the aspect of cleansing we also see compensation (Nicole) or ransom (Sklar) given to God for the offenses committed. This comes via the death of the substitute victim.

The preceding points about purification and forgiveness are helpful for the present study, since they may support the conclusion that for Hebrews there is more than mere purification in view. The sacrificial victim is a sin offering both *to God* and *for the people*. Both cleansing and reconciliation are granted to the worshipper. As in the Day of Atonement, human beings needed more than purification, they needed forgiveness and reconciliation.⁴³ This is in contrast to the tabernacle and its objects which only needed to be cleansed (impersonal objects cannot be

reconciled). This is where, I think, some have erred: looking chiefly to the *objects* in the tabernacle and the tabernacle itself in the Day of Atonement ceremony, and therefore seeing only purification in the cultus. Defiled *objects* need only to be cleansed. Yet defiled *people* need more than to be ceremonially cleansed. We cannot overlook the important fact that for the penitent worshipper (what Morris calls “the right internal disposition”⁴⁴) purification from sin is only the *means* to the end. What is needed is reconciliation and forgiveness—restoration of the relationship to God broken by sin—and that is something tabernacle objects cannot possess. The distance between God and people caused by sin is visibly manifested in the fact that the people had only limited access to the divine presence in the Old Covenant. Yet in Hebrews’ treatment of the New Covenant, all of these elements are spoken for. Purification from sin is procured (1:3; 7:27; 9:11-14; 10:10, 14), forgiveness is granted (8:12; 9:24; 10:17-18), relationship with God is no longer hindered (8:10-11), and unfettered access to the presence of the Lord is granted (Heb 4:16; 6:19-20; 10:19-20). Again, purification cannot be disconnected from forgiveness, since in the accomplishing of the New Covenant work, Christ purifies and reconciles sinful people to the holy God.

In the Day of Atonement ritual of Leviticus 16, we see that sin is cleansed by the blood of substitutionary animal sacrifice. This is also seen in Leviticus 17:11. The transgressions of the people have brought impurity to the tabernacle which is cleansed by the blood sacrifices. This atones for the people’s transgressions and brings purity to both people and tabernacle. As a result God will continue to dwell among his people. The two parties

are reconciled, given that the sin and guilt of the people are removed by the substitution of the animal for the human. In such acts of *kipper*, humans are the beneficiaries of the verbal action, and the action “was not performed *upon him* [the worshipper] . . . but for *his sake*, outside of him.”⁴⁵ As such there is an inextricable connection between purification from the person’s sin and ransom/compensation to God to placate his offense. Thus we may conclude that in the Day of Atonement ritual, the deaths of the animals are substitute deaths in place of the people.⁴⁶ Further, as noted above in the comments on Lev 16:1-2, the cultus is set out in a framework of averting God’s wrath against sin. Sin brings death (an axiom seen from the beginning of the Torah in Gen 1-3), and it is no different here. Sin brought the death of Aaron’s sons, and would also bring about the death of all of the people, unless their penalty was absorbed by the blood of bulls and goats in the Day of Atonement ritual.

Biblical Data: Hebrews 9 *Introductory Matters*

Given the conclusions from Leviticus 16 above, and since the writer of Hebrews tells us that the OT sacrifices (first and foremost the Day of Atonement) served as a shadow (10:1) and type or parable (9:9), then we would do well to think in terms of Leviticus when we interpret Hebrews 9. To be sure, there are significant hermeneutical questions concerning the writer’s usage of the OT. Though these matters are important, this is not the place for such a lengthy discussion. I have written about this matter elsewhere,⁴⁷ and in short one may conclude that the writer of Hebrews is essentially an OT expositor who does not run roughshod over OT meaning.

Graham Hughes is correct when he argues that the OT permits the NT writer meanings that are found in light of new revelation.⁴⁸ There is continuity between the testaments because it is the voice of God in each, and this revelation only comes into full view by looking at the OT through the person and work of Christ (rather than proof-texting or making use of Philonic exegesis, etc.). Hofius properly argues that for the writer of Hebrews, Christ is the interpretive and hermeneutical key.⁴⁹ In these eschatological “latter days” God has spoken in his Son (1:2), and it is in this present “time of reformation” (9:10) brought about by the person and work of Christ that the light of his new revelation can shine back onto the Old Covenant’s rituals in order to fully grasp their place and significance. They were a parable and shadow that outlined the reality to come in Christ. As such, the writer of Hebrews’ hermeneutic is patently Christological; he views the OT (specifically here the cultus) through the lens of Christ in terms of expectation and fulfillment. This hermeneutic seems clearly to be at work when the writer of Hebrews interprets the death of Christ by means of it fulfilling the Day of Atonement.

At the outset of this section, two things must be stated before proceeding. First, we must think logically and in a historical-redemptive framework about the relation between (1) the death of Christ, and (2) the Day of Atonement and the other purification rituals noted in Hebrews 9. The OT sacrifices are types and parables, mere outlines of the very form of things (10:1).⁵⁰ As such, no single type can adequately and fully prefigure the antitype on its own. This is why the sacrifices are referred to as part of the shadow that the Law possesses (10:1).⁵¹

We must see that each of the sacrifices referred to in Hebrews 9 point to the one sacrifice of Christ, and thus if we are to understand *them* we must understand *Christ's* sacrifice, and not the other way around. This explains how the writer of Hebrews can put together the daily sacrifices, those on Yom Kippur, the red heifer, and covenant inauguration. They all teach the importance of blood as it pertains to cleansing and access to the divine presence.⁵² To be certain, they illumine and prepare, functioning pedagogically for what would come in the person and work of Christ. The Day of Atonement does not exhaust the meaning of the death of Christ (9:6-10; 23-25). Similarly, neither the covenant inauguration ritual (9:18-22), nor the red heifer purification ritual (9:13) exhausts the death of Christ. Each of these have something in common to be sure (sacrificial blood), but they each need to be considered separately and together if we are to comprehend the many contours of the death of Christ. *He* is the form, *they* are the shadow. His one New Covenant sacrifice corresponds to the many Old Covenant sacrifices; his single sacrifice fulfilled all of the anticipatory sacrifices under the Old Covenant. His blood atones for sins and cleanses (Lev 16:1-34; Num 19:9, 17), as well as inaugurates the New Covenant (Exod 24:3-8). These are the main emphases of the writer of Hebrews, as seen in chapter 9: atonement for sin and (new) covenant inauguration.

Since no single sacrifice can bear a one-to-one correspondence to Christ's, then it should come as no surprise that when we turn to Hebrews 9 we find more than the Day of Atonement present. Further, since the proper starting place for the writer of Hebrews is the cross, we should not attempt to make every aspect of Leviti-

cus 16 correspond to the cross of Christ, as though Yom Kippur casts a mold into which the work of Christ must fit in every contour. Certainly there is much correspondence, but there is not *perfect* correspondence between Yom Kippur and Calvary. For example, in Leviticus 16 the high priest first sacrifices the animal and then takes the blood into the Holy of Holies. Thus his work has more than one step in the OT's instruction. Yet the writer of Hebrews argues that the work of Christ is completed on the cross, and he nowhere states that the Lord carries his own blood into the presence of God.⁵³ His work was completed on the cross (in contrast to many Roman Catholic scholars who argue for his continued and perpetual sacrifice). Hebrews 9:12 should be translated as "*after* he obtained eternal redemption, he entered the Holy Place once for all," where he *sat down* as ruler and Lord (Ps. 110:1).

Second, in Hebrews this is all couched in the context of covenant, specifically the New Covenant. Structurally, Hebrews 9 is part of the larger section of 8:1-10:18, which bordered by the inclusio of Jeremiah 31 (8:8-12 and 10:16-18).⁵⁴ Exegetically, the Jeremiah text serves as a broad framework for the entire present section, which answers questions that the Jeremiah text raises. Hebrews 9:1-10:18 is an explanation of Jeremiah's prophecy,⁵⁵ with the Jeremiah text forming the basis for the writer's ensuing argument. However, Jeremiah makes no mention of the *means* and *manner* by which his prophecy would be fulfilled, how the New Covenant would be established, or how its blessings would take effect.⁵⁶ Answers to such fundamental questions lie with the writer of Hebrews in his Christological exposition of Jeremiah through the hermeneutical lens of the "latter day" revelation of the Son (1:1-2).

It is only now, in light of the new eschatological revelation from God, that what Jeremiah foretold can be explained. Such an explanation by Hebrews, in light of the present voice of God in Christ, is in keeping with the writer's hermeneutic. France asserts, "The means by which the problem of sin is finally dealt with may not have been specifically present in Jeremiah's mind, but it involves no distortion of the significance of his words to identify it in the single sacrifice of Christ to take away sins once for all."⁵⁷ A covenant that assures forgiveness of sins must be inaugurated with blood, and if there is to be sacrifice then there must be blood as well.

In short, Jeremiah's prophecy of a new covenantal arrangement cannot be understood except in terms of OT cultic practices (i.e., atonement), since sins are dealt with by means of sacrificial blood (9:22). As Ellingworth rightly states, "Purification by blood under the Mosaic law points to the need for blood to be shed under the new covenant, in order that sins might be forgiven."⁵⁸ The announcement of a new covenantal arrangement that promises forgiveness of sins would have brought to mind the factors of sacrificial death, blood, priesthood/mediation, and the like, and in Hebrews 9 the Day of Atonement is the chief "connecting link" for explaining the initiation of the New Covenant.⁵⁹ In other words, merely the announcement of Jeremiah's New Covenant prophecy frames the cultic backdrop of what follows in Hebrews 9, and the typological structure for understanding Christ's death *primarily* stems from the Day of Atonement for the writer of Hebrews. I would also argue that after the announcement of Jeremiah 31, a discussion of blood and sacrifice would have been *expected*.⁶⁰ The author's main point is to demonstrate that the New

Covenant and its better promises (8:6) are present by means of Christ's work. Scullion rightly notes, "the new covenant promises forgiveness of sins . . . and the Yom Kippur blood rite provides the mechanism to explain how this forgiveness is effected." The cultic ritual is more than a mechanism—it is a shadow (10:1), a parable (9:9) and a type pointing to what Christ would ultimately do. Jeremiah announces the ends (internalization of the Law, forgiveness of iniquities), while Hebrews explains the means (the atoning blood sacrifice, and the mediation of Christ). Therefore, both structurally and exegetically the context of the atonement in Hebrews is one of covenant.

Given the above brief sketch of writer's hermeneutic and the explication of Leviticus 16 above, I suggest that it is best to interpret the death of Christ in Hebrews 9 in a manner that corresponds to Leviticus 16 unless guided to do otherwise by the writer of Hebrews. In other words, if there is substitution and atonement in Leviticus, we should not be surprised to find the same in Hebrews, albeit expanded in a decidedly Christological direction.

Hebrews 9:1-10

This brief section is set apart by the inclusio regarding Old Covenant regulations in 9:1 and 10, and establishes the cultic character and tone so explicit in Hebrews 9.⁶¹ Verse 1 announces two topics that verses 2-10 take up in reverse order: the earthly sanctuary (9:2-5) and regulations for worship (9:6-10).⁶²

In verses 2-5 the writer stresses the earthly nature of the tabernacle, which will soon be contrasted to the heavenly sanctuary (9:11). The tabernacle, with its two divisions and strict regulations were a continual reminder of the holiness of

God and the ritual impurity of the people. There was no direct access to God for the people in the earthly tent. Only priests were allowed to serve the outer tent, and the inner tent, the Holy of Holies, could only be penetrated by the high priest once a year.⁶³ There was distance between the Lord and the people caused by the incompatibility of their sin and his holiness.

In verses 6-10, the writer of Hebrews draws from the Day of Atonement ritual and brings out its unique character in verses 6-7.⁶⁴ The *men . . . de* construction (“on the one hand . . . and on the other”) in verses 6b-7 contrasts the priests who continually serve in the outer tent with the high priest who has the specific duty to enter the holy place once per year. Blood (*haima*) is mentioned for the first time in this section (9:7), and anticipates 9:18 and 9:22.⁶⁵ In Hebrews’ theology, it is only by blood that cleansing from sin can occur in both the Old Covenant and New Covenant, and blood (i.e., the pouring out of the victim’s life in place of another, see above on Lev 17:11) must therefore play a central role in his explanation of Jeremiah 31. Blood, in this respect, is seen as the medium of cleansing (9:21-22) and thus forgiveness and restoration of the relationship between God and people, and is found throughout Hebrews 9 (7, 12, 13, 14, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, and 25). Johnson points to the importance of blood in Leviticus 16, and of sin as defilement and ritual impurity that can only be cleansed with blood.⁶⁶

We should recall blood shed on the Day of Atonement blood is largely *substitutionary*. Aaron first sacrificed for himself and his family, then the priests, and then for the sins of the people that had polluted both them and the tabernacle. We saw that the goat ceremony especially dem-

onstrated this in two ways: the first goat died in place of the people to purify them of their many sins committed throughout the year, while the second goat bore their sins, carried them away, and died in the wilderness.⁶⁷ In the goat ceremony, we see that the consequences of sin, namely defilement/guilt and God’s wrath against sin, are summarily dealt with. That the writer of Hebrews has this ceremony in mind is seen in his reference to the goats in 9:13 and 10:4. That the Day of Atonement is in view is clear, and the vast majority of Hebrews scholarship is in agreement that Yom Kippur forms the main OT backdrop for the writer’s discussion of Christ’s work throughout Hebrews 9, (cf. 6:19-20; 10:19-20).⁶⁸

Verses 8-10 give the writer’s evaluation of the tent (9:8) and the sacrifices (9:9-10). The structure and regulations of the sanctuary have a profound meaning that is now only shown via the Holy Spirit in these present eschatological latter days. The cultic regulations had a symbolic significance that is only now understood.⁶⁹ The point is that while there is a sacrificial system (carried out in the outer compartment of the tabernacle), there is no real access to God in the true, heavenly sanctuary (see 8:2).⁷⁰ The parenthetical comment of verse 9a (“which is a symbol/figure for the present time”) indicates that the first tent (*tēs prōtēs skēnēs*) was a parable (*parabolē*) that “symbolizes the total first covenant order with its daily and annual cultic ritual.”⁷¹ External washings and regulations do nothing for the heart/conscience,⁷² and thus stand in contrast to the internal work that is at the heart of the New Covenant blessings, promised in Jeremiah and inaugurated by the blood of Christ.

Continuing, such external sacrifices

cannot perfect the worshipper in his or her conscience.⁷³ Lane notes that *suneidēsis* (conscience) is typically used in the negative sense of a conscience that is plagued by guilt that is an “internal witness that defilement extends to the heart and mind.”⁷⁴ It is telling, therefore, that the heart and mind are precisely in view when one considers that the New Covenant’s better promises specifically address the heart and mind of the people (8:6, 10-11; 10:16). What the Day of Atonement could only do symbolically, Christ has done in the *true* Day of Atonement, the Day of Atonement *par excellence*. The purification via the death (blood) of Christ has brought real cleansing, a purification that is internal, rendering the worshipper perfect in conscience, in contrast to and yet in fulfillment of the external rites of the old.

Hebrews 9:11-14

The writer of Hebrews’ theological aim of verses 11-28 is to demonstrate that Christ fulfills the Day of Atonement ritual in his death and self-offering as the new high priest, and that this self-offering both permanently atones for sin as well as inaugurates the promised New Covenant. Whereas 1-10 are largely negative, verses 11-14 are positive and set forth the matters for discussion in 9:15-28. In contrast to the inability of the earthly tabernacle (vv. 1-10), the new eschatological order (vv. 11-14) brings with it the greater and more perfect tabernacle. Thus, the conscience is cleansed from sin and access to God is granted.⁷⁵ By means of Christ’s entering the holy place in heaven by offering his own blood, he has secured the transformation of the worshipper guaranteed in 8:10-12. Peterson asserts that the writer of Hebrews makes use of the positive

promises of the Jeremiah text at this point, in that both cleansing from sin and the promise of obedience are in view in verses 11-14.⁷⁶ Forgiveness of sins *and* obedient service are the effects assured to the believer by means of Christ’s work.⁷⁷

Verses 11-14 are the core of the writer’s argument concerning the superiority of the death of Christ.⁷⁸ In 9:11, the writer of Hebrews transitions by noting, “But⁷⁹ when Christ appeared as a high priest,” which reinforces the idea that the event in mind is specifically the Day of Atonement (9:7). The fundamental distinction between the priests and the high priest was the latter’s function on the Day of Atonement. Thus, identifying Jesus as the *high* priest calls to mind the priestly activity outlined in Leviticus 16. Grammatically, though Christ does three things (appears as a high priest, enters the holy place, obtains eternal redemption), the main clause of 9:11-12 is “Christ entered the holy place” (*Christos...eisēlthen...eis ta hagia*) via the heavenly counterpart to the earthly tent (*skēnē*).⁸⁰

It is in this section that the comparisons between the high priest on the Day of Atonement and Christ at the cross reach their zenith. They entered an earthly tabernacle, he the heavenly “holy place” (*ta hagia*) which is synonymous with the right hand of God.⁸¹ They came with blood of unwilling animals, he willingly offers his own blood. Their entrance into the Holy Place was repeated⁸² and brief, whereas Christ entered once and for all. The result of their offering was limited and repeated, while his is an eternal redemption. In Christ, the good things have now come.⁸³ The blood of their offerings cleansed only temporarily and externally, while Christ’s cleanses and perfects the inmost disposition of man, his accusing and guilty

conscience. The result is eternal redemption via the non-repeatable sacrifice of Christ, and not by the medium of the blood of goats and calves and ashes of a heifer.⁸⁴ Windisch rightly concludes that the unique offering of Christ brought the animal sacrifices to an end.⁸⁵

The *a fortiori* argument of verses 13-14 states that if animal sacrifices can sanctify on some external level, how much more cleansing is there by the blood of Christ? In the Old Covenant sacrificial system, there was an element of cleansing that occurred each Yom Kippur, yet it was merely external, cleansing the flesh only.⁸⁶ This is in contrast to the internal cleansing that is assured in the New Covenant (9:14). Christ effects in reality what the cultus could only provide symbolically and in seminal form. The self-offering of Christ procures the internal cleansing of the conscience *from* dead works and *to* obedient service to God. Those who draw near to God through Christ's sacrifice *are* perfected,⁸⁷ in direct contrast to 9:9. Once there is an *internal change*, the tabernacle and its rituals are no longer necessary.⁸⁸ Such cleansing in 9:14 leads to a change of heart, and generates service to God. The result is worship expressed in a life that acknowledges the name of God (13:15), loves fellow Christian brethren (3:13; 10:24-25), and is pleasing to God by means of obedience (13:16). The effective purgation of the conscience and its orientation to obedient service is the epitome of the New Covenant promises in 8:10-12, and draws attention to the specific matter of covenant (*diathēkē*) taken up in 15-22.

Additionally, the note that Christ was the offering "without blemish" (*amōmon*) in 9:14 further reiterates the cultic context and helps to draw the conclusion that the Day of Atonement is never far from

his mind when he thinks of the death of Christ. This adjective is found over twenty times in the LXX of Leviticus alone, and is explicitly applied to the sacrificed bull in Leviticus 4 as well as to the sacrificed goat in Leviticus 4 and 9, both of which are found in Hebrews 9. Additionally, upon observing Hebrews' emphasis on the blamelessness of Christ as sacrifice Thielman avers, "It is difficult to see why the author would place such a stress on Jesus' sinlessness precisely in speaking of his sacrificial death, unless this sacrifice contained a substitutionary element."⁸⁹

Hebrews 9:15-22

Logically and grammatically speaking, verse 15 is the climax of 11-14 and 16-22 are a parenthetical explanation of verse 15.⁹⁰ Here the spotlight is not on the Day of Atonement (resumed in 9:23-28), but on the covenant initiatory rite (see Exod 24:3-8). Because of all of these things, he is therefore the mediator of the New Covenant, which reinforces the idea that the bigger picture in Hebrews 9 is covenant inauguration. Further, the death of Christ brought about the release/redemption of the transgressions committed under the first (i.e., Mosaic) covenant. As such, in 9:15-22 the writer of Hebrews focuses on Christ's blood as the basis for the (new) covenant inauguration. Just as blood was shed in the inauguration of the Old Covenant (Exod 24:3-8), so also is there blood shed for the inauguration of the New Covenant. To be sure, there remains substantial debate concerning the translation of *diathēkē* (covenant) in 9:16-17,⁹¹ and it is my understanding that the focus of these verses is more on death as it inaugurates a covenant via the priestly mediator (*diathēkē* = "covenant"), than on death as a prerequisite for an inheritance

(*diathēkē* = “will” or “testament”).⁹² Yet, the fundamental point of these verses is less debated and are established by 9:15, viz., a death has occurred for redemption.⁹³ These verses support the necessity of Christ’s death for the inauguration of the New Covenant and the realization of its blessings;⁹⁴ death makes a covenant operative.⁹⁵ This dictum reinforces the point that for Hebrews there must be death if there is to be a new covenantal arrangement, even though Jeremiah did not specify precisely *how* the new arrangement would be enacted.⁹⁶ The “how” is left to the Christological development of the writer of Hebrews.

Further, since Christ is mediator (*mesitēs*) of the New Covenant (9:15; cf. 7:22; 8:6; 12:24), there must be blood, since even the Sinai covenant was marked by blood (9:18-22). The New Covenant has a new foundation (the blood of Christ), and is therefore a decidedly *new* work. Vanhoye rightly observes that Christ’s blood at once fully atones for sin (under both the Old and New Covenant) as well as inaugurates the New Covenant, and concludes that such is an “astonishing coalescence.”⁹⁷ Attridge is helpful, asserting that under the Old Covenant sins could not be expiated, and thus Christ’s work had a “retrospective” effect.⁹⁸ Further, the unique substantival use of the perfect passive participle in 9:15 (*hoi keklēmenoi*) refers to “those that have been called” under *both* Old Covenant and New Covenant. As such, the sins of the true people of God (those called and marked by faith), in both Old and New Covenant, are forgiven in the atonement of Christ. The person and work of Christ consummated the old order and inaugurated the new. “As the priestly mediator of a new covenant, he is able to administer the eschatological

blessings that specify the newness of the *diathēkēs kainēs* [new covenant].”⁹⁹

Verse 18 states that the first covenant “was ratified with blood,” again marking the importance of blood in the covenant procedure. Verses 19-22 support and explain this statement. After Moses gave every commandment of the Law, he sprinkled the book of the Law as well as the people with blood, thus inaugurating the Old Covenant with blood. The two aspects of blood (medium of purity and covenant inauguration) coalesce in the citation from Exodus 24:8 in Hebrews 9:20. For Hebrews, since the Old Covenant had blood, Jeremiah’s New Covenant must have blood as well. That blood has a cleansing function is clear from verses 21-22, and this section concludes with the summary statement that “according to the Law” almost everything is cleansed (*katharizetai*) by means of blood.¹⁰⁰ Dunnill avers, “defilement is the fundamental religious problem, which sacrifice confronts by providing *purgation* by means of *blood*.”¹⁰¹

Verses 15-22 conclude with the maxim that there is no forgiveness without blood-letting (9:22). No one in Judaism could have argued with such a statement. It is the biblical author’s theological purpose to affirm this fundamental truth, as well as to argue that it is Christ’s blood, and not that of animals, that effects true forgiveness and internal cleansing from the defilement of sin. Far from a mere canceling of the rubric of the cultus, the writer of Hebrews takes pains to show that the Old Covenant cultus has met its end and goal in the New Covenant “cultus.”

Hebrews 9:23-28

The final section of Hebrews 9 is essential for the present discussion, and further

demonstrates that the writer of Hebrews sees the death of Christ in terms of substitution. This is most clearly seen as he crowns the present discussion with an allusion to Isaiah's fourth Servant Song (Is 53:12) in 9:28. The verb *katharizō* (to cleanse) serves as a catchword that forms a link between verses 15-22 and the final pericope of Hebrews 9, in which there is a return to Day of Atonement imagery. Logically, 9:23 concludes what has come before (*oun*, therefore), and recalls the contents of 9:11-14.¹⁰² The emphasis in these verses is on the definitive character and finality of the work of Christ accomplished in the true tabernacle of heaven.¹⁰³ The cleansing occurs in heaven itself (*auton ton ouranon*) where the exalted high priest enters the very presence of God and appears there on behalf of his people (9:24). Verses 25-26 make the point clear that Christ is not like the Levitical high priests who repeatedly offer sacrifices yearly on Yom Kippur. If his offering were like that of the sacrificial system, then Christ would have to be offered continually from the beginning of time. His sacrifice is superior and has been offered at the consummation of the ages to put away sin.

Heb 9:27-28 and Isa 53:12

The final sentence of Hebrews 9 (vv. 27-28) is quite important to the present study, and asserts that Christ offered himself once "to bear the sins of many." Such an allusion to Isaiah 53:12 places the death of Christ firmly in the category of substitution for the writer of Hebrews. Many Hebrews scholars have identified a reference here to Isaiah 53:12.¹⁰⁴ Hebrews 9:28 reads that Christ was offered once "to bear the sins of many" (*eis to pollōn anenegkein hamartias*), compared to Isaiah 53:12 (LXX) where it is said of the Servant of the Lord

that "he himself bore the sins of many" (*autos hamartias pollōn anenegken*). Seifrid is representative when he states that in 9:28, the writer of Hebrews "obviously recalls the substitutionary suffering of the Isaianic Servant (Is 53:4-12)."¹⁰⁵

In the context of Isaiah 53:12 one finds that the Servant is the substitute for others, in that his undeserved sufferings deliver the people. This point comes to the fore in 53:4-12 (esp. 4-6; 10-12). The Servant does not merely suffer alongside the people, or even as a result of the sins of the people, but instead "suffers *for* them, and because of that, they do not need to experience the results of their sins."¹⁰⁶ As Oswalt points out, the exegesis of Orlinsky and Whybray¹⁰⁷ is a bit nearsighted, and does not satisfy the context of Isaiah 52-53. It is not the point of these verses, as Orlinsky and Whybray argue, to assert that the people had already born their sin in their captivity and defeat, and thus that the Servant described here merely suffers *with* the people as a result of their sins, with no thought of a substitutionary death present. In his remarks on this thesis Childs says of Whybray, "In my judgment, this bland and even superficial understanding of the passage serves as a major indictment of his conclusions."¹⁰⁸ Rather, the divine Servant bears the consequences of the people's sins. The contrast running throughout Isa 53:4-12 is "him" vs. "we." He suffers, but it is "we" who have actually sinned. This contrast of "him" and "we/us/our" is even seen in the syntax of both the MT and LXX, where the placement of the pronouns stress this emphasis on what "he" has done for "us." Oswalt notes this to be true in the MT, and a reading of the LXX makes this clear as well (esp. in 4-6, 7). It is "our sickness and pains" that he bears, and "this man has

been stricken because *we* are sinners."¹⁰⁹ Thus, substitution seems to be in view for Isaiah 53.

That the Servant "carries" and "bears" brings to mind the Levitical cult wherein the animal carries away the sins of the offerer, so that he does not bear them any longer, dying in his place (recall discussion above on Lev 16, 17). This language appears in vv. 4, 11, and 12 and casts the Servant's death in substitutionary terms. Verse 5 states that the Servant was pierced through and crushed for the rebellion and sin of the people. Further, his suffering is seen to be accomplished by God. Childs notes that God is the active agent in the suffering of the servant, and "what occurred was not some unfortunate tragedy . . . but actually formed the center of the divine plan for the redemption of his people and indeed of the world."¹¹⁰ Further, it is the people's *punishment* that is born by the Servant, which amounts to *penal* substitution given that the Servant bears the consequences of the people's sins, which all knew ultimately to be death (recalling Gen 1-3). As Oswalt summarizes, "In the Servant, he [God] has found a way to gratify his love and satisfy his justice."¹¹¹ Further, it is a "double injustice" that the Servant bears the punishment of the people, yet he has done nothing (vv. 7-9). How can this be? The answer lies in the final stanza of the song, verses 10-12, from which the writer of Hebrews cites.

Isaiah writes that God "was pleased to crush him" and "put him to grief," to give up his own life/soul for sin so that God's purposes could be realized. He offers his own life as a guilt-offering, which in this context must be for the sins of others since the poet goes to great lengths to make clear the Servant's innocence. Thus

Thielman rightly notes that "Isaiah understood the guilt offering generally as substitutionary and described the Servant's suffering within this framework."¹¹² The Servant will see the fruit of his suffering (vv. 10b-11), and will have offspring and a long life having accomplished the Lord's task for him. Success and divine blessing is promised both to the Servant as well as his people (v. 11). By his suffering, the many are made righteous (v. 11b). How can this be? Because "he will bear their sins" (*tas hamartias autōn autos anoisei*) in verse 11b and in verse 12, "he himself bore the sin of many" (*autos hamartias pollōn anēnegken*).

"What does this mean?" Oswalt asks rhetorically.¹¹³ It means that the Servant's death is redemptive and it finds its "true fulfillment in the realization of what the whole sacrificial system prefigured."¹¹⁴ Isaiah here leaves little room for doubt when he remarks that the "many are made righteous" (v. 11) because the Servant of Yahweh bears their sins in their place. They receive righteousness and peace, since their sin and guilt has been born by another. As a result of this, the Servant is exalted, being granted "a portion with the great;" he is the victor, dividing the spoils (53:12).¹¹⁵ This verse essentially summarizes what has come before, and is the climactic end to the Servant Song. The innocent one who dies in the place of others is not defeated; he enjoys the fruits of his vicarious suffering along with the many that have been made righteous because of his substitutionary sacrifice. As a result of all of this, the Servant is exalted "to the highest heaven" (52:13).¹¹⁶ His suffering was that of a penal substitute. Agreeing with this assessment is Peterson who goes so far as to conclude, "Those who deny the theme of penal substitu-

tion in this chapter appear to be guilty of special pleading."¹¹⁷ In his comments on Hebrews 9:28 Lane notes at this point that the Isaianic Servant's ministry is vicarious and adds, "The vicariously redemptive quality of Jesus' death was of paramount importance to the argument [of Hebrews 9]."¹¹⁸ Further, as Williams (along with Oswalt and Peterson) has demonstrated, the most satisfying reading of Isaiah 53 is that of penal substitution, especially given the expressions concerning the bearing of punishment in 53:11-12.¹¹⁹

If the above interpretation of Isaiah 53 is correct, and I am correct that the writer of Hebrews draws from this text, seeing its fulfillment in Christ, then what does that say for the question under consideration concerning Hebrews' theology of the death of Christ? There is strong evidence that for Hebrews the death of Christ is not only a *substitutionary* sacrifice, but a *penal substitutionary* sacrifice. Sin is defilement that brings death, be it the deaths of animals that grant symbolic and external cleansing (Lev 16), or the death of the Servant of the Lord that effects true cleansing from sin and righteousness (Is 53). For the writer of Hebrews to refer to the death of Christ in terms of Isaiah 53:12 implies an understanding of the larger context of the fourth Servant Song, especially that of 53:4-12. In keeping with his hermeneutic, the writer of Hebrews sees here (along with other NT authors) that Christ is the Servant who bears the sin and sin's consequences on behalf of many. As Gathercole rightly notes, "Statements about Christ's death *for our sins* . . . mean *taking the consequences of our sins*. The biblical assumption is that death is the consequence of sin, and therefore Christ takes that consequence even though the sin is not his own . . . it is at this point in

the logic where substitution and penalty become difficult to prise apart."¹²⁰

Are there such statements as this in Hebrews? Does the writer of Hebrews use the language of Christ's work being "for our sins" or similar? Hebrews 2:9 says that Christ suffered death so that "he might taste death on behalf of all" (*hyper pantos geusētai thanatou*); 2:17 asserts that Christ's offering as high priest (his own blood) was for the sins of the people (*hina . . . tas hamartias tou laou*); 6:20 states that he "entered the holy place as a forerunner on our behalf" (*prodromos hyper hēmōn eisēlthen*), doing so by his death for human sin; 7:27 (cf. 9:7 for the similar idea) says that Christ, unlike the earthly priests, offered up himself "for the sins of the people" (*hyper . . . tou laou*); 9:24 says that after this death for people's sins, Christ appears now in the presence of God on our behalf (*hyper hēmōn*); in 9:28 recall that Christ "bears the sins of many" (*eis to pollōn anenegkein hamartias*); and in the summary statement of 10:12 we find the important statement that Christ's willing self-offering (via Ps. 40; which is reminiscent of the willing suffering of the Isaianic Servant alluded to in 9:28) was "a sacrifice for the sins [of the people]" (*houtos de mian hyper hamartiōn prosenegkas thysian*).¹²¹ In these passages one sees that for Hebrews Christ died for our sins, which I would assert is the language of substitution and the bearing of the consequence/penalty of the sins of his people.¹²²

It appears that there is good reason for asserting a substitution theology in Hebrews, but is there more evidence concerning God's wrath and its being averted due to Christ's work? Are both elements (substitution and wrath) found in Hebrews? From the data recounted above, it appears that substitution is

clearly in view for the writer of Hebrews. I have put forth the thesis that by his usage of Leviticus 16:1-34 and 17:11 (as well as Is 53) the writer of Hebrews sees Christ as fulfilling these sacrifices, and doing so in such a manner that substitution becomes an accurate description of the author's theology. I also averred that such a substitutionary sacrifice serves to avert the righteous wrath of God. To be sure, this is not the only idea present in Hebrews. One can see the *Christus Victor* concept in several passages such as 2:14 and 12:2. Yet, what is the center? What is the main idea? There is further evidence that needs to be considered in order to articulate more fully the writer's theology of the atonement.

Wrath of God in Hebrews

What of Gathercole's statement that substitution and penalty are "difficult to prise apart"? Is there wrath for the sins of humanity in Hebrews? Does the writer of Hebrews speak of the wrath of God against sin? In fact he does. To be sure, one could argue that this judgment may be in this age or the one to come, but this does not negate the point that for the writer of Hebrews, human sin incurs God's wrath. Consistently, the point seems to be that sin (*hamartia* and related terms) incurs the judgment and wrath of God. To my own surprise, quite little on this topic has been discussed when speaking of Hebrews and the atonement. Yet if, for the writer of Hebrews, God is wrathful against human sin and rebellion, and wrath is averted due to the death of Christ (argued here as a substitute), then would it not lead to the conclusion that one finds in Hebrews not simply substitution, but *penal* substitution? Despite the fact that the idea of God's wrath plays little role in most discussions

of Hebrews and the atonement, I want to argue that it should, since the concept of God's wrath is not simply an idea that is merely in the background of Hebrews. Quite the contrary, it has a substantial role. In short, *wrath and judgment are seen in Hebrews to be against the very thing for which Christ's death affects cleansing, viz., the sins of people.*

First, from beginning to end, the writer of Hebrews paints a picture of God who has sent his son in human flesh to cleanse his people from their sins. How does God feel about sin? Heb 1:9 says that the Son "hates lawlessness" (*emisēsas anomian*). If Christ is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of God's nature (1:3a), then surely 1:9 means that God the Father too "hates lawlessness,"¹²³ there being no division within the Godhead concerning hatred for lawbreaking.¹²⁴

Second, this is seen in the first warning passage of 2:1-4. Regardless of how one views the warning passages regarding the possibility of a true believer losing their salvation, the points made here should be agreeable to all, viz., that for Hebrews, human sin brings a penalty from God in the form of his wrath expressed in judgment. In 2:2 it is said that every transgression under the Mosaic administration received a just penalty. Yet given the new revelation of the Son, the penalty for transgression (neglecting the word of salvation spoken in the Son) is not *less*, but *more*. Using the argument from lesser to greater, we see that if transgressions received penalties under the Old Covenant, *greater* penalties are to be expected in the present administration. The idea of penalty for sin denotes wrath for sin, and the one who commanded (and often personally exacted) such recompense is God himself. There is "no escape"

(*ekpheuxometha*)¹²⁵ which in this text has an eschatological ring to it referring to eschatological deliverance from the judgment of God (6:2; 9:27).¹²⁶ In the present time of the speaking of the Son, there is greater privilege as well as greater peril. What kind of judgment is not explicitly stated here, but in the overall context of Hebrews (see below), it is cast in terms of “wrath” and “fiery judgment.”

Third, from the outset of the canon, we find that sin brings the penalty of death (Gen 2-3). This principle is at work in Hebrews as well in 2:10-18 where the “fear of death” and the slavery that accompanies it is stricken because of the death of Christ (2:14-15) the “champion.”¹²⁷ As their “brother” he has died, and in so doing the tyranny and fear of death is vanquished. Sin brings death as God’s judgment on it, and the death of Christ on behalf of all (2:9) removes this fearful judgment, replacing it with the hope of the New Jerusalem (12:22-24).

Fourth, the wrath of God against human sin is clearly seen in the negative example of Hebrews 3:7-4:13. The Old Covenant people, after having been given the covenant and its laws, hardened their hearts, tested God, provoked God, and went astray in their hearts not knowing the ways of God (3:7-11). What was God’s response? He was angry (*prosōchthisa*) with them, and their sin resulted in his wrath (*orgē*, cf. 4:3). Human sin elicited the wrath of God. They were sentenced to die in the wilderness, outside the land (functioning as a metaphor for God’s “rest”). This leads to the second warning passage in Hebrews in 3:12 where the warning is not to *sin* against God like the Old Covenant people in vv. 7-11. It is precisely this issuance of wrath that serves the pastoral purpose of this warning (and all others)

in Hebrews. To turn from God to sin and lawlessness is to disbelieve what he has spoken (1:1-2; 3:19; 4:2). Obey the voice of God in Christ the Son or face his wrath is clearly the point of such exhortations. This is repeated in 3:15-19 in the rhetorical questions. God’s anger and wrath is demonstrated towards those who do not believe and thus disobey the divine word (see 3:19; 4:2, 3, 6, 11). Such an actual example as this from biblical history demands that such warnings of God’s wrath be seen as actual and not hypothetical.¹²⁸

Fifth, God’s wrath is seen in the warning of 6:4-8. The sin of those described in verses 4-6 receive for their sin a fiery judgment, as demonstrated in the agricultural image of verse 8.¹²⁹ Those described here face the curse of God, and end up being burned up in his judgment for their sin.

Sixth is the judgment mentioned in 9:27. Why is there judgment? From the context of Hebrews, it appears to be eschatological judgment for sin. This is in keeping with what has been demonstrated already, and is in concert with what follows. The individual does not merely die, but is judged, presumably by God. The same noun for judgment (*krisis*) is used only one other time in Hebrews (10:27), where fearful eschatological judgment is clearly in view. See also 10:30 and 13:4 where the verb form (*krinō*, to judge) as well as 12:23 where God is the judge (*kritēs*) of all.

Seventh, after the lengthy section of exposition (7:1-10:18), the writer’s exhortations begin again in 10:19, and quickly return to the theme of the wrath of God against human sin. In 10:26-31 this is spelled out in greater detail with even more terrifying language than at any other time up to this point.¹³⁰ Again, the issue is human sin (v. 26) that results in God’s wrath,¹³¹ described here as “a ter-

rifying expectation of judgment” and God’s “fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries” (v. 27). There is no mercy, only death, for one under the Old Covenant. How much worse will it be for those in the New Covenant era who have the added revelation of the Son? (cf. 2:1-4 above). In verse 29, they deserve an even more severe punishment, and can expect only to receive the vengeance of God because of their sin since it is the Lord who is judge (v. 30). The writer of Hebrews summarizes what all readers ought to think in verse 31 when he writes, “It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” Why is there terror (vv. 26, 31)? Because God demonstrates his hatred for lawlessness and disobedience, i.e., against all those who reject his speaking in the Son.

Eighth, this warning is reiterated in the threat of “destruction” in 10:38-39. The term for “destruction” in verse 39 (*apōleia*) refers to “supernatural destruction”¹³² by God as a consequence of not persevering in faith and shrinking back. To “shrink back” (*hypostellō*) is here the opposite of having persevering faith (10:36, 39; 11:1, 6), and this means that God brings destruction. In this context “destruction” is itself the opposite of God’s “taking delight” (*eudokeō*)¹³³ in the individual.

Ninth, we come to the last of Hebrews’ warning passages in 12:25-29. These verses issue the final warning of the book, and bring the writer’s work to an end (chapter 13 is a collection of exhortations and concluding remarks). It is telling that he ends his argument this way—with another sharp word of warning. This underlines his overarching pastoral concern and calls them, one more time, to a sober warning about the dangers of ignoring what he has argued about Jesus and the New

Covenant. This warning focuses on the end-time judgment of the world. As seen before, sin is described here as ignoring the voice of God and turning away from his word and his person. Again using “lesser to greater” argumentation, the Old Covenant people are used again as a foil—a negative example to make the point that where rebellion against God and his word exists (either “long ago” in the Old Covenant or in these “latter days” of the New Covenant), judgment is to be expected. The term “refused” is the same term as in verse 19 (*paraitēomai*). The readers are in the same danger as their historical forebears at Sinai, that of stopping their ears from hearing the voice of God who warns them. The writer of Hebrews sees in the Exodus 19 narrative a connection between the people’s asking for God to stop speaking (out of fear) and their soon-to-be-expressed rebellion against God and His servant Moses (Heb 3:7-4:13). They refused Him who spoke to Him, and they were judged and sentenced to die in the wilderness. The final note in 12:29 describes God as a “devouring fire” (cf. Deut 4:24); images of fire have frequently been employed throughout Hebrews in contexts of judgment. Clearly then, DeSilva is correct when he states that such an image is designed “to show the danger of his judgment upon the unjust.”¹³⁴

Finally, such a discussion would not be complete without at least a reference to 2:17 and to the dispute over propitiation of wrath vs. expiation of sin. While this is not the place for a lengthy treatment of the verse,¹³⁵ or even less a recounting of the Dodd-Morris/Nicole discussions, it is fitting, after considering the data in the preceding pages, to now turn one’s attention to the question concerning the

meaning of *hilaskesthai*, typically rendered as “expiation,” or “propitiation.”¹³⁶ The writer of Hebrews does not immediately spell out exactly what he means by the statement “to make propitiation with reference to the sins of the people” or “to make expiation for the sins of the people” (*eis to hilaskesthai tas hamartias*¹³⁷ *tou laou*). Yet as Thielman observes, given the Hellenistic Jewish milieu in which Hebrews was written, it is quite likely that the term in question (*hilaskesthai*) “means here what it means in 4 Maccabees 6 and 17—that sacrifice lifted the curse of God against his sinful people.”¹³⁸ Further, I find much to commend in the statement of Seifrid who writes, “once it is acknowledged that the removal of sin [i.e. cleansing] averts divine wrath, as is the case here, one arrives at the idea of propitiation.”¹³⁹ Sin must be cleansed, and such purgation and cleansing is achieved by Christ’s blood. Once the person’s sin is cleansed by the blood of Christ, there is no longer a place or need for divine wrath.¹⁴⁰ Therefore it is possible that both ideas of expiation and propitiation are present.¹⁴¹

In contrast to this conclusion, and given the previous discussion of God’s anger and judgment against sin, can the assertions of Attridge and Montefiore withstand the exegetical test? Both of these scholars either minimize¹⁴² or even deny¹⁴³ God’s righteous anger against sin, and yet their treatments of the aforementioned passages are less than satisfying when weighed together. In contrast, Kistemaker is correct when he asserts that it is unwarranted to “ignore the meaning of the concept of propitiation,”¹⁴⁴ and Paul Jewett notes (though not specifically referring to Hebrews) that using the term “expiation” instead of “propitiation” does not, in the end, account for the reality of

God’s righteous indignation towards sin. He asks, “Why should sins be expiated? What would happen if no expiation were provided? Can anyone deny that, according to the teaching of Scripture, men will die in their sins?”¹⁴⁵ For the present study of Hebrews, these questions are difficult to answer in terms that do not include the element of propitiation, given the numerous references to God’s anger against sin.

Therefore, the objection to an emphasis on the aversion of wrath, arguing instead that the accent in Hebrews is only on cleansing from impurity, is difficult to maintain given the data above. The theme of God’s punitive wrath against sin runs throughout Hebrews. Further, such an objection, I would suggest, is a false dichotomy.¹⁴⁶ Sin is a transgression of God’s commandments and thus brings impurity; sin is disobedience and unbelief; God is the Majesty on High (1:4) in the heavenly place (9:24) and as such is pure and sinless. Blood (death; Lev 17:11) is required for forgiveness (9:22), and the typological sacrifices *always* end up dead in Hebrews. Why? Because sin brings not merely impurity, but wrath expressed in *death*, which is cast in the recurring metaphor of “blood.” Cleansing from impurity and guilt caused by sin centers on the believer (he is made pure), while the satisfaction of wrath centers on God (his just wrath is satisfied), and there is therefore no division between the justice and love of God. This is especially true given that it was God himself who inaugurated the sacrificial system and who would later send his own son (2:7) to die “in behalf of all” (2:9), which is to say “instead of all.”¹⁴⁷ Therefore, any act of clemency, any acceptable sacrificial offering, and even any warning issued to sinful humanity

are all tangible demonstrations of the love and grace of God. For Hebrews, when the voice of God is rejected (either in the OT prophets or in the Son), divine anger is the result. Further, his wrath is indeed just, given that it is incurred when His Law is transgressed (1:9). For the faithful, sins and lawless deeds are remembered no more (8:12; 10:17) and the believer is no longer impure, having been cleansed by the sacrificial blood (death) of Christ. Christ, in his death, has taken the *consequences* of our sins, which is to say, the penalty of death upon himself.

For Hebrews, then, one is either of faith and part of the covenant faithful (either the Old Covenant or now the New Covenant), or one is under wrath and judgment. The sinner either receives atonement/purification for his sin (which is inextricably tied to persevering faith; 10:36-39) or he receives wrath from God, not having atonement for all one's sins. This is clearly seen when one contrasts the Old Covenant faithful of 11:1-40 with those in 3:7-4:6, and is also seen by comparing those in 3:7ff. with the New Covenant people of God, described as those who are of persevering faith and marked by the better promises of the eternal covenant (8:6, 8-12; 10:16-18; 13:20). The Exodus people function as a paradigm: they did not believe, thus did not obey, and as a result received the wrath of God. Thus we concur with Peterson's assessment, "Salvation in Hebrews thus appears to be deliverance from the wrath of God in order to enjoy the life of God in his presence forever (cf. 9:28; 12:25-9)."¹⁴⁸

Conclusion

Based on the above exegetical analysis, one arrives at the logical conclusion that *for the writer of Hebrews, the way to avoid*

the judgment of God is for all of one's sins to be cleansed by the blood of Christ. Stated conversely: to be cleansed from all of one's sins by the blood of Christ means that judgment and wrath will not be incurred. Against this conclusion one could possibly argue that if the warning passages speak of genuine believers who have fallen away, then their sins were once cleansed, yet they *still* fell under God's wrath.¹⁴⁹ Yet, for this position, the sin for which judgment is incurred is the specific sin of apostasy, and as such is *not* cleansed and forgiven, and is therefore judged. For those who maintain the legitimacy of genuine apostasy, such a counterargument is possible. This is precisely why I have included the word "all" when speaking of one's sins that are forgiven, cleansed, and no longer remembered. Therefore, such a rebuttal is not in conflict with my summation, since for those who maintain such a view of the warning passages, when the sin of true apostasy is committed, then judgment *still* is incurred for that specific sin. Therefore, the statement and principle still stands for Hebrews: if *all* one's sins are cleansed by the blood of Christ, then wrath is averted. The very thing that brings such judgment is what Christ cleanses, viz., sin.

In sum, the concept of divine judgment due to sin can be said to underlie much if not the whole of the Epistle to the Hebrews. It seems as though everywhere the reader turns, he is not far from an explicit or implicit reminder of the idea that God is the one who judges sin, and his judgment is consistently a frightening thing. Further, the writer of Hebrews looks both backwards and forwards in history to make this point.¹⁵⁰ God judged the sinful acts of people in the past, and will do so in the future as well. Further, since he is the judge of all (12:23), and

vengeance belongs to him (10:30), then it is fearful to note that nothing at all is hidden from his sight (4:13). Morris is worth quoting in full,

Because God is so great and His standards so high, and because we shall one day stand before Him, we do well to give heed to the situation in which our sin has placed us. The sinner facing the prospect of judgment before such a Judge is in no good case. This Epistle leaves us in no doubt but that those who are saved are saved from a sore and genuine peril. Christ's saving work is not a piece of emotional pageantry rescuing men from nothing in particular.¹⁵¹

In sum, when all of the pieces are put together, I humbly suggest that what emerges from Hebrews is the picture of Christ Jesus, the New Covenant mediator, whose blood inaugurated the promised eternal New Covenant and cleansed his people from the impurity of their sins, granting divine forgiveness, and thereby placating the all-consuming fire of the righteous wrath of God.

ENDNOTES

¹See for example the collection of essays in *Christianity, Patriarchy and Abuse: A Feminist Critique* (ed. J. C. Brown and C. R. Bohn; New York: Pilgrims, 1989).

²See for example *The Nature of the Atonement: Four Views* (ed. James Beilby and Paul R. Eddy; Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 2006).

³See for example: *The Glory of the Atonement* (ed. Charles E. Hill and Frank A. James III; Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 2004); *Where Wrath and Mercy Meet* (ed. David Peterson; Carlisle: Paternoster, 2001); *Atonement Today: A Symposium at St. John's College Nottingham* (ed. John Goldingay; London: SPCK, 1995); and Paul S. Fiddes, *Past Event and Present*

Salvation: The Christian Idea of Atonement (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1989).

⁴David Peterson, "Atonement in the New Testament," in *Where Wrath and Mercy Meet*, 47.

⁵Allen P. Ross, *Holiness to the Lord* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 314.

⁶Gordon Wenham, "The Theology of Old Testament Sacrifice," in *Sacrifice in the Bible* (ed. Roger T. Beckwith and Martin J. Selman; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 75-87.

⁷*Ibid.*, 82.

⁸*Ibid.*

⁹Thomas R. Schreiner, "Penal Substitution View," in *The Nature of the Atonement*, 78.

¹⁰Derek Tidball, *Discovering Leviticus* (Leicester, England: Intervarsity, 1996), 125.

¹¹Derek Tidball, *The Message of Leviticus* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 2005), 189.

¹²Frank S. Thielman, "The Atonement," in *Central Themes in Biblical Theology: Mapping Unity in Diversity*, (ed. Scott J. Hafemann and Paul R. House; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 105.

¹³Wenham, "Old Testament Sacrifice," 80.

¹⁴Gordon Wenham, *Leviticus* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 26.

¹⁵Tidball, *Message of Leviticus*, 192.

¹⁶Emile Nicole, "Atonement in the Pentateuch: 'It is the Blood That Makes Atonement for One's Life,'" in *The Glory of the Atonement*, 44-46.

¹⁷Wenham, *Leviticus*, 233.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 233.

¹⁹Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 163.

²⁰David Peterson, "Atonement in the Old

Testament," 14.

²¹Tidball, *Message of Leviticus*, 193; *emphasis added*.

²²That the high priest uses both hands in the ceremony should not be interpreted as radically different than those cases in which a single hand was used (contra Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16* [Anchor Bible; New York: Doubleday, 1991], 151-52; 1041-42). What seems to be in view is that the animal becomes an acceptable substitute for the contrite worshipper.

²³Wenham is quite helpful here. See his "Old Testament Sacrifice," 79. For the verb *sāmak* see also Isa 59:16; Ezek 24:2; 30:6; Amos 5:19.

²⁴E. R. Leach, *Culture and Communication* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1976), 89. I owe this citation to Wenham, "Old Testament Sacrifice," 79. See also Gen 22:13.

²⁵Peterson, "Atonement," 15.

²⁶Wenham, "Old Testament Sacrifice," 82.

²⁷See Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 253-61; 1032-34; 1079-84.

²⁸Nobuyoshi Kiuchi, *The Purification Offering in the Priestly Literature* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1987), esp. 87-109.

²⁹Jay Sklar, *Sin, Impurity, Sacrifice, Atonement* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Phoenix, 2005).

³⁰Tidball, *Message of Leviticus*, 194-95. See also Nicole, "Atonement," 48-49.

³¹Tidball, *Message of Leviticus*, 195.

³²*Ibid.*, 195; cf. 196-97.

³³Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. "Leviticus," in *New Interpreter's Bible* (vol. 1; Nashville: Abingdon, 1994), 1111.

³⁴Wenham, *Leviticus*, 236.

³⁵Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the*

Hebrews (NIGCT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 473.

³⁶Sklar, *Sin, Impurity, Sacrifice, Atonement*, 181.

³⁷Nicole, "Atonement" 49.

³⁸Thielman, "The Atonement," 107.

³⁹Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 1082-83.

⁴⁰Jacob Milgrom, "Prolegomenon to Leviticus 17:11," *JBL* 90 (1971): 149-56.

⁴¹Schreiner, "Penal Substitution," 85 n.56.

⁴²Nicole, "Atonement" 48.

⁴³For a similar line of thinking, see *ibid.*, 49.

⁴⁴Leon Morris, *The Atonement: Its Meaning and Significance* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 1983), 80, 81.

⁴⁵Nicole, "Atonement," 48.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 44, 45, 50. Also recall the remarks to this effect of Wenham, Peterson, Tidball, Ross, et al.

⁴⁷See Barry C. Joslin, *Hebrews, Christ, and the Law: the Theology of the Mosaic Law in Hebrews 7:1-10:18*, (Carlisle: Paternoster, forthcoming 2008), esp. ch. 5.

⁴⁸Graham Hughes, *Hebrews and Hermeneutics: The Epistle to the Hebrews as a New Testament Example of Biblical Interpretation* (Cambridge: University Press, 1979). Hughes essentially argues that there is continuity across the covenants due to the fact that it is the same voice of God that speaks in both.

⁴⁹Otfried Hofius, "Biblische Theologie im Lichte des Hebräerbriefes," in *New Directions in Biblical Theology*, (ed. Sigfred Pederson; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994), 112-13, 124.

⁵⁰What is not in view is a quasi-Platonic understanding of forms and particulars. This was once the

consensus in Hebrews scholarship, but has been soundly overturned in more recent decades. It is not a matter of higher and lower outlines and shadows, but the eschatological "then" and "now." A Jewish apocalyptic understanding is in play here, not Philonic-Platonic dualism. See L. D. Hurst, "How 'Platonic' Are Heb. 8:5 and 9:23f.?" *JTS* 34 (1983): 163. For further information, see C. K. Barrett, "The Eschatology of the Epistle to the Hebrews," in *The Background of the New Testament and Its Eschatology* (ed. W. D. Davies and D. Daube; Cambridge: University Press, 1956), 363-93; Richard P. C. Hanson, *Allegory and Event* (London: SCM Press, 1959); R. Williamson, *Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1970); L. D. Hurst, "Eschatology and 'Platonism' in the Epistle to the Hebrews" *SBL Seminar Papers* 23 (1984): 41-74; *idem*, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: Its Background of Thought* (Cambridge: University Press, 1990).

⁵¹On the content of the Law's shadow, see Joslin, *Hebrews, Christ, and the Law*, chapter 6.

⁵²Peterson, "Atonement," 51.

⁵³See esp. F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (rev. ed.; NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990) on 9:12. See also Mark Seifrid, "Death of Christ," in *Dictionary of Later New Testament and Its Developments* (ed. R. P. Martin and Peter H. Davids; Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 1997), 274-75; P. E. Hughes, "The Blood of Jesus and His Heavenly Priesthood in Hebrews Part II: The High-Priestly Sacrifice of Christ," *BibSac* 130 (1973): 210-11.

- ⁵⁴See Barry Joslin, "Can Hebrews Be Structured? An Assessment of Eight Approaches," *Currents in Biblical Research* 6, no. 1 (forthcoming, October 2007); George H. Guthrie, *The Structure of Hebrews: A Text-Linguistic Analysis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 85.
- ⁵⁵G. B. Caird, "The Exegetical Method of the Epistle to the Hebrews," *CJT* 5 (1959): 44-51; R. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 163-64; R. T. France, "The Writer of Hebrews as a Biblical Expositor" *TynBull* 47 (1996): 245-76; J. Walters, "The Rhetorical Arrangement of Hebrews," *AsTJ* 51 (1996): 59-70. Likewise, in his discussion of Hebrews 9 Young asserts, "Our author has clearly never lost sight of his original discussion of the covenant" (Norman Young, "The Gospel According to Hebrews 9," *NTS* 27 [1980-81]: 198-210). See also James P. Scullion, "A Traditio-Historical Study of the Day of Atonement," (Ph.D. diss., The Catholic University of America, 1991), 221, *passim*.
- ⁵⁶Leon Morris affirms such an assertion as well. See Morris, *The Atonement*, 28-31.
- ⁵⁷France, "Biblical Expositor," 265.
- ⁵⁸Paul Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 471.
- ⁵⁹See Scullion, "A Traditio-Historical Study," 200-53.
- ⁶⁰Vanhoey agrees. See Albert Vanhoey, *Old Testament Priests and the New Priest According to the New Testament* (trans. J. Bernard Orchard; Petersham, MA: St. Bede's Publications, 1986), 201.
- ⁶¹Guthrie, *The Structure of Hebrews*, 86.
- ⁶²David Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection: An Examination of the Concept of Perfection in the 'Epistle to the Hebrews'* (New York: Cambridge University, 1982), 132; Harold Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 231; William L. Lane, *Hebrews* (WBC 47; 2 vols.; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1991), 2:217.
- ⁶³Riggenbach notes that 9:2-5 stresses the significance between the inner and outer tents of the tabernacle, and such emphasis sets up the distinctions in 6-10 (Eduard Riggenbach, *Die Brief and die Hebräer* [Leipzig: Deichert, 1922], 238-39).
- ⁶⁴Vanhoey, *Old Testament Priests*, 184-85; J. Dunnill, *Covenant and Sacrifice in the Letter to the Hebrews* (Cambridge: University Press, 1992), 139-41.
- ⁶⁵Lane, *Hebrews*, 2:223.
- ⁶⁶On the importance of blood in Heb 9, see W. G. Johnsson, "Defilement and Purgation in the Book of Hebrews," (Ph.D. diss., Vanderbilt University, 1973), 152-61, 306-39.
- ⁶⁷So important was the death of the scapegoat that the rabbinic writings aver that a practice developed wherein the one who led the goat away (Lev 16: 21-22) made certain that the scapegoat was dead. We are told in the Mishna that the goat would be tied to a rock and then pushed over a cliff to ensure its death. This was symbolic of the sin being carried away and destroyed, never to be seen again (that is, until the next Day of Atonement).
- ⁶⁸One exception is Davidson who, in his discussion of 6:19-20 (as well as the larger context of Heb 9) puts forward the argument that the sanctuary inauguration of Num 7 is primarily in view and not the Day of Atonement (Richard Davidson, "Christ's Entry 'Within the Veil' in Hebrews 6:19-20: The Old Testament Background," *AUSS* 39, no. 2 [2001]: 175-90). See Norman Young's response to Davidson's argument, "The Day of Dedication or the Day of Atonement? The Old Testament Background to Hebrews 6:19-20 Revisited," *AUSS* 40, no. 1 (2002): 61-68. See also idem, "Gospel According," 198-210.
- ⁶⁹There is no element of gnosticism here. Contra Otto Michel, *Der Brief an die Hebräer* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966), 306.
- ⁷⁰B. F. Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950), 252. Attridge, *Hebrews*, 240; Hugh Montefiore, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, BNTC (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1964), 149; David DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle "to the Hebrews"* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 300; Craig Koester, *Hebrews* (Anchor Bible 36a; New York: Doubleday, 2001), 397; Ceslas Spicq, *L'Épître aux Hébreux* (Paris: Gabalda, 1953), 2:253-54; Peterson, *Perfection*, 133; Barnabas Lindars, *Theology of the Letter to the Hebrews* [Cambridge: University Press, 1991], 87; Dunnill, *Covenant and Sacrifice*, 233-34; Johnsson, "Defilement and Purgation," 281.
- ⁷¹Lane, *Hebrews*, 2:224.
- ⁷²Bruce, *Hebrews*, 206.
- ⁷³"Conscience" must take into account the OT view of man in general, and

of the “heart” in particular. See Christian Maurer’s article in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (ed. G. Kittel; trans. G. W. Bromiley; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 7:908-19. Cf. C. A. Pierce, *Conscience in the New Testament* (Chicago: Allenson, 1955), 21-59. Pierce notes that the starting point for Hebrews’ view of the conscience is the fact that man cannot worship God with a guilty conscience (100).

⁷⁴Lane, *Hebrews*, 2:225.

⁷⁵See also Young, “Gospel According,” 202-05, 210.

⁷⁶David Peterson, “The Prophecy of the New Covenant in the Argument of Hebrews,” *RTR* 38 (1979): 76-77; idem, *Perfection*, 129.

⁷⁷On the importance of both forgiveness of sins and law on the heart, see Joslin, *Hebrews, Christ, and the Law*, chapter 6.

⁷⁸Lane, *Hebrews*, 2:235.

⁷⁹The *de* (“now,” “but”) should be given full adversative force. There is a distinct temporal contrast between two stages of redemptive history.

⁸⁰On the varied interpretations of this verse and especially the meaning of *skēnē* (tabernacle, tent), see Albert Vanhoye, “Par la tente plus grande et plus parfait . . . (Heb 9,11),” *Bib* 46 (1965): 1-28. See also P. E. Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 283-90. The issues surround the grammatical usage of *dia* (“through,” “by means of”), as well as the meaning of *skēnē* (“tent,” “tabernacle”) and decisions for each are related. Interpretations of *skēnē* in v. 11 include Christ’s resurrected

body, Christ’s incarnate body, the church, a cosmic passageway, or heaven itself (George H. Guthrie, *Hebrews* [NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998], 310; see also Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 446-48, 450). A close examination of the text of 11-12 indicates that the destination is the very presence of God (*ta hagia*, “the holy place”) that is reached by Christ’s passage, which refers to the “true tent” that God pitched (8:2). Such an interpretation presumes a local (and not instrumental) sense of *dia* in 9:11, and an instrumental sense in 9:12. This is the view taken here. See *ibid.*, 450-51; Jean Héring, *L’Épître aux Hébreux* (Neuchâtel: Delachaux & Niestlé, 1954), 84; Spicq, *L’Épître aux Hébreux*, 2:256; Michel, *Der Brief*, 310-11; Helmut Koester, “‘Outside the Camp’: Hebrews 13:9-14,” *HTR* 55 (1962): 309-10; and Lane, *Hebrews*, 2:236-38. This understanding relinquishes the highly metaphorical interpretations of *skēnē* (see Paul Andriessen, “Das grössere und vollkommener Zelt (Heb 9:1),” *BZ* 15 [1971]: 86). Contra James Swetnam, “Greater and More Perfect Tent: A Contribution to the Discussion of Hebrews 9:11,” *Bib* 47 (1966): 91-106.

⁸¹Shinya Nomoto, “Herkunft und Struktur der Hohenpriestervorstellung im Hebräerbrief,” *NovT* 10 (1968): 17. Similarly Otfried Hofius *Der Vorhang vor dem Thron Gottes* (Tübingen, Mohr, 1972) 65-66; and Andriessen, “Das grössere,” 84-85.

⁸²Spicq, *L’Épître aux Hébreux*, 2:256-58. On the chiasm in 9:11-12, see Hofius, *Vorhang*, 66.

⁸³The phrase *tōn agathōn* is comprehensive, referring to the New Covenant promises as well as to the fulfillment of what the Old Covenant cultus foreshadowed. Purgation from sin, access to God, and the better promises are in view and flow from the atoning work of Christ (P. E. Hughes, *Hebrews*, 327).

⁸⁴See Numbers 19 and the account of the red heifer. The inclusion of the account of the red heifer (“a primitive purificatory ritual,” see Attridge, *Hebrews*, 249) demonstrate that what the writer of Hebrews has in mind is offerings for sin. None of the animal sacrifices could finally and fully atone for sin since all were external (9:10).

⁸⁵See Hans Windisch, *Der Hebräerbrief* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1931), 87.

⁸⁶Bruce states that “flesh” here refers to the “physical element of the human make-up . . . in contrast to one’s inner being, or conscience” (Bruce, *Hebrews*, 215 n. 87). Cf. James W. Thompson, *The Beginnings of Christian Philosophy: The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association, 1982), 108-09.

⁸⁷Peterson, *Perfection*, 129 n. 17. On the cleansing here Spicq avers, “C’est une sanctification, et si complète qu’elle est synonyme de perfection” (Spicq, *L’Épître aux Hébreux*, 2:282).

⁸⁸F. F. Bruce astutely observes that the real barrier between God and the people was not an external cultus. The cultus only represented symbolically the barrier within the conscience of the individual. The tabernacle and its restrictions were in place due to the *internal* impurities of the people. “It is only

when the conscience is purified that one is set free to approach God without reservation and offer him acceptable service and worship" (Bruce, *Hebrews*, 209). The good things to come/have come, among other things, involve removal of sin and a change of nature, to a clean conscience which produces service to God. This is the fulfillment of Jeremiah 31:33-34.

⁸⁹Thielman, "The Atonement," 120. He cites 4:15; 7:27; 9:14.

⁹⁰Lane, *Hebrews*, 2:234. Attridge rightly avers that 9:15 is the thesis underlying the whole of 15-22 (Attridge, *Hebrews*, 254).

⁹¹A simple comparison of mainline translations should alert the attentive reader to the presence of this issue (cp. NASB, NIV, ESV, RSV, KJV etc.) Within current Hebrew scholarship, there is still considerable debate over the matter of the translation of *diathēkē* in 9:16-17 as "will/testament" (and thus a play on the term's secular meaning), or "covenant," as it is uniformly translated in vv. 15 and 18. There is no consensus in either scholarship or translation, and those who maintain either "will/testament" or "covenant" each typically conclude that the passage is confusing if taken the other way. Though not an unimportant matter, neither view affects the present study to any significant degree given that the overall point of 9:15-22 is not obscured: they are argumentative support for the necessity of Christ's death if the New Covenant is to be inaugurated and its blessings realized, and covenant requires death.

For references and discussion, see Koester, *Hebrews*, 417-18, 424-26; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 255-56; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 462-64; DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude*, 308-09; P. E. Hughes, *Hebrews*, 368; Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 156-57; Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 127-28; F. F. Bruce, *Hebrews*, 221-22; Lindars, *Theology*, 95-96; Dunnill, *Covenant and Sacrifice*, 250-51; Vanhoye, *Old Testament Priests*, 203; G. Vos, "Hebrews, the Epistle of the *Diathēkē*," *PTR* 13 (1915): 587-632; and J. Swetnam, "Suggested Interpretation of Hebrews 9:15-18," *CBQ* 27 (1965): 373-90. Each of these maintains, for various reasons and with varying levels of certainty, that *diathēkē* in Heb 9:16-17 should be rendered as "testament."

Though the translation of *diathēkē* as "testament/will" has enjoyed significant support, others maintain that the term should be consistently rendered as "covenant" throughout 9:15-18. For example, see Westcott, *Hebrews*, 265; Lane, *Hebrews*, 2:231, 242-43; Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 313; Alexander Nairne, *The Epistle of Priesthood* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1913), 140, 364-66; K. M. Campbell, "Covenant or Testament? Heb. 9:16, 17 Reconsidered," *EvQ* 44 (1972): 106-11; G. D. Kilpatrick, "Diatheke in Hebrews," *ZNW* 68 (1977): 263-65; Johnsson, "Defilement and Purgation," 308-18; John J. Hughes, "Hebrews 9:15ff and Galatians 3:15ff: A Study in Covenant Practice and Procedure," *NTS* 21 (1979): 27-96; and Scott Hahn, "A Broken Covenant and the Curse of Death: A Study of Hebrews 9:15-22," *CBQ* 66 (2004): 416-36. Hahn and

J. Hughes soundly demonstrate on lexical, syntactical, semantic, and contextual levels why "testament" is inconsistent in these verses. They also argue that the "testament" rendering has no real basis in Greco-Roman legal practice. In sum, though for much of the twentieth century there was a near consensus that *diathēkē* ought to be rendered "testament" or "will" in 9:16-17, the more recent efforts of J. J. Hughes, Lane, and Hahn make a compelling case for a consistent translation of *diathēkē* as "covenant."

⁹²J. Hughes, "Hebrews 9:15ff," 38-39.

⁹³Young, "Gospel According," 205. Young notes that this is the controlling point for these verses, though he states, wrongly in my view, that *diathēkē* in vv. 16-17 ought to be rendered "testament" or "will."

⁹⁴The promise here refers to eternal salvation and the assurance of the New Covenant blessings. See Cody, *Heavenly Sanctuary*, 136; G. Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 309-10.

⁹⁵The thesis for 9:15 (supported by 16-22) is: "any covenant requires a death" (Attridge, *Hebrews*, 253; see also Dunnill, *Covenant and Sacrifice*, 250; Cody, *Heavenly Sanctuary*, 183-84). For further references see Leonard Goppelt, *Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New* (trans. D. H. Madvig; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 168; and Hahn, "A Broken Covenant," 431.

⁹⁶Morris likewise makes this point. See Morris, *The Atonement*, 30, 37.

⁹⁷Vanhoye, *Old Testament Priests*, 204; see also Attridge, *Hebrews*, 253.

⁹⁸Attridge, *Hebrews*, 255. Though it is not as though the idea of forgive-

ness is new to the New Covenant.

⁹⁹Lane, *Hebrews*, 2:242.

¹⁰⁰See Johnsson, "Defilement and Purgation," 152-61; 306-39; Gräßer, *An die Hebräer*, 2:149-51; and Dunnill, *Covenant and Sacrifice*, 100-03. See also 9:14 and the blood of Christ which cleanses (*katharizō*) the conscience.

¹⁰¹Dunnill, *Covenant and Sacrifice*, 121, emphasis his. Such purgation also puts one in right stead with God (see below).

¹⁰²Harold Attridge, "Use of Antithesis in Hebrews 8-10," *HTR* 79 (1986): 7; Lane, *Hebrews*, 2:247.

¹⁰³Koester, *Hebrews*, 427; Johnsson, "Defilement and Purgation," 336. On the interpretation of the heavenly things being in need of cleansing, see David J. MacLeod's helpful article, "The Cleansing of the True Tabernacle," *BibSac* 152 (1995): 60-71.

¹⁰⁴For example, see Peterson, "Atonement," 52; idem, *Perfection*, 94; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 266; P. E. Hughes, *Hebrews*, 388; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 486-87; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 232; Lane, *Hebrews*, 2:250; DeSilva, *Perseverance* 315. Cf. J. R. Schaefer, "The Relationship Between Priestly and Servant Messianism in the Epistle to the Hebrews," *CBQ* 30 (1968): 259-85; Seifrid, "Death of Christ," 275.

¹⁰⁵Seifrid, "Death of Christ," 275.

¹⁰⁶John N. Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 385-89.

¹⁰⁷R. N. Whybray, *Thanksgiving for a Liberated Prophet*, *JSOT Supp* 4 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1978), 79-105; 134-40; Harry M. Orlinsky, "The So-Called 'Servant of the Lord'

and 'Suffering Servant' in Second Isaiah," in *Studies in the Second Part of the Book of Isaiah* (ed. Orlinsky and Snaith; Leiden: Brill, 1967), 1-133. For Oswalt's compelling response to their allegations, see his *Isaiah 40-66*, 385ff.

¹⁰⁸Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 415. See also his brief critique of Hanson (415-16).

¹⁰⁹Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 386.

¹¹⁰Childs, *Isaiah*, 415.

¹¹¹Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 388.

¹¹²Thielman, "The Atonement," 108.

¹¹³Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 404.

¹¹⁴Ibid.

¹¹⁵How can the Servant, who dies, enjoy the spoils as the victor? Many scholars have posited that he must therefore be resurrected. While this is a logical conclusion, it is not demanded by the text of Is 53.

¹¹⁶A thought not unlike the exaltation of Christ to the right hand of God, as seen in Ps. 110:1.

¹¹⁷Peterson, "Atonement," 21.

¹¹⁸Lane, *Hebrews*, 2:250.

¹¹⁹Garry Williams, "The Cross and the Punishment of Sin," in *Where Wrath and Mercy Meet*, 78-81.

¹²⁰Simon Gathercole, "The Cross and Substitutionary Atonement," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 11, no. 2 (2007), 69 (emphasis in original).

¹²¹Further, Heb 9:15 states that his death is redemption for *transgressions*.

¹²²One other point ought to be mentioned here. Quite often, the absence of any explicit mention of the scapegoat is cited as possible evidence against the interpretation of the

data presented here. See for example Morna D. Hooker, *Not Ashamed of the Gospel: New Testament Interpretations of the Death of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 123. It is true enough that there are no explicit references to the scapegoat, but is an explicit reference demanded in order for the idea to be present? If Isaiah sees the Servant's bearing away of sins as a way of referencing the scapegoat, then is there not the possibility of an implicit reference to the scapegoat when NT authors refer to Christ bearing or carrying away the sins of humanity? If I am correct about the goats being two aspect of a single sacrifice (above), then this becomes more of a possibility.

¹²³Interestingly, the term here *anomia* (lawlessness) is *a* (no) + *nomos* (law). "Lawlessness" is what God hates, was what brought his wrath onto the Old Covenant people, and is what is forgiven in the New Covenant (see 10:17, *tōn anomion autōn ou mē mnēthesomai*). Further, it is the "transformed Law" (7:12; *nomou metathesis*) that is internalized on the New Covenant heart and mind (8:10; 10:16-17; cf. Jere 17:1, 9), bringing about a life of obedient service to God (9:14). What God hates in 1:9 is forgiven in 10:17, and what pleases God (lawfulness/obedience) is guaranteed in the New Covenant's "better promises" (8:10; 10:16). As one can see, the construct of the Law of God plays no small role in Hebrews. See Joslin, *Hebrews, Christ, and the Law*.

¹²⁴This is actually quite an interesting text, given that the very thing

the Son explicitly hates is the thing he came to cleanse. This further bolsters the present thesis.

¹²⁵The term *ekpheugō* is often used in context of eschatological judgment such as Luke 21:36; Rom 2:3; 1 Thess 5:3.

¹²⁶Attridge, *Hebrews*, 66.

¹²⁷The language of the “champion” quite likely echoes Isaiah 49:34-36 (Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:63).

¹²⁸So George Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 227; contra Attridge, *Hebrews*, 66.

¹²⁹Attridge, *Hebrews*, 66 n. 38.

¹³⁰I would agree with many that the five warnings build in intensity, with the final and most terrifying note saved for last, concluding the fifth warning, “our God is a consuming fire” (12:29).

¹³¹Some might be tempted to argue that only apostasy yields this kind of response, since this is akin to the Old Testament’s “sinning with a high hand” i.e., a willful disobedience. Yet, does Hebrews subdivide or categorize sin? Christ made purification of sin (1:3), and throughout Hebrews 8-10 the concern of Christ’s death is for sin, bearing the consequences. Further, those in the New Covenant are assured that all their sins and lawless deeds are forgiven (8:10-12; 10:15-18). Does the writer of Hebrews make such a distinction between kinds of sins? Is apostasy the “unforgivable sin”? On the basis of Hebrews, at this time I am persuaded to say no.

¹³²See *NIDNTT*, 1:462-64; *TDNT* 1:396-97; rightly Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 557.

¹³³See *NIDNTT*, 2:818 where the term is said to mean “God’s purpose,

resolve and choice.” This is in contrast to the only other times (2X) in Hebrews where it is used, of Christ the willing sacrifice (10:6, 8), with which God does take delight.

¹³⁴DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude*, 477.

¹³⁵For an excellent and persuasive treatment of Heb 2:17, see Simon Kistemaker, “Atonement in Hebrews,” in *The Glory of the Atonement*, 163-75; cf. Leon Morris, *Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955); 125-60; idem, *The Atonement*, 170-76; Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:65-66; Peterson, “Atonement,” 48-49; Seifrid, “Death of Christ,” 275-76.

¹³⁶Cf. the NIV, which remains ambiguous with “make atonement.” In some ways, such an ambiguity has advantages.

¹³⁷The accusative here should be seen as an accusative of respect. See Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: an Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 203-04; Kistemaker, “Atonement in Hebrews,” 166-67; contra F. F. Bruce, *Hebrews*, 78 n. 57.

¹³⁸Thielman, “The Atonement,” 120.

¹³⁹Seifrid, “Death of Christ,” 275.

¹⁴⁰Therefore, the lines drawn by Dodd and Morris in the 20th century each had merit, though, as Gathercole has rightly pointed out, it is the conclusions of Morris that have better stood the test of time and theological reflection (Gathercole, “The Cross and Substitutionary Atonement,” 70).

¹⁴¹This is precisely the point put forward by Kistemaker (“Atonement

in Hebrews,” 163-67).

¹⁴²Attridge, *Hebrews*, 96 n. 192.

¹⁴³Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 68. Montefiore asserts that propitiation is not even a biblical concept.

¹⁴⁴Kistemaker, “Atonement in Hebrews,” 165.

¹⁴⁵Paul K. Jewett, “Propitiation,” in *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* (ed. Merrill C. Tenney; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975); 4:904-05. I owe this reference to Kistemaker, “Atonement in Hebrews,” 167.

¹⁴⁶See Seifrid, Kistemaker, et al.

¹⁴⁷To be sure, the writer of Hebrews does not promote universalism, the doctrine that all will possess the salvation of the Lord regardless of faith or repentance. Quite conversely, Hebrews is patently clear that faith in God saves (11:6, “pleases God”). This is the trans-testamental truth of salvation by faith. As such, all who are of faith will see the new Jerusalem etc. so beautifully outlined in Heb 12:22-24.

¹⁴⁸Peterson, “Atonement,” 49.

¹⁴⁹My own position is that true believers will not abandon faith and will ultimately persevere. In the doctrinal sections of Hebrews, particularly 7:1-10:18, one finds that New Covenant believers have their sins and lawless deeds remembered no more (*ou mē* + aorist subjunctive) and the transformed Law written on their hearts (7:12; 8:10-12; 10:15-18). Based on this description, it seems difficult to maintain that what is in view is something other than *all* one’s sins, both past and present, rather than all sins up to the point of faith, or all sins *except* for the sin

of apostasy. True New Covenant membership is a preeminently theocentric work (note the repeated divine “I will” in the New Covenant passages). Those who are his covenant people are perfected for all time (10:14). Also, there is a change of heart that God produces in which obedience becomes the pattern of life (8:10; 10:16). This pattern is distinctly different from the Old Covenant people (recall 3:7-4:11). Further, and quite significantly, Christ, the High Priest of the New Covenant, is always interceding on behalf of His covenant people (7:25). His ongoing mediation offers assurance that His people will endure to the end. What is implied concerning the effectiveness of his mediation if such mediation does not in some way guarantee the endurance of the one for whom he mediates?

¹⁵⁰Leon Morris, *The Cross in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 273.

¹⁵¹Morris, *Cross in the New Testament*, 274.