

**HEBREWS 9:1-28,
IN THE LIGHT OF THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF
SACRIFICIAL RITUAL, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE
TO PEDI RESPONSES TO THE TEXT**

By

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PREFACE

My interest in the theme of sacrificial rituals was shaped by personal experience at home, at Majaneng-a-Mmakola. I observed a number of ritual sacrifices, some of which I had to perform myself. It was an enriching experience. The Lutheran Church, on the other hand, made a certain impact on me. The "Ditumišo" (praisings) in the Lutheran agenda helped me to become interested in the study of rituals and their impact on our lives. My studies at the University of Natal helped me to be critical of my own practices. I was particularly impressed by the undergraduate and postgraduate courses offered in the Department of Classics, by lecturers like Michael Lambert (African Studies, Magic Papyri), David Pike (Homeric Verse), Zola Packman (Papyrology) and Patricia Bruce (Athenaze). I benefitted a great deal from these courses. In theology, I was excited by the course entitled Rituals in the New Testament, offered by Jonathan Draper. It offered me an opportunity to revisit my local ritual practices.

I want to convey a special word of thanks to Michael Lambert, who took most of his precious time to read through my work and for his supervision. He became a friend and colleague. I appreciate his guidance. The same goes to Jonathan Draper who supervised my work. At times it was difficult to meet with him because of his commitments as the head of department. Nevertheless, he made himself available to help me. He was generous in offering me his research grant to undertake fieldwork in the Northern Province, as was the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (ELCSA) for allowing me to continue studies on a postgraduate level, and the Centre for Science Development (CSD) for its 1994 financial support. Unfortunately, I was not offered any support in 1995. *Ditebogo* to the following pastors and their Lutheran congregations for their help during the fieldwork: Revs. M. Mohalanyane, Mokwele, E. B. Farisani and J. M. Matsebatlela; Mogabane Lutheran congregation (Ga-Dikgale), Mmasealama Lutheran congregation and Setlhong Lutheran congregation. *Go lena ka moka bana besho ke re ditebogo le mahlogonolo ka meshegofela*. To the School of Theology, thank you for your financial support. The same goes to Klaus Nürnberger, who chairs the Bursary Fund Committee. I would like to thank my family back home, for its moral support. Throughout this research, I enjoyed constant encouragement and comfort. To all I say thank you!

DECLARATION

As required, I hereby state that the whole thesis,
unless specifically indicated to the contrary in the text,
is my own original work

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mogomme Alpheus Masoga', written in a cursive style.

(MOGOMME ALPHEUS MASOGA)

ABSTRACT

This research looks at the function and importance of ritual in the Hebrews Epistle, in particular chapter 9:1-28. The text is dealt with in the light of the theories of the anthropology of sacrificial ritual, and with special reference to Pedi responses to the text. Thereafter, the theories of sacrificial ritual are introduced. The interesting part of the thesis rests on the Pedi responses to Hebrews 9:1-28. The responses were collected after Bible-study workshops conducted in the Northern Province of this country at the following places: Mmasealama, Ga-Dikgale and Setlhong. Most of the respondents, the majority of whom were women, were either illiterate or semi-literate. This study argues for a new paradigm in studying the New Testament in the South African context, a new paradigm which takes into account African voices. Lastly, it looks at the importance of rituals for the bloody province of Kwa-Zulu Natal and in the broader South African situation.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Problem formulation

It is Friday afternoon. The time is 4.00p.m. A group of women and men converge at a house where a death (*lehu*) had occurred. Immediately, a man shouts at a group of men that they have to hurry, since the deceased will soon arrive. "*Ke tshwanelo gore ge mohu ge a fitlha a hlakanetšwe ke madi*" shouted the man (lit. It is proper that, when the deceased arrives, he should be welcomed by a flow of blood). The group of men hearken to the word of this man who happened to be the head of the family. They prepare the place where the beast was going to be slaughtered. A large beast was dragged to this special place. No talking was permitted; only the head of the family was allowed to speak and give instructions. What one could hear often was "*O hlokomele o seke wa...*" (Be careful not to...). This indicates that precision was maintained during this sacrificial ritual. Blood was important. It was kept in a number of containers to be used for different ritual activities throughout the funerary rite.

At five that afternoon we heard that the hearse was on its way bringing the deceased. The head of the family informed us that sacrificers are not allowed to carry the coffin and sacrifice at the same time. He warned that disobedience would result in large-scale diarrhoea and, perhaps, another death. Note the following,

"*Banna tena, e be le gore le ankwa. Ga le a swanela go yo rwala o la ntatamogolo. Ge o ka ya wa swara lepokisi wa ba wa bowa wa tla wa swara nama o tla be o re feditše. Ka moka batho ba tlo pšyega. Go tla nkgaga go sa bola. Seo se ka ba sa dira gore re be le e mongwe eo a re tlogelago*" (You group of men, listen. You are not allowed to carry the coffin of your grandfather. If you carry it and involve yourself in the slaughtering, you will bring a fateful disease on many people. People could have diarrhoea and, perhaps, another death). The above-mentioned event took place at Winterveldt. This was the funeral service of my uncle.

Sacrificial rituals are vitally important structures for most Pedi communities, who settle in the Northern part of this country. Every step in the life of a Pedi person has to be marked with the shedding of blood. All the appropriate procedures are followed, for instance:

- *Dithipa di swanetše goba bogale* (Knives should be sharp);
- *Lefelo la go hlabela le swanetše goba la o swanela* (The sacrificial ritual place should be fitting);
- *Badira mošomo e swanetše goba ba go swanela ke modiro* (The sacrificers should be fitting for the duty).

These procedures indicate the importance of precision and diligent care when performing a ritual sacrifice. I was struck by the importance which is placed on blood. Why do people still offer sacrifices in spite of the SPCA's warnings that animals should not be harmed? Is there any virtue in pursuing such ritual activity in the light of a changed and still changing society? Why is blood so central in our lives? The centrality of blood can be noted in the following areas: blood in the menstrual cycle, blood which is needed by the Blood Transfusion Services, blood in a traditional sense - sacrificial ritualistic blood, blood shed in the situation of violence, blood of the victims of the old apartheid South African regime (cf. Steve Biko, Chris Hani, Ruth First etc.). The list is endless. Certainly, the centrality and value of blood are inevitable. Yet blood often presupposes an act of violence and societies continue to define and redefine life and its meaning within ritualized acts of violence. Why?

Simply because for there to be life, death has to precede it. This idea shapes this research. The presupposition of this study is that the death-life phenomenon maintains the survival of human cultures and societies and provides them with new meaning. Redefinition and re-orientation of life takes place within the framework of the death-life act. In short, we need death, and, indirectly, an act of violence to have new life, reparation, development and forgiveness. Our societies are ignorant of this fact and still use other mechanisms to deal with the ordeal of death. Subconsciously, they accept that the necessity of death gives way to new life. One must accept that this phenomenon is difficult to understand; perhaps, that is why we have belief systems, like heaven, to be able to come to terms psychologically with this death-life phenomenon. This study states the obvious about life. It demonstrates the positive nature of this

phenomenon, in which blood is used as a central and significant symbol to portray the need of violence for the continuance of life.

The epistle to the Hebrews is instructive. It deals with the above-mentioned phenomenon and uses it in a creative manner. The author and his audience are able to confront the matter of death and new life in a creative way. Jewish ritual practices are transformed in the light of the situation that faces the author and his audience. The centrality of blood is obvious, especially in Hebrews 9:1-28. The matter of blood is re-oriented and re-appropriated in a creative and interesting manner. The modern reader is able to see the interaction between the old and the new paradigms. The result of this synthesization is profound. It might not seem to be so for the modern reader, but the author and his audience deserve credit for having comprehensively contextualized and synthesized the old paradigm in the light of the new.

1.2 Introduction to methodology

As part of this research, I looked for New Testament texts relevant to the issue of sacrificial ritual. My initial interest was to focus on the function of sacrificial ritual in the New Testament tradition. This initial interest soon became too broad for me. It was no longer feasible to pursue it. I had to look for a particular text. Immediately, the Hebrews epistle came to mind.

A basic question that I asked myself was: how often does one read the Epistle to the Hebrews? In most cases, the epistle is read in parts, yet some scholars note the richness of the epistle in terms of ritual activities (Neill 1955:90). Others, however, find it difficult to understand what they refer to as a theological treatise or sermon (Attridge 1989:1, Lane 1991: lxx-lxxi, Hagner 1990:16). It became obvious that earlier and even more recent scholars did not consider the ritualistic nature of the epistle. Later I came across a book entitled *Covenant and sacrifice in the letter to the Hebrews* by John Dunnill (1992). The title of Dunnill's work was impressive. When I read the book, I was disappointed to find out that Dunnill's intentions were self-defeating. He aimed at a comprehensive analysis of the epistle from a ritualistic perspective. However, he fell into the same trap into which earlier and more recent New Testament scholars have fallen, by avoiding to take full account of the ritual elements in Hebrews. This I hope to avoid by not embarking on a traditional exegesis which ignores or avoids interpreting the ritual content of this Epistle. Nevertheless, one should note Dunnill's endeavour to make use of a

structuralist method which acknowledges the importance of linguistics, literary theory and anthropology, in dealing with the epistle to the Hebrews (Dunnill 1992:1-2). This, I think, is a step forward in the history of New Testament scholarship.

Because of my disappointment with New Testament scholarship, I opted to forge a dialogue with scholars interested in the anthropology of classical and modern religion, like Walter Burkert, Rene Girard and Jonathan Smith, in the hope that their methodology and theories would result in a better understanding of Hebrews. As a way of extending my analysis, I applied their theories to a Pedi context.

1.3 Methodology and Outline

The study which I am about to undertake analyses the structure and content of the Epistle to the Hebrews 9:1-28, highlighting the ritual features of the Epistle. I make use of some influential modern studies of the anthropology of sacrifice to analyse Hebrews 9:1-28. This methodology helps one to pave the way for a comparative analysis later on in the course of this research work. I have chosen Walter Burkert, whose eclectic blend of functionalism, structuralism, and socio-biology has been very influential in studies of sacrificial systems in antiquity.

Some of Burkert's work includes *Structure and History in Greek Mythology and Ritual* (1977) and *Homo Necans: The anthropology of Ancient Greek Sacrificial Ritual and Myth* (1981). The second theorist is Rene Girard, a distinguished French literary critic whose views on violence, aggression and sacrifice were shaped by literary texts, for example, Euripides' *Bacchae*.

Girard's major work is entitled *Violence and the sacred* (1977). Both Girard and Burkert, in their work, attempted to respond to the cruelties of the Vietnam war and the problems raised by these cruelties with regard to human aggression and the survival of human culture. The third theorist that I make mention of is Jonathan Smith, who specialises in Hellenistic religions and whose work aims at examining religion from the viewpoint of *homo symbolicus*. I have chosen to examine the views of Girard and Smith because they have been engaged in critiques of the work of Burkert and so represent contrasting viewpoints.

I then focus on the data collected during the Bible-study workshop at Mmasealama, Setlhong and Ga-Dikgale. Guiding questions were formulated and were used for these Bible-study workshops. Hebrews 9:1-28 was used as a basic text. What motivated me to conduct these workshops was the fact that 'local' or 'implicit' theologies are not offered the chance to speak up (Bediako 1995:60, West 1991; 1994; 1993). They have been speaking implicitly; but not listened to or taken into the scholarly dialogue. I also needed to hear from a culture where sacrifice is still meaningful so that I could contextualize my analysis. Bediako is right when he poses the question: how is it that we hear in our own languages the wonders of God? He argues that Christianity is Africa's religion (1995:59), and therefore, was never a religion of the west. As he mentions,

"The ability to hear one's own language and to express in one's responses to the message which one receives must lie at the heart of all authentic religious encounters with the divine realm. Language itself becomes, then, not merely a social or a psychological phenomenon but a theological one as well" (1995:59)

Bediako states cogent facts, which are obvious and undeniable. Local readers should be listened to and should be valued. It is time for 'explicit' readers to keep quiet and to listen to voices and sounds from below. African sounds have been sounding with a peculiar repetiure, which were ignored. Hopefully, this study that I am embarking on listens to these African sounds. I do note the fact that I am in the position to manipulate the data collected. It has to be noted that I use my own formulations and clarification of certain concepts. I grew up in a Pedi context, which means that I share with the respondents some common practices and world views.

The Bible-study workshop questions were open-ended. In formulating these questions, I had my own agenda. Respondents were allowed to ask questions and issues of interest with regard to the meaning of the text in their own lives. I can recall having had to respond to a question that had to do with pastoral care and counselling for widows and widowers. Clearly, I did not anticipate being asked to discuss such a topic. Nevertheless, I had to discuss it, seeing that it was central in the life of the Pedi respondents.

I will propose a broader structural pattern for the epistle as a whole and then for chapter 9:1-28. Then I will briefly highlight classical and modern debates around the authorship and readership of this epistle. I then look at Hebrews 9 and its implications for a Pedi Christology.

Finally, in the last section, the Hebrews Epistle and some suggestions for an African Christology are treated. The central ideas of the ritual theories are applied to the Pedi responses concerning the matter of death and life. In this section, I attempt to pave the way for a Pedi Christology, using Hebrews 9:1-28 to compare some Pedi concepts with regard to the question of sacrificial ritual.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORIES OF SACRIFICIAL RITUAL

As ritual process and, in particular, the ritual of sacrifice is central to my analysis of Hebrews 9:1-28, I would like to focus on some influential modern studies of sacrifice, in order to inform my methodology before embarking on a comparative analysis. I will treat theorists, i.e., Burkert, Girard and Smith. Each theorist's views are looked at and a critique is offered. This section of the thesis provides the background to my analysis of Hebrews 9. Many issues raised by these theorists will be dealt with in the conclusion to this thesis.

2.1 Walter Burkert

2.1.1 Background influences

In his book *Homo Necans*, Burkert starts by outlining his approach - an eclectic blend of functionalism, structuralism, and socio-biology (Burkert 1983:xix, 1987:150, Alderink 1980:3). Rituals are what he calls the $\delta\rho\omicron\mu\epsilon\nu\alpha$ (things done): "action patterns used as signs, in other words, stereotypic demonstrative action" (1987:150). Further definitions include: "Forms of non-verbal communication" and "patterns" which are accompanied by motives (1987:150). These definitions reveal his structuralist and socio-biological background. Furthermore, he mentions that:

"Even philology depends on a biologically, psychologically, and sociologically determined environment and tradition to provide its basis for understanding" (1983:xix).

For him human society is shaped by the past. Therefore, there is need to examine its development over long periods of time. He examines religion as an historical and social phenomenon - a medium of tradition and communication among people (1983:xxii).

Burkert's intention is to focus on the primary function of religious ritual. He is heavily dependent on scholars like Meuli (1946) who pointed out that "aspects of Greek sacrificial

practice, especially the care and handling of bones of animal victims, were similar to the practice of palaeolithic hunters" (1987:24).

Meuli maintained that the practice of sacrifice emerged from the palaeolithic hunting period. Hunters killed animals for food. Man the hunter distributed meat among the community after the hunt. This act of distribution anticipated the founding of communities by communal eating, with a previous kill (1987:165). Later, during the Neolithic age, when domestication of animals was introduced, sacrifice became "a transfer of property, a *gift*", instead of forceful appropriation" (1987:166). Burkert's aim is to construct a palaeolithic hunting culture and develop a theory of ritual and religion from this (1987:24).

2.1.2 Burkert's view of ritual and myth

Burkert further looks at meaning and function of ritual. As he is largely influenced by the socio-biological view which is postulated by Huxley and Lorenz, ritual is "a behavioral pattern that has lost its primary function...and persists in a new function, that of communication" (1983:23). Two basic characteristics of ritual are noted by the socio-biologists and consequently by Burkert: repetition and theatrical exaggeration.

Burkert argues that ritual activity has to be seen in a communal context because its function "normally lies in group formation, the creation of solidarity, or the negotiation of understanding among members of the species" (1985:54). Within this ritual activity, there is an interplay of the most threatening and alluring things, i.e., fire, blood, and weapons, on the one hand, and food and sexuality on the other (1983:54).

Ritual creates and affirms social interaction (1983:24). Τα ἔργα, that is, the actions or signs performed during a ritual, like raising hands and kneeling, demonstrate the individual's proclamation of his/her membership and place in the community (1983:24). Ceremonial customs of a society are the means by which the thought structures and behaviour patterns of a society are given collective expression on appropriate occasions and so confirmed as the social universe of the participants.

"Ritual is, after all, communication of a special sort: it is action rooted in pragmatic interaction, and thus not only transports information, but often directly affects the addressee and possibly the "sender" as well" (1987:153).

In the tradition of the socio-biologists and functionalists, religious ceremonies are seen to be a form of communication that "creates, commemorates, and preserves solidarity among the members of the group" (1983:155).

Burkert then considers the relationship between myth and ritual. If ritual is viewed "as a form of communication, a kind of language", it then follows that verbalized language, man's most effective system of communication, should be associated with ritual (1983:29). In contrast to Harrison, who believed that myth was in essence the text of the ritual (rather like the script of a play), Burkert believes that, although ritual is far older in the history of evolution, since it goes back even to animals, and myth only became possible with the advent of speech, myth does not grow directly out of ritual, but that the two systems later came to be closely allied (1983:31,33). Myths can exist without rituals and rituals can come into being without myths, but at some stage, these two systems of communication can become intertwined. Thus Burkert believes, myth and ritual, by mutually affirming each other, became a strong force, in forming a cultural tradition, " even though their origins were different" (1983:34).

2.1.3 On sacrificial ritual

Burkert moves on to discuss the killing and spilling of blood as a central ritual of religion. This practice, in his opinion, affirms, paradoxically, the necessity of violence for the foundation of human culture (1987:163). Even for Christians salvation from this "so called evil" of aggression are confronted with murder at the very core...the death of God's innocent son" (1983:2). Violence and blood "lurk fascinatingly at the very heart of religion" (1983:2).

Two of the most important elements which he analyses include aggression and human violence. For him they marked the progress of our civilization and continue to grow as a central problem presently (1983:1). He locates the root of aggression within evolutionary human biology. According to socio-biological theorists like Lorenz, to whom Burkert is deeply indebted, the human species is the sole species which has the aggressive capacity to destroy itself.

Consequently, collective rituals, like hunting and its successor, sacrifice, evolve, in order to channel this intraspecific aggression and so prevent the species from destroying itself.

In analyzing the structure of a sacrificial ritual, Burkert notes the following three-fold structure of the death experience:

- (i) the preliminary rites of purification and preparation;
- (ii) the central action "marked as the emotional climax by a piercing scream, the *Ολολυγη*;
- (iii) the closing rites, usually involving, in an animal sacrifice, the eating of a meat meal, which restores the peace shattered by the kill. The sacrifice thus moves "from an inhibited, labyrinthine beginning, through a terrifying midpoint, to a scrupulously tidy conclusion" (1983:12).

The sacrifice itself transforms death into life-affirming enjoyment (1985:58), for the sacrificial ritual is considered to provide the society with a specific form or shape. "A sense of community arises from collective aggression", notes Burkert (1983: 35). The shock felt in the act of killing is followed by consolidation; guilt is followed by reparation, destruction by reconstruction (1983:38).

Therefore, "killing justifies and affirms life; it makes us conscious of the new order and brings it to power" (1983:40). Through hunting ritual and later sacrifice, Burkert maintains that society was shaped, defined and rescued from the destructive power of intraspecific aggression. "Sacrificial killing is the basic experience of the 'sacred'...*Homo religiosus acts and attains self-awareness as Homo necans*" (my emphasis) (1983:3). In other words, only man the killer (*homo necans*) has the capacity to become a truly religious being (*homo religiosus*).

2.1.4 Sacrificial ritual and the hunting hypothesis

As indicated earlier, Burkert, in believing that sacrifice is ultimately derived from hunting ritual, bases his views on Meuli's work which examined the customs of hunting and herding societies in the Palaeolithic period (from at least 30 000 B.C.E.). Elements of this hunting activity include aggression which is "necessary to kill and bind the hunting group together" and

is an "essential and deeply-ingrained element in man's nature, acquired over many years in this stage of his biological evolution" (Lambert 1993:305). Burkert points out that aggression is released in the dangerous and bloody hunt. He holds the view that intra-specific aggression is sublimated and redirected if the hunting party was to succeed (1987:24). This is because of the fact that it is not easy for adult males to co-operate.

This aggressive nature of male adults caters for group demonstration of aggression toward outsiders "that creates a sense of close personal community" (1983:20).

In hunting, the act of killing is not ceremonial but practical because it is subject to chance and its aim is profane (to obtain meat for food) (1983:15). According to Burkert, killing can become ceremonial even among hunters. "In hunting societies accessible to ethnological study, hunters are said to have expressed clear feelings of guilt with regard to the slaughtered animal" because the hunter kills a beast which he regards as quasi-human (1983:16). Later hunting concentrated on great mammals which "conspicuously resembled men in their body structure and movements, their eyes and 'faces', their breath and voices, in fleeing and in fear, in attacking and in rage" (1983:20). He mentions that there is a feeling of guilt and fear seeing the "flowing blood" which indicates the "remnant of a biological, life-preserving inhibition" (1983:21). At the end of the day, as Burkert mentions "weapons, blood, and death establish a sense of human community...The power to kill and respect for life illuminate each other" (1983:21).

Later this guilt is "evinced in the ritual attempt to restore or re-constitute the beast after the hunt--bone gathering, the raising of the skull and the stretching of the skin" (Lambert 1993:305). This complex of guilt feelings survives in the fact that, certainly in the ancient Greek sacrifice, the sacrificers ask the beast's permission (Meuli's *'comedy of innocence'*) before it is killed. For Burkert, this then proves the fact that central to the sacrificial ritual are "forgiveness and reparation...." (1983:16). However, the ritual does not channel or sublimate or erase anxiety completely, but it creates anxiety at the moment before and during the kill in order to confront this anxiety and channel it creatively (1987:27).

Still on the matter of ritual and death, Burkert mentions that "the ritual betrays an underlying anxiety about the continuation of life in the face of death". Therefore, a bloody act is necessary for the continuance of *life* (my emphasis) so that new life will be able to start again" (1983:16). In short for life to be, violence is necessary.

2.1.5 Funerary Ritual and sexualization

Burkert argues further that the association between death and eating in funerary ritual signifies the fact that funerary ritual is also derived from hunting.

He suggests that behind every burial there is a funerary ritual and he sees a sense of relationship between the three rituals: ritual hunting, sacrificial and funerary ritual. According to him each influenced the other (1983:49). The fact that dead animals and the human dead were treated alike by the palaeolithic hunter indicates the fact that "*Homo sapiens* is also *homo necans* and *homo sepeliens*" (1983:49) (*Homo sapiens* is also man the killer and man the burier).

Burkert notes the role which is played by the funerary meal in the funerary ritual. He argues that "At first the necessary combination of death and eating appeared only in the hunt" (1983:50). He then suggests that a twofold transferral procedure occurred: 1. The dead person took the place of the hunted quarry; 2. The place of the quarry was substituted by the sacrificial animal, for the mourners did not eat their dead. Furthermore, he notes that although "feasting follows death, the death must be repeated immediately before the feast, through ritual killing" (1983:51).

Another interesting point within the funerary ritual is the treatment of bones which is typical of hunting customs. The bones of the dead person are gathered together, as the hunter attempted, through guilt, to reconstitute his quarry by carefully gathering together the bones of the animal. Then follows the lamentation - weeping and wailing, tearing of clothes and hair, and polluting oneself which are elements of aggression transferred from hunting behaviour.

This aggressive behaviour at a funerary ritual transforms death into killing and celebration into an eruption of aggression followed by reparation (1983:55). The act of killing (that is, the

sacrifice of an animal) associated with a funerary ritual is perceived to be re-establishing the context of the hunt. In this way the dead person becomes the focus of attention once again, and thus power is recognized and renewed (1983:56).

Burkert later looks at human sexuality and argues that human impulse and sexuality has to be seen within the context of ritual. Noting that "Male aggression and male sexuality are closely bound" (1983:59), he suggests that the "act of killing is sexually charged" and "sexual abstinence is frequently a part of preparing for sacrifice, for war, and for the hunt" (1983:61).

Burkert elaborates on his association of aggression, sexuality and ritual, by examining the sacrifice of a maiden or the sacrifice to a virgin goddess, which often was the prelude to "fighting expeditions and war" (1983:64). He notes that:

"If the preliminaries and the aftermath of the great experience correspond, the sequence of guilt and atonement can be reversed, that is, the sacrifice of a maiden or woman can follow the battle...In this way, feelings of guilt and readiness to atone can be expressed, just as death previously had been given the form of killing, in an aggressively and sexually motivated act" (1983:67).

Burkert concludes that "Sexual reproduction and death are basic facts of life. Mutually determinant and interwoven, both are acted out in the sacrificial ritual, in the tension between renunciation and fulfilment, destruction and reparation". Therefore, for him, the stele built on a grave can take the form of a phallus. "Orgies and death are close neighbours. Thus, ritual itself serves in the process by which the group perpetuates its existence through death" (1983:72).

2.1.6 Criticisms of Burkert's hypothesis

Lambert provides some criticisms of Burkert's theory of the palaeolithic origin of ritual sacrifice by testing the universal assumptions of his theory in another sacrificing culture. For example, Lambert does not accept the view that Zulu sacrificers experience guilt or anxiety before or after the kill (1993:307). He points out that Zulu sacrificers, unlike ancient Greek sacrificers, who concealed the weapon in a basket of grain, do not attempt to conceal the violence of the act; on the contrary, "the *giya* almost seems to emphasise the violence of the

act" (1993:305,308). Furthermore, French structuralist scholars who have examined sacrifice in ancient Greece have concluded that the Greeks actually made a strong distinction between hunting and sacrifice and did not associate the two (Durand and Schnapp 1989:61 ff.). Similarly, Lambert's comparative study seems to suggest that the association of hunting, guilt and sacrifice is not necessarily the case in all cultural systems, as Burkert seems to imply. Consequently, Burkert's theory does not seem universally valid.

Lambert poses a crucial question with regard to the participants in a ritual process: "Do all the participants in ritual acts ever know precisely why they are performing an act?" (1993:309). The answer to this question is definitely negative. As Lambert maintains, the participants in a ritual process can only explain their behaviour, in terms of their tradition or immediate function, but not in terms of origin as Burkert postulates. This then exposes Burkert's theory of "formative antecedents" as being "always fraught with speculative traps" (1983:307) (as Burkert himself concedes).

In criticising the work of Burkert, Kirk argues that there is no particularly valid system in studying sacrifice (in particular ancient Greek sacrifice). In the case of the work done by Marcel Mauss who examined sacrifice in terms of the concept of 'the gift', Kirk points out the fact that his view of *gift* (my emphasis) is one-sided and incomplete. For him "There are many different kinds of gift with many different possible motives, and yet phrases like *do-ut-des* (I give in order that you may give)... are often now used as though they were self-explanatory and needed no further discrimination" (1980:42).

He dismisses the fact that ritual acts must be seen as the result of a single motive or state of mind (1980:42) and is very sceptical of the structuralist approach in dealing with the matter of ritual sacrifice. He further points out that even the psychological interpretations can sometimes mislead one (cf. Freud, Adler and Jung) (1980:43). In particular, the insistence in Burkert on a connection between sacrifice and sexuality seems to have more to do with Western psychoses and romanticism than science.

He later draws what he calls a preliminary conclusion: "any view of society and its institutions, whether it be termed functionalist or structuralist or something else, which insists on society

as a bounded and self-consistent organism, is wrong" (1980:53-54). Kirk does not completely condemn a functionalist approach, but considers "rather the careful re-statement of functionalism in relation to those accidents, confusions, syncretisms and historical changes that make religion in particular, including its rituals and the practices of animal sacrifice not least of all, such a multifarious and often contradictory affair" (1980:54).

He highlights the fact that some scholars believe that ritual can only be understood in terms of performance, and not of belief. Either it is performed in relation to current needs and interests, or it attempts to explain something about the traditional past itself (1980:55). There will always be an adjustment of ritual to purpose; in this case, Kirk views ritual to be dynamic (1980:55). An historian of ritual has to be able to detect and understand the "serious re-casting of the whole complex" (1980:56).

Turning to Burkert's reconstruction of ancient Greek sacrificial ritual, Kirk challenges Burkert's account of this ritual. The *Ολολυγη* (the ritual scream of the woman), which Burkert believes accompanies the terrifying kill, is said to be mentioned once in the Homeric epics in direct connection with sacrifice. Furthermore, the *Ολολυγη* does not accompany the slaughter, the death, and the blood-letting, but the stunning that preceded them (1980:66). Kirk mentions that Homer does not mention bones at all, in contrast to Burkert's suggestion, that burned thigh-bones were put on the pyre. He challenges this aspect of Burkert's interpretation which is crucial for his notion of guilt and reconstructing the beast.

Kirk then examines Karl Meuli's theory that sacrifice is indirectly derived from Palaeolithic and Mesolithic hunters. He accepts the view that prehistoric hunters did reconstitute the bones of their animal victims, and did give them special treatment by burying them or setting them on trees or removing certain internal organs and treating them in a special way; and that Neolithic herdsman "maintained many of these practices and, in particular, increased the tendency to throw the specially-treated bones on to a fire" (1980:70-71). He warns that, in the light of the above facts, one should not "encourage the conclusion that everything of importance about Greek sacrifice has been said, even in relation to its Olympian developments, once hunting analogies have been fully set out" (1980:71).

One needs to understand fully Greek religious concepts and attitudes "in the main periods to which we have access, those from Homer onwards....". In short, Kirk argues for particularity, instead of the generalized theory of sacrifice Burkert proposes (1980:72).

He warns that Burkert's views on anxiety and aggression with regard to the Greek sacrificial ritual should be seen as a precarious business, as this involves so much speculation about a period for which we have no concrete evidence. Furthermore, attributing anxiety and guilt to palaeolithic hunters seems as if Burkert is projecting twentieth century notions into prehistory. However, Burkert's conception of the origins and function of sacrificial ritual is seen as "bold and typically imaginative" (1980:76).

2.1.7. Conclusion

We should thus be careful about the idea of bones collected, hunting theories and theories of sexual aggression. However, we should accept the relationship between rituals of sacrifice and the renewal of life. Also we can accept the community affirming and building role of sacrificial ritual.

2.2 René Girard

2.2.1 Background influence

René Girard is a distinguished French literary critic whose views on violence, aggression and sacrifice are shaped by literary texts such as Euripides' *Bacchae*. His major work *La violence et le sacré* (Violence and the sacred) first appeared in French in 1972, the same year that Burkert's *Homo Necans* first appeared in German (1987:171). The works were written independently of each other and are both arguably reactions to the horrors of the Vietnam War and the problems which this raised about human aggression and the very survival of human culture and society. Girard concedes that he uses a literary approach and that his approach is close to Burkert's. He too admits having been influenced by structuralism (1987:108).

2.2.2 Girard's view of ritual and myth

Girard uses Freud's model of the conscious and unconscious. For him, ritual is an act which is a substitution of a prior event, while, on the other hand, myth is the verbalised concealment of the original event. Ritual becomes part of the social institution and it is repetitive because it claims to be a mimetic reenactment of a prior event. Later comes the myth-prettifiers who repress "the truth of the scapegoat phenomenon" (1987:99). Myth functions to describe "the safer course, the most reassuring course from the standpoint of the community at large" (1987:100).

Girard argues that "all myths" result from nonconscious efforts to repress, distort, marginalize or efface the original pattern itself, the telltale signs of collective scapegoating" (1987:103). Therefore, "myths that contain something else and do not clearly support my case I therefore regard as having been tampered with" (1987:103).

Girard points out that "In an enormous number of myths, we find a cluster of themes that, despite the extremely diverse variations they can undergo, always remain compatible with the pattern I have in mind, the pattern of scapegoating delusion narrated from the standpoint of the deluded persecutors" (1987:79). What precisely is collective scapegoating and how is this connected to sacrificial ritual?

2.2.3 On generative scapegoating and sacrificial ritual

Sacrifice is viewed by Girard as having originated with a fictional act of mob violence in the prehistorical period. This act of collective killing was generated by the fact that "humans have no breaking mechanism for intraspecific aggression" (1987:8). The answer to one murder is another murder. This leads us to the second feature of human behaviour highlighted by Girard: mimetic desire. Girard points out that the vicious cycle of revenge murders became necessary because desire is learned by imitating the other (1987:9). For example, person A desires object C; person B imitates the desire of person A for object C. In this process (mimetic desire), the closer person A gets to object C the more persons A and B become locked in deadly rivalry. What began as imitation turns into murderous hostility.

This cycle of murders and revenge murders is finally halted by making use of a surrogate victim. From within the group, one person is separated out as a victim and the killing of this

person brings temporary peace to the community. According to Girard, violence is not merely "collective" but spontaneously unanimous. Its function is to unify the community (1987:100). The person unanimously and spontaneously chosen is the scapegoat and this leads Girard to formulate his theory of 'generative scapegoating', generative in the sense that this mechanism (i.e. the scapegoat) led to the very formation of human societies and cultures. For Girard scapegoating is "the generative principle of mythology, ritual, primitive religion, even culture as a whole" (1987:106). All positive effects flow from it (1987:120). He believes that "intraspecific fighting among human beings is held in check by the "scapegoat murder" (1987:121).

After the death of the scapegoat there is harmony and peace. This sudden change is attributed to the scapegoat. One has to note this contrastive aspect - before the death of the scapegoat there is disruption while after its death peace and reconciliation is attained (1987:92). These binary oppositions are central: Social order - a symbol of supreme benevolence, while disorder on the other hand is the symbol of supreme malevolence (1987:92). In this regard the "transcendental power of the divinized scapegoat is very harmful as well as beneficial" (1987:97). The apparent ambiguity of the scapegoat is due to the fact that "the victimizers see themselves as the passive victims of their own victim, and they see their victim as supremely active, eminently capable of destroying them. The scapegoat always appears to be a more powerful agent, a more powerful cause than he really is" (1987:91).

In conclusion, for Girard, the victim is both the malefactor and benefactor. The entire "mimetic cycle is projected onto him and interpreted as supernatural visitation destined to teach the community what to do and not to do in the future" (1987:128). This is because people cannot share "peacefully an object they all desire, but they can always share an enemy they all hate because they can join together in destroying him" (1987:128). In this case the cure is really the same as the disease. The Greek word for scapegoat ($\phi\alpha\rho\mu\alpha\kappa\omicron\varsigma$) in fact conveys this perfectly, for $\phi\alpha\rho\mu\alpha\kappa\omicron\varsigma$ means both the 'cure' and the 'poison'.

Girard uses the myth of Oedipus to illustrate this: Oedipus brings plague on the city of Thebes, but his expulsion brings the necessary cure. He is thus both poison and cure.

Girard views the term sacrifice as an important term for the description of the original event, as well as for later sacrifices which commemorate the original mob killing which brought peace to the community (1987:10). In this case unanimous victimage is useful to stabilize human communities. It provides "a model for the whole elaboration of human culture, beginning with ritual sacrifice" (1987:121).

2.2.4 Criticisms

One of the criticisms which Burkert makes of Girard's theory is the fact that Girard constructs an original fictional collective murder which has no basis in historical fact. However, Burkert does concede that:

"... there are clear advantages to this construct, as compared with the many controversial items of evolutionary history adduced in *Homo Necans*. There is no need to hypothesize about evolution or even animal behaviour, and the equivalence of man and animal plays quite a secondary role. In fact, Girard is not primarily interested in ritual; works of literature turn out to be the more revealing sources" (1987:172).

Burkert goes on to criticise Girard for combining two different mechanisms he gleans from ancient Greek literature: the scapegoat \φάρμακος and the σπαραγμός (the tearing into pieces), which one finds in rituals of Dionysus, as portrayed in Euripides' *Bacchae*. In the case of Oedipus, argues Burkert, Oedipus is not killed by a mob in a spontaneous collective killing; he is "voluntarily led away" (1987:172).

"If there is annihilation in the scapegoat complex, it is characteristically left to 'the others', to hostile forces, be they demons or real enemies. The basic action seems to be abandonment. It is different with normal sacrifice, which through killing leads to the communal meal" (1987:172).

Burkert thus stresses that Girard has not really accounted for the origins of sacrifice with his theory of generative scapegoating: "the basic fact that man has always eaten animals in sacrifice comes in only as an additional, secondary trait, a form of deterioration" (1987:172). He therefore prefers his own hunting hypothesis which "envisages the one situation in which killing is as legitimate and necessary as it can possibly be, namely, the quest for food in the competitive system of life" (1987:176).

2.2.5 Conclusion

The details of Girard's thesis may be challenged rightly, especially the reduction of everything to binary opposition and the positing of hypothetical original situations, but the idea of projected guilt is helpful and could be combined with Burkert, especially in the community building aspect and the death life exchange.

2.3 Jonathan Smith

2.3.1 Background influence

Smith is an historian of religions who specialises in Hellenistic religions. His methodology is a comparative one which involves using a Hellenistic text and juxtaposing it with another text drawn from a completely different historical-cultural context. He warns that comparative activity is never identity. It requires "postulation of differences as the grounds of its being interesting....and a methodological manipulation of difference, a playing across the 'gap' in the service of some useful end" (1987:36). He argues that *homo religiosus is homo symbolicus* (my emphasis) (1987:39).

2.3.2 Criticisms of Burkert and Girard by Smith

For Smith ritual activities should be associated with the concept of incongruity. He warns that when one deals with the issue of rituals and myths one has to be careful not to give priority to the categories of action and experience at the expense of rationality and language (Smith 1987:103).

He defines ritual as a mode of paying attention and a process for marking interest (Smith 1987:103, 1982:54). A temple is an example which is provided by Smith. It is said to be a marked-off space. The person who enters in it is expected to pay attention. This marked-off space serves as a focusing lens, "establishing the possibility of significance by directing attention, by requiring the perception of difference" (1987:104, 1982:54).

What underlies this view is the fact that someone or something is made sacred by ritual (cf. *sacrificium*). Ritual process brings about the transitive categories (cf. divine and human, sacred and profane) (1987:105). Smith stresses the realm of thought as opposed to the realm of reality. He does not accept the view that ritual elements should be associated with substances, but rather that ritual elements function as purely differential and countless signs forming a system which is composed of elements which are signifiers and yet, at the same time, signify nothing (1987:108, 1982:57,60).

Smith maintains that action and speech, ritual and myth, are coeval modes of human cognition. He makes use of the theories of Freud and Levi-Strauss. His argument is that "ritual activities are an exaggeration of everyday activities, but an exaggeration that reduces rather than enlarges, that clarifies by miniaturizing in order to achieve sharp focus" (1987:194). For him rituals are no "big deal" (1987:195).

What is important in ritual is "its infinite and infinitesimal elaboration". It is not possible, as he maintains, to find the theory of sacrifice in a quest for origins, but this can only "be found through the detailed examination of elaboration" (1987:195).

In summary, Smith theorises that ritual is an assertion of difference which provides an occasion for reflection on the rationalization of the fact that what ought to have been done was not, and what ought to have taken place did not (1987:109). Ritual brings to the fore the relationship between present reality and an ideal perfect world.

Smith's theory is both similar to and different from that of the Vedic scholar Frits Staal who, in analyzing the Agnicayana ritual (a 3000 year old Vedic ritual performed in a village in southwest India by Nambudiri Brahmins), argues for the essential meaninglessness of ritual (Staal 1979:2). Staal opposes the view that ritual consists of symbolic activities which refer to something else. He argues that the participants in a ritual process are only concerned with the rules of their performance and not with the symbolic meanings "going through their minds when they are engaged in performing ritual" (1979:3). It is only the outsiders and bystanders who may suggest to them ideas "about religion and philosophy generally" (1979:4).

Staal therefore reduces a ritual to mere activity governed by specific rules (1979:4). The all important consideration is what a person does as opposed to what a person thinks, or believes.

Furthermore, Staal discusses the reasons for performing rituals. He notes two: obligation and option (1979:7). He poses the following questions: Why should anybody wish to re-enact a myth? Why should social structures be represented or enacted ritually? (1979:7). With these sorts of questions, Staal challenges some ritual theory which still maintains that rites re-enact myths.

For Staal, "ritual exhibits its character of pure activity most readily when it is contrasted with the applied activities of our ordinary, everyday life. In ritual activity, the rules count, but not the result. In ordinary activity it is the other way around" (1979:9).

On a positive note, ritual is seen as a creator of a bond between the participants which "reinforces solidarity, boosts morale and constitutes a link with the ancestors" (1979:11). However, he warns that this positive note cannot be used to explain the origin of ritual, but can only explain its preservation (1979:11).

2.3.3 On sacrificial ritual: Smith's theory of domestication

According to Smith, the palaeolithic indications for sacrifice are dubious. "...If Walter Burkert proves something about the Palaeolithic era, it's still not data, because I don't admit anything from that era as evidence" (1987: 206). For Smith, animal "sacrifice appears to be, universally, the ritual killing of a domesticated animal by agrarian or pastoralist societies" and so "is a component of secondary and tertiary cultures - a product of "civilization" (1987:197).

He moves on to suggest a possible link between sacrifice and domestication. As indicated earlier "A theory of sacrifice must begin with the domesticated animal and with the sociocultural process of domestication itself" (1987:199). His definition of domestication is the "process of human interference or alteration of the genetics of plants and animals". This alteration is understood in terms of space and time. In this way one is able to see a paradigm shift from the nomadic social world of the hunter-gatherer to the social world of the settled societies with their notion of continuity of time and place (1987:199). Within the latter social world, the art of breeding and selective killing is introduced (1987:200). Therefore,

"Sacrifice is an elaboration of the selective kill, in contradiction to the fortuitous kill". Sacrifice becomes an "exaggeration of domestication, a meditation on one cultural process by means of another" (1987:200).

As domestication focuses on selected characteristics in the animal and so aims at perfection of the species (the words 'focus' and 'perfection' are drawn from Smith's ritual theory), so sacrifice becomes a focus on this focus (1987:201).

"It can do this precisely because it is a ritual. *Sacrifice, in its agrarian or pastoral context, is the artificial (i.e., ritualized) killing of an artificial (i.e., domesticated) animal*" (1987:201).

2.3.4. Criticisms

Smith is clearly influenced by structuralist approaches to ritual which focus on the language and structure of ritual acts as the essence of their meaning, rather than on the function of ritual within a community. The language Smith uses reveals the influence of Levi-Strauss (1987:202). French structuralist studies of ancient Greek sacrifice reveal similar concerns with the grammar or syntax of sacrificial acts and how these mediate between nature and culture. i.e. for these scholars, the sacrifice is not a 'meditation on domestication', but the means by which human beings define themselves as cooked meat eaters, as opposed to the beasts which eat raw flesh and the gods who eat neither. The sacrifice, in transforming the raw into the cooked, thus mediates between nature and culture.

2.3.5. Conclusion

It is clear that both Smith and Staal come from societies which no longer sacrifice. Smith is unable to explain the power and meaning of sacrifice to an insider. The key point is that there is some collective process which effects some kind of communal transformation. It is here that Burkert's theory of sacrificial ritual as social affirmation and community building, by means of a transformative ritual process between death and life, is able to offer a more satisfactory explanation. Smith's and Staal's theories have no place for the sacred - leaving in its place meaninglessness and random actions for their own. Smith is also unable to comprehend in his

theory that transformative potential of the scapegoating ritual, as expressed by Girard. So we accept Burkert's main thesis as modified by Girard.

2.3.6 Summary

So far we have dealt with three theorists, i.e., Burkert, Girard and Smith. As has been stated, aspects of Burkert's and Girard's theories will be used in order to provide an interpretative framework for both my analysis of the following Pedi responses and of Hebrews.

CHAPTER THREE

FIELD WORK UNDERTAKEN IN THE NORTHERN PROVINCE: GA-DIKGALE, MMASEALAMA AND SETLHONG

3.1 Introduction

Before I consider the text of Hebrews 9:1-28 in the light of sacrificial ritual theory and the Pedi responses to the text, I would like to give a full account of the field work which I undertook in order to gather and assess these responses.

3.2 Account of fieldwork

The fieldwork was undertaken in the Northern province (cf. Appendix A). I was accompanied by Leonard Nyakale (a third year theology student). I formulated questions on which Mr. Nyakale, Prof. Draper and Mr. Lambert commented. The questionnaire was two-fold. The first part dealt with the Pedi appropriation of Hebrews, whilst the second part dealt with the matter of orality and literacy. I was interested in the first part of the questionnaire since it is related to my research work.

The research work was conducted for a period of twelve days. We chose three areas that are still rural and to a larger extent use orality as a transmitting strategy. One cannot argue that they are entirely oral communities. However, they have a propensity to orality.

Firstly, the Ga-Dikgale is a rural area. The Lutheran church building, school, community garden and post office are the only facilities of the community. The group consisted of elderly participants. There were nine women and two men. The majority of these participants was either semi- or completely illiterate. Worth mentioning is the fact that one member, David Moloisi, participated in the First World War and was able to recall the places that he went to when he was in the army.

Secondly, Mmasealama, as in the case of Ga-Dikgale is very rural. The place is centred around the old Lutheran mission station called Kratzestein. The majority of the participants was either semi- or completely illiterate. The group consisted of both old and young participants. However, it has to be noted that the old participants were in the majority.

Thirdly, Setlhong is more rural than the above-mentioned areas. The group was considerably mixed. We had almost all ages and literary capabilities. We had to alter our questions in order to be inclusive. We did what we could with the limited resources at our disposal.

The following was the order which we used during the field work: we started with a short devotion service after which I prayed. The common hymn which we used was hymn 138 (cf. the Transvaal region Lutheran hymn book) entitled "*Morena Jesu Kriste tla*" (Lord Jesus Christ come) (cf. Appendix B). Respondents enjoyed the song very much.

After the song we explained to them the purpose of our visit and assured them that we were not representatives of the government. We assured them that we would forward the results of the research to them. In this way we established a rapport.

I then read the text (Hebrews 9:1-28) aloud to them. Later I asked questions (note the following sections of this chapter). I have abbreviated the above areas as follows: GD = GA-Dikgale, MM = Mmasealama and SET = Setlhong

The following are the questions and responses of the three groups we visited:

1. How often do you read the Epistle to the Hebrews?

GD - We are guided by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa's (ELCSA) almanac (This almanac is called *Tšhupamabaka* in Sepedi). Participants pointed out that they were not familiar with the letter.

MM - Participants pointed out that they were guided by the ELCSA almanac. Hebrews' Epistle was not well known to them.

SET - They were guided by the ELCSA almanac.

2. Which parts do you like and which appeal to you? and why?

GD - Participants pointed out that they could not respond to the question since they had not read the epistle by themselves, but they had always been guided by the ELCSA almanac.

MM - It was difficult for them to respond to the question (Refer to the above section with regard to this response).

SET - Participants raised the same concerns as in the case of GD and MM.

3. Is the question of death and sacrifice central?

GD - Yes, it is.

MM - Yes, it is.

SET - Yes, it is.

4. Have you ever thought of the issue of death being central in the Epistle to the Hebrews?

GD - Yes. Central to the Epistle to the Hebrews is the idea of death. They drew attention to the mention of the killing of calves and goats and the death of Jesus himself, offered as a "*sedimo*" (lit. means of redemption) on behalf of sinners.

MM - Some verses in chapter nine are about sacrifice. It has to be understood that sacrifice is killing. For it to be effective killing has to take place. Therefore, the Epistle of Hebrews is about death.

SET - Yes. Because of its strange language of killing and sacrifice.

5. What about the matter of burial being central in the Epistle to Hebrews?

GD - Yes. It is also about burial. It can be connected with the Pedi traditional burial ceremony. *Mabele* used to be thrown in the grave and an animal was slaughtered. All these practices indicated a continuance of life in the family, clan and community. Death was not understood to be the final end of life but the beginning of life. This might sound ironical or contradictory. It was this contradiction, they claimed, that had to be maintained in order for one to explain the Pedi *cosmological structure* (my formulation) (*seo lefatshe e leng sona le ka moo motho a leka netšwago ka mo gare ga lefatshe - what the world is all about and the way a person is part of the world*).

MM - Yes. Burial cannot be without blood. Blood is central to burial.

SET - Death and burial are central. They are augmented by the issue of blood. In this case one cannot separate these three things.

6. How is death understood in your community?

GD - *Lehu le a tshabego kudukudu. Le bohloko kudukudu. Lehu ke seo bophelo e leng sona* (Death is feared terribly. It is painful. It is our way of life).

MM - Death is sometimes associated with pollution. No one dares to face death. It is terrible.

SET - Death is painful.

7. What are the main rites of death and burial in your community?

GD - *Ke go lukišetša phitlho goba poloko, nako ya phitlho le ka morago ga phitlho*
(Preparation for funeral, the time of the funeral and service after a funeral).

(The respondents used two words for burial i.e *phitlho* and *poloko*. *Phitlho* literally means 'to hide'; while *poloko* means 'to bury' with the understanding that one day one will revisit what he/she buried. What is buried is valued and should be buried in a proper manner. In this case, the mourners, including friends of the deceased, are witnesses to what is buried and the manner in which it was buried. In this case there is a sense of continuation and value).

MM - Preparation, time of a funeral and service after a funeral.

SET - Preparation for a funeral, time of a funeral and service after a funeral.

8. Can you recall them?

GD - (i) Preparation

Ge lehu ge le tla ka gae, le kwišišwa e le phiri eo e tšenego ka gae. Ka gobane bohle ba re o tšere ke phiri (When death strikes in the family, it is understood to be a fox that has taken away the dead person). Immediately a group of old men and women gather together. If the deceased is a male, he is washed by a group of men sanctioned by the deceased family. Water is used to wash the deceased. Having washed the deceased, he is placed in the corner of his room.

The widow removed *dipheta*, *difaga*, and *maseme* (traditional pearls and necklaces) to show that her husband has died. In the meantime a beast is slaughtered. A male beast has to be slaughtered because the gender of the deceased is masculine. Let us note the following when the beast is slaughtered:

The beast has to face the west to indicate the place of the dead. The east is seen as the place of the living. This *binary opposition* (my formulation) must be

maintained. Before the animal is slaughtered, the head of the family or clan has 'to speak' to it in a poetic manner. The animal is praised by the praise names of the deceased. Some of the oldest and most powerful ancestors and ancestresses are evoked to welcome a newcomer among them. At the same time, the deceased is informed about the long journey which he is about to undertake to the world of the living timeless.

Then the animal's throat is struck. When blood flows, bowls are brought. The first bowl holds the blood which is going to be used during a funeral ritual. The second bowl contains the blood to be used to evoke the *Ba-Dimo* at a place called *Lehwama*. The beast should 'give a sign of permission' by loosening up and giving its last sign. It is important that this ritual be maintained within such an activity. If the said things do not happen, the slaughterers will have guilt feelings that the funeral ceremony did not proceed as planned. This will have a bearing on the deceased and his\her family or clan.

Then different parts of the animal are arranged and cooked in different cooking pots. The limbs and head of the animal are put aside. These are to be eaten by the eldest male members of the family or clan. The skin is used to cover the deceased (*Ke kobo ya mohu*: the deceased blanket), one respondent in the group pointed out).

Then the second bowl of blood is taken to the *lehwama* or *thithikwana*. Alongside this blood, *metsi* (water), *morito* (a mixture), and *letsoku* (red clay) are brought to this place. They are used to *suma* ('to speak to') the ancestors and ancestresses to welcome the deceased.

A group of men from the clan dig a vertical hole and at the end of it they make a small room in a horizontal way, in which they will place the deceased (cf. Appendix C).

Women are involved in the cooking of the *bogobe le nama* (porridge and meat). The *nama* is not supposed to be salted.

(ii) The funeral ritual

The funeral ritual takes place at night. This is linked to the view that the deceased is taken by a fox. Foxes are associated with the night. Children are not involved during this ritual. They have to keep in their minds that their father is taken by a fox. That's it! Mourners move to the hole dug by the men of the family or clan. The funeral ritual is led by either the *Kgadi-ya-lapa* (aunt of the family) or *Malome-wa-lapa* (uncle of the family). Silence is of utmost importance.

No singing is done nor are prayers said. The funeral ritual is characterised by the activities associated with it i.e the casting of seeds into the grave along with the *morito* (a mixture of blood, water, and other medicines known to the family of the deceased and the traditional healer). A spear, bowl of food (water, porridge and unsalted meat) are buried together with the deceased. This is to indicate that the dead person will be undertaking a long journey to the other side of the world of the living dead. The deceased is then put into the hole, into the small room, where he is understood to be hidden. He is put in a kneeling position (*O be a kwatamišwa ka makoto a gagwe go bontšha gore ke motho eo a le go tseleng le gore ga a robala byale ka bahu ba lehono bao ba robatšwago. Selepe se be se dirišwa go mo roba marabo ao a ka be go a kokoropane*). He used to kneel with his legs to show that he is not sleeping but awake on a journey to some place, unlike nowadays, when dead people are placed in a sleeping position. An axe was used to break hardened bones). Seeds are thrown inside to indicate growth and fertility. In this case, the deceased symbolizes a seed that will germinate again and once more give the continuance of life.

(iii) After the funeral ritual

After the funeral, mourners go back to the deceased's home. The plates (*mašapelo le legata*), from which the deceased ate, are thrown on the ground *ka mafori* to

indicate that the head of the family has died. The same practice is not performed in the case of a child or a dead woman. Mourners share in the common meal which is prepared at the deceased's home. However, they first have to wash their hands in fear of *makgômô* (to be constipated). When they arrive at their respective homes, they are not supposed to touch children. They have to use water and ash before they do that. The widow was *arametšwa* (i.e. she inhaled fumes, placing a cover over her head and the fire) to get rid of *sefifi goba senyama* (close to miasma, but with a deeper meaning than a miasma).

The perception is that the spirit of the dead person (*moya wa mohu*) is on the widow, which could result in another fate, if the widow did not carry out this ritual. There was also concern about the physique of the widow. Her physical condition needed support. As a way of helping her, she was *arametšwa maswika a gofiša, metsi le ditlhare tše dingwe ka mmono wa reatseba* (i.e. she inhaled water, mixed with medicines, on the recommendation of the traditional healer. Rocks were placed in the water). She is furthermore said to be *kokotela* (hit hard) on her shoulders. A *ngatha* (an old hoe) was used to do this, a way of strengthening her body (flesh and bones).

The clothes of the deceased (*dikobo tsa sesetho*) are washed and distributed among members of the family. Some of the clothes are burned and the ashes thereof are used by the widow to *koma, go pata* or *go latswa* (putting ash on her tongue). After a year, the widow is given back the *difaga, dipheta* and *maseme*. This is to indicate that she can now partake fully as a member of the community. Before this, she was not allowed to attend some of the major ceremonies of the community or even the family. She was understood to be polluted and therefore a threat to the entire family. At times the lack of rain and good harvest was associated with the presence of the widows within the community. It was important that cleansing be undertaken in order to circumvent this state of affairs.

MM - (Basically the above description applies in the case of the Mmasealama group. What will follow is what is unique in the Mmasealama's description).

Death is central to the life of the community. It overrides every activity of the community. When it strikes, family neighbours are expected to bring along cooked porridge and *morogo* to the deceased home. The deceased family and clan are not expected to cook, except for the animal that has to be slaughtered for this occasion.

The sex of the animal has to correspond with the sex of the deceased person. If it is *mokgalabye* (an old man) who died, a *kgomo ya poo* (bull) will be slaughtered. If it is a *mokgekolo* (an old woman), a *kgomo ya tshadi* (cow) will be slaughtered. This practice was central in order to maintain a sense of coherence in the ritual sacrifice. *Lešaka* (i.e. a cattle kraal) was used as the place to bury the deceased. It has to be understood that the idea of graves is a recent practice. It was important to have the deceased as part and parcel of the family and *kgoro* (i.e. a clan). The respondents pointed out that it was important to *kwatamiša* the deceased to indicate the idea of life as opposed to death. The dead person was said to be alive. He is on a journey. That is why it is important to use the blood of the animal when it is still warm. That indicates the continuation of life.

SET - The Setlhong group was reluctant to recall the entire burial ceremony. I thought that what could have contributed to that was the presence of their pastor (Rev. E. B. Farisani). This could, however, be disputed.

9. Where were they performed? Describe the location clearly.

GD - The home of the deceased is central. There is a movement from the house to where the hole is dug. It is like moving from point A to point B.

MM - The home of the deceased. This is because death and burial ritual are part and parcel of home rituals. Home plays an important role in this regard.

SET - The home is central in this regard. Soil is also very significant, for the soil is where fertility originates. Coupled with blood, it forms a very powerful combination.

10. Who was in charge of these rites?

GD - The eldest *rakgadi* or *malome* (i.e. aunt or uncle).

MM - The eldest *rakgadi* or *malome*.

SET - The eldest *rakgadi* or *malome*.

The aunt and uncle must be from the father's side (Patrilineal)

11. How did she\he look?

GD - She is like any other person except that she has a big responsibility.

MM - She is not different from any member of the family. Her status is different from the rest of the members. She is considered to be in touch with the spirits above. In that case she is unique.

SET - Not different from the rest.

12. Who else was involved during the performance of these rites?

GD - Other members of the clan and family, mourners from the greater community, the animal which is slaughtered during the sacrificial ritual (without a sacrificial ritual, funerary rite won't be effective at all), the deceased person, who is very active during this ceremony. Nothing can be done or performed without his knowledge. He has to be informed before every activity is undertaken, as well as the *Ba-Dimo* who play a central role (the *Ba-Dimo* are asked to welcome the newcomer who will be joining them shortly).

MM - Members of the family and clan, outside members, *Ba-Dimo*, the slaughtered animal and the dead person.

SET - Members of the family and clan, members of the community, Ba-Dimo, the dead person and the slaughtered animal.

13. Where did they sit?

GD - Most of the time mourners are standing. This is because the ceremony is shortened. It has to be performed within two or three days. The quicker the better.

MM - Most of the time standing.

SET - Most of the time standing.

14. What did they do?

GD - Each participant had a unique role to play. Mourners accompanied the deceased to his *ntlong* (house). The animal was used to re-enact the death itself, to convey the messages of the family and clan, and to accompany the deceased (cf. the skin which is used during this ceremony).

MM - Each had a specific role to play (It was not elaborated).

SET - (No response provided).

15. What did they have?

GD - A number of things were used during the funerary rite. Water, blood, cattle's skin, soil, *letsoku*, an axe, and rocks, to mention just a few.

MM - Blood, soil and water are central.

SET - Blood, soil and water are central.

16. Which symbols were used during these rites?

GD - Blood, a symbol of life, continuation and fertility (Blood is life). Water always accompanies blood. However, blood seems to be the most central symbol in the entire funerary rite. *It forms a recurring motif in this rite* (my formulation). Without blood, the rite has no basis at all. It is upon blood, this blood, that one has a comprehensive funerary rite.

MM - Blood is a central symbol (*Madi ke bophelo* - Blood is life), as well as the hole, in which the deceased is placed. The small room indicates the continuation of life.

SET - Blood is central. Blood is life. Without it there is no life. Water can be regarded as another symbol because blood is mixed with water. This indicates the importance of having the animal slaughtered.

17. Can you recall songs and prayers which were sung and said during these rites?

GD - During funerary rites, there are no songs or prayers. Silence is important. Silence forms part of the funerary rite. It is necessary within a funerary rite.

MM - There are no prayers and songs during the funerary rite. Everyone is expected to keep quiet. It has to be understood that this rite was performed in the evening. This was because death cannot be comprehended. On the other hand, it is necessary to have a particular community ritual.

SET - There are no prayers and songs during the funerary rite.

18. If you read or had the Epistle read to you, could you pick up some ritualistic language, symbols in the text?

GD - verse 6 "not without taking blood which he offers for himself and for the errors of the people" - verse 9 "According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered which

cannot perfect the conscience of the worshipper" - verse 12 has something to do with blood and redemption - the same applies to verse 13 "For if the sprinkling of defiled persons with the blood of goats and bulls and with the ashes of a heifer sanctifies for the purification of the flesh, 14, how much more shall the blood of Christ". Verses 15-22 emphasise the importance of death to effect a testamentum (*Lehu le šwanetše gore le be gona gore bohwa bo tle bo be gona. Seo sona ke tshwanelo ya mmakgonthe*).

MM - The language of blood is central in the entire chapter. Blood was used in the Old Testament and so in the New Testament time. Blood is a central ritualistic symbol which is reflected in the language of the entire chapter.

SET - Blood is a central symbol. This symbol is accompanied by the ritualistic language of killing (The shedding of blood). The animals used in the sacrificial ritual, which are indicated in the text, are calves and goats. Jesus is also an animal which is used in a sacrificial ritual (*sedimo*). He is killed and his blood is shed in the same way as the calves and goats in the Old Testament time.

19. How can you retell the above text in your Pedi communal life?

GD - An attempt to retell the text was done by Mrs Paulinah Shoroma

She started in this way: *Motho wa bogologolo e be e le morui. O be a ruile mo go šišago. Bophelo bya gagwe e be ele bya goba le diruiwa. Byale gee, mathomong a bophelo bya motho e be le tshwanelo ya gore a tšholle madi. Ge ngwana belegwe e be e le tshwanelo ya gore a tšholle madi. Ge ngwana a babya, e be e le tshwanelo ya gore a tšholle madi. Ge a gola a ya le ge a e tšwa go rupa, e be le tshwanelo ya gore a tšholle madi. Ge a nyala goba a nyalwa, e be le tshwanelo ya gore a tšholle madi. Ge aile a se kwane le bao a agišanego le bona, e be le tshwanelo ya gore a tšholle madi ge ba seno dira kwano eo e phetagetšego. Seo se be tshwanetse e le ruri.*

Madi a tshwanetse gore a tšhollwe e le go bontsha bophelo le phethego ya bophelo byo boswa. Mme fela go tllile sedimo sa go makatša seo e leng Jesu kriste. Ke sedimo gare ga didimo ka moka. Ka madi a gagwe o tlišitše poelano lekago boswa.

Formerly a Pedi person centred his life around animals that he domesticated. A Pedi person was rich. Life for him was cattle, goats etc. It was therefore necessary to shed blood at that time. At birth, it was necessary to shed some blood. When the child was sick, it was necessary to shed blood. When a boy or girl finished at the circumcision institution, it was necessary to shed some blood. When a man or woman married, it was necessary to shed some blood. In times of trouble with fellow neighbours, it was necessary to shed some blood to indicate the fact that peace was restored, and that there was reparation and restoration in a complete sense. This had to be performed.

The shedding of blood indicates life and the sanctification of life. What surprises one is having a miraculous victim who is Jesus Christ. He is a sacrificial animal among other sacrificial animals. Through his blood that was shed, he brought about reparation and restoration.

M - Not available

SET - Not available

3.3 Conclusion

From the above fieldwork a number of important issues emerge. The centrality of death and the manner in which funerary ritual, with which sacrifice and hence the shedding of blood are associated, helps to shape and maintain the sense of community. Each mourner, for example, had his/her role to play in the ritual. In the same way that Burkert argues that a sacrificial ritual preserves the binding force of the hunt which shaped the earliest human communities, so sacrifice in the Pedi funerary ritual helps maintain the sense of belonging. Furthermore, in response to Hebrews, the respondents considered Jesus to be the *Sedimo*, a sacrificial animal which was killed in the same way as calves and goats in the time of the Old Testament, and in

the same way as calves and goats in the Pedi tradition. Through the shedding of this blood, the respondents believed that Christ brought about reparation and restoration. From his death therefore, there springs new life for the community. So Burkert argued when he concluded, from his study of sacrifice, that the sacrificial act brings the community face to face with the realization that death is necessary for life to continue. The conception of Christ as the *Sedimo* recalls the generative scapegoating theory of Girard. Christ is thus the scapegoat who takes upon himself the sins of the community and through his death restores that community to new life and wholeness.

CHAPTER FOUR

HEBREWS EPISTLE 9:1-28 IN PERSPECTIVE

4.1 Introduction

Before I consider the text of Hebrews and its implications for a Pedi Christology in the light of the sacrificial theories and the Pedi responses contained in the previous two chapters, I would like to examine the thematic content, authorship, background and context of Hebrews itself.

4.2 Content, background and context of Hebrews 9:1-28

Scholars have attempted to divide the content of the epistle into sub-sections (for example, Bruce 1965:Ixiii, Neill 1955:5, Bowman 1963:20, Murray 1929:24, Lauersdorf 1984:5,). However, since this is not the main focus of this thesis, I intend highlighting only the structural analysis which is postulated by Montefiore (1961:31).

The following is Montefiore's thematic outline of the entire epistle which I take as representative of most commentaries:

- | | | |
|-------|----------|--|
| i. | 1-4 | Introduction |
| i. | 5-ii.18 | A name better than the angels |
| iii. | I-iv.14 | Jesus the faithful |
| iv. | 15-v.10 | Jesus, the compassionate High Priest |
| v. | 11-vi.20 | Preliminary exhortation |
| vii. | 1-28 | Jesus, High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek |
| viii. | 1-ix.28 | Jesus' completed work |
| x. | 1-18 | The cause of eternal salvation |
| x. | 19-39 | Final exhortation |
| xi. | 1-40 | The faith of the heroes of old |

xii.	1-13	The endurance that is required
xii.	14-xiii.18	Warnings, religious and ethical
xiii.	19-25	Conclusion

His thematic analysis of chapter nine itself is as follows:

9,1-5	The institutions of the Old covenant;
6-10	The insufficiency of the cultus;
11-14	The Cultus of Christ;
15-22	The Covenant of Sacrifice;
23-28	The Sacrifice of Christ.

The above structure does not help one to see what the author of the Epistle intended. It is very evident looking at Montefiore's structural outline of the Epistle, that appreciation of Jewish sacrificial ritual life is never accommodated.

The Jewish ritual sacrifices based on the Old Testament covenant are ignored by Montefiore. He focuses on the priesthood role which is played by Jesus. His entire outline is centralised around the figure of Jesus and excludes the ritual process that underlines the whole chapter, as if this has no relevance to the meaning of the text.

In order to take into account the ritual process underlying Hebrews, I would like to make use of Victor Turner's theory of ritual process. He explores the semantics of the ritual symbols of the Isoma ritual of the Ndembu in Northern Zambia (1977:6-7). Turner argues that ritual has a tri-partite structure i.e. preparation, performance and conclusion. He then applies this structure to the Isoma ritual, which is derived from the word "*ku-somoka*" meaning "to slip", implying the unborn child who slips out of the womb prematurely (1977:11-12). The aim of this ritual is to restore the right relation between the matrilineal shades; to reconstruct the

conjugal relations between wife and husband; and to ensure the fertility of the wife. The couple (wife and husband) are treated with cool and hot medicines, which have their own symbolic meaning and are accompanied by different procedures (1977:15)

Turner maintains that a ritual ceremony such as Isoma is marked by three phases or stages. He is influenced by the work of Van Gennep, a French social anthropologist whose work is entitled *Rites de Passage*. Van Gennep believed that rituals accompany every change of place, state, social position and age. The three phases of ritual are: separation, liminality and aggregation (1977:44-52). The phase of separation indicates a detachment of the individual or group from their earlier relationship. It could be either a social structure or a particular condition. A university student who leaves his\her own community to join the university community serves as good example of this idea of separation.

A person moves from a particular community with particular values and systems of meaning to join a different kind of a community with its own peculiar values and systems of meaning. Obviously, the two contexts differ in their orientation of life and world views.

The same can be applied to the initiate who undergoes a process of initiation until he\she is accepted socially or religiously. The phase of liminality is a phase of ambiguity. It is between the phase of separation and the third stage (1977:94). The individual or group pass(es) through the cultural domain which has nothing to do with either the past or the future. Again the example of a university student is instructive. A university student is taught things that do not have any relation to his\her community left behind. However, it is important for him\her to undergo this training for social\status transformation later. This is a very essential phase. It determines whether one is accepted socially or not. Another example is a group of catechumens who undergo training in anticipation of acceptance in the community which shares in the holy communion.

The third and last phase, is the phase of re-incorporation. The individual who has undergone training is brought back to his\her community. He\she has completed the process of ritual, and, therefore, is re-incorporated in his\her former community. It has to be noted that the status of

this individual(s) is elevated to a certain level. He\she will not be seen in the same light he\she was seen. A certain amount of respect is accorded to him\her.

I would like to make use of this theory to analyze Hebrews. The aim of this analysis is to indicate to the reader that there are other ways of reading this epistle. One of these ways is to read the epistle from an anthropological ritualistic perspective.

I therefore propose the following outline for the Epistle to the Hebrews as a whole:

Chapter

Part One - Preparatory Discussion

- 1.1-2 (Two paradigms) - Old and New (A comparative approach by the author for his audience)
- 1.3-14 A new paradigm is discussed in detail (Christ as a new paradigm)
- 2.1-18 An inclusion of a salvific dimension (It does not necessarily cancel the Old paradigm but it builds on it)
- 3.1-18 The authority of the role of Christ (A processual section)

Part Two - Separation

- 4.1-16 Separation from God's rest, liminality and initiation into it
- 5.1-14 The ritual process (An Old paradigm is in process and is used as a preparation for the New paradigm)

Part Three - Liminality

- 6.1-20 A paraenetic section within the liminal period between the Old and New paradigms

- 7.1-28 Play of ritual symbols - re-ordering and experimenting in liminal space (Old and New paradigm)
- 8.1-13 Restatement of the New Paradigm
- 9.1-28 Comparative approach - Two paradigms. The relevance and significance of the New paradigm is highlighted in the light of the Old ritual paradigm
- 10.1-18 The place of the law in ritual sacrifice. Efficacy of the New paradigm

Part Four - Aggression

- 10.19-39 Moves beyond liminality into true aggregation: Images of entry, washing and warnings against relapse: indicate phase of aggression
- 11-12:13 Faith and exhortation
- 12:14-13:25 Normative *communitas* enjoined on new members and exhortations *paraenesis*

The above outline tries to demonstrate a ritualization process within the epistle. The old paradigm referred to is the Jewish ritual process, whereas the new paradigm refers to the figure of Christ who is often mentioned in the epistle. The new paradigm does not necessarily replace the old paradigm but instead strengthens it. The above outline further highlights the role of ritual, and in particular the role of the concepts surrounding initiation ritual, which shape the Epistle. Separation refers to the space which is created between the initiate and his/her former

locus. The author of this epistle often uses forms of the word εἰσεναί (to enter) (e.g. Heb. 4. 3-16; εἰσερχομαι (v.3); εἰσελευσονται (v.3, 5); εἰσελθεῖν (v.6); εἰσελθόν (v.10); εἰσελθεῖν (v.11); προσερχομεθα (v. 16; cf. 10. v. 22)), in contexts which suggest separation from the old, entry into a liminal or threshold stage between old and new, and finally aggregation or integration into the new paradigm. The initiate is separated from her\his former activities and acquires different status once he or she has been exposed, usually in the liminal period, to the paraenetic teachings, which are associated with the ritual process. Hebrews 6:1-20 is characterised by admonishments and exhortations (for example, one is able to note the subjunctive mood (φερομεθα) which occurs at the opening of this chapter).

The author provides a contrast between the dead rituals of the old paradigm (ἀπο νεκρὸν ἔργον) (Heb.6.2) and the dynamic rituals of the new, which will result in fulfilment τεν τελειοτετα (Heb.6.1), a word which has profound initiatory connotations; for the τελετε is the final stage of initiation (see Liddell and Scott s.v.) The initiates are provided within this contrast to be able to see the distinction between their former life and the life on the threshold of which they now stand.

In the light of the above, the following is my outline analysis of the ninth chapter of this epistle:

9. 1-10 The old ritual paradigm in perspective; the failure of the old paradigm to bring the suppliant to full growth (again the author uses a word from the process of initiation, τελειοσαι, to describe this final state) (Burkert 1985:291).

11-14 The new ritual paradigm in perspective; rather than the blood of goats and calves Christ shed his own blood in sacrifice; freedom from the dead rituals of the old paradigm (ἀπο νεκρὸν ἔργον v.14)

15-22 The new paradigm, like the old covenant of Moses, requires the shedding of sacrificial blood to seal the covenant, as well as to atone for transgressions committed in the old paradigm.

23-28 The differences between the old and new paradigms. The annual animal sacrifices of the high priest have been

replaced by a human sacrifice which has rid the old world of its sins and is valid for all time.

4.3 Background to Hebrews

4.3.1 Authorship

Lindars postulates the view that the name of the author of this epistle is unknown. In the light of this view, he maintains the name "Hebrews" is the name for both the authorship and the readership of the epistle (1991:17).

Neil points out that the Epistle was first attributed to Paul "more for lack of a better known author than for any other reason" (1955:14, cf. Lane 1991:xlix). He later mentions the improbabilities that disqualify Paul from being the author of this Epistle.

Some of them include the following:

- * There is no customary opening greeting as is the case in the Pauline letters.
- * It is improbable that Paul would have been interested in the elaborate technicalities of Jewish Temple ritual.

The other candidate mentioned by Neil is Apollos, a suggestion which was postulated by Martin Luther, on the basis of his eloquence in articulating the Jewish-Christian view in the light of the Alexandrian context (1955:15, cf. Hagner 1990:17, Attridge 1989:4-5, Lane 1991:xlix). Neil rejects this suggestion, because of the lack of a clear basis for argument. He therefore concludes that it is not possible to identify precisely the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and so refers to the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews simply as the author (cf. Bowman 1963, Gromacki 1984, Lauersdorf 1984).

For Bruce, the author is a Hellenist who was learned. Attridge, in support of Bruce's view, points out that the author of the epistle composed the entire epistle and was a well educated person with a thorough rhetorical training.

This author was acquainted with Greek and some Greek philosophical categories during his time. Added to that, he was experienced in the exegesis of Jewish Scriptures in a Greek form (Attridge 1989:5). The same view is held by Lane who points out that:

"All that can be said with certainty is that Hebrews was composed by a creative theologian who was well trained in the exposition of the Greek Scriptures...From the composition of Hebrews it is possible to draw a number of plausible inferences about the writer. He possessed an architectural mind; he affirms a thesis and then develops it by a way of analysis...The manner in which the writer structures his material for maximum effect lends credence to the supposition that he was formally trained in rhetoric. He understood speech as a means and medium of power. He appreciated speech as agonistic and used it effectively in the service of the Jewish Christian mission" (1991:li).

It becomes obvious up to this point that the debate around the authorship of this epistle will never be resolved. Most arguments postulated by scholars are based on literary grounds. A good example is the view raised by Martin Luther, for whom Apollos seemed to be the possible author of the epistle. Luther's arguments are based on a subjective literary assessment rather than anything else.

Nevertheless, much can be said about the author of the Epistle in terms of his interest in ritual and symbol. He would appear to be well acquainted with the structure of the Temple and sacrificial ritual. He seems to have been deeply influenced also by Hellenistic ideas. His symbolic use of sacrificial ritual seems to come close to the Neo-Platonic thought world of Philo of Alexandria. However, since these ideas were probably widespread in the first century Hellenistic environment, we need not suppose an Alexandrian influence. Indeed the familiarity with the Temple ritual is striking. What is clear is the author's passionate appropriation of the ritual process of sacrifice in Jerusalem for his own context.

4.3.2 Possible addressees of the Epistle to the Hebrews

It is difficult for one to trace the possible audience of the Epistle as the authorship of this letter cannot be established. Neil points out that the addressees are the more conservative Jewish Christians of Palestinian origin who were residing in Italy (Hebrews 13.24) (1955:16, cf. Hagner 1990). Hagner takes up the matter further to point out that the author wrote to a

specific community with a specific history. The author was definitely related to this community (1990:2). Unfortunately, Hagner does not provide details about this "specific community with a specific history". Lane, who supports a view of a specific community mentions that this community had an urban outlook. He basis his view on internal evidence which includes the following quotation from the epistle "here we do not have a permanent city" (Hebrews 13:14). Therefore, he concludes that the intended audience was almost a house Church:

"... one of several scattered throughout the different districts and sections of the city. The early Christians met in ordinary rooms in private houses. They are undoubtedly a small group, consisting of the members of a household and some of their associates and close friends... whose theological vocabulary and conceptions were informed by the rich legacy of Hellenistic Judaism" (1991:liii, lv).

Andrew Murray does not offer a precise profile of the addressees (1929:20). For him it is likely to have been a special community with a Christian basis which resided in Jerusalem (1920:20). A rather impressive response to the aforementioned question is that of F.F.Bruce.

Bruce argues that the title "To the Hebrews" may simply "have reflected the editor's impression (shared, no doubt, with other readers) that the people addressed were Jews or, more probably, Jewish Christians" (1965:xxiv). He continues his argument to point out further, that:

"If the title "To the Hebrews" is an editorial label attached to the work for convenient reference, and not an original designation, we should not be greatly influenced by it in endeavouring to establish the identity of the addressees" (1965:xxiv).

This must be based, in so far as it possible, on internal evidence (1965:xxiv).

The possible readers of this Epistle are likely to have been second century readers because "The whole background is conducted against a background of Old Testament allusion" noting the familiarity of the author with the Levitical ritual and his interest in it (1965:xxv). The familiarity with and interest in the Levitical ritual, argues Bruce, does "not require either the author or the people addressed to be Jewish; we have known at the present time Gentile Christians who were thoroughly familiar with the Old Testament, accepted it as sacred and authoritative scripture, and manifested interest in the details of the Mosaic tabernacle and the

Levitical offerings" (1965:xxv). Bruce concludes that the knowledge of the author is literary knowledge of Old Testament literature aided by the Midrashic tradition. The addressees are "a group of Jewish Christians who had never seen or heard Jesus in person, but learned of Him from some who had themselves listened to him" (1965:xxx).

Now in addressing the location of the recipients of this Epistle to the Hebrews, Bruce points out that they were readers who were in the Diaspora and not in Jerusalem because their knowledge of "the Jewish ritual was not derived from firsthand contact with the temple services" (1965:xxxi). The priesthood and ritual which is associated with the tabernacle, rather than the temple in Jerusalem, is focused on in the epistle (1965:xxxii). For Bruce, Roman destination of the letter is a possibility (1965:xxxiv).

Bowman does not support the view that the possible addressees could be Jewish-Christians. He points out that the author and his readers, who "as we have said belonged to a single group of second-generation Christians" were Hellenistic-Jewish Christians who resided at Sychar (1963:16).

The debate around the authorship and the addressees of the Epistle to the Hebrews remains complex. It is difficult to establish who the author and addressees were in the light of the fact that the external evidence does not provide one with any clue. Most scholars, as we have seen in the above section, base their arguments solely on internal evidence (Dunnill 1992:13). The author and the addressees of the epistle remain anonymous for today's readers. However, this provides the reader with interesting possibilities for interpreting the epistle. Anyone can interpret the epistle in the light of his/her own frame of reference, precisely because "as to who actually wrote the epistle, God knows the truth of the matter" (Neil 1955:xlvi).

What we can assume is that the addressees of the Epistle would have understood and resonated with the author's appropriation of ritual process. The language and symbol of sacrifice is approached from the inside by those who grew up within such a world.

4.3.3 Background Influence

Several scholars attempt to place the epistle in different intellectual milieux and philosophical traditions. Recent work by Ronald Williamson refers to the controversy around Platonic influence on the epistle. Among some of the scholars who are referred to by Williamson is Paul Wernle who is convinced that the epistle "to the Hebrews is still entirely under Jewish Alexandrine influence" because it makes use of the Old Testament, of definitions and dogmas, and Platonic terminology which are all philosophical (Williamson 1970:2). Williamson challenges this view. He indicates that the argument based merely on etymological and linguistic analysis is not adequate to prove that the epistle was influenced by Platonic philosophy.

For him "what matters is the thought that lies behind a writer's language, the beliefs, convictions". His conclusion is that "The mere presence of the same words in the work of both writers does not of itself prove the existence of a relationship of inter-dependence" (1970:10).

Williamson begins by tracing the argument of Wernle who adheres to the view that, as eschatology is also found in Hebrews, this indicates a combination of a Platonic world view and Christianity (1970:2). Wernle then concludes that the Christianity of Hebrews is Platonic philosophy added to the Christian $\epsilon\pi\alpha\nu\gamma\epsilon\lambda\iota\alpha$. Similarly Fairbairn postulated the view that the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews could have known Philo and the social orientation that characterised Alexandria around that time. Such a knowledge could have shaped the final product of the Epistle to the Hebrews (1970:10).

Howard supports the view that the Epistle has both a Judaic and Platonic flavour in it. He is supported by Dodd in this regard. Taking this view further, Vincent Taylor points out that the author attempted to present a new faith in the light of Platonic philosophy (1970:3). Ryder Smith takes a rather different view. For him, the author could not have been directly influenced by Plato, but by what transpired in his own times (1970:2).

Similarly, Robinson mentions that there is no need to assume that the author of the "Epistle to the Hebrews" had read Plato or other of the well-known Greek philosophers, but he may have internalised their teaching second-hand. This does not exclude him from having being familiar with the writings of the Jewish Alexandrian philosophers and added to this was his knowledge

of the Wisdom of Solomon (1970:4). This seems to me to be the most likely view, especially since education in the Jewish literate classes was deeply Hellenized from at least the time of Herod the Great in the first century B.C.E.

However, the author's knowledge of traditional Jewish sacrificial ritual should not be overlooked and it is this aspect of his background which is of primary importance for the following discussion.

4.4 Central Ideas from ritual theories used

So far I have examined the theories of Burkert, Girard and Smith, and I have shared my field work which I undertook in the Northern province of the country. I will now attempt to integrate three areas of this research work i.e. Hebrews 9:1-28, sacrificial ritual theory and the Pedi appropriation of the text in the light of sacrificial ritual. The aim of this task is to search for an African Christology.

Both Burkert and Girard demonstrated that violence is at the heart of the sacred. In this case, one cannot do away with the idea of violence in the act of sacrifice. Violence is necessary. Therefore, killing and life are poles that structure human culture. Both are necessary and rely on each other. For death to take place, life has to precede and vice-versa. In the whole act of ritual sacrifice forgiveness and reparation take place.

4.5 Pedi understanding of death and life

From the fieldwork responses, one is able to note the following: death is viewed as the beginning of life. Central to the whole understanding of death is blood. Blood is life. One respondent (Mrs Shoroma from Ga-Dikgale) pointed out the importance of blood. She said that blood marked every step in the life of a Pedi person. Rites of passage are sealed and affirmed by the act of a sacrificial ritual. Furthermore, the community dynamics are driven and determined by the sacrificial act. This denotes the fact that blood is central.

In the Pedi funerary ritual, there are additional symbols which support Burkert's thesis. *Mabele* (seeds) are thrown in the grave. The casting of *Mabele* indicates the idea of rebirth,

reconstruction, development and restoration. This activity is linked with blood. *Mabele* are understood to rot and regain life once more. From the rotting seeds, new life springs; so the cycle of death-life continues. As the hunter threw his spear and the ancient Greek sacrificers threw the grains of barley at the beast, so casting *mabele* could symbolise the necessary act of violence.

Mmu (soil) is linked with blood. *Mmu* is seen as the *locus* of life and death. It is where death and life take place. In the case of the funerary rite, one needs *mmu* to have rebirth and restoration.

Burying, as indicated earlier, is seen as an act of burying a valuable article with the understanding that it will be retrieved some days or months to come. This view tallies with the understanding of rebirth, reconstruction and restoration. Linked with this view is the practice of removing the pearls (*maseka*, *difaga le dipheta*) from the widow and returning them back to her after a certain period of time.

The use of different parts of the body after the beast is slaughtered suggests the whole idea of reparation, reconstruction and development. For example, the beast's skin which is put around the dead person. Respondents (cf. Mmasealama) viewed this practice as an indication worthy of respect. The fact the beast's skin is placed around the dead person suggests that the dead person changes roles with the slaughtered beast which is then, following Burkert, being reconstructed, thus implying that death and sacrifice are essential for new life.

The small room, in which the dead body is placed, has the same name as the private parts of a woman, which also suggests rebirth and fertility, in contrast to the burning of some of the deceased's clothes, which is a destructive act of violence---the necessary death before the rebirth. The plates of the deceased's are thrown on the ground, thus supporting this interpretation.

4.6 Hebrews 9:1-28 a violent text

I would now like to examine Hebrews 9:1-28 in detail, in the light of the ritual theories and the Pedi responses.

Verse 1. This describes guidelines, space and location in which the first covenant worship took place.¹ Location is important for a sacrificial ritual. As in the case of the Pedi, the beast was slaughtered in a special place. The deceased was buried in a place prepared by the mourners.

Verse 2. Ritual symbols are mentioned.² Every ritual activity is characterised by special symbols. The Pedi respondents mentioned *mabele*, *mmu le madi* etc.

Verse 3. This verse emphasises the whole idea of sacredness. The *locus* of the Holy of Holies is central. Lane argues that the author distinguishes between the two compartments by the numerical terms, i.e., the 'first' and 'second' (cf. vv. 2,6,8). These terms, he claims, do not designate two separate tents but rather one tent that was divided "into a "front" sanctuary and "rear" sanctuary (1991:219; Attridge 1989:234; and Hagner 1990:128). It is where the special ritual activity of the high priest takes place. Separation is important to distinguish between sacred and profane space (cf. Turner 1977:44-52), as the Pedi respondents distinguished between the space where the beast is sacrificed, the *lehwama* (place of the *Ba-Dimo*), and the grave.

Verse 4-5. The golden-censer, the sacrifice-table, the ark of the covenant and the budded rod of Aaron mark the sacredness of the Holy of Holies. This place is distinct. The suppliant has

¹ For Neil (1955:85), the author describes the furnishings and ritual of the Tabernacle "which may seem at times to take us into the regions which have only the remotest connection with the Christian life to-day". Attridge (1989:231), on the other hand, argues that the worldliness or even the earthiness of this Temple and its ritual is part of its weakness and limitation "and it stands in contrast with the heavenly and spiritual quality of Christ's sacrifice". Bowman (1963:217) regards the Tabernacle to have been rendered "obsolete". It becomes clear that a majority of scholars do not see a possible link and continuity between the Old paradigm and the New paradigm. If indeed the Old paradigm is rendered "obsolete" and is both weak and limited, should traditional Pedi practices be rendered "obsolete" as well? I do not think so. Montefiore does not support the view that the Temple is rendered "obsolete". For him, he argues, it implies that these regulations are ancient in origin (1961:143).

² Hagner points out that the "Directions for the construction of the tabernacle are given in Exodus 26, while for the Lampstand is contained in Exodus 25:23-40". For Attridge the author deals with regular furnishings (1989:232).

to have a sense of this peculiarity and of its history.³ In similar fashion the *lehwama*, the bowls for sacrificial blood, the *metse* (water), the *morito* (mixture) and *letsoku* (red clay) have special significance and a sense of historical continuity for the Pedi.

Verse 6-7. In the outer tent, the priests carry out their ritual activities continually,⁴ but only the high priest enters into the second tent once a year. He has to use blood which he offers on behalf of himself and for the mistakes of the people committed in ignorance. Blood is central in verse seven. Thus a sacrificial ritual in which blood is shed earns forgiveness and reparation in the community of the suppliants. In a similar way, as Mrs Shoroma indicated, blood plays a central role in the life of a Pedi person, as it marks important stages in the life of every individual and also effects forgiveness and reparation in the community of the living and the dead.

Verse 8-10. The author provides a contrast between the practices of "now" and "then",⁵ using the parable of the outer tent. Gifts and sacrifices are offered in the old paradigm which cannot fulfil the suppliant, because they deal only with the outward forms of ritual (for example, food and drink) and not its true meaning. However, the writer of the epistle assumes that these rituals form the necessary preparation for the sacrifice of Christ in the new paradigm. In other words, the sacrifice of Christ makes no sense without the ritual backdrop of the old paradigm. For the Pedi Christian, traditional sacrifices, apart from the sacrifice of Christ, are like the

³ Attridge argues that Hebrews does not stand alone, and the parallels suggest that it follows an exegetical tradition. It is possible, he maintains, that this tradition "arose not only on the basis of the ambiguities of Exodus but also out of an attempt to harmonize the Pentateuchal data on the priesthood. The necessity of such harmonization arises from the divergent images of the priesthood in the D and P strands of the Pentateuch" (1989:236).

⁴ It is interesting to note that Attridge acknowledges the continual aspect of these ritual activities. He maintains that the "repeated aspect of the priests activity" is reinforced by the adverbial phrase "always" (1989:238). This is important in maintaining the connection and continuity between the Old and New paradigm. For Attridge the yearly performed ritual of Yom Kippur can be paralleled to the unique sacrifice of Christ. If this is the case then, how can one fit in the multiple Pedi offerings? Are they not rendered "obsolete" as Bowman (1963) maintains?

⁵ Hagner points out that the present time refers to the author's time. He highlights the fact that it does not necessarily mean that the "sacrificial ritual was still in progress at the time of writing of the epistle" (1990:134).

preparatory sacrifices of the old paradigm; however, they attain true fulfilment in the new paradigm and are thereby affirmed (see below).

Verse 11-12. Christ⁶ is considered as a high priest of the good things which have come, a high priest who enters into the holy place not with the blood of goats and calves, but with his own blood. He thus takes the place of the sacrificial victim in the inner tent which is now no longer the inner tent of the old paradigm, but a greater and more perfect tent of the new paradigm, which is not made with human hands. Christ becomes a *sedimo*. However, what should be noted is that he entered the Holy of Holies as *sedimo* once and found eternal ransoming by shedding his own blood. Christ becomes a sacrificial victim which is slaughtered in the same manner as the beast. The ritual performance is maintained, only the victim and the duration of the rite have been altered.

It should be noted that these verses contain a paradox (i.e. Christ is both a high priest and a sacrificial victim). This is striking. Is it possible for Christ to occupy both levels of ritual process (i.e. as both ritual elder and a sacrificial victim)? How can this be synthesised with the Pedi sacrificial ritual? In Pedi, it is not possible for one to be both *modiri* (doer, subject) and a *modirwa* (victim, object). There is a clear line of demarcation between the two levels of ritual process. The new paradigm replaces the role played by the ritual elders (the priests) in the old paradigm. What about the communal structure within a ritual process? Who sacrifices the *sedimo-Christ*? Why are they silenced, if they exist at all? Should *voluntas* be seen as the only overriding factor in this regard? Clearly, the author radically changed the old paradigm. What impelled him to make such a change? This question is almost impossible to answer, but this does not preclude us from asking critical questions in response to the text. As I indicated earlier, it is up to the reader to find answers and to practise his\her own *hermeneutic of recovery*. The reader has to establish his own cue(s), on which he\she bases his\her interpretation of the epistle. In this way, the epistle becomes an adventurous jungle of discovery and recovery. Readers discover and recover something about themselves and can, therefore, postulate something about the life of the author and his audience.

⁶ For Attridge Christ makes the new what it is. He sees a connection between the coming of Christ and the "present time" as the time of correction (1989:245).

Verse 13-14. The author shares with his audience, which clearly understands sacrificial ritual,⁷ about the effect of the blood of goats and calves. He makes a strong case that the blood of "*Sedimo-Christ*" is more effective in cleansing defiled persons than the blood of calves and goats. He uses a comparative methodology. He does not underestimate the blood of goats and calves, but strengthens his case by mentioning the effect of "*Sedimo-Christ*".

Verse 15. The author brings to the fore the idea of mediation. The "*sedimo-Christ*" is a mediator of the new covenant (*Pedi-mmoelanyi*). The *sedimo-Christ* takes the place of the sacrificial animal and is thus a surrogate-victim which brings restoration and reparation to the community. In contrast to the beast which has to be slaughtered, he gives himself up to be killed, in order for rebirth and reparation to take place in the community. The *Pedi* understanding of *mmoelanyi* is important. The *mmoelanyi* suffers at the expense of two or more groups or people that he/she is attempting to reconcile. Christ is in fact the *mmoelanyi* who attempts to reconcile all groups.

Does the idea that the *sedimo-Christ* gave himself up to be killed suggest the notion of the innocent scapegoat (cf. Girard's theory) and perhaps Burkert's notion of sacrificial guilt? Why is it important that the *sedimo-Christ* offered himself voluntarily? Perhaps offering himself voluntarily (as the animal had to give its consent in the sacrificial ritual) suggests that ritual implies a negotiation of meaning and consultation. It is imperative to involve all participants in the process.

Verse 16-17. The author uses an example of a will and the person who makes a will. A will takes its effect after the person who made it dies. It cannot be effective when the maker of it is still alive (Attridge 1989:252). So Christ's death has to occur before the new paradigm comes into being. In this case life (the new paradigm) is preceded by death. This relates to what Girard and Burkert regard as the foundation of new cultures and societies. Death is a necessity; without it there will be no new life. The death of the old paradigm and the birth of

⁷ Attridge argues that "This new element alludes not to the sacrifices of Yom Kippur, but to the primitive purificatory ritual of the red heifer that was to be slaughtered and burnt" (1989:249).

the new are marked by the shedding of blood, just as important rites of passage in Pedi culture are marked by blood.

Verse 18-22. The author links this idea of blood being central with the old paradigm. Attridge argues that "The author probably viewed subsequent expiatory and purification sacrifices as acts whereby the old covenant was renewed" (1989:257). The old paradigm was also effected with blood, for *Madi ke bophelo* (blood is life, note the Pedi respondents). Moses is introduced by the author. He is said to have taken the blood of calves and goats, water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and to have sprinkled the book and the people. Moses then sprinkled the tent and every vessel of worship with blood. All these symbols are central in effecting the old covenant and restoration between the people of Moses and their deity. This again stresses the centrality of blood. Blood is life and is necessary for legitimizing the old paradigm. The question is: why should everything be legitimized by blood? The answer to this is the fact that the sacrificial kill and the shedding of blood are vital for rebirth, restoration and reparation. For the hunter, the death of the beast was necessary for life; this central idea was maintained in the sacrificial ritual.

Verse 22. This verse strengthens the idea that blood is central (*Madi ke bophelo*) "For in fact, almost everything which exists has been purified in blood... it follows suit that without the pouring out of blood, there is no forgiveness". Renewal can only happen within the context of blood sacrifice. The death-life act is necessary and central for rebirth and renewal in the Pedi community as well.

Verse 23-24. In these verses, the writer states that it was necessary for the imitations of heavenly things to be purified with the above-mentioned rites, "but the heavenly things themselves should be purified with stronger sacrifices than these". Presumably the author means that the ritual objects used in the old paradigm were purified with the sacrificial blood of calves and goats; however, the new paradigm requires "better sacrifices", the blood of the *sedimo-Christ*, who has entered not into a man-made sanctuary (a mere copy), but into heaven itself. This heavenly sanctuary was not built with human hands, but "sacred hands". Sacredness is stressed in this regard. It is a sanctuary which has been set apart. Sacredness and profane, the old and the new, are contrasted once again.

Verse 25-26. Taking up the "once and for all" sacrifice again (see v.12), the author stresses that Christ's sacrifice was not done repeatedly. There is no room for repetition, as in the case of the old paradigm, for "then it would have been necessary for him to suffer often from the foundation of the cosmos". The question is: does Christ's death put an end to the need for repeated sacrificial ritual and so the need for constant renewal? It is acceptable that a person has to die once, but there is a need to repeat what the sacrificers and the mourners experienced in order to create a sense of solidarity and understanding in a particular community. "Once" refers to the actual act. However, the repetition that follows later does not duplicate the actual event, but serves as a pointer to the actual event. Christ's death cannot and will never be repeated in reality, but it can be re-enacted in a sacrifice which represents the actual event. This then allows one to make Christ's death adaptable to a number of situations. One can regard this activity as a form of enculturation. The fact of the matter is that Christ's death is open to any re-orientation. The Pedi Christian is thus able to utilize this open-ended event to adapt it to his\her own cultural sphere and to formulate a comprehensive "Pedi Christological paradigm". The fact that the event happened once does not preclude a Pedi sacrificer from sacrificing. That is not the case here. The actual event affirms and strengthens the practices or rituals that exist. It does not cancel them. It gives a reason for the "once and for all" actual event---the remission of sins, which is ensured every time a sacrifice occurs.

The author posed a challenge to the contemporary reader. The 'once and for all event' could have been adapted during his time. A possible suggestion could be that the author witnessed the destruction of the Temple or was anticipating the destruction of the Temple. The '*fate of the Temple*' thus might have adduced the author and his audience to formulate the 'once and for all' sacrificial ritual practice of the *sedimo-Christ*.

Verse 27-28. The addressees are once more reminded of the fact that they have to live once and die once, after which there will be a time of crisis, but Christ after having been offered once for the sins of all, will appear a second time to save those who are waiting for him. Once more the issue of death-life is brought to the fore. Death precedes life. Death is necessary for rebirth and salvation, reconstruction, and development. The following challenge is inevitable: Does the final appearing imply an end to biological life on earth and so an end to the cycle of life-death blood?

4.7 Summary

In the above analysis I have argued for an interpretation of Christ as *sedimo*, the sacrificial victim which by his death brings life to the community. The latter is vitally important as the ritual elements in Hebrews resonate with rituals in the Pedi community and so communicate the worth and value of the *sedimo-Christ*.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION: A CASE FOR A PEDI CHRISTOLOGICAL PARADIGM

The above-mentioned analysis indicated the importance of sacrificial ritual to the author and addressees of Hebrews (in particular, the shedding of blood). In all areas examined (i.e. the ritual theorists; the Pedi respondents and the Epistle to the Hebrews 9:1-28), blood forms a recurring motif. This observation brings to the fore the idea of the *theology of blood* (cf. the centrality of blood) and the violent act that accompanies it. It is indeed ironical to hold the idea that both blood and violence shape human cultures and societies, as Burkert and Girard maintain, but it is clear that the shedding of Christ's blood shapes the new paradigm and thus a new culture. Rebirth, reparation and restoration are affirmed in such an activity.

To recap once more. Burkert's view of ritual is based on group formation, the creation of solidarity, and the negotiation of meaning and understanding among members of the species (1985:54). As he concludes, the killing and spilling of blood are central to ritual, because human culture progresses when aggression and violence are channelled into sacrificial ritual, which then transforms them. Hence *homo religiosus* acts and attains self awareness and fulfilment as *homo necans*.

Girard regards ritual as part and parcel of the social institution and it is repetitive because it claims to be a mimetic reenactment of a prior event (1987:18). For Girard, as indicated earlier, the prior event (actual event), which is characterized by constant murder and revenge, is halted by making use of a scapegoat, the killing of which brings peace and stability to the community. This is what Girard means by generative scapegoating and the Hebrews epistle seems to be the kind of text which supports Girard's theory of the scapegoating mechanism. Christ is in a sense conceived of as a φάρμακος who generates a new culture with his death which, in the tradition of the φάρμακος, is an innocent one.

The above-mentioned ritual theorists acknowledge the importance of ritual as a formation of human cultures and societies. Blood and death are central in their analyses. Both Burkert and Girard, as indicated before, affirm and support the Pedi respondents' views of sacrificial ritual.

Mrs Shoroma, who appears as the highlight of this research work, pointed out succinctly the importance of blood in marking every step in the life of a Pedi person. The Epistle to the Hebrews 9:1-28 ratified the importance of blood in both paradigms (cf. old and new paradigms).

Both the Christian and traditional Pedi practices have much to inform our understanding of Christology. As Burkert noted, ritual creates and affirms social interaction (1983:24). It is indeed true that the ritual practices do not only foster a common practice among its participants, but create and affirm a close interaction among them. It is from these practices that a new community is born and bred for the sake of the community. Most of the Christian denominations have practices which include the following: death, baptism, holy communion etc. These practices are practised within a particular community. The question is: what if these practices are related to Pedi traditional practices? This is the right place from which the theology of *ubuntu* could emerge. The *ubuntu* theology which enhances the *Sedimo*-Christ who fosters genuine social interaction within a particular community.

It would be within such a theology that the *Sedimo*-Christ would sacrifice himself and thereby transform death into life-affirming enjoyment, not only for those who profess his name, but the entire human race. This then calls for the *Sedimo*-Christ who is not confined within certain boundaries but transforms boundaries in order to achieve genuine *ubuntu* among *abantu*. The Christological paradigm that I am proposing does not only look at the dangers of those who profess to be Christian, but is whole in a sense that it rescues the community from the power of intraspecific aggression. In this case the *mvana* which is slaughtered binds every community regardless of the fact that that person is *ikholwa*, moslem, hindu, jew etc. This *Sedimo*-Christ offers a person a place to fit in and still maintain his/her previous practices.

A good example of this *Sedimo*-Christ is the recent debate about the the Truth and Reconciliation commission and the *Imbizo* which was proposed by the president of the country and the *iSilo samaBandla*. These are some of the questions which face most South Africans: Who should be involved in the Truth and Reconciliation commission? Was the process which led to the formation of the commission fair? Is it legitimate that the president of the country and the president of the Inkatha Freedom Party be part of the preplanning of the *imbizo*?

Should only the *iSilo samaBandla* and his *amakhosi* and *izinduna* be involved in the preplanning of this *imbizo*? What about the traditional Zulu healers? Should they not be consulted in a ritual manner about the preplanning of this *imbizo*? These questions demonstrate a quest for a traditional intervention in the state of affairs which face our communities today. I believe that this is the right place which could be used to involve the *Sedimo*-Christ in this crisis. The *Sedimo*-Christ who is in touch with the traditional language and values of the local people.

It seems as if one can forge common ground (i.e. sacrificial blood) between Hebrews and the Pedi world view. The question is: is it possible for a traditional Pedi Christian to synthesise both Christ and his\her own traditional ritual activities? Is New Testament scholarship able to respond to both the New Testament tradition and the concerns of a traditional Pedi Christian? If New Testament scholarship does respond positively to both concerns, what kind of Christ will a traditional Pedi end up with? These questions form the crux of the conclusion to this research work.

I have argued that Hebrews accommodates Pedi traditional practices. The focus of this argument centred around the 'once' debate. Christ's sacrificial death occurred once and cannot be repeated in reality except when re-enacted in a sacrifice which represents the actual event. In noting this 'once and for all' occasion, I argued that the death of Christ offers an opportunity for a Pedi traditional Christian to adapt the actual death event to his\her situation, because the event itself is open-ended.

The actual event accommodates and legitimizes Pedi traditional sacrificial symbol and practice. Some aspects of both the old and the new paradigm form an affinity through blood which strengthens the idea of accommodation. It is up to a Pedi traditional Christian to re-orientate the actual event to his\her own situation. The question is how?

It is important for the Pedi traditional Christian to use Pedi categories in pursuit of affinities. Language and specific Pedi concepts are important in this regard. The open-endedness of the 'actual-event' allows a Pedi traditional Christian to appropriate the event into his\her own traditional context. For the 'actual-event', to have a comprehensive and meaningful impact,

it has to adapt and adopt a Pedi world view and thought pattern. In this case, it is important that the *sedimo-Christ* come to terms with *mmu*, *madi*, *lehwama* etc. It has to be noted that these words are accompanied by their Pedi conceptualization categories. This activity, informed by categories and structures, I believe, pave the way towards meaningful dialogue. In this regard, the enculturation-hermeneutic or movement has to be holistic. Using a symbol such as *madi* should not permit one to view himself/herself as being in the enculturation process. Words, practices, concepts, thought patterns, and structures should be used collectively and holistically as the firm basis for the enculturation process.

Accommodation presupposes value and respect. This applies to Pedi traditional practices as well, when synthesised with the Hebrews world view. As in the case of the above paragraph, a meaningful and effective dialogue is possible when there is a sense of value and respect. It is important to respect the Pedi world view and thought patterns and treat them as 'an equal partner'. One should avoid superimposition. It would not benefit one to pick and choose what one considers to be good about a particular cultural pattern and to discard what one considers to be "problematic" and "indigestible". A cultural pattern needs to be treated in a holistic sense. Such a treatment does not imply that a cultural pattern is free of flaws or is completely perfect.

Acknowledgement of practices is not enough. There is a need to endorse practices as an indication of approval or ratification. It needs to be understood that Pedi traditional sacrificial practices ratify the "*sedimo-Christ*". In this case the *sedimo-Christ* fullfills the multiple ritual practices of the Pedi Christians. Pedi Christians, who practise traditional rites, cannot be regarded as heathens or converts. Converted from what? Approval and ratification of Pedi practices presuppose a total 'recovery' of the worth of these practices.

This is not to imply that traditional practices are completely perfect, but they can also be adapted in the course of time. In the light of the UN Fact Sheet No.23 on Human Rights (Harmful Traditional Practices Affecting The Health Of Women And Children), practices which mutilate, enslave, or exploit women should be done away with. Recent feminist debates attack African traditional religions and ways of life for being oppressive towards African women. There might be virtue in these attacks. Rituals, like Christianity, should be dynamic

and should reflect changes in social attitudes. Stagnation will result in the death of ritual practices.

There is a need for Pedi practices to be transformed in the light of recent African feminist debates. One can pose the following questions:

- Why is it only a woman who removes the *dipheta*, *difega* and *maseme*?
- Why is there a difference between a Pedi widow and widower in terms of the manner and period of purification (ritual cleansing)?
- Why are *mashapelo* and *legata* only thrown when the male (head of the family) has died? What about a woman?

The above-mentioned practices could have been assimilated into Pedi culture without any questioning. It is important to note that times have changed. Structures have changed. Thought patterns, although still influenced and shaped by our past, are shifting and gaining different perspectives. The Pedi world view has to enter this debate and movement of change. It has something to offer amidst recent African feminist debates. For example the following:

- (i) The fact that the private parts of a woman and the small room, in which the dead person is placed, have the same name, might indicate something feminine, which is especially African. That is, the idea of fertility and enhancement of life (a strong symbol). Life starts from a woman and ends with her. She is the mother of life, without her we are nowhere.
- (ii) The centrality of blood can be associated with fertility, rebirth, restoration, reparation and development of life. At the centre of all these things is a woman. She is affirmed by the Hebrews text when it comes to the matter of blood. The death-life paradox is central to this debate. The Pedi world view affirms the fact that blood marks every step in the life of a Pedi person. Life begins with blood and ends with blood. This is, I believe, a powerful African female symbol. However, traditionally, the colour red symbolizes the male, while the white colour symbolizes the female (Turner 1977:31). This view does not close the door for re-orientation and re-appropriation of traditional symbols creatively.

It is time for Christianity to begin dialogue with traditional African ritual practices. One should avoid confining this dialogue to those practices which seem to be in line with Christian practice only.

In this respect, we must note that the Pedi respondents were not familiar with the epistle to the Hebrews, because it was not listed in the ELCSA Almanac, which is produced by the Moravian Church. Furthermore, I have shown in the study how appropriate this text is to Pedi ritual practice. Thus, to further dialogue between Christianity and traditional ritual practice, ELCSA members should write their own Almanac, noting the needs of the local congregants. Otherwise, the Almanac is nothing but an extension of the spiritual colonialism of the missionaries.

This raises the issue of curricula in New Testament scholarship in South Africa today. Which issues should be taken up when constructing curricula for South African New Testament students, and who should decide what these issues should be? The case of the Pedi respondents and the ELCSA Almanac suggests that students should be consulted and their needs accommodated, when New Testament curricula are shaped. This would contribute richly to the dialogue between Christianity and traditional ritual practices.

As Kofi Appiah-Kubi challenges, the Euro-American missionaries presented a Euro-American Christ, who "seems to be a spiritual, intellectual or philosophical entity ...He seems to be absent in several crisis situations of the African life - birth, puberty, marriage, illness and death" (1987:69). This challenges the New Testament scholar in South Africa to take seriously issues that face students in their lectures and seminars. The *locus* of operation should start with the life and experience of a student. In this way, the basis of New Testament scholarship, with its historical critical tools, may find a home in Africa. Bediako strengthens this matter by looking at the Ghanaian appropriation of Hebrews 1:3; "When he had brought about the purgation of sins" (New English Bible). The language used to appropriate this verse is Twi. The Twi verb for purification is *dwiraa*. This verb is associated with the time of year called *Odwira*, the traditional New Year festival which, "marks the end of one year and the start of a new year and is....a festival of purification, reconciliation and renewal" (1995:71). Jesus could be related, maintains Bediako, to the traditional *Odwira* rituals and its anticipated

benefits (*ibid.*) This is, I believe, a good example of the right approach to the comprehensive handling of New Testament in Africa. I have demonstrated this by showing how Pedi respondents appropriated Hebrews 9:1-28.

African based New Testament scholars should begin to enter into this meaningful dialogue. I do not think that the historical critical tools will be suppressed, instead, they will be "*dwiraa*" (purified) to fit into current realities that face contemporary readers in their respective contexts.

Finally, the studies of Burkert and Girard, as well as my field work amongst the Pedi, have demonstrated the critical importance of ritual in the modern world, and in particular the importance of ritual in a society which is torn apart by violence and is undergoing the sacrificial crisis of which Girard speaks.

In Kwa-Zulu Natal, the cycle of violence and revenge killings is reminiscent of the fictional society which Girard described. Peace in this society was established by the killing of the $\phi\alpha\rho\mu\alpha\kappa\omicron\varsigma$, which then generated a new society in which this act was remembered in sacrifice. The sacrificial ritual thus channelled and controlled the mimetic desire (or, in Burkert's terms, the intra-specific aggression) which threatened to tear the society apart. Apart from the socio-economic and political problems which have contributed to this violence, it could be suggested that a breakdown in traditional ritual practice is another contributing factor. Resurrecting archaic rituals (like *umkhosi wohlanga* - the reed dance), which Mangosothu Buthelezi has done, in order to further his concept of Zulu identity, ethnicity and the aims of the Inkatha Freedom Party, has obviously failed, because manipulating ritual in this way is self-defeating. However, what is needed is consultation between the king, the chiefs, the politicians and the people in order to establish which rituals have broken down, why they have broken down and who should be responsible for re-instating them.

The Church practices rituals which need to be understood. However, it is time for the Church to enter into a dialogue with traditional religious practices. The Church needs to define how it is going to integrate rituals like *umkhosi wohlanga*, *umkhosi wamabutho* etc. into its rituals. It is well-known that most congregants place a certain amount of value on these practices. Something has to be done. For instance, how should the church help in breaking political

tensions in the Kwa-Zulu-Natal province? I believe that it cannot and will never do it alone. The church needs other practices. Dialogue is central in this case.

In the broader context, the Truth Commission is in sense a public ritual designed to bring about reconciliation and reparation (rather like a sacrifice) for the sins of the old paradigm. However, we perhaps need more than this. A public ritual, which brings together Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and Hinduism, together with African traditional religions, would be a ritual cleansing on a national scale. Such a ritual cleansing would require the shedding of blood in sacrifice, for, as the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Pedi responses indicate, without this shedding, there can be no new life, no reparation, no forgiveness and no new culture.

Gerd Bauman's view of ritual as implicating 'Others' is instructive. He looks at public rituals as being directed to an outsider by making statements about the definition or redefinition of outsider and insider. When public rituals are performed, the messages are transmitted to both the inner and outer groups (1992:98). This is because of the fact that even outsiders participate in the performed rituals visibly or invisibly. Therefore, the presence of 'Others' during a public ritual performance, maintains Bauman, suffices to alter the intentions and meaning of a traditional ritual. He offers an Anglican procession on a Good Friday as an example. The event is said to turn into an outward-oriented witnessing. This public ritual can be very "often viewed as claim to public attention, public space, and public recognition in an arena which allows and encourages multiple readings of symbolic messages. This is especially clear when the participants in a ritual do not even seem to form a ritual community but are recognized most easily as a loose alliance of ritual constituencies, each using symbolic forms to stake mutual claims" (1992:101). The public rituals offers an opportunity for a negotiation of meaning with 'Others' and a contextual definition (1992:99).

For us in South Africa, President Mandela's inauguration on the 10 May 1994 is a good example of a public ritual. This public ritual performance was witnessed by millions of South Africans. A Christian archbishop, a Jewish rabbi, a Hindu priest, an Islamic imam and a traditional *imbongi*, together with choirs singing the anthems from two diametrically opposed constituencies, combined in a ritual performance which negotiated meaning, to include the 'other'. All of us participated in a number of ways either as by-standers, spectators (via the

medium of television), invited guests or close witnesses. We all shared in the negotiation of meaning and redefined this public ritual contextually. Countless traditional presentations and dances were shown on that day. Various opinions were aired, from the right wing, the moderates, to the left wing.

Even those who opposed the idea of elections watched and contextually redefined this public ritual performance. The ritual itself offered us an opportunity to negotiate meaning with 'Others'. A short period of healing, reconciliation and stability was experienced by all South Africans.

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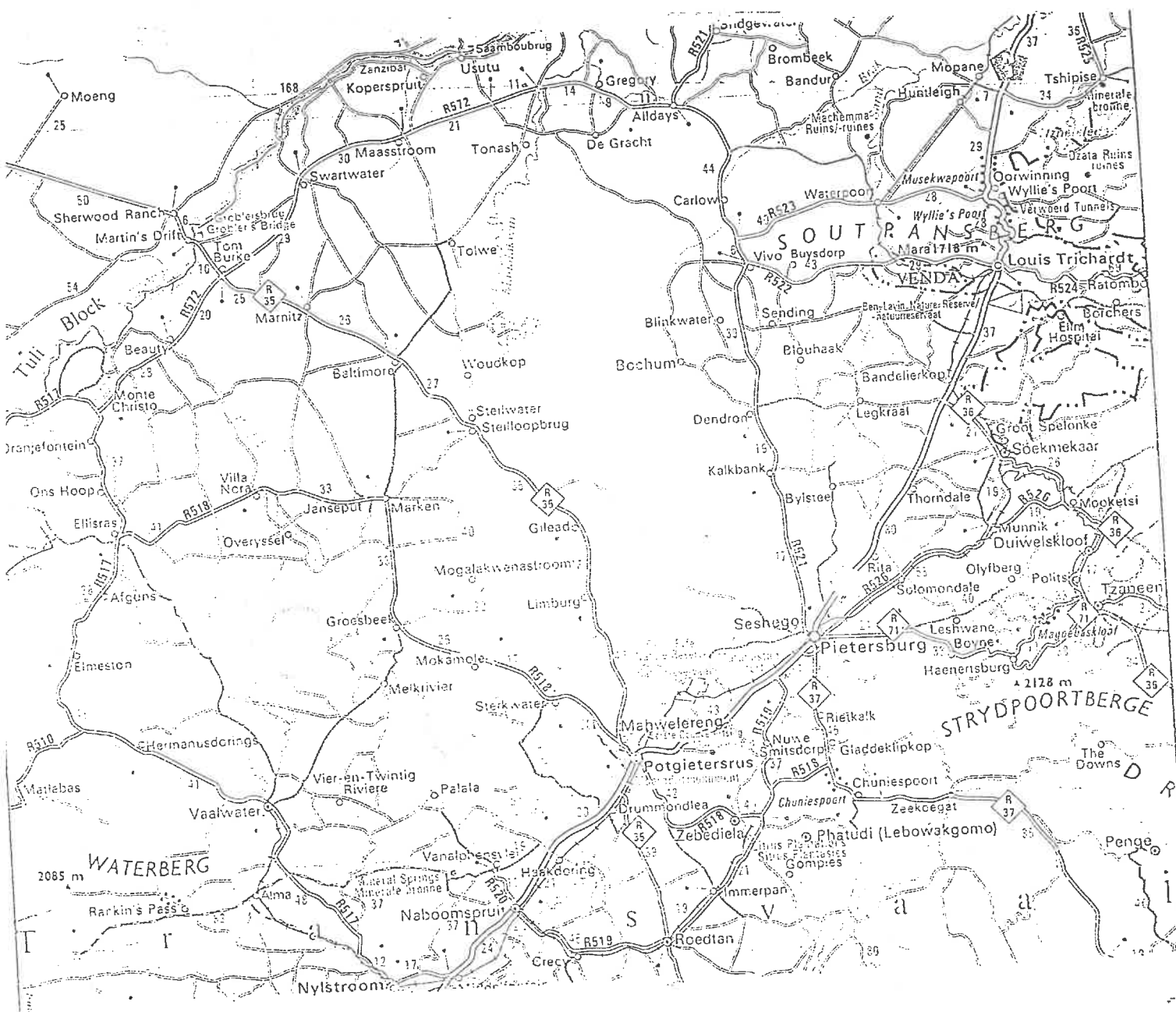
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APPENDIX A

A MAP INDICATING GA-DIKGALE, MMASEALAMA AND SETLHONG



APPENDIX B

A LUTHERAN HYMN

"Morena Jesu Kriste tla"

138. Morena Jesu Kriste, tla

KEY G

Id :—	m :—	s :—	m :—	r :—	m :fe	s :—	l :—	s :—	m :—
Is :—	d :—	r :—	d :—	t :—	d :d	t :—	d :—	d :—	d :—
Mo -	re -	na	Je -	su	Kri-ste,	tla	go	ba	re
Mu -	re -	na	Ye -	su,	ri: I -	da	na	Mu -	ya
m :—	s :—	s :—	s :—	s :—	s :d	r :—	f :—	m :—	s :—
Id :—	d :—	t :—	d :—	s :—	d :l	s :—	f :—	d :—	d :—
r :—	d :—	t :—	d :—	r :—	m :—	m :—	r :—	s :—	s :—
l :—	s :—	l :—	s :—	s :—	d :—	d :—	t :—	t :—	t :—
phu -	the-	gi-leng	fa.	A	Mo -	ya	wa -	go	go
wa -	u	mu -	khe-thwa.	Ri	who -	ne	tshe -	le	le
s :—	d :—	f :—	r :—	m :—	s :—	s :—	s :—	r :—	r :—
Is :—	m :—	f :—	s :—	d :—	d :—	d :—	s :—	s :—	s :—
s :fe	s :—	m :—	f :—	m :—	r :—	d :—	d :—	t :—	d :—
l :—	l :—	t :—	l :—	s :—	l :—	s :—	l :—	s :—	s :—
le -	fo -	kong	o	ko	re	i -	šc	the- re -	šong.
ri	tshi	pfa	ma -	fhu -	ngo	a -	u	he -	ne -
r :r	r :r	l :—	d :—	d :—	d :—	t :—	d :—	f :r	m :—
r :r	s :—	l :—	d :—	f :—	d :—	s :—	l :—	f :s	d :—

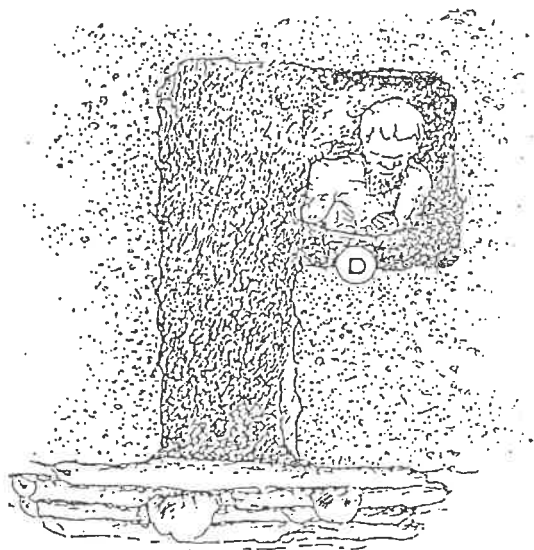
2. A ko re buše dipelong,
Tebogo di tšwe melomong.
O re kgwatliše tumelong,
O re fihliše godimong.

3. Re go leboge mahlatseng
Go tee le ba ba kgethilweng,
Ba ba bonang mo seetšeng
Tše ba di dumetšeng faseng.

4. Modimo Papa godimong,
Le Morwa'gagwe mo thronong,
Le Moya a kgethegileng
A retwe ka go sa feleng.

APPENDIX C

A SMALL ROOM IN WHICH THE THE DEAD BODY IS PLACED



APPENDIX D

TRANSLATION OF HEBREWS 9:1-28

1. Therefore, the first covenant also had guidelines for worship and a distinct earthly sanctuary. 2. For the first tent was set down in which were the lamps, the dining-table and the shew-bread, and this was called Holy; 3. behind the second curtain stood a tent which is called Holy of Holies, 4. having a golden-censer, a sacrifice-table and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, which contained a golden urn containing manna and the budded rod of Aaron and the tables of the covenant, 5. above it were the Cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat, concerning which we cannot speak in detail. 6. As these were built in this way, the priests go continually into the outer tent (first tent) performing their duty; 7. only the high priest enters into the second tent once a year, and not without blood which he offers on behalf of himself and the people for (their) mistakes committed in ignorance, 8. because of this the holy spirit proves that the way into the Holy of Holies is not yet opened while the first (outer) tent remains standing, 9. which is a parable for the now time, during which gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot fulfil the suppliant (server) according to conscience, 10. but only concerning the food, drink and various baptisms, rules for the body are laid down until the time of reformation.

11. But when Christ appears as a high priest of the good things to come, through the greater and more perfect tent (not designed with human hands), this is not of this creation,

12. not through the blood of goats and calves, but through his own blood he entered once and for all into the Holy of Holies obtained from eternal ransoming. 13. For if the sprinkling of the blood of goats and calves and the sprinkling of ashes of the heifer makes holy the defiled persons for the cleansing of flesh, 14. how much more will the blood of Christ, who through his own spirit offered himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from your dead works in the service of the living God. 15. And because of this he is a mediator of the new covenant, so that when death has come to redeem the transgressors under the first covenant, those who are called may receive (partake) the promise of the eternal inheritance. 16. For where there is a will, the death of the one making the will is a necessity; 17. for a will is confirmed at death, since it is not in force as long as the testator is still alive. 18. Hence even the first covenant was not ratified without blood.

19. For every commandment, according to the law, has been declared by Moses to all the people, (on) taking the blood of the calves and goats with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and he sprinkled the very book and all the people, 20. saying, "This is the blood of the covenant which God instructed you (about)". 21. And in the same manner with blood he sprinkled the tent and every vessel of worship. 22. For in fact, almost everything (which exists) has been purified in blood according to the law, (it follows suit that) without the pouring out of blood, there is no forgiveness. 23. Therefore, it is

necessary for the reflections of the heavenly things to be purified, but the heavenly things themselves should be purified with stronger sacrifices than these. 24. For Christ has entered, not into a holy place (designed) under (human) hands, an image of the truth, but into heaven itself, now he appears in the sight of God on our behalf; 25. nor did he offer himself often, like the high priest who enters into the Holy of Holies once a year in the offering of another's blood; 26. then it would have been necessary for him to suffer often from the foundation of the cosmos, now he has appeared once and for all, at the fulfilment of the ages, to get rid of sins through the sacrifice of himself. 27. As it is also laid down for each human being to die once, and after this there is judgement, 28. so in this way Christ, being offered once in order to carry the sins of many, will be seen for the second time not for the purpose of taking on the sins of many, but to save those who are patiently waiting for him.

