

**Sacrifice in Hebrews 9:1 – 10:18 and Ganda Sacrifice. A study in relation to the
Christian sacrament of the Eucharist**

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DECLARATION

The whole of this thesis, unless specifically indicated to the contrary in the text, is my own original work.

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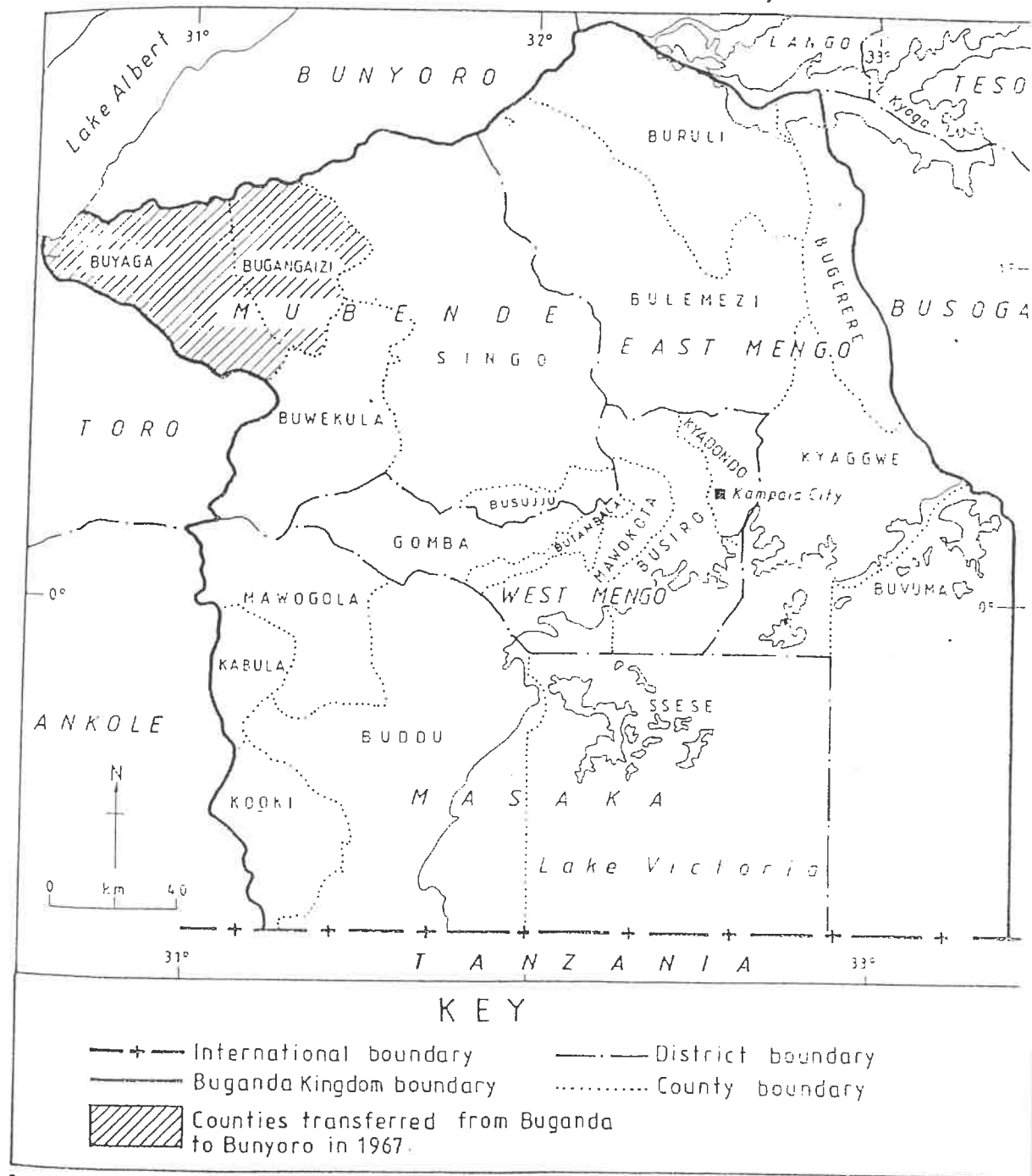
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To the glory of God.

Map 2

COUNTIES IN BUGANDA KINGDOM, 1962



Source: Adapted from Uganda Atlas 1967.

Map 3

BUGANDA KINGDOM: ITS DISTRICTS AND COUNTIES, 1995



BIBLE TEXT AND ABBREVIATIONS

The New Revised Standard Version (Anglicised Version) has been my standard text for scriptural quotations, but where another version of the Bible has been used, this has been indicated.

The abbreviations in this study are the standard ones approved and recommended by the Journal of Biblical Literature. The European referencing system has been employed in this study.

ABSTRACT

This study has examined the way Hebrews 9:1 – 10:18 presents the death of Jesus Christ as sacrifice and how that message is appropriated for the Ganda (for whom sacrifice is at the heart of their traditional religion) through the participatory celebration of the sacrificial death of Christ in the eucharist. While the study acknowledges a number of remarkable anthropological studies on the Ganda, none has been found to provide the much-needed connection between the peoples' culture and the Bible more especially in the area of sacrifice. What this study uniquely provides is that link – a connection between the peoples' culture (practices, beliefs, values) particularly in the area of sacrifice and the Bible which has been demonstrated in this study, the Ganda treasure. This link, I have sustained in this study is the eucharist. The eucharist is the meeting point for the sacrifice of Christ in Hebrews 9:1 – 10:18 and Ganda sacrifice. To put it candidly, the way to communicate sacrificial theology (specifically the sacrificial death of Christ as presented in Hebrews 9:1 – 10:18) to the Ganda is by examining sacrificial eucharistic theology. It is in the eucharist that the sacrificial death of Christ is celebrated in the life of Church.

Using the *tripolar interpretive* process developed by Christina Grenholm and Daniel Patte, I have demonstrated that the way the sacrificial death of Christ as presented in Hebrews 9:1 – 10:18 (analysis of the biblical text) can be appropriated by the Ganda (the context) is through the celebration of an inculturated eucharistic sacrifice (appropriation). All these three poles of the interpretive process are vital if the sacrifice of Christ in

Hebrews 9:1 – 10:18 is to be clarified to the Ganda for whom sacrifice was at the heart of their traditional religion.

The findings of this study reveal that in Hebrews 9:1 – 10:18, Christ has offered himself once-for-all as a sacrifice for all sin in willing obedience to God's will. Through Christ's sacrifice, communication and communion with God has been established for all who have faith in Christ. Ganda sacrifice functioned to establish communication, communion and friendship between the visible and the invisible/spirit world. Furthermore, through sacrifice, evil spirits were appeased and all forms of evil to the community averted. This study has demonstrated that, in the celebration of the inculturated eucharistic sacrifice, the incarnate and risen Lord Jesus Christ meets with the Ganda and bestows the benefits of his sacrificial death to the faithful through faith. If the sacrificial death of Christ is understood in this way, it will no longer be necessary for the Ganda Christians to practice the traditional ways of sacrifice for protection, healing, blessing etc., as some still do today.

CHAPTER 1

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background to the study

Christianity has been in existence in North Africa for many centuries.¹ Protestant and Catholic missionaries brought the Western form of Christianity to many parts of Africa in the sixteenth century and the late eighteenth century. Some of the fastest growing Christian Churches are in Africa. Yet for all that Christianity has meant to Africa, the Christian understanding of sacrifice has not been clarified in societies for which sacrifice lay at the heart of their traditional religion. One such society is the Ganda² in Uganda. They were the first to be evangelised with the gospel of Christ in 1877 when the Protestant white missionaries first came to Uganda. These were followed in 1879 by the Roman Catholic missionaries. Most of the celebrated early Christian Ugandan Martyrs were Ganda. Both Protestant and Catholic missionaries brought Christianity to Uganda in a way which rejected the Ganda traditional beliefs and practices of sacrifice. The protestant missionaries even went a step further by rejecting and downplaying sacrifice in the Christian tradition. The sum total of all this had harmful social consequences for the

¹ According to David B. Barrett, Christianity has had an ancient history in North Africa. As early as the first century CE, the Christian faith had been introduced to Egypt. North Africa was the spectacle of the early church's expansion and turned out prominent theologians of the time – See David B. Barret (ed), *World Christian Encyclopedia: A Comparative Survey of Churches and Religions in the Modern World AD 1900 – 2000*, Volume 1, 2nd ed. (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 456, 252.

² In dealing with the Ganda, there are five terminologies that one constantly comes across and it is better to explain them at this point. They are: *Ganda*, *Buganda*, *Baganda*, *Luganda* and *Kiganda*. It is easy to identify the root in all these words as *Ganda*. When the 'prefix' is added to this root word, then it controls the specific meaning as follows: *Buganda* comes to mean the geographical area where the people live. *Baganda* come to refer to the people themselves (with the singular form: *Muganda*). The language they speak is *Luganda*. *Kiganda* is the way of thinking and doing things among the *Baganda*. It denotes everything pertaining to the customs and beliefs of the *Baganda*. One can for instance speak of the *Kiganda* religion, *Kiganda* dress etc. For practical purposes of this study I will use *Ganda* as an adjective and so will speak of *Ganda* people, *Ganda* culture, *Ganda* language, *Ganda* sacrifice. For further clarification and use of the *Ganda* language see note 27 of chapter six on page 132 of this study.

Ganda people, Christian and non-Christian. It resulted in the long term alienation of Ganda Christians from either their own culture or Christianity or both.

The Ganda are one of the oldest tribal systems in Uganda and have preserved (to a large extent) their cultural values through a strong monarchy. The elaborate sacrificial system of the Ganda has by and large remained intact to date (albeit some of the sacrificial rituals being performed in great secrecy). There is even a reported increase in the once abandoned ritual of human sacrifice.³ This is in spite of clearly defined and stated Church dogma backed by extensive preaching of the Gospel of Christ and relentless condemnation of the traditional practice of sacrifice from the pulpits every Sunday.

John Mary Waliggo writing about Ganda traditional religion and Catholicism in Buganda acknowledges that

The tensions between traditional religion and Catholicism in Buganda have existed from the very beginning of the Catholic presence in the country. If, in fact, the Church's policies were to be judged only by the degree they have succeeded in either eliminating or weakening the Ganda customs, ceremonies and superstitions which were declared incompatible with Catholicism, the conclusion would be none other than that the church has failed badly. Traditional religion has not always been on a diminishing rate among Buganda Catholics.⁴

It is to be understood that the traditional religion that Waliggo refers to here includes the institution of sacrifice.

1.1 Motivation and scope of study

This study explores in detail the concept and practice of sacrifice in the daily life of the Ganda in Uganda and how it relates to the sacrifice of Christ in the Epistle to the Hebrews 9:1 – 10:18. I also examine the implications of all this for the understanding of

³ See details in section 6.6.2.

⁴ John Mary Waliggo, 'Ganda Traditional Religion and Catholicism in Buganda, 1948-75' in Edward Fashole-Luke, Richard Gray, Adrian Hastings and Godwin Tasie (eds) *Christianity in Independent Africa* (London, Rex Collings, 1978), p. 413.

the Christian sacrament of the eucharist. Not all aspects of the eucharist have been studied. The focus is on the sacrificial aspect of the eucharist.

The study inevitably involves some anthropological study on the nature of sacrifice though that is not my primary focus. I primarily carried out this study as a theologian examining sacrifice as a phenomenon of religion.

I acknowledge the commendable work of John Roscoe⁵. Roscoe together with Apolo Kaggwa⁶ have written in general terms about Ganda customs and beliefs. They have attempted an anthropological study of the Ganda people. Anatoli Wasswa⁷ has on the other hand tried to trace the origins of the Ganda customs and beliefs and Taboos, but made a sociological study. Recently, William Mpunga⁸ has examined some Ganda customary practices and recommended how they could be integrated into the Christian liturgy.

Whereas the above works are notable for providing general information about Ganda customs and beliefs, they do not provide the much-needed connection between the peoples' culture and the Bible more specifically in the area of sacrifice. What is the link between the peoples' culture (practices, beliefs, values) and the Bible, which they cherish? Commenting on the African views of the Bible, Mary Getui writes, 'The Bible is regarded as the ultimate source of authority for African Christians'.⁹ Most recently, Jonathan Draper in his article 'The Bible and Culture in Africa' has brought to the fore

⁵ John Roscoe, *The Baganda: An Account of their Native Customs and Beliefs* (London, Macmillan & Co Ltd, 1911).

⁶ Apolo Kaggwa, *Mpisa Z'Abaganda*, (London, Macmillan & Co Ltd, 1952). There is an English translation of the first edition of this book which is not as detailed as the Revised Luganda version: Apolo Kaggwa, *The Customs of the Baganda* (Translated by Ernest B. Kalibala, New York, Columbia University Press, 1934).

⁷ Anatoli Wasswa, *Eby'ekinnansi N'ebuwangwa* (Masaka: St. Joseph's Printery, 1986).

⁸ William Mpunga, *Amagezi g'abedda* (Kisubi: Marianum Press, 1987).

⁹ Mary Getui, 'The Bible in African Theology', in Mary Getui, Knut Holter and Victor Zinkuratre (eds) *Interpreting the Old Testament in Africa* (NY, PeterLang Publishing Inc. 2001), p. 181.

the inextricable connection between the African Christians and the Bible in great contrast to their Western counterparts.¹⁰ Drawing from his South African experience, he writes,

there are commonalities in attitudes towards the Bible. African Catholics and Protestants may have received very different doctrinal teaching, but may well use the Bible in ways closer to each other than they are to Western Catholics and Protestants. Its influence on ordinary people is far stronger than is customary elsewhere in the Christian world (in “township language” it is often called *incwadi yabantu* or “the people’s book”, since it is found in nearly every home even if it is rarely read)¹¹.

For the Ganda Christians, the Bible is not something that they find in the church pews on Sunday. They have it in their homes, go with it to church on Sunday, read it in church and at their Christian gatherings. You are most certain to find a Bible in the parcel of a devout Christian Muganda on a journey – it is such a valued possession. Sacrificial terminology is very dominant in the bible (as will be noted in chapter three, four and five of this study). What is the ordinary Ganda to make of this sacrificial language especially as it is applied to Jesus Christ as we shall observe in chapter five of this study?

Additionally, what is one to make of Christian practices like the sacrament of the eucharist that share similar sacrificial language / word and thought forms with sacrifice in the daily life of the Ganda?¹² Are these to be considered as synonymous or what? When sacrificial language is used in the eucharistic liturgy, is it the sacrifice of Christ that believers have in mind or the traditional sacrifice? This study aims among other things at clarifying these matters and providing the necessary connection which I consider to be the missing link.

¹⁰ Jonathan A. Draper, ‘The Bible and Culture in Africa’. Forthcoming in *Companion to the Bible and Culture*. Edited by J. Saywer. Oxford: Blackwells.

¹¹ Jonathan A. Draper ‘The Bible and Culture in Africa’. Forthcoming in *Companion to the Bible and Culture*. Edited by J. Saywer. Oxford: Blackwells.

¹² For example in Ganda language the word for ‘Sacrifice’ is *Kitambiro*. This word has been adopted in the Christian liturgy of the eucharist – in the Roman Catholic Church in Uganda.

My focus and task in this study has been twofold. First, making a connection between the interpretations of the death of Christ as sacrifice in Hebrews 9:1 – 10:18 and sacrifice in the daily life of the Ganda. Second, relating all this to the Christian sacrament of the eucharist (emphasizing mainly the eucharistic sacrifice). My goal is an inculturated theology of the eucharistic sacrifice (based on biblical resources) that would help the Ganda to appreciate the total sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice represented in the eucharist thus rendering Ganda traditional sacrifices irrelevant (for Christians). Hopefully this will constitute my contribution to the existing body of knowledge. This will encourage the Christian church in Uganda to focus more on the interpretation of the Bible and Christian traditions in the light of the culture of the people and establishing points of connection. This to me has been the missing link in the much appraised inculturation process / contextual studies in Africa.

1.2 Research problem

Major issues and areas of study handled in the research have addressed the following questions: First, how does the Epistle to the Hebrews present Jesus Christ as Sacrifice? I have examined the 'power' and the role / use of the phrase 'blood of Christ' in referring to the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on the cross. Similarly, I have studied the sense in which Hebrews presents the sacrifice of Christ as 'once for all' – the finality of the sacrifice of Christ will be explored. Second, what is the understanding and practice of sacrifice among the Ganda? Here I have investigated the various types of sacrifices that are offered in the daily life of the Ganda and what they are meant to achieve. I have identified the specific sacrifices, what they are and their meaning. Third, does the sacrifice of Christ in Hebrews render obsolete the Ganda Sacrifice / supersede it? Or does sacrifice in the daily life of the Ganda inform their understanding of the sacrifice of Christ in Hebrews? Fourth, what contribution(s) does thought about the sacrifice of Christ in the Epistle to the Hebrews and sacrifice in the daily life of the Ganda have for the understanding of the Christian sacrament of the eucharist?

And why the eucharist one may ask? As I have argued in this study, Hebrews clearly has a sacrificial theology; and where is this located in the life of the church other than within

the traditions of the Christian Church? I have demonstrated that the Christian sacrament of the eucharist is one tradition where sacrificial theology is dominant. If one is to communicate sacrificial theology among the Ganda, the only way to do it is through the examination of the eucharist. This explains why it is imperative to have the chapter on the eucharist in this study. Likewise, both the understanding of the death of Christ as sacrifice in Hebrews and Ganda sacrifice are essential for a meaningful celebration of the eucharist among the Ganda. But most important for me, this approach as described in the methodology below helps to bring both the text of Hebrews and the tradition of the eucharist 'into interaction with the context of the readers'¹³ – the Ganda in this case.

Put differently, my research problem is not simply how the Ganda understand the relationship between their traditional forms of sacrifice and sacrifice in the book of Hebrews. I go beyond this, to answer the question of how I can construct a theology of the eucharist for the Ganda believers which brings into conversation the traditional sacrifice of the Ganda and the biblical book of Hebrews.

1.3 Thesis structure

This thesis falls into nine inter-dependent chapters. Chapter one: General Introduction explains the purpose, problem, motivation and scope, thesis structure, and methodology employed in this study.

The central theme of this study i.e. sacrifice, did not originate with the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews or the traditions of the eucharistic and Ganda sacrifice. It is prominent in pagan communities of antiquity (notably the Graeco-Roman world) and in the Old Testament. It is therefore imperative that any comprehensive study of the theme of sacrifice in the New Testament takes into consideration the understanding and practice of sacrifice in both the Graeco-Roman world and the Old Testament. This is the focus of chapters two and three. Notably the sacrifice of Christ is a key concept of the Epistle to the Hebrews in understanding God's saving act. The appreciation of this concept in the

¹³ Justin S. Ukpong, 'New Testament Hermeneutics in Africa: Challenges and possibilities' in *Neotestamentica* 35 (1-2) 2001, p. 148.

Epistle to the Hebrews depends on an understanding and valuation of the Old Testament sacrifice. The aim of chapters two and three is to determine later whether (and to what extent) the way in which the author of Hebrews interprets the death of Christ as sacrifice draws on or is influenced by concepts and practices of sacrifice in the Graeco-Roman world and the Old Testament.

Chapter four explores the history of research into Hebrews and the main theories that have been used by various scholars regarding the authorship, dating, audience and the main themes that underlie the message of Hebrews.

Chapter five is an exegetical study of Hebrews 9:1 – 10:18. It demonstrates the way in which the author of Hebrews interprets the significance of the death of Christ in purely sacrificial terms using the framework of the Day of Atonement ritual in Leviticus 16.

Sacrifice is a key component of Ganda culture. Chapter six focuses on the understanding and practice of sacrifice among the Ganda. It details the various types of sacrifices that were offered in the daily life of the Ganda and what they are meant to achieve.

The central Christian ritual, the eucharist, is a participatory sacrifice in the death of Christ. Chapter seven analyzes the sacrificial language in the eucharistic liturgy based on the Ganda translated eucharistic liturgies. A survey of the history and theology of the Eucharist forms the background material to this chapter.

It was the understandable but regrettable outcome of the Reformation protest at abuses of the eucharist that a sacrificial understanding of the eucharist was rejected. However, the need for inculturation of the gospel in the Ganda requires Ugandan Christians to re-open this question and to push for a new understanding and ritual expression of the sacrificial nature of the eucharist as expressing the sacrifice of Christ seen in the Epistle to the Hebrews, and to explore its parallels with Ganda culture. This has the added advantage of opening ecumenical dialogue between Catholic and Anglican Christians in Ganda. With this in mind, chapter eight is a dialogue between the three sacrificial traditions:

Hebrews 9:1 – 10:18, Ganda and eucharistic sacrifice with a view of coming up with an inculturated understanding of the eucharistic sacrifice – that is both biblical and contextual.

Chapter nine is a summary that shows how the understanding of the death of Christ as sacrifice in Hebrews and the Ganda concept of sacrifice in dialogue are fertile ground for an inculturated understanding of eucharistic sacrifice that is meaningful to the Ganda today. What this study demonstrates is a new way in which the sacrifice of Christ in the Epistle to the Hebrews and Ganda sacrifice are meaningfully appropriated in the Christian sacrament of the Eucharist.

It is important to mention at this point that the term “sacrifice” in this study is used analogously not univocally when referring to Hebrews and the Eucharist on one hand, and the Old Testament and Ganda sacrifices on the other.

1.4 Approach and methodology

Studies carried out on the Ganda have largely been anthropological. This has been the approach used by many researchers in the area of sacrifice like John Roscoe¹⁴, John Mbiti¹⁵, A. M. Lugira¹⁶, Francis-Xavier Kyewalyanga.¹⁷ A. J. Barret also used an anthropological approach when examining sacrifice among the Turkana people.¹⁸

As already mentioned, I have primarily carried out this study as a theologian examining sacrifice as a phenomenon of religion and taking the Ganda in Uganda as the locus of my

¹⁴ See John Roscoe, *The Baganda: An Account of their Native Customs and Beliefs* (London, Macmillan & Co Ltd, 1911).

¹⁵ John Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (London, Heinemann, 1990).

¹⁶ A. M. Lugira, *Ganda Art: A Study of the Ganda Mentality with respect to possibilities of Acculturation in Christian Art* (Kampala, Osasa Publication, 1970).

¹⁷ Francis-Xavier Kyewalyanga, *Traditional Religion, Custom, and Christianity in Uganda: as illustrated by the Ganda with references to other African cultures and Islam* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1976).

¹⁸ A. J. Barret, *Sacrifice and Prophecy in Turkana Cosmology* (Nairobi, Paulines Publications Africa, 1998).

interpretation. So my theoretical framework has been contextual. I have aimed at establishing a connection between the New Testament understanding of the death of Christ as sacrifice as we have it in the Epistle to the Hebrews 9:1 – 10:18 and the reality of sacrifice in the daily life of the Ganda. My research design has included Library Research and Field Research.

In Library Research I have examined vast written material available on the understanding of the death of Christ as sacrifice in the Epistle to the Hebrews. I have exegeted passages in the Epistle to the Hebrews 9:1 – 10:18 that are used to refer to the death of Christ as sacrifice.

In this I have employed the *tripolar interpretive process* as developed by Christina Grenholm and Daniel Patte.¹⁹ The three poles of this interpretive process are: A scriptural text (which in this study is Hebrews 9:1 – 10:18), the believers' life and the believers' religious perception of life.

As Grenholm and Patte explain, this tripolar interpretive process involves 'a critical analysis of the text, an analysis of the believer's life situation and an elucidation of the theological issues involved in their religious perceptions of life – all of which are integrated in one interpretive process'.²⁰ This I believe will help me offer a contextual exegesis of Hebrews 9:1 – 10:18.

Grenholm and Patte are not alone in the theory and methodology of contextual biblical interpretation. Jonathan A. Draper has provided a modified and easy to apply version of the tripolar interpretive process that involves three steps that he has called distantiation,

¹⁹ Grenholm C. and Patte D, 'Receptions, Critical Interpretations, and Scriptural Criticism' in Grenholm C. and Patte D (eds), *Reading Israel in Romans Legitimacy and Plausibility of Divergent Interpretations* (Harrisburg, Trinity Press International, 2000), pp. 1-54. It is important to note that I am exploring Hebrews 9:1 – 10:18 on behalf of the Ganda readers. The interpretation of this text in this study is a result of my own reading. But I am doing this in a way that is valid for a Ganda reader of Hebrews and also to help me in the understanding of Hebrews.

²⁰ Grenholm and Patte (eds), *Reading Israel in Romans*, pp. 15, 18-19.

contextualisation and appropriation.²¹ Like Grenholm and Patte, Draper emphasises the ordinary readers' context.

As Draper has rightly maintained, it does not really matter which of the three poles of the interpretive process one begins with. It is perfectly possible for one to begin with any of the poles 'provided that each is given due weight' with appropriate consideration for the context of the reader.²² Additionally, no rigid dichotomy of these three poles is to be envisaged. Rather, they are to be seen as belonging to an intergrated interpretive process – or as Grenholm and Patte put it, 'an interpretive process that interrelates three poles: a scriptural text, the believer's life and the believer's religious perception of life'.²³ Grenholm and Patte have warned against taking the three poles as 'referring to three discrete entities'; adding that 'each of these poles is defined through its interaction with the others'.²⁴ I will briefly explain the three poles of the intergrated interpretive process below.

First, we consider the scriptural text (which I have chosen to call the biblical text). This pole entails a critical analysis of the biblical text (which in case of this study is Heb 9:1 – 10:18). In a study of any biblical text, the reader or reading community ought to be aware that every biblical text 'is rooted in a specific historical, social, cultural and economic context'²⁵ other than ours. The text contains a message related to the needs of its specific historical context. Both the text and its context are apart from us. That is why Draper has appropriately called this pole *Distantiation* arguing that every reader or

²¹ Jonathan A. Draper, 'Old Scores and New Notes: Where and What is Contextual Exegesis in the New South Africa' in McGlory T. Speckman and Larry T. Kaufmann (eds), *Towards an Agenda for Contextual Theology: Essays in Honour of Albert Nolan*, (Pietermaritzburg, Cluster Publications 2001), pp. 153-167. Also see Jonathan A. Draper, 'Reading the Bible as Conversation: A Theory and Methodology for Contextual Interpretation of the Bible in Africa' *Grace and Truth, a Journal of Catholic Reflection for Southern Africa* Volume 19 No 2 – August (2002), pp. 16-23.

²² Draper, 'Old Scores and New Notes', p. 155; Draper, 'Reading the Bible as Conversation', p. 16.

²³ Grenholm and Patte (eds), *Reading Israel in Romans*, pp. 8, 14.

²⁴ Grenholm and Patte (eds), *Reading Israel in Romans*, p. 18.

²⁵ Draper, 'Old Scores and New Notes', p. 155.

reading community must 'allow the text to speak for itself by creating space or critical distance between themselves and the text. It must be allowed to be other, different, over against ourselves and our concerns and questions'.²⁶ One goal then as exegetes, explains Draper, 'is always the reconstruction of the text in its own right in opposition to us and needs. ... our work of reconstruction seeks to create sufficient distance for us to hear the voice of the text rather than our own echo'.²⁷ Such critical study of the text²⁸ is what I have given to Heb 9:1 - 10:18 in chapters four and five of this study.

Grenholm and Patte have emphasized the centrality of the 'interpreter-believers' religious experience' as the other indispensable pole of the interactive interpretive process.²⁹ This is the contextualization pole that 'focuses specifically on analysis and evaluation of the context of the reader / hearer today. We need to understand who we are as readers and what the questions are which we bring to the text'.³⁰ In the past, exegetes have not given priority attention to the context of the readers / hearers of the biblical text. According to Grenholm and Patte, there has been some among certain sections of academia 'with a monolithic view of religious experience as a remote and strange corner of the believer's individual existence'.³¹ This study espouses a different and contrary view. Every reader / reading community has a social location that certainly has a bearing on the type of question raised in respect of a particular biblical text and tools to be employed in its interpretation.³² Chapter six of this study has focused on the understanding of the Ganda and their religious experience / perception of life. An understanding of the reader / reading community of the biblical text is imperative for any meaningful interpretive process.

²⁶ Draper, 'Old Scores and New Notes', p. 155.

²⁷ Draper, 'Old Scores and New Notes', p. 156.

²⁸ Grenholm and Patte (eds), *Reading Israel in Romans*, p. 18.

²⁹ Grenholm and Patte (eds), *Reading Israel in Romans*, p. 9.

³⁰ Draper, 'Old Scores and New Notes', p. 157.

³¹ Grenholm and Patte (eds), *Reading Israel in Romans*, p. 9.

³² Draper, 'Reading the Bible as Conversation', p. 16.

The third pole draws the process into the believer's life situation. This, as Draper has suggested is the climax of the interpretative process. It deals with 'the appropriation of the text in the light of the context of the reader /s'.³³ It is through the process of appropriation that the believers accept the 'word' or the message of the biblical text.³⁴ The pertinent question here is how the particular biblical text speaks into the specific situation of the readers / hearers i.e. how 'it relates to their lived faith'.³⁵ In chapters seven and eight of this study, I have demonstrated how the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as we have in Heb 9:1 - 10:18 can be appropriated among the Ganda through an inculturated sacrificial theology of the eucharist.

Justin S. Ukpong has also written with the same concern of 'creating an encounter between the biblical text and the African context - ... so that the main focus of interpretation is on the communities that receive the text rather than those that produced it or on the text itself, as is the case with the Western methods'.³⁶ Gerald O. West has made a strong and convincing case for Contextual Bible reading. Like the other methods discussed above, Contextual Bible reading 'embraces and advocates context'.³⁷

The strengths of the Grenholm and Patte's theory and methodology lie first and foremost on its emphasis on a proper understanding of the biblical text. Secondly, it takes into

³³ Draper, 'Old Scores and New Notes', p. 157. Draper has accordingly called this pole 'appropriation'.

³⁴ Draper, 'Reading the Bible as Conversation', p. 18.

³⁵ Draper, 'Reading the Bible as Conversation', p. 18.

³⁶ Justin S. Ukpong, 'Developments in Biblical Interpretation in Africa: Historical and Hermeneutical Directions' in Gerald O. West and Musa Dube (eds), *The Bible in Africa*, Boston (Brill Academic Publishers, Inc. 2001), p. 11. Also see further Justin S. Ukpong, 'Towards a renewed Approach to inculturation Theology'. *Journal of Inculturation Theology* 1 (1994), pp. 3-15; Justin S. Ukpong, 'Rereading the Bible with African eyes'. *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 91 (1995), pp. 3-14.

³⁷ Gerald O. West 'Contextual Bible Study in South Africa: A Response for Reclaiming and Regaining Land, Dignity and Identity' in Gerald O. West and Musa Dube (eds), *The Bible in Africa*, Boston (Brill Academic Publishers, Inc. 2001), pp. 595-610. Also see further Gerald O. West, *Biblical Hermeneutics of Liberation: Modes of Reading the Bible in the South African Context*, 2nd ed. (Maryknoll, and Pietermaritzburg: Orbis books and Cluster Publications, 1995); Gerald O. West, *Contextual Bible Study*. (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 1993), pp. 11-25.

account the religious experience of the people or individuals concerned. Thirdly, it seeks to enable the biblical text to speak specifically into the situation of the person or individuals. However, this method requires honesty in dealing with both the meaning of the biblical text and the understanding of the religious experience of the people in question. Besides, it is more of a scholarly method requiring knowledge of biblical languages. Often in researching into the context of the text, it becomes imperative that one consults extra-biblical material. The method also requires a thorough knowledge of the religious experience of the people to whom the text is applied.

While being an effective tool in contextual biblical interpretation, the *tripolar interpretive process*, in my opinion, is not a tool that 'ordinary readers of the Bible' (as Gerald West chooses to call them) can easily access.³⁸

The Contextual Bible Study method of Gerald West is very easy and appropriate to work with the ordinary Bible readers. It confronts situations of abuse and violence (especially against women) head-on – opening ordinary Bible readers' eyes and minds to abuse / violence and guiding them to a course of action / or a remedy. It is no harsh criticism to say that this method is essentially another form of liberation theology designed to help people make sense of the Bible in contexts of struggling and suffering. But this method is deficient in the consideration of the faith / spiritual life of specific communities. While it suits the South African context, care needs to be taken when applying the method to other communities who may not necessarily share the same context.

Having said that, a contrast between West and Grenholm and Patte is not intended here since their target audiences or user groups are different. My choice of Grenholm and Patte's theory and methodology is governed by convenience and preference rather than by any significant difference in emphasis. To me, all the methodologies mentioned above are complementary rather than being mutually exclusive or worse still competitive. This aspect of complementarity is what will make contextual bible interpretation stand the challenge that is raised by Justin Ukpong – '... sustaining the African context as the

³⁸ West, *Contextual Bible Study*, p. 8.

subject of interpretation of the Bible...'³⁹ During the Library research, I also examined some of the vast literature of sacrifice on religion.

The Field Research focused first and foremost on conducting field work in the remaining centres of Ganda traditional activity. Secondly, I explored liturgical documentation and practice in the Church in Buganda – study of how the Ganda Christian community employs sacrificial language. Thirdly, I participated and observed Christian rituals where sacrifice or sacrificial language is employed (mainly Eucharistic services). The fourth component of field research was oral /written field-research. Here a series of interviews / discussions with theologians, liturgists, and ordinary Ganda were conducted. With the help of Field Research Assistants, I collected information from the research area – region of Buganda. The consent of the people interviewed was secured by research workers and the people interviewed knew why this was being done. The questionnaire used by the research workers is appended as Appendix 1. The Data collected and used in this study has been compiled and stored at the Uganda Christian University, Mukono Library to be accessed by interested readers and researchers.

1.5 Limitations

The Baganda are by far the biggest single tribe in Uganda covering the districts of Masaka, Mukono, Mubende, Luwero, Wakiso, and Mpigi making up the central region of Uganda.⁴⁰ This is a vast area to cover in order to find representative views on sacrifice

³⁹ Ukpong, 'Developments in Biblical', p. 26. As Ukpong, 'Developments in Biblical', p. 12-13 notes, African scholarship in the 1930s-1970s was dominated by the comparative approach that sought to legitimize African religion and culture. According to Ukpong (himself an advocate of the comparative approach) such 'studies were carried out within the framework of comparative religion and they took the form of showing continuities and discontinuities between the religious culture of Africa and the Bible, particularly the OT. Since the NT shares the same cultural world view as the OT, the consequence of such comparison was considered to extend to the NT too'. In my view, the *tripolar interpretive process* is an advance over the comparative approach. It is a critical analytical approach with appropriation.

⁴⁰ This year (2005) by an Act of Parliament, Mengo Municipality has been carved out of Kampala (the capital city) to serve as the Headquarters of Buganda Regional tier government under the recently

among these people. Though I have lived in the area for twelve years, I am really not one of them. I come from another part of the country (the western region) looked at with some suspicion. Not being a Muganda created language problems. Though I can speak Luganda, some of the deep concepts and terms needed translation. While Ukpong has underscored the need for 'trained readers to know and share the cultural perspectives of the community: that they situate themselves in the community', he has nevertheless mentioned that such people with adequate knowledge of and competence in the culture ... do not have to be indigenous to the culture'.⁴¹ While being indigenous to the culture has its obvious advantages, Ukpong points out that 'those indigenous to the culture need to know the culture critically'.⁴² I suppose this would guard against blind and uncritical appraisal of one's culture.

Admittedly, the majority of the available written books quoted in the bibliography on the subject of sacrifice are not by indigenous Ganda authors. This implies that I heard very few voices of Ganda authors on this subject. But the extensive field research that I carried out helped bridge this gap and I strongly believe that I have been able to construct an authentic Ganda theology of the eucharist based on the research findings.

introduced Regional Tier system of governance. Government has plans to subdivide these existing districts into smaller manageable districts.

⁴¹ Ukpong, 'New Testament Hermeneutics in Africa', p. 163. See further Ukpong, 'Rereading the Bible', p. 5.

⁴² Ukpong, 'New Testament Hermeneutics in Africa', p. 163; Also Ukpong, 'Rereading the Bible', p. 5.

CHAPTER 2

SACRIFICE IN THE GRAECO-ROMAN WORLD

2.0 Introduction

The language of sacrifice was familiar in areas in which Christianity was born and those into which it spread. There was however, a variety of understandings of what sacrifice was meant to achieve for the offerer. Sacrifice was so natural to the world of both the Jews and the pagans that some of them used the language of sacrifice in a metaphorical sense. It is likely that all or some of these thoughts might have influenced the Hebrews' use of sacrificial language in interpreting the death of Jesus Christ. It is therefore imperative at this stage to examine sacrifice in the Graeco-Roman world.

2.1 Sacrifices in the Graeco-Roman world

The word *sacrifice* originates from two Latin words: *sacer* = sacred; and *facere* = to make; thus etymologically, it means 'to make something sacred', i.e. to set something apart and make it sacred. This is precisely how the Graeco-Roman world understood sacrifice.

The essence of the sacred act, which is hence often simply termed doing or making sacred or working sacred things, is in Greek practice a straightforward and far from miraculous process: the slaughter and consumption of a domestic animal for a god.¹

As with nearly all pre-Christian religions, the main element of Roman worship was the sacrifice: *rem divinam facere* "to attend to divine matters" was practically synonymous with "to sacrifice".²

¹ Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical* (E.T. Oxford, 1985), p. 55.

² Burkard Gladigow, 'Roman Religion' in David Noel Freedman (ed), *The Anchor Bible Dictionary Volume 5* (New York, 1992), p. 812.

The two quotations above point us to the centrality of sacrifice in the traditional religious life in the Graeco-Roman world. Frances M. Young points out that the ancient world was saturated with religion at the heart of which was the offering of sacrifice.³ Sacrifice was the way of their religious life. They took it for granted, assumed it and it never occurred to anyone belonging to the traditional Graeco-Roman culture that sacrifice needed any particular definition or explanation.⁴ Sacrifice was an occasion of celebration for the whole community marked by great festivities. Anything from the produce of the land to domestic livestock could be offered as a sacrifice, though animal sacrifices were considered to be better. Even among the animals, the sacrifice of an ox especially the bull was the most noble (most common was the sheep; then the goat, pig and poultry - but use of other birds like geese, pigeons not to mention the fish were rare).⁵ Young attributes the high preference for animal sacrifices to the scarcity of meat, which made eating meat a 'luxury' in those days.⁶ But Michael Lambert disagrees. According to Lambert,

The Athenians still managed to sacrifice four hundred ewes and cows to Athena every year; the Romans sixty thousand cattle during one month at the accession of

³ Frances M. Young, *The Use of Sacrificial Ideas in Greek Christian Writers from the New Testament to John Chrysostom* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, The Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1979), p. 7. She has a summarized section on sacrifice in the Graeco-Roman culture in her other book *Sacrifice and the death of Christ* (London, SPCK, 1975), pp. 21-25.

⁴ Young, *Sacrifice and the death of Christ*, p. 21. See further Hudson B. McLean, *The Cursed Christ Mediterranean Expulsion Rituals and Pauline Soteriology* (Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), p. 52, where he mentions that sacrifice was so vital to the Greek religion that Plato has Socrates define piety as 'knowledge of sacrificing and praying'. Writing about sacrifice among the Romans, Ken Dowden, *Religion and the Romans* (London, Bristol Classical Press, 1992), p. 1 states that 'without butchery there could be no piety'. This understanding is sustained by Mary Beard, John North and Simon Price, *Religions of Rome Volume 2* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 148. Beard, North and Price have written extensively about sacrifice among the Romans detailing the various stages of sacrifice, Records of Sacrifice, Private Sacrifice, Sacrifice without animals, the Season of the 'Sacred Spring', Human Sacrifice, etc - See Beard *et al*, *Religions of Rome*, pp. 148 - 165.

⁵ Burkert, *Greek Religion*, p. 55. He also details on page 56 the requirements for both the people offering the sacrifice and the animal that is being sacrificed.

⁶ Young, *Sacrifice and the death of Christ*, p. 22.

Caligula. There were streets of butcheries clustered around ancient temples; Paul advises the Corinthians not to eat pagan meat from these butcheries!! Many temples had their own fields to graze cattle; skins were sold to replenish sacrificed cattle.⁷

But I see no major contradiction between Young and Lambert. They are all agreed on the central issue: the value of animals sacrifices in Greco-Roman sacrificial rituals.

The meaning and rationale of the sacrifices varied from sacrifice to sacrifice as will be seen later in the section on the different types of sacrifices, with each sacrifice being offered for different purposes and out of various motives.

Whereas one cannot assume a uniform structure for the Graeco-Roman sacrifices, Lambert has observed a 'basic tri-partite structure' comprising of: ritual preparation, the act of killing itself and finally the sharing of the meal.⁸ Royden Keith Yerkes has given us a helpful outline of the specific features that constituted the three major parts of the sacrificial ritual pattern.⁹

I. The preparation

1. Lustration
2. Barley grains ceremonial
3. Prayer

⁷ Michael Lambert in a written response dated 29th, August, 2003.

⁸ Michael Lambert, 'Ancient Greek and Zulu Sacrificial Ritual: A Comparative analysis', in *Numen*, Vol.40 (1993), p. 294.

⁹ Royden K. Yerkes, *Sacrifice in Greek and Roman Religions and Early Judaism* (London, Adam and Charles Black, 1953), p. 99. For a detailed explanation of the features of the sacrificial ritual see Yerkes, *Sacrifice in Greek and Roman Religions*, pp. 97-109. Walter Burkert (whose works I shall constantly be referring to) has reconstructed for us the course of an ordinary Greek sacrifice to the Olympian gods as described in Homer and tragedy – see details Walter Burkert, *Homo Necans: The Anthropology of Ancient Greek Sacrificial Ritual and Myth* (ET, Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1983), pp. 3-7. Another valuable summary is in Lambert, 'Ancient Greek and Zulu Sacrificial Ritual', pp. 294-295.

4. Casting the hair of the animal into the fire
 5. Slaying and flaying of the victim
 6. Processions
- II. The thusia proper
1. Burning thigh pieces and fat: libations
 2. Eating the splanchna
- III. The feast
1. Roasting the victim
 2. The banquet
 3. Libations
 4. Music: song and dancing

Having described the basic elements of a Greek sacrifice above, attention should now be turned to the various forms of Greek sacrifice and the underlying theories.

2.2 Types of sacrifice

There were various types of sacrifices made to the various Greek and Roman deities and it is not possible to analyze each one of them in this study. But the following categories can be identified: the Sacrifice of gifts, Annihilatory sacrifices and Communion sacrifices. I will now examine these individually.¹⁰

2.2.1 The sacrifice of gifts

Burkert has amply clarified the role played by the exchange of gifts in human society: 'through giving and receiving, personal bonds are forged and maintained, and relations of superiority and subordination are expressed and recognized'.¹¹ He adds 'if the gods are

¹⁰ For a detailed classification and description of the forms of Greco-Roman Sacrifices and their primary theories see Burkert, *Greek Religion*, pp. 55-84, and Hans-Josef Klauck, *The Religious Context of Early Christianity: A Guide to Graeco-Roman Religions* (ET, London, T&T Clark Ltd, 2000), pp. 19-23; 37-42.

¹¹ Burkert, *Greek Religion*, p. 66.

the stronger ones and also the givers of good, then they have claim to gifts'.¹² Klauck¹³ has pointed out that all the natural products like meat, wine oil, honey, and milk belonged to the sacrificial cult. Baked products like bread and cakes also belonged to this category. But they also could 'function as independent gifts made in sacrifice'.¹⁴ Liquids could for example be libations, i.e. the gift of a drink, such as wine could be poured out on the ground for the divinities to drink and the offerer would drink the rest. In some incidences all the wine would be emptied onto the ground from the vessel. Some of these natural products were offered alongside the offerings of the first fruits to which we now turn as a sub-category under the sacrifice of gifts.

2.2.1.1 First fruit offerings

It was incumbent upon all to surrender to the deities the firstlings of food whether won by hunting, fishing, gathering or agriculture.¹⁵ The deities came first and had a divine right over the firstlings. These were offered to them as first fruit offerings. As mentioned above, other sacrificial elements like wine could also be offered alongside the first fruit offerings. This kind of gifts would be placed at sacred spots and left there and often other men or animals ate them up. Sometimes they would be sunk in springs and rivers or seas, or burned altogether: 'gift sacrifice turns into sacrifice through destruction'.¹⁶

2.2.1.2 Votive offerings

The most common type of sacrifice was the votive offering. This was in essence a gift offering made to a god as a result of a vow. But as Burkert rightly states, 'votive offerings differ from the first fruit offering more in occasion than in substance'.¹⁷ An individual, a family or the entire community faced with danger, distress, or in any kind of need (sometimes motivated by greed), would make a vow to a particular god or goddess

¹² Burkert, *Greek Religion*, p. 66. Burkert mentions that Plato has Socrates define piety as 'knowledge of sacrificing and praying' and sacrificing as 'making gifts to the gods'.

¹³ Klauck, *The Religious Context of Early Christianity*, p. 20.

¹⁴ Klauck, *The Religious Context of Early Christianity*, p. 20.

¹⁵ Burkert, *Greek Religion*, p. 66.

¹⁶ Burkert, *Greek Religion*, p. 66.

¹⁷ Burkert *Greek Religion*, p. 68.

promising a particular kind of sacrifice if the god would help alleviate a particular problem or satisfy their particular need. If the god(s) removed the predicament (e.g. sickness, famine) or provided what was required and in the case of war provided victory, then it was obligatory upon the person(s) who made the vow to fulfill it. Once a vow was made and the gods successfully responded, it was irrevocable.¹⁸ The type of votive sacrifice depended on what the one who made the vow committed himself / herself to; and by accepting the votive sacrifice, the god(s) would be obliged to do something (some kind of transaction and bargaining with the gods-‘if you will do this for me, then I will...’).

Young sees behind this idea of sacrifice what she calls ‘a very crude and primitive notion of the nature of the gods’.¹⁹ By making this statement, which is rather unfortunate, Young undermines the very essence that maintained the relationship between the gods and human society in the Graeco-Roman world. On the contrary, this relationship with the gods reflects the very essence of ancient Greek inter-personal relationships, which were structured by *charis* or reciprocity.²⁰ Societies cohere because of *charis*. This was the basis of the ‘*do ut des*’ formula (‘I give that you may give’)²¹. But why the gift offerings?

¹⁸ Young, *Sacrifice and the death of Christ*, p. 22 quotes an interesting story when before the Battle of Marathon the Athenians vowed to Artemis that if she helped them to win the battle, they would sacrifice to her she-goats equal in number to the number of the enemy dead. But so many died that they had to pay at the rate of five hundred per year; and they were still paying sixty years or so later. Also on votive offerings see Burkert, *Greek Religion*, p. 69. Gladigow, ‘Roman Religion’, p. 812 speaks of votive offerings in the Roman Religion.

¹⁹ Young, *Sacrifice and the death of Christ*, p. 22.

²⁰ For a detailed discussion of the principle of reciprocity see further C. Lévi-Strauss, ‘The Principle of Reciprocity’, in L. A. Coser and B. Rosenberg (eds), *Sociological Theory: A Book of Readings*, 3rd ed. (London, The Macmillan company, Collier-Macmillan Ltd, 1969), pp. 77-86; Stephen Joubert, *Paul as Benefactor: Reciprocity, Strategy and Theological Reflection in Paul’s Collection* (Tübingen, Mohr Siebek, 2000), pp. 17-37.

²¹ See Walter Burkert, *Structure and History in Greek Mythology and Ritual* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1979), p. 54; G. Hamerton-Kelly, (ed), *Violent Origins*, Walter Burkert, René Girard, and Jonathan Z Smith on Ritual Killing and Cultural Formation (Stanford, California,

There was a common belief in ancient Greece as well as in Rome²² that the gods needed and depended on the sacrifices for food and so some of the gift offerings were offered as food for the gods. If food was not provided then the gods were not happy but were kept in favourable and joyous mood if they were provided with food. Some were of the view that one had to offer the gods food in order to win their favour.

It was not unusual for the gods in the Greek religion to get angry and as Young puts it 'often for no particularly moral reason'.²³ It was therefore necessary to offer sacrifices that would buy off this irrational anger of the gods²⁴ hence the sacrifices of placation and propitiation.²⁵ Gladigow observes that this was true in the Roman religion as well.²⁶

2.2.2 *Holocausts / Annihilatory sacrifices*

As will be seen in the next chapter, holocausts / burnt offerings are very common in the Old Testament. Here as is the case of the Old Testament, the entire sacrifice is consumed in flames leaving nothing for a sacrificial meal. Such sacrifices were offered to divinities and spiritual powers that were thought to be unfriendly and unwelcome (as for example the evil spirits, ghosts, the spirits of the dead) with the objective of keeping their influence away (hence the name aversion sacrifices) as they were thought to be

Stanford University Press, 1987), p. 2; Klauck, *The Religious Context of Early Christianity*, p. 38. It is interesting to note that the words 'charity' and 'eucharist' are derived from *charis* – and this is a principle that Young is not justified in labeling as 'crude and primitive'.

²² See Young, *Sacrifice and the death of Christ*, p. 23; and also Gladigow, 'Roman Religion', p. 812. But McLean, *The Cursed Christ*, p. 61 identifies a social dimension in Greek sacrifices and states that 'sacrifice formed the basis of community (*κοινωνία*) and the very act of offering sacrifice served to reinforce the social bonds that united people together into a community'.

²³ Young, *Sacrifice and the death of Christ*, pp. 23-24.

²⁴ As for example Young, *The use of Sacrificial ideas*, 14, quotes a case of Iphigeneia who was offered as a human sacrifice in response to the demand of the goddess Artemis to placate her anger.

²⁵ Young, *Sacrifice and the death of Christ*, p. 30.

²⁶ Gladigow, 'Roman Religion', p. 812.

responsible for disease, old age, death, and any other evil influence.²⁷ These were moments of sadness and most of these sacrifices were offered at night with great fear. They were either burnt whole or buried whole in the ground.²⁸ Klauck observes that though annihilatory sacrifices occupied a less prominent role than the sacrifice of gifts, they were nevertheless found among the 'Greeks and the Romans especially in expiatory rites and in the cults of the gods of the underworld'.²⁹

2.2.3 Communion sacrifices

Communion sacrifices were another type. The great city festivals held in honour of the gods were included in this category. These were characterised by great celebrations punctuated by worship, rejoicing, feasting and thanksgiving. In communion sacrifices the sacrificial victims were shared between the god(s) and the worshipper(s). These were moments of great joy with the god present as leader or head of the family - all sharing together in the festival. It was an occasion to thank the god for protection and support. The sacrifices of first fruits were also in this category (which in themselves were a form of gift offering); offered to the god in appreciation for a good harvest. For the people in the ancient world, sacrifice was the only way of showing gratitude to their gods.³⁰ There was a unique type of communion sacrifice in which the worshippers were thought to share the divine nature of the gods as illustrated by the cult of Dionysus in which 'ecstatic and frenzied worshippers wandered over the mountains, tearing at the raw flesh of a bull

²⁷ Young, *Sacrifice and the death of Christ*, pp. 24-25. Young, *The use of Sacrificial ideas*, p. 13, points out that sacrifices to the Chthonians, the gods of the earth and the underworld were intended to placate the evil spirits that caused disease, old age and death.

²⁸ Young, *Sacrifice and the death of Christ*, pp. 24-25. Young, *The use of Sacrificial ideas*, p. 13.

²⁹ See Klauck, *The Religious Context of Early Christianity*, p. 20.

³⁰ See Young, *Sacrifice and the death of Christ*, p. 24. Also see Burkert, *Greek Religion*, pp. 166-7 for details of first fruit offerings. On this McLean, *The Cursed Christ*, pp. 58-59 points out that only inedible parts (as for example the thigh bones, pelvis, and tail) were burned for the gods with the rest of the meat being shared by the worshippers. To these inedible parts was added the gall bladder, a libation of diluted wine and some incense. This contrasts greatly with the Jewish whole offerings where the whole of the victim was offered to Yahweh. He adds that 'the Greeks marveled at the custom of the Jew's whole-offering in which no meat reverted to the people'. The aroma from the burnt bones, fat and incense was thought to delight the gods and make them continually favourable to the worshippers.

that was thought to be the actual embodiment of the god. By eating this flesh, the worshipper believed he received a little of the god's power and character'.³¹

Klauck has argued and concluded that this is no longer a popular theory of sacrifice in modern scholarship.³² He quotes Plutarch as speaking 'of the presence of a god at the sacrifice, but not directly of his participation in the meal' arguing that: 'the god would have been seen as the host who receives the sacrificial gifts and generously hands them back to the human persons'.³³ However, Klauck, adds that, 'the idea of the god sharing directly in human person's table fellowship comes more from a mythical ideal than from experienced reality'.³⁴ But as shall be observed in chapter six on Ganda sacrifice, this may not necessarily be true for the Ganda. For the Ganda, sacrifices offered to the benevolent ancestors are taken as an experienced reality and not simply something of a 'mythical ideal' as Klauck states.

Before leaving this section, I need to mention ways in which the sacrificial language was used metaphorically among the pagan communities.

2.3 The metaphorical uses of the idea of sacrifice

The aim of this section is to examine instances where the concept of sacrifice was used in a metaphorical sense rather than in a literal understanding of sacrifice to interpret the death of people on behalf of others. I shall consider Martin Hengel's work *The Cross of the Son of God* (1976) in which he points out that the idea and practice of people dying on behalf of others or for their city did exist in the Graeco-Roman world.

³¹ Young, *The use of Sacrificial ideas*, p. 14.

³² Klauck, *The Religious Context of Early Christianity*, p. 39.

³³ Klauck, *The Religious Context of Early Christianity*, p. 39.

³⁴ Klauck, *The Religious Context of Early Christianity*, p. 39. As further explained, perhaps in the mystery religions (Eleusis, Isis – Sarapis, Mithras, Cybele), but communion sacrifices were not in the mega sacrifices of the Greek or Roman city.

2.3.1 Representative atoning death in the Graeco-Roman world

Martin Hengel's thesis is that there are within the traditional culture of the Greeks and the Romans, analogies for 'the interpretation of the death of Jesus Christ as a presupposition for his exaltation and also a representative atoning death for others'.³⁵ In this regard, I shall seek to answer the question of whether the Greeks and the Romans derive this theme from the world of sacrifice or from somewhere else. We shall also explore whether there is any suggestion that the life of the person who dies is being offered to anyone (which is a key element in the idea of sacrifice).

He arrives at his conclusion by investigating three valued ideals in the Graeco-Roman culture namely: *the apotheosis of the dying hero, dying for the city and for friends, and dying for the law and the truth*. I shall comment on each briefly below.

2.3.1.1 The apotheosis of the dying hero

Hengel asserts that there are examples in Greek myth where voluntary acceptance of death is taken as a way of divine honour indicated by the gods (as is the case of two heroes: Heracles and Achilles).³⁶ To these heroes and others after them, it was more glorious to accept death if that is what the gods had resolved. There is also the example of the Cynic - and erstwhile Christian - Peregrinus Proteus, who is reported to have immolated himself in Olympia in CE 165. He is said to have hurled himself onto the burning pyre with the cry 'May the gods of my mother and father be gracious to me'.³⁷

Hengel points out that voluntary death was understood as the way towards deification. He concludes that any historical investigation of the NT should not be confined to the OT and Judaism. Attention must be paid to the Graeco-Roman world as well adding that Jewish and Greek conceptions were already fused in the pre-Christian period.³⁸ This is

³⁵ Martin Hengel, *The cross of the Son of God* (E.T. London, SCM Press, 1976), p. 192.

³⁶ Hengel, *The cross of the Son*, p. 192.

³⁷ Hengel, *The cross of the Son*, p. 193.

³⁸ Hengel, *The cross of the Son*, p. 193.

the hypothesis of a conclusion of Martin Hengel's major work, *Judaism and Hellenism* (1974).³⁹

2.3.1.2 Dying for the city and friends

Death for some Greeks and the Romans was regarded as noble and glorious. It was especially so when such death occurred in defence of the nation or the city as in the case of war. In the classical Greek period argues Hengel, there are familiar 'expressions for the voluntary sacrifice of a man's life in the interests of the native city, his friends and his family'.⁴⁰ Hengel adduces many examples in support of his argument but for purposes of our investigation, only a few will be quoted below.⁴¹

In praise of vicarious death in battle, one called Hector is said to have urged Trojans:

Go fight at the ships in close groups, and if any of you, wounded by arrow or sword, should meet death and fate, let him lie in death; it is no disgrace to die fighting for one's country.⁴²

The Spartan poet Tyrtaeus is making the same point when he says:

For it is honourable to be killed, to fall in battle among the foremost fighters as a brave man, for one's country.⁴³

Ephesian Callinus also writes:

For it is a glorious thing when a man fights for his country, his children and his wife.⁴⁴

Pindar goes to the extend of regarding dying for the city as a religious sacrifice:

³⁹ See Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period*, Volume one (ET, London, SCM, 1974), pp. 310-314.

⁴⁰ Hengel *The cross of the Son*, p. 197.

⁴¹ For the rest of the examples not quoted in this work, see Hengel, *The cross of the Son*, p. 197-203.

⁴² Hengel, *The cross of the Son*, p. 198.

⁴³ Hengel, *The cross of the Son*, p. 198.

⁴⁴ Hengel, *The cross of the Son*, p. 198.

Hearken, O war-shoot, daughter of war! Prelude of spears! To whom soldiers are sacrificed for their city's sake, In the holy sacrifice of death.

(...ἔθύεται ἄνδρες ὑπὲρ πόλιος τὸν ἱερόθυτον θάνατον).⁴⁵

The root for the word *θύεται* is *θυσία* used normally of animal sacrifice and it appears that Pindar seems to imply that those who had died had died as a sacrifice to the god of war whom he describes as 'war-shoot, daughter of war! Prelude of spears!' It is to this god of war that those who had died in defence of the city had been sacrificed. Other texts that Hengel quotes in which sacrificial language is evident are: Euripides, *Erechtheus* fr. 79.38f.: *κόρην / θῦσαι πρὸ γαίας*; Plutarch, *Pelopidas* 21.2: *Λεωνίδα τε τῷ χρησμῷ τρόπον τινὰ προθυσάμενον ἑαυτὸν ὑπὲρ τῆς Ἑλλάδος*.⁴⁶

The Stoics after Chrysippus are quoted as having said that:

to sacrifice one's life for one's country or for one's friends was foremost among the reasons which justified one's voluntary death.⁴⁷

The ideal of representative dying for the community is one that both Greeks and Romans were well versed with from childhood. It was usual for those who had given their lives in death for the native city, its gods, holy laws and temples, to be worshipped as heroes, as if they were divine beings. Those who lost their lives in battle also shared in the same fame.

2.3.1.3 Dying for the Law and the Truth

Recounting the death of Socrates, Plato said:

Faithful to the inner command of the god, Socrates fulfilled his task in Athens and, mindful of the laws of the city, did not try to escape the unjust death penalty imposed on him, but fearlessly drank the cup of hemlock. In this way he becomes

⁴⁵ Hengel, *The cross of the Son*, p. 199.

⁴⁶ Hengel, *The cross of the Son*, p. 268 in his endnote 31.

⁴⁷ Hengel, *The cross of the Son*, p. 201.

the prototype of the martyr who looks death fearlessly in the eye for the sake of the truth - which he represents.⁴⁸

Hermias (a friend of Aristotle, who was crucified by the Great King) is said to have 'sent a message from the cross to his friends that he had not done anything unworthy of philosophy or shameful'.⁴⁹

The transfer of voluntary representative death for the sake of the nation, city and friends to a religious voluntary death for the Law and the Truth was the basis of 'the idea of martyr'.⁵⁰ It is likely that the devout Jews fighting in the time of the Maccabees (as will be noted in the next chapter) would have adopted the tradition of fighting and dying for the law, righteousness and divine truth from this philosophy, which they then used 'to create a new type of martyr'.⁵¹

It is not possible to trace the origins of this ideal of representative death so prevalent within the culture of the Greeks and the Romans. The likelihood that they did not borrow it from elsewhere remains. But from the examples quoted above, one issue that emerges very clearly is that in most of the cases the language of sacrifice is used loosely to refer to someone doing something hugely costly on behalf of his nation, city, family or friends. Apart from the example of Pindar (quoted above) and the sacrifice of individuals in the early Greek period where human sacrifice for the good of the community was often understood in expiatory terms to appease the anger of the gods,⁵² it is not usually explicit that the life of the person is being offered to the deity. On the contrary, the heroes are the ones who are glorified and even worshipped as if they were divine beings. The idea that exaltation, glorification, honour etc. are achieved through representative death for the sake of others is implicit in Hebrews as will be seen in chapters four and five later.

⁴⁸ See Hengel, *The cross of the Son*, p. 192-3 for further examples.

⁴⁹ Hengel, *The cross of the Son*, p. 204.

⁵⁰ Hengel, *The cross of the Son*, p. 203.

⁵¹ Hengel, *The cross of the Son*, p. 204.

⁵² Hengel, *The cross of the Son*, p. 207. There are further examples of human sacrifice among the Greeks on pages 208ff.

2.4 Summary and critique

In this chapter, we have surveyed the theme of sacrifice among the ancient communities of the Greeks and the Romans, which were the main missionary centres of the early Christian Church and probably the cultural background of the readers of the Epistle to the Hebrews. It is worthwhile noting that for the ancient communities of the Greeks and Romans, the means of relating to the deity was through sacrifice. Sacrifice was at the heart of their religious life and one could not speak of the deity in any meaningful way apart from sacrifice. The metaphorical use of the language of sacrifice in Graeco-Roman cultures has also been explored. It is now time to draw together the findings of our survey.

In summary, there was not one but many concepts of sacrifice in the Graeco-Roman world. The meaning and what sacrifice was thought to achieve also differed from one type of sacrifice to another. It emerges from our discussion that these ancient communities thought of the gods in more human terms ascribing to them the irrational anger of humans and making them liable to manipulation and bribery. The examples of the goddess Artemis (quoted in note 18) illustrate this point. Among the ancient Greeks and Romans, propitiatory sacrifices were offered as bribes to buy off the anger of the deities or to oblige the gods to meet some specific needs of the worshipper(s). As I shall be demonstrating in the next chapter, there is no evidence in the OT that the Jews ever understood Yahweh in this way. It appears that there were no explicit expiatory sacrifices. We do not find sacrifices that are understood as a means of wiping away sin, as is the case of the expiatory sacrifices in the OT (see next chapter). This does not mean that they did not have a concept of evil such as would pollute them or their environment. The issue is that even sacrifices intended to deal with such situations of pollution were offered with a sense not of directly removing evil but of appeasing the gods.⁵³ The

⁵³ All the purification rituals in the literature surveyed bear witness to this fact. See Robert Parker, *Miasma: Pollution and Purification in early Greek Religion* (Clarendon, Oxford University Press, 1983), pp.104-143 (the shedding of blood); pp. 257-280 (purifying the City); pp. 370-374 (the ritual of purification from homicide) etc. Also Burkert, *Greek Religion*, pp. 75-84; Burkert, *Structure and History*, pp. 64 -67 (of the scapegoat and Pharmakós); Hamerton-Kelly (ed), *Violent Origins*, pp. 73-105. The seriousness with

equivalent of sin offerings are the ones offered with the sense of placation, propitiation and aversion; to keep away the anger and influence of an otherwise dangerous and unhappy god or spirits.

Martin Hengel has explored the metaphorical use of the language of sacrifice among the ancient Greeks and Romans where the heroic death of people for their native city, nation, family or friends is expressed as sacrifice made on behalf of others. Representative dying for others becomes an ideal that is highly cherished in the communities and some of the heroes are worshiped as if they were gods. But as we observed, in most of the cases, there is no understanding that the life of the heroes is being offered to any particular deity which relegates the sacrificial language to a metaphorical sense from the basic understanding of sacrifice as an offering made to a deity.

It remains to be seen in chapters four and five, whether the author of Hebrews in interpreting the death of Christ as sacrifice was in any way influenced by the concepts of sacrifice in the Graeco-Roman world.

which the Greeks and Romans treated pollution and guilt notwithstanding, we do not find evidence for explicit expiatory sacrifices as was understood among the Jews.

CHAPTER 3

OLD TESTAMENT BACKGROUND TO THE THOUGHT OF HEBREWS ABOUT SACRIFICE.

3.0 Introduction

At the very heart of the religious life of Israel was the principal rite of sacrifice and Hartmut Gese is not overstating the matter when he says that it was hard to imagine Israel without the cult.¹ The altar was the place of sacrifice. In its broadest sense, sacrifice meant any offering (animal or vegetable) wholly or partially offered upon the altar as a sign of gratitude or expression of respect to God.² If one had to ask the Israelites the question: How is one to worship, relate or pay homage to God? The answer would constantly be: through sacrifice at the altar³ (which was the symbol of God's presence). As already stated above, there was no single type of sacrifice but many and I shall now examine the various types of sacrifices and their significance in the Old Testament.

¹ Hartmut Gese, in his *Essays on Biblical Theology* (Minneapolis, 1981), p. 100. Also Roland de Vaux argues that to speak of the public worship of Israel was to speak of sacrifice, which meant the offering of a gift upon the altar – See Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its life and Institutions* (E.T. London, 1965), p. 415.

² See de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, p. 415.

³ See de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, p. 415. Altar translates the Hebrew *mizbēah* meaning “the place of slaughter” and therefore in the sacrificial context, to slaughter with a view to sacrifice – *mizbēah* then comes to mean ‘the place of animal sacrifice – see Robert J. Daly, *Christian Sacrifice* (Washington, The Catholic University of America Press, 1978), p. 115. However, as the ritual of sacrifice developed, the altar acquired a broader meaning e.g. in the Temple, sacrifices other than birds were killed at some point away from the altar and then later placed upon it; the vegetable offerings were also placed on the altar. We find the same word being used for the altar of incense – See further de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, p. 415. It is to be acknowledged however, that at least in the first century (Christian era), doing Torah and not ritual sacrifice came to be the focus of some Jews e.g. among the community of the Dead Sea Scrolls (e.g. 1QS 8:1-19).

However, this exploration of the types and significance of sacrifices in the OT should not be expected to encompass and or detail the entire general scope of all the types of sacrifices in the OT, which is not the main focus of my thesis. In the first part of this section mention will indeed be made of other types of sacrifices, but in the later and larger section I shall be focusing more on sacrifices for sin or sacrifices made in relationship to atonement.

To help me do this, I have chosen to examine the work of three scholars (namely Hartmut Gese, Leon Morris and David Hill), giving both a descriptive and critical analysis of their understanding of sacrifice in the OT. I shall be summarizing their arguments, pointing out what each one of them thinks is significant for understanding what sacrifice means and how it works. In some cases I will be handling two or more scholars with similar or contrasting views together. This information will be helpful later as a kind of grid to test what I am to say about what I discover in Hebrews.

3.1 Types of sacrifices

Gese contends that there is no evidence for the existence of a sin offering in pre-exilic times. Atonement is not understood as an element of sacrifice before the post-exilic period.⁴ However, this should not be understood to mean that there were no ritual acts of atonement. God being inherently merciful and gracious did free humans from sin, 'but, for those humans, atonement means a readiness to die'.⁵ A ransom had to be found to

⁴ Gese, *Essays on Biblical*, pp. 98-9. The mention of sacrifice and whole burnt offering that could not expiate the sins of Eli's household (1 Sam 3:14) do not point to the existence of sin offerings before the exilic period. He adds that the mention of sacrifice and burnt offerings here is meant to point to the inadequacy of the entire priestly sacrificial system, which could not expiate the iniquity of Eli's house. Even 2 Kings 12:16 which appears to explicitly mention that King Jehoshaphat never used money from the sin offerings to renovate the Temple is no evidence for the existence of sin offerings in the pre-exilic period but rather should be understood to mean that 'no use was made of the offerings given for the atonement, because such misuses would have profaned the Temple'.

⁵ Gese, *Essays on Biblical*, pp. 98-9 This is the situation as when Moses offers his life as a ransom (Hebrew *kopher*) for the sin of his fellow Israelites (Ex 32:31-32); offering his very existence in the book of life and this is nothing short of a substitution of life for life through a complete giving up of self. The

substitute for the otherwise forfeit life and this had to be accompanied by total surrender on the part of humans. A penalty for death had to be paid. There was to be restitution for sins and errors, which could be made good. For such sins and errors there was to be no atonement and individuals concerned had to take responsibility and make restitution where it was possible. What is important here is that there had to be a substitution of life for life through an act of complete surrender of self in situations where restitution was not possible.

The situation was however different following the Assyrian and Babylonian conquests of Israel-Judah as a nation. There was an increasing awareness among the Israelites that the exile had been as a result of their sin and the call to repentance dominated the theology of the prophets of that period. There was a new and deepened understanding of atonement and the cult. As recorded in the priestly code, in the post-exilic cult, atonement was recognized as the basis for the cult.⁶ There was therefore a transition from the concept of atonement, which had nothing to do with worship to one that became the basis of all regular cultic practices. However, this transition did not happen very suddenly but rather occurred over a long period.

Sacrifices that involved the shedding of blood occupied a special place in the cultic worship of Israel.⁷ Two broad categories of sacrifice can be identified. First, the holocausts/ burnt offerings (*olah*) where the victim was wholly burnt on the altar and nothing ever went to the person who brought it or to the priest (save for the skin). Everything was offered to God by burning. This symbolized a person's whole commitment to God. Second, the meal offerings (*zabah*), which as the name suggests were for human consumption after the slaughter (also called communion sacrifices).

sons of Saul had to lose their lives (2 Sam 21: 1-14) and Isaiah in his vision in Isaiah 6 experienced a burning in his heart; this being symbolically expressed because it does not involve an actual total sacrifice.

⁶ Gese, *Essays on Biblical*, pp. 100-1.

⁷ Gese, *Essays on Biblical*, pp. 100-1. Only domestic animals raised for human consumption were used as sacrifices. The laws and regulations of ceremonial purity excluded all animals of prey from the hunt and more so those that were not edible.

Only specific pieces of the fat around the intestines, the kidneys and the liver were burnt on the altar while the rest of the meat was shared by the priests and the person who brought the sacrifice. Leviticus 3 describes the principal ritual. The distinctive feature of this sacrifice is that the victim is shared between God, the priests and the person who brought the sacrifice. Initially it appears that the purpose of both *olah* and *zabah*⁸ was to pay homage to God and to acknowledge him as the Lord of life.

The transition spoken of above becomes even clearer when we come to the Priestly material and the rituals of consecration in Exodus 29 and Leviticus 8-9. Whereas the broad categories of *olah* and *zabah* can still be applied to these types of sacrifices, there are obvious distinctive details in the rituals and also a marked shift in their significance as seen in the section that follows.

Here is identified the third broad category called expiatory sacrifices whose main purpose was to re-establish the covenant with God when it has been broken by human sin.⁹ Expiatory sacrifices are subdivided into sin offerings (*chattat*) and guilt offerings (*asham*).¹⁰ The sin offering was made in situations where sins had been committed and

⁸ Only male animals were involved in burnt offerings, which ranked higher than the meal offerings. In the pre-deuteronomic times, meal offerings could be celebrated anytime when there was a slaughter of an animal. Also among the burnt offerings, the sacrifice of the first-born male was given highest place. For a more detailed classification of sacrifices in the OT and their significance, see de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, pp. 415-456; Robert J. Daly, *The Origins of the Christian Doctrine of Sacrifice* (London, Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd, 1978), pp. 11-35. A related discussion of expiatory sacrifices by de Vaux is found in his other valuable work: Roland de Vaux, *Studies in Old Testament Sacrifice* (Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 1964), pp. 91-112. Also Justin S. Ukpong, *Ibibio Sacrifices and Levitical Sacrifices*, (Rome: Urbaniana University Press, 1990), pp. 98-166 and Vincent Taylor, *Jesus and His Sacrifice*, (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1937), pp. 49-75; C. S. Gayford, *Sacrifice and Priesthood* (London, Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1924), pp. 23-58.

⁹ See de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, p. 418.

¹⁰ Gese, *Essays on Biblical*, pp. 102-3 & 109-110 contains a detailed discussion of these two types of sacrifices. Also see de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, pp. 418-21 for similar discussions. For ritual details of sin offering cf. Lev 4:1-5:13; 6:17-23 and for the guilt offering cf. Lev 5:14-16; 7:1-6.

also for ceremonies of consecration.¹¹ The sin offering during the rituals of consecration allowed access to the holy. The sin offering was made only in respect of inadvertent sins and not for sins committed deliberately.¹² The sin offering was a form of a burnt offering as the victim was wholly burnt (when the sin offering was being made for the priest, and the entire community). But in cases where a sin offering was being made by the elder of the people or by any individual on his own behalf, then only the fat, kidneys and the appendages of the liver were burnt on the altar and the rest of the flesh was eaten by the priest (the person who brought the sin offering was excluded). Also very significant here was the blood ritual. Part of the blood from the sin offering was sprinkled on each of the horns of the altar and the rest was poured at the base of the altar. This was the minor blood rite but there was also a major blood rite when the sin offering was being offered for the High Priest and or for Israel. In this situation the blood was applied to the Temple, the curtain in front of the holy of holies and on the horns of the incense altar in front of the holy of holies. The rest of the blood was again poured at the base of the altar of burnt offering. Besides this major blood rite, there was yet another greater blood rite when on the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*) the blood was sprinkled on the mercy seat (the place of the very presence of God- the place where God appeared). More will be said about the Day of Atonement later. Preceding the blood ritual was the ritual of laying hands on the sacrifice by the offerer before it was slaughtered and there is more to say about these two rituals later in the chapter. As already mentioned above, the sacrifice in this case cannot be eaten but is wholly destroyed outside the camp.

On the other hand the guilt offering (*asham*) was some kind of meal offering except that the person who brought the offering did not share in it (hence also the name *negative*

¹¹ See Ex 29; Lev 8 & 9; Ezek 43:18ff; 45:18ff.

¹² Lev 5: 1-13 has a long list of sins for which a sin offering could be made and they include such sins as: failure to give testimony when you are in position to, not being able to observe the laws and regulations governing moral purity and cleanness, uttering a rash oath for a good or bad purpose. But the sin offering did not cover sins for which people or individuals were guilty of and for that there was the guilt offering which originally concerned repentance and not atonement.

meal offering). The Priest burnt the fat, sprinkled blood on the altar and ate the flesh.¹³ If an individual committed an offense out of negligence, then he was guilty and was required to offer a guilt offering. In the event that there had been some material damage or loss resulting from this negligence, then there was need to make restitution and a penalty of a fifth of the damages was usually imposed. As mentioned earlier (see note 12), the guilt offering was an offshoot of the meal offering and more to do with repentance than atonement in its original setting.

Gese notes another unique development in the priestly material (P) in that atonement is no longer limited or confined to the sin offerings, but that now all types of sacrifices achieve atonement.¹⁴ Atonement becomes the basis for offering any and every sacrifice. The entire sacrificial system of Israel now serves to atone. This is what is found in Ezekiel e.g. in Ezek 43:18-27 there are various burnt offerings that are made for the dedication of the altar, and it is said of all of them that they are 'to make atonement for the altar' (v 26). In Ezek 45:13-17 is listed a number of items for the sacrifices (which include grain-offerings, burnt-offerings and offerings of well being) and again they are all 'to make atonement for them, says the Lord God' (v 15 & 17). In Lev 9:7, all the sacrifices of the priest and of the people atone. Therefore, this seems to confirm the assumption that all sacrifices after Ezekiel's period are interpreted as being for atonement.

The unanswered question up to this point is how all these sacrifices worked out ritually to bring or effect atonement. This is the point at which we should describe the works of three scholars to examine how they thought atonement was achieved in all types of sacrifices for sin.

¹³ Cf. Lev 5:14 - 6:7; 7:1-10. For a recent detailed account of burnt offering, the grain offering, the peace offering, the sin offering, the guilt offering; see Derek Tidball, *The Message of Leviticus* (Leicester, IVP, 2005), pp. 35-94 and P. P. Jenson, 'The Levitical Sacrificial System' in Beckwith, T. R. and Selman, J. M. (eds), *Sacrifice in the Bible* (Carlisle, Paternoster Press, 1995), pp. 25-40.

¹⁴ Gese, *Essays on Biblical*, p. 103.

3.2.1 Hartmut Gese

Gese points out that to effect the cultic process of atonement, two cultic rituals are essential and these are: the laying on of hands (*semikah*) and the blood ritual. In the section that follows, I examine the significance that Gese attaches to these two rituals in the atonement cult.¹⁵

According to Lev 1:4, the people are instructed thus: 'You shall lay your hand on the head of the burnt-offering, and it shall be accepted in your behalf as atonement for you'. The implication here is that through the act of laying hands on the animal, atonement is made possible for the person offering the sacrifice. The same is recorded of King Hezekiah and the people in the rededication of the sanctuary in Jerusalem (as found in 2 Chr 29:23). So it appears that the laying on of hands was necessary in the atonement ritual of the sin offering. Later when all sacrifices acquired the function of atonement, the laying on of hands came to apply in all types of sacrifices.

Coming back to our question, what did this ritual act of laying on of hands on the offering signify in the atonement process? Two theories have been suggested. First, the transference theory which interprets the laying on of hands as an active act of the transfer of sins to the animal and second, the identification theory which sees in this act the person who has brought the offering identifying with it.

The passage in Lev 16:21-2 is quoted in strong support of the transference theory but Gese argues that there are other passages in the Bible where the laying on of hands is not associated with a transfer of sins.¹⁶ There are even recorded instances where the ritual of laying on of hands was done collectively.¹⁷ Besides, the hands are laid on the head and

¹⁵ See Gese, *Essays on Biblical*, pp. 104-9 for a detailed discussion on the significance of laying hands on the victim before it is offered /slaughtered and the blood ritual that followed. Also see de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, p. 415 with a similar argument.

¹⁶ Cf. Num 27:18, 23; Deut 34:9 where the laying on of hands is used to appoint a successor and Num 8:10 which concerns the consecration of the Levites.

¹⁷ Cf. Lev 4:15; 2 Chr 29:23.

not the back of the animal normally used for carrying heavy loads, which implies that identification rather than transfer of a burden of sins is meant.

However, Gese does acknowledge that there might be a case for the transference of sins with an appropriate confession by an individual as in the case of Lev 16:21-2, but goes on to argue that even this passage speaks against the transference theory in respect to atonement.¹⁸ He makes a distinction between the *semikah* in respect of the first goat (where there is no confession of sins on the victim) and the *semikah* of the second goat (with a confession of sins on the victim). The priest lays his hands on the scapegoat, confesses the sins on the goat; a kind of giving them to the goat which in turn carries them away in the elimination ritual which is performed in addition to the ritual of *semikah*. So there appear to be two rituals that are performed sequentially and hence this situation should be treated as a special case where in addition to the *semikah*, the ritual of transference of sins is actualized through a confession and giving of sins to the scapegoat. The two are to be treated as separate procedures from which one cannot draw a general principle. Besides, the scapegoat is not sacrificed, only the first goat (Lev 16:15-17) is offered as an atoning sacrifice and it is likely that the laying on of hands here is done in parallel to the atonement ritual of the first goat.¹⁹

So there is no transfer of any objective or material sin, rather in the act of laying on of hands there is the transfer of the subject expressed in the gesture- 'a serving in the place of'.²⁰ Gese concludes that what all this means for our understanding of atonement is that 'atonement takes place through the sacrifice of the life of an animal which, by a laying on of hands, is identified with the one bringing the sacrifice' which fits well with the definition of atonement as 'a substitutionary commitment of a life'. It is inappropriate to contemplate the act of atonement as an objective transfer of sins to the victim which in turn is destroyed with the burden of sins it is bearing in a sacrificial ritual. To regard it as such would be to exclude the person who brought the sacrifice from the atonement act

¹⁸ Gese, *Essays on Biblical*, p. 105.

¹⁹ Concerning the Day of Atonement, see further below pages 40-41.

²⁰ Gese, *Essays on Biblical*, p. 106.

itself. It is rather to be understood that 'in cultic atonement the sacrifice of the victim's life is a substitution that embodies the one who brings the sacrifice'.²¹ Furthermore, one should not imagine that by killing the animal, the sinful material is being annihilated. The primary purpose seems to be the shedding of the blood, which is then used in a holy blood ritual that in essence brings the owner of the sacrifice in touch with God, and it is vital to consider the significance of this blood ritual now.

The biblical prohibition²² of eating of blood is based on the OT belief in the sanctity of blood as expressed in Lev 17:11; 'For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you for making atonement for your lives on the altar; for, as life, it is the blood that makes atonement'. So it is the blood of the animal that bears the life element of the animal. This is the reason why in the OT and in most of biblical usage, 'shedding of blood' is not merely bleeding the animal or injuring a person, but the taking or the giving up of life in death. Consequently, the blood of the animal was its life (*nephesh*) in totality. The only known sanctioned way of shedding blood in the OT was through the ritual of sacrifice. The understanding is that as the animal is killed in the ritual of sacrifice, its life substance (i.e. its blood) is set free and it is this life substance that God says that He has given to make atonement.²³ The question that needs to be asked is how this life substance achieves atonement for the person who brought the animal.

Gese observes that this is where the ritual of *semikah* works together with the blood ritual to effect atonement. Through *semikah*, the one making the offering identifies his life (*nephesh*) with that of the victim, 'and through the shedding of the animal's blood the life of the person who brings the sacrifice is symbolically offered up'. Later when the blood

²¹ Gese, *Essays on Biblical*, p. 106.

²² For passages prohibiting the eating of blood, cf. Lev 17:10, 14; 7:26f; 3:17; Deut 12:24; Gen 9:4.

²³ For the Biblical understanding of 'blood' as 'life' given up in death and the power of sacrificial blood as atoning, purifying and sanctifying – see further F. Laubach, 'Blood', in C. Brown (ed), *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* Volume 1, Revised Edition, (Carlisle, Paternoster, 1986), pp. 220-224 and J. Behm, 'αἷμα, αἱματεκχυσία', in G. Kittel (ed), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Volume 1(ET, Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1964), pp. 172-177.

of the victim is sprinkled on the holy articles (in the ritual act of sprinkling),²⁴ effectively the life of the offerer comes in contact with and is incorporated into the holy and in this way atonement for the person making the offering is achieved. To use Gese's words: 'the blood ritual which follows the laying on of hands is the constitutive element in atonement'.²⁵

Lastly and most important of all was the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*) which ranked highest in the cultic life of Israel, for it was only on this day throughout the year that the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies to make atonement for himself, his household and all Israel for all the inadvertent sins accumulated throughout the old year that may not have been covered by the daily sin offerings during the course of the year. The details of the rituals of the Day of Atonement are in Leviticus 16. I shall only focus on the essentials of the cultic activity of this day. This is where the elimination ritual of the goat for Azazel is found. Again Gese maintains that the ritualistic removal of sin should be seen as distinct from the atonement act, which is limited to the goat, which is slaughtered in sacrifice.²⁶ The High Priest entered the Holy of Holies²⁷ (which was the place of divine presence) with the blood of the sacrifice and sprinkled it on the mercy seat. He also sprinkled it seven times before the mercy seat. To the Israelites this was the most comprehensive atonement. The significance of the Day of Atonement lay in the fact that by a substitutionary sacrifice of life, Israel was brought into contact with God himself.

In the ritual process of cultic atonement, Gese identifies two important rituals: the laying on of hands (*semikah*), and the blood ritual (both the minor and major blood rituals as

²⁴ See previous paragraph above.

²⁵ Gese, *Essays on Biblical*, p. 110.

²⁶ Gese, *Essays on Biblical*, p. 113. Gese compares this elimination ritual to that involved in the cleansing of lepers in Lev 14:7 where a bird symbolically carried away the leprosy.

²⁷ In the holy of holies was the Ark of the Covenant, which symbolized God's presence. In fact it was understood that God as King was enthroned invisibly above the Ark. On top of the Ark was the mercy seat, which acted as the lid of the Ark of the Covenant and was thought to be the place of atonement – See J. M. Gundry-Volf, 'Expiation, Propitiation, Mercy Seat' in Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin (eds), *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters* (Leicester, IVP, 1993), p. 282.

already described).²⁸ In *semikah*, the life of the sacrificer is identified with that of the victim. When the victim later gives its life in death through the shedding of blood, symbolically it is the life of the person who brought the sacrifice that is being given up. Through the blood ritual then, the sacrificer is brought in contact and is incorporated into the Holy hence achieving fellowship with the Holy -technically called atonement. Gese sums up by saying that atonement is achieved through the sacrifice of the life of an animal, which he terms 'a total substitutionary commitment of a life'.²⁹ However, when using the word 'substitutionary', he appears to mean what scholars commonly mean by 'representation' as well: as explained by Colin E. Gunton.³⁰ In applying these two terms to Jesus Christ, Gunton distinguishes between them as follows: 'if Jesus is man before God, then He must be said to represent the rest of us'.³¹ Being one like us, He can be spoken of as our representative before God. But in as far as Jesus 'does for us what we cannot do for ourselves, He is our substitute'.³² This way according to Gunton, Jesus then becomes both our representative and substitute – making these terms complementary and not mutually exclusive when applied to the work of Christ on the cross for us.

3.2.2 C.H. Dodd, and the response of Leon Morris and David Hill

Leon Morris and David Hill are essentially making a critique of C.H. Dodd's work. They are debating whether atonement in the *LXX* should be understood as achieved through expiation of sin (as Dodd suggests) or propitiation of the deity (as Morris and Hill argue). Since both Morris' and Hill's arguments are based on the work of Dodd, it is helpful if I start by stating Dodd's position.

²⁸ Refer back to page 34 where details of this have already been covered.

²⁹ Gese, *Essays on Biblical*, p. 106.

³⁰ I am using the terms 'substitution' and 'representation' in a way defined and described by Colin E. Gunton in his book, *The Actuality of Atonement* (Edinburgh, T & T Clark, 1988), pp. 160-7. I am raising the issues of 'substitution' and 'representation' here but these are issues that relate more directly to the New Testament material and will become clearer when we examine material related to the sacrificial death of Christ in Chapters 4, 5, and 7.

³¹ See Gunton, *The Actuality of*, p. 161.

³² See Gunton, *The Actuality of*, p. 165.

3.2.2.1 C.H. Dodd

Dodd's proposal is that when the *LXX* uses the *ἱλάσκω*-word group, the intended meaning is that of expiation rather than propitiation.³³ God, argues Dodd, is never the object of the atonement act but always the subject of it and therefore atonement should be understood as God's act whereby guilt or defilement is removed. Dodd arrives at this conclusion through three stages and I shall briefly look at each one in turn.

First, he examines a number of other words in the *LXX* (other than *ἱλάσκεσθαι*) which translate the Hebrew word *kipper* (and its derivatives) which is usually translated in English as 'atone', or 'to make atonement'.³⁴ Such words are: *ἐξιλάσασθαι* in Dan 9:24 (the Hebrew *chatem* which literally means confirm, affix a seal or seal up). *ἐξιλάσασθαι* is used in parallel with *kipper*. Here the iniquity of the people is the object of the atoning act. The other passage is found in Ex 33:10 where *ἐξιλάσεται* (the Hebrew *kippurim* meaning, 'the smearing' refer to atonement as a covering of sin by wiping or smearing). The sense here is that of the purification of the Altar of Incense. I shall quote two more passages before arriving at Dodd's conclusion. They are: Ex 29:33, 36. In these two texts, *kipper* is translated *ἀγιάζειν* (meaning to set apart as sacred to God; make holy, consecrate; regard as sacred; purify, cleanse). What is important for us here is that the objects of the purifying or cleansing action are the priests and the altar respectively. This leads Dodd to conclude that:

where the *LXX* translators do not render *Kipper* and its derivatives by words of the *ἱλάσκεσθαι* class, they render it by words which give the meaning 'to sanctify', 'purify' persons or objects of ritual, or 'to cancel', 'purge away', 'forgive sins. We should therefore expect to find that they regard the *ἱλάσκεσθαι* class as conveying similar ideas.³⁵

³³ See C. H. Dodd, 'ἸΛΑΣΚΕΣΘΑΙ, its cognates, derivatives and synonyms in the Septuagint', *JTS* 32 (1931), pp. 352-60. The same work is reproduced word for word (except for the change of the heading to 'Atonement') in his book, *The Bible and the Greeks*, (London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1935), pp. 82-95.

³⁴ See Dodd, 'ἸΛΑΣΚΕΣΘΑΙ, pp. 352-3 for details of the examples quoted.

³⁵ Dodd, 'ἸΛΑΣΚΕΣΘΑΙ, p. 353.

Second, Dodd goes to great depth of grammatical detail to examine Hebrew words other than *kipper* and its derivatives, which are translated by the Greek word *ἱλάσκεσθαι* and other words of the same class.³⁶

a. *Ἐξιλάσκεσθαι* in middle where the human is the subject (*chitter*'), meaning 'cleanse from defilement', 'expiate', as in Ezek 43:23; 45:19.

b. *Ἰλασκεσθαι* in middle where the divine is the subject (*salach*) come to mean 'to forgive' as in 2 Kings 5:18; Ps 24:11; always used of God as the subject.

c. The passive form of *Ἰλασκεσθαι*; *ἴλεως εἶναι* or *γίγνεσθαι*, *εὐίλατεύειν* all with divine as the subject renders *salach* and also carries the meaning 'to forgive', as in Deut 29:20; 2 Kings 24:4; Am 7:2.

d. *Ἰλεως* in Num 14:19 renders the Hebrew *Nasa'* (meaning lift, carry or take) i.e. taking away iniquity; which in the context can be taken simply to mean 'forgive' and this would imply that it is used in the same sense as in 'c' above.

e. *Ἰλασκεσθαι* in passive, *ἴλεως γίγνεσθαι* with the divine as the subject renders the Hebrew *nicham* or *richam* both of which convey the sense of 'having compassion' as in Ex 32:14; 32:12. Again it is out of God's own compassion that He is going to have mercy on the people, not that anything is being done to Him by the people to induce Him to be compassionate.

Nonetheless, Dodd acknowledges that there are a number of passages where *ἐξιλάσκεσθαι* is used in the middle with human subject and God as the object. In such cases it renders the Hebrew *chilah* meaning 'to appease, pacify, propitiate'.³⁷ This is true of such passages as: Zech 7:2; 8:22; Mal 1:9. Dodd accepts these examples when he

³⁶ The details of the examples summarized here can found in Dodd, 'ἸΛΑΣΚΕΣΘΑΙ, pp. 353-6.

³⁷ Dodd, 'ἸΛΑΣΚΕΣΘΑΙ, pp. 354-5.

says, 'In these three passages, then, we meet for the first time with unmistakable examples of the ordinary classical and Hellenistic sense of ἐξιλάσκεσθαι = "to propitiate".'³⁸ The context of Ps 105:30 (*LXX*) allows for a similar interpretation. Another passage he considers is 1 Sam 6:3. But Dodd dismisses these examples as 'merely exceptional' on which a theory of propitiating God cannot be based. He therefore goes ahead to draw his conclusion that:

where words of the ἱλάσκεσθαι class do not render *kipper* and its derivatives, everywhere, except in the four cases last considered, they render words which fall into one or other of two classes: (a) with human subject, 'to cleanse from sin or defilement', 'to expiate' ; (b) with divine subject, 'to be gracious', 'to have mercy', 'to forgive'.³⁹

Finally, Dodd examines a number of passages in which the ἱλάσκεσθαι class is used to translate *kipper* and its derivatives and he identifies many of these with the same results as already shown above (and I have only quoted a few of them)⁴⁰ insisting that:

the *LXX* translators did not regard *Kipper* (when used as a religious term) as conveying the sense of propitiating the Deity, but the sense of performing an act whereby guilt or defilement is removed, and accordingly rendered it by ἱλάσκεσθαι in this sense.⁴¹

Therefore, Dodd observes that *kipper* is never a propitiatory offering and sees no evidence in the *LXX* that the translators ever understood it in that way at all. Hellenistic Judaism as we know it in the *LXX*, he concludes, 'does not regard the cultus as a means of pacifying the displeasure of the Deity, but as a means of delivering man from sin'.⁴²

³⁸ Dodd, 'ΙΑΑΣΚΕΣΘΑΙ, pp. 354-5.

³⁹ Dodd, 'ΙΑΑΣΚΕΣΘΑΙ, p. 356.

⁴⁰ Dodd, 'ΙΑΑΣΚΕΣΘΑΙ, pp. 356-9. E.g. Lev 16:16; 16:33; 23:27-8; Ezek 45:20; Deut 21:8; 1 Sam 3:14; Ex 30:10; Num 29:11; 1 Chr 28:11 etc.

⁴¹ Dodd, 'ΙΑΑΣΚΕΣΘΑΙ, p. 359.

⁴² Dodd, 'ΙΑΑΣΚΕΣΘΑΙ, p. 359.

But as we shall be discovering in the next section, Leon Morris and David Hill have seriously challenged this.

3.2.2.2 Leon Morris and David Hill

Morris' and Hill's criticism of Dodd stems from his virtual elimination of any propitiatory ideas in the *LXX*.⁴³ Morris and Hill, agree with Dodd that you cannot think of God in terms applicable to the capricious irrational anger and character of the Greek pagan deities who needed to be bribed or placated in order to do anything for their subjects.⁴⁴ God is merciful and gracious, they all concede. But Morris and Hill go a step further to state that God's inherent opposition to evil expressed as His wrath and therefore requiring propitiation or being turned away cannot be dismissed. They are also quick to add that this turning away of God's wrath should not be thought of as the work of man or human beings (which would make the work of atonement a human endeavour and achievement) but that God being gracious and merciful provides that which turns away his wrath. I shall be examining in the section that follows, the arguments they advance to support their case.

The point of difference between Morris and Hill on one hand and Dodd on the other seems to hinge very much on the seriousness that they attach to the reality of the wrath of God. Dodd maintains that it is improper to apportion to God the passionate, irrational and capricious anger of the heathen deities and therefore the *LXX* cultus should not be taken as a way of ameliorating the anger of the Deity but as a means of rescuing man from sin.⁴⁵ Morris is not lacking in Bible passages⁴⁶ to prove that the concept of the

⁴³ The details of their arguments are found in the two books Morris and Hill have written: Leon Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* (London, 1955), pp. 125-85; David Hill, *Greek words and Hebrew meanings: Studies in the semantics of soteriological terms* (Cambridge, 1967), pp. 23-48.

⁴⁴ Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching*, pp. 129, 155. Also Hill, *Greek words and Hebrew meanings*, pp. 24-5.

⁴⁵ Dodd, 'ΙΑΑΣΚΕΣΘΑΙ, p. 359.

⁴⁶ Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching*, pp. 131-2. Here Morris quotes a number of passages to show that 'there is consistency about the wrath of God in the OT. It is no capricious passion, but the stern reaction of divine nature to evil in man. It is aroused only and inevitably by sin' as for example in: Job 21:20; Jer

'wrath of God' is deeply embedded in the OT; adding that it is both 'real and serious'. The wrath of God is in no way to be confused with that of the pagan deities, argues Morris and for purposes of clarification, I shall quote in full what he says:

God is not thought of as capriciously angry (like the deities of the heathen), but because He is a moral being His anger is directed towards wrongdoing in any shape or form. Once roused, this anger is not easily assuaged, and dire consequences may follow. But it is only fair to add that the OT consistently regards God as a God of mercy, so that, though men may and do sin and thus draw upon themselves the consequences of His wrath, yet God delights not in the death of the sinner, and He provides ways in which consequences of sin may be averted.⁴⁷

The prophets and the psalmist use even stronger language in referring to God's anger in more personal terms.⁴⁸ However, Morris observes that the God of anger is also by nature merciful (as in Mic 7:18; Ps 85:2f).⁴⁹ He further shows ways in which the wrath of God is averted (but since they are non-cultic ways of turning away God's anger, they shall not be discussed here).⁵⁰ Worth noting are those passages which point out that it is God Himself who removes his wrath (as in Ps 78:38; Isa 48:9; and Ps 85:2f- where Morris notes that forgiveness and the averting of God's wrath are treated as being analogous).⁵¹ Morris seems to give an answer to the gloomy picture that he paints by his discussion and emphasis on the reality and seriousness of the wrath of God when he says that:

the general picture which the OT gives us of God is of One who is by nature merciful and who cannot be swayed by man's puny efforts, so that forgiveness is always due in the last resort to God's being what He is, and not anything that man may do. Because God is God, He must react in the strongest manner to

6:11; 21:12; Ezek 8:18; 16:38; 23:25; 24:8; 24:13; 25:17; Ex 22:23f; 2 Chr 28:11-13; 2 Kings 13:3; 23:26; Num 32:14 etc.

⁴⁷ Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching*, p. 131. Also see p. 132 for the effects of God's wrath.

⁴⁸ Cf. Ezek 7:8; Jer 23:20; Is. 30:27-31; Ps 60:1-3.

⁴⁹ Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching*, p. 134.

⁵⁰ Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching*, p. 135.

⁵¹ Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching*, p. 136.

man's sin and thus we reach the concept of the divine wrath. But because God is God, wrath cannot be the last word. 'The Lord is good; his mercy endureth for ever' (Ps 100:5).⁵²

Although Hill supports Morris's argument regarding the reality and seriousness of the wrath of God, he rightly points out that sometimes Morris forces evidence in favour of the wrath of God.⁵³

Having established that sin which severs the relationship between man and God causes a holy reaction to evil in God (otherwise called God's wrath or anger), Morris and Hill argue that it is only reasonable that any means of restoring that broken relationship should embody in itself a mechanism by which that anger or wrath is turned away (the technical term being 'propitiation'). They argue that Dodd has made a theological error of interpretation by taking the passages he refers to out of their contexts; 'Dodd omitted all discussion of contexts from his study and thereby deprived himself of an important guide to interpretation'.⁵⁴ In the majority of passages where *ἰλάσκεσθαι* and related words occur, there is compelling evidence for reference to God's wrath or anger with many of them expressing the desire that God should really turn away his wrath (as in Ex 32:12-14 and Dan 9:16).⁵⁵ Dodd in totality ignores such examples hence casting doubt on most of the conclusions he draws from his investigation.

Dodd is also criticized for grouping together words, which by themselves vary so much in meaning as for example, 'sanctify', and 'cancel'.⁵⁶ This does not offer any helpful guidance to the understanding of the meaning of the *ἰλάσκομαι*- group argue Morris

⁵² Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching*, p. 136.

⁵³ Hill, *Greek words and Hebrew meanings*, p. 25. Hill does not see how the wrath of God is expressed in Ps 25:11; 65:4 as asserted by Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching*, p. 139.

⁵⁴ Hill, *Greek words and Hebrew meanings*, p. 25. See further Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching*, pp. 137-8.

⁵⁵ Hill, *Greek words and Hebrew meanings*, p. 25.

⁵⁶ Dodd, 'ΙΑΑΣΚΕΣΘΑΙ, p. 353, in the first summary of his investigation.

and Hill.⁵⁷ Again here it would have been helpful if Dodd had paid close attention to the contexts of these words. The same goes for Dodd's understanding that *kipper* and *ἐξιλάσκομαι* can be taken to have the same meaning. True as this may be, it would be wrong to assume (as Dodd does) that the rest of the Hebrew words rendered by *ἐξιλάσκομαι* are related in meaning to *kipper*. There is always the need to consider the particular contexts in which the individual words are set.⁵⁸

Dodd ascribes to the fact that where *ιλάσκεσθαι* and its cognates are used in respect to the pagan deities, the intended meaning was almost in all cases 'to propitiate', 'make propitious', 'to be propitiated' (in the passive), but adds that when used of the Deity, it means 'to be gracious'.⁵⁹ Dodd suggests that the *ιλάσκεσθαι* word group acquires a completely new meaning in the *LXX* when he asserts that:

Thus Hellenistic Judaism, as represented by the *LXX*, does not regard the cultus as a means of pacifying the displeasure of the Deity, but as a means of delivering man from sin, and it looks in the last resort to God himself to perform that deliverance, thus evolving a meaning of *ιλάσκεσθαι* strange to non-biblical Greek.⁶⁰

Hill and Morris see Dodd's assertion as illogical.⁶¹ Morris says that it is unthinkable that the *LXX* translators used words, which in themselves mean propitiation or are associated with propitiatory ideas without actually meaning propitiation, as this would be 'the surest way of being misunderstood'.⁶²

⁵⁷ Hill, *Greek words and Hebrew meanings*, pp. 25-6 and Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching*, p. 137.

⁵⁸ Hill, *Greek words and Hebrew meanings*, pp. 25-6 and Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching*, p. 137.

⁵⁹ Dodd, 'ΙΑΑΣΚΕΣΘΑΙ, p. 356.

⁶⁰ Dodd, 'ΙΑΑΣΚΕΣΘΑΙ, p. 359.

⁶¹ Hill, *Greek words and Hebrew meanings*, pp. 24-5; and Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching*, p. 130.

⁶² Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching*, p. 130.

Dodd after his search for words other than *kipper*, which *ἱλάσκεσθαι* and related words render in the *LXX* arrives at the same conclusion⁶³ insisting that *ἱλάσκεσθαι* does not mean 'to propitiate'. Again here, Hill thinks that Dodd is wrong in assuming that once the meaning of a Hebrew word is known, then we do not only know the Greek meaning which renders it in the *LXX*, but also the meaning of any Greek word which translates it. Hill does not find the second part of this assumption to be always true. While he acknowledges this method to be a good guide, he says that it is not an absolutely reliable procedure and to do this would be to regard 'translation as a process of mechanically inserting equivalents. The ideas expressed in the context, rather than the presence of a particular Hebrew term, may have influenced the choice of translation'.⁶⁴

The criticism of Dodd's work seem to intensify because of the way in which he treats the passages that Hill refers to as 'cases in which uncertainty does not prevail'⁶⁵ (these are Zech 7:2; 8:22 and Mal 1:9). Concerning these passages, Dodd also writes that they are 'unmistakeable examples of the ordinary classical and Hellenistic sense of *ἐξιλάσκεσθαι* = 'to propitiate'.⁶⁶ This is the form in which they appear in the *LXX*:

Zech 7:2 καὶ ἐξαπέστειλεν εἰς Βαιθὴλ Σαρασάρ καὶ Ἀρβεσεὲρ ὁ βασιλεὺς καὶ οἱ ἄνδρες, αὐτοῦ ἐξιλάσασθαι τὸν Κύριον. [And Sarasar and Arbeseer the king and his men sent to Bethel, and that to propitiate the Lord...]

Zech 8:22 καὶ ἔξουσιν λαοὶ πολλοὶ καὶ ἔθνη πολλὰ ἐκζητῆσαι τὸ πρόσωπον Κυρίου παντοκράτορος ἐν Ἱερουσαλὴμ καὶ ἐξιλάσασθαι τὸ πρόσωπον Κυρίου το προσωπον Κυρίου.

[And many peoples and many nations shall come to seek earnestly the face of the Lord Almighty in Jerusalem, and to obtain favour of the Lord - conciliate the face of the Lord].

⁶³ This has already been quoted in full on page 43 and it will not be reproduced here.

⁶⁴ Hill, *Greek words and Hebrew meanings*, pp. 26-7. Also for the details of this see the examples he gives of such texts as: 2 Kings 24:4; Ex 32:14.

⁶⁵ Hill, *Greek words and Hebrew meanings*, p. 27. Also see Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching*, pp. 152-3.

⁶⁶ See Dodd, *ἸΛΑΣΚΕΣΘΑΙ*, p. 355.

Mal 1:9 καὶ νῦν ἐξιλάσκεσθε τὸ πρόσωπον τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ δεήθητε αὐτοῦ.
[And now entreat the face of your God, and make supplications to him]. Here
ἐξιλάσκεσθε literally means “propitiate”.

Clearly in these passages God is the object of a propitiating action and Morris and Hill see no reason for interpreting them otherwise. But Dodd explains these away by referring to them as exceptional cases, suggesting that here ‘the translators have deliberately used *ἐξιλάσκεσθαι* with a note of contempt for its standard meaning in pagan usage, as unworthy of the God of Israel’.⁶⁷ Hill is surprised that Dodd does not give these passages the significance that they deserve in his findings.⁶⁸

Hill concludes by pointing out that since the *LXX* uses *ἱλάσκεσθαι* in a propitiatory sense (as for example in Ps 106:30; Ecclus. 45:23; Zech 7:2; 8:22; Mal 1:9; and most likely 2 Kings 24:4; Ex 32:14 and 1 Sam 6:3), the significance of this finding should not be dismissed or ignored altogether in the discussion of how the *ἱλάσκ*-word group is used in the *LXX*.⁶⁹ So much then for the general use of *kipper* in the *LXX*, I must now turn to specific examples of the cultic use of *kipper* in the closing part of this section.

Morris extensively discusses the use of *kipper* (as a verb) and *kopher* (as a noun) in respect to the offering of sacrifices. He admits that when *kipper* is being used in respect to sacrifices it is not immediately possible to find out exactly how atonement was achieved adding that in most cases the meaning is such as ‘to accomplish reconciliation between God and man without anything to indicate how that reconciliation is held to be obtained’.⁷⁰ He notes a transition from the non-cultic to the cultic usage of *kipper* in the event recorded in Num 15:41-50. The people have rebelled against Moses and Aaron. God is angry about this and as a result a plague breaks out (v46). Aaron makes an

⁶⁷ See Dodd, *ἸΛΑΣΚΕΣΘΑΙ*, p. 355.

⁶⁸ Hill, *Greek words and Hebrew meanings*, p. 27.

⁶⁹ Hill, *Greek words and Hebrew meanings*, pp. 29-30.

⁷⁰ Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching*, p. 148.

offering of incense to avert God's wrath (verses 46f). Morris admits that this was not one of the prescribed offerings but suggests that since the action was performed by a consecrated priest it lies within the boundaries of the cultus serving in a situation of an emergency.⁷¹

Morris also sees the cultus closely linked with *kopher* in Num 15:25 where it reads 'And the priest shall make atonement (*wekhipper*) for all the congregation of the children of Israel and they shall be forgiven; for it was an error and they have brought their oblation (*'eth-qorbanam*), an offering made by fire to the Lord'.⁷² Implicit in the word *qorban* is the sense of a gift and this makes Morris to conclude that in this passage *kipper* 'stands for a process of making atonement by the offering of a suitable gift'.⁷³ He sums up his conclusion by maintaining that the general impression produced by the sacrificial system is that an offering of a propitiatory character is being made, emphasizing that the verb *kipper* is used in the sense of turning away God's wrath by offering a *kopher*.⁷⁴ However, Morris is keen to maintain that the cultus should never be thought to mean that the God of Israel can be bought (it is not bribery) but 'it is the divinely appointed way of removing wrath, of propitiation'.⁷⁵

Hill does not however entirely agree with Morris here. He does not think that ideas of propitiation were always present in the non-cultic use of *kipper* and suggests that the same may be true for the cultic occurrence and use of *kipper*.⁷⁶ His argument is that in many of the cultic appearances of *kipper* in sacrificial contexts (especially in Leviticus and Ezekiel) it is not even possible to tell for sure whether the emphasis is on propitiation or expiation. For this reason he settles for terminologies like 'atonement',

⁷¹ Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching*, p. 149.

⁷² Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching*, p. 150.

⁷³ Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching*, p. 150. Among the passages he quotes which have the idea of the gift element in the sacrifice are: Deut 16:16; Judg 6:18-9; Isa 18:7; Zeph 3:10.

⁷⁴ See Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching*, pp. 150-3.

⁷⁵ Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching*, pp. 160.

⁷⁶ Hill, *Greek words and Hebrew meanings*, p. 33.

reconciliation', and 'forgiveness', words which he thinks includes aspects of both ideas.⁷⁷ He concludes by saying that 'while the ritual of sacrifice was performed as a means of expiation, the whole action was regarded as propitiatory, because the consequences due to sin in the divine wrath were averted'.⁷⁸

To sum up: the vast number of passages examined in the non-cultic use of the *ἱλάσκ*-word group in the *LXX* point to an action whereby sin is the object of an atoning act and God as the subject- technically called expiation. But there are also some passages where the context requires and does mean that the act of atonement involves the turning away of God's wrath or anger; not by bribery as in the case of the pagan gods, but that God being gracious and merciful provides that which averts His anger. Understood in this way then, propitiation becomes a gracious act of God not that human beings are doing anything to buy off God's wrath. There are also those passages, which speak explicitly of propitiation (as for example Zech 7:2; 8:22; Mal 1:9).

3.3 The metaphorical uses of the idea of sacrifice

The aim of this section is to examine instances where the concept of sacrifice was used in a metaphorical sense rather than in a literal understanding of sacrifice to interpret the death of people on behalf of others. The case of the Maccabaeans martyrs is a very good example of this.

3.3.1 The Maccabean martyrs

This refers to a group of devout Jews who lost their lives following the persecution before and during the Maccabean Revolt, which was an uprising opposed to the attempts of Antiochus (during the Seleucid domination) to suppress the traditional worship in Jerusalem and Judea.⁷⁹ The martyrs chose death rather than to renounce their faith in

⁷⁷ Hill, *Greek words and Hebrew meanings*, p. 33.

⁷⁸ Hill, *Greek words and Hebrew meanings*, p. 34.

⁷⁹ For the historical details of the Maccabean Revolt, see Uriel Rappaport (1992) 'The Maccabean Revolt' in David Noel Freedman (ed), *The Anchor Bible Dictionary Volume 4* (New York, Doubleday, 1992), pp. 433-439.

Yahweh or abandon their religious practices.⁸⁰ The events of this historical period have been preserved for us in the four books of Maccabees and, without going into historical details of these books, I shall examine the relevant sections of these books.

We read in 1 Macc 6:28-47 when during the battle, Eleazar spots one of the elephants and supposing that Antiochus himself is riding on it, went straight to it, rushed underneath it and stabbed it from beneath and killed it. But he also died under its weight because it collapsed on him. But in the face of what one would call a tragic death, it is said of Eleazar: 'So he gave his life to save his people and to win for himself an everlasting name' (1 Macc 6:44).⁸¹

The story of Eleazar is retold in 2 Macc 6:18-20 and how he courageously chose death rather than to be polluted with swine flesh. It is written of him that he died, 'leaving in his death an example of nobility and a memorial of courage, not only to the young but to the great body of his nation' (v 31). Tabor identifies two important themes in these stories. First, 'the willingness of the individual to die and second, the nobility that such a death exemplifies'.⁸²

Most astonishing is the story of seven brothers and their mother in 2 Maccabees 7. The King forced them to partake of unlawful swine flesh (v 1) but one of them speaking on behalf of the rest said; '...we are ready to die rather than transgress the laws of our ancestors' (v 2) and the King was enraged at their refusal (v 3). It is told in this chapter how each one of them met his/her horrific death after untold torture.

⁸⁰ It is for example recorded in 1 Maccabees that the Jews who had revolted would not fight back if attacked on the Sabbath as this would be a violation of God's law and so they chose to die. We read of how they comforted each other, 'Let us all die in our innocence; heaven and earth testify for us that you are killing us unjustly' (1 Macc 2:37).

⁸¹ For the rest of the events in 1 Maccabees, see Thomas Fischer (E.T. 1992) 'First and Second Maccabees' in Freedman (ed), *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* Volume 5 (New York, Doubleday, 1992), pp. 439-50. A similar account is given by James D Tabor, 'Martyr, Martyrdom' in Freedman (ed) *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* Volume 4 (New York, Doubleday, 1992), pp. 575-9.

⁸² Tabor, 'Martyr, Martyrdom', p. 576.

The story of Eleazar and the martyrdom of the seven brothers and their mother is picked up in the book of 4 Maccabees, and Tabor is right in saying that this book is essentially an expansion of 2 Macc 5:29-7:42.⁸³ Eleazar tells his torturers that he will not denounce the law of his ancestors and even asks them to fuel the fire a lot more (4 Macc 5:29-32). Likewise the seven brothers and their mother after denouncing their torturers, each one of them faces a daunting death but with courage. It is even written of the youngest brother and the mother that they threw themselves into the blazing fire (see 4 Macc 12:19 and 17:1 respectively).

The most striking idea as indeed Tabor concludes is that in 4 Maccabees 'these deaths bring vicarious atonement for the sins of the nation'.⁸⁴ Shortly before he died Eleazar prayed thus: 'Be merciful to my people, and let our punishment suffice for them. Make my blood their purification, and take my life in exchange for theirs' (4 Macc 6:28-9). Later the author writes in 4 Macc 17:21-2:

the tyrant was punished, and the homeland purified-they having become, as it were, a ransom for the sin of our nation. And through the blood of those devout ones and their death as an atoning sacrifice, divine Providence preserved Israel that previously had been mistreated.⁸⁵

They are also spoken of as those who 'gave over their bodies in suffering for the sake of religion' and by them the nation gained peace (4 Macc 18:3-4). The reference to blood elsewhere (as for example in 1 Macc 1:37; 7:17; 2 Macc 8:3; 4 Macc 6:6; 6:29; 9:20;

⁸³ Tabor, 'Martyr, Martyrdom', p. 576. For another discussion of the events of 4 Maccabees, see also Hugh Anderson (1992). 'Fourth Maccabees' in David N Freedman (ed) *The Anchor Bible Dictionary Volume 4* (New York, 1992), pp. 452-4.

⁸⁴ Tabor, 'Martyr, Martyrdom', p. 576.

⁸⁵ Commenting on this passage, Anderson, 'Fourth Maccabees', p. 453 suggests that words like 'satisfaction (translated above as 'suffice'), ransom and propitiation (here translated as 'atoning sacrifice')' are reminiscent of long-standing OT traditions as for example the Levitical regulations of the Day of Atonement (Lev 16; 17:11 etc.). He also sees parallels in Isa 53:5, 10, & 11 where the Servant of Yahweh, taken as a single individual or a group, would by suffering and sacrifice redeem God's people Israel. He adds that, 'the notion of vicarious sacrifice and the saving efficacy of the death of the martyred righteous, however, naturally became especially prominent in the period after the Maccabean wars'.

10:8; 17:22) is further evidence of people who had died innocently and in defence of their faith.

The Maccabean martyrs believed that their deaths were in part vicarious atoning sacrifices for their fellow Jews and the land of Israel. This was in addition to the divine inheritance, which was their reward. Passages like 4 Macc 1:11; 6:29; 17:21 speak of the death and blood of the martyrs as being for 'purification' for the land and the people and there is reason to believe that sacrificial imagery is evident here. The death and blood of the martyrs is explicitly spoken of as 'a ransom for the sin of the nation' (4 Macc 17:21) and *ἱλαστήριον* translated here as an 'atoning sacrifice' (4 Macc 17:22). Anderson is right in saying that the use of words and phrases here is suggestive of OT traditions (e.g. the Levitical traditions of the Day of Atonement in Leviticus 16).⁸⁶ It remains to be seen whether Hebrews was in any way influenced by this martyr theology in interpreting the death of Christ.

3.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have surveyed the theme of sacrifice in the OT. It is now time to draw together the findings of our survey.

It is worthwhile noting that for Jews, (like in the Graeco-Roman world) the means of relating to the deity was through sacrifice. Sacrifice was at the heart of their religious life and one could not speak of the deity in any meaningful way apart from sacrifice. We have examined the meaning and types of sacrifice in the OT and how atonement for sin was thought to be achieved.

Central to the OT understanding of atoning sacrifice is the idea that Yahweh is the author of sacrifice, putting in place means through which human beings alienated by sin can be restored to Himself and Leviticus 17:11 makes this very clear: 'For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and *I have given it to you for making atonement for your lives on the altar*'.

⁸⁶ Anderson, 'Fourth Maccabees', p. 453.

Whatever their theories of atonement, Gese, Dodd, Morris and Hill all agree that God takes the initiative in the atonement act. Atonement is not the work of man nor does man initiate it. It is from beginning to end the work of God. There is also consensus that the passionate irrational and capricious anger of the Greek and Roman deities cannot be attributed to God who is by nature Gracious and Merciful. That sin is the human predicament that is dealt with by God in the act of atoning sacrifice is not contested by any. But differences in the understanding of how God deals with sin in the act of sacrifice for sin abound.

Gese argues that in the OT, atonement for sin is understood to be achieved through a substitutionary commitment of the life of the animal in death, for it is the blood (*nephesh*) of the victim on the altar that achieves atonement for the sacrificer (Lev 17:11). Through the ritual of *semikah*, the life of the sacrificer is identified with that of the victim so that later when the blood (*nephesh*) of the victim is shed, symbolically the life of the offerer is being offered up. In the subsequent blood ritual when the blood is sprinkled on the holy articles, in essence it is the life of the offerer getting in contact with and being incorporated into the holy and hence atonement for the offerer is achieved which is essentially gaining access to the holy.

Dodd's thesis is that sin being the human predicament and God being always the subject of an atoning act in the LXX, atonement should be understood as an act whereby sin or guilt is removed (the technical term being 'expiation'). From his survey of the occurrence and use of the *ἱλάσκει*-word group in the LXX, he finds evidence for sustaining this conclusion and dismisses any ideas of propitiating God.

Morris and Hill's contention with Dodd is that he has underrated the reality and seriousness of God's wrath and ignored the context of the passages he has examined. They agree with Dodd that through sacrifice, sin, which is the human predicament, is removed (expiation) but have also shown sufficient evidence in their survey of the *ἱλάσκει*-word group in the LXX that God's wrath (aroused only and inevitably by sin) is averted or propitiated through the same act of atonement. They see propitiation in such

passages as Zech 7:2: 8:22; Mal 1:9, suggesting that atonement in passages whose contexts contain reference to God's wrath should be understood in a sense that aims at turning away God's wrath as well (the technical term being 'propitiation'). Ideas of expiation and propitiation run into each other and words like reconciliation, atonement, or phrases like 'sacrifice of atonement', which leave the question open, have been opted for (especially by Hill). It is not possible in some instances to adopt one theory of atonement at the exclusion of the other not least when both are brought about by the same sacrificial action. The same is true of ideas of representation and substitution. There is reason to consider the contexts in which these words are used.

The metaphorical use of the language of sacrifice in the Jewish culture has also been explored. In the Maccabees literature sacrificial language is used metaphorically to give meaning to the death of the martyrs, whose death is given atoning sacrificial overtones (4 Macc 17:21-2).

In chapters four and five that follow, I explore Hebrews' understanding of the death of Christ as sacrifice and whether in interpreting the death of Jesus Christ, the author of Hebrews was influenced by any or all of these aspects of sacrifice that we have considered or whether Hebrews' interpretation is independent of them. This survey should naturally answer the question of why it was necessary for Christ to die.

CHAPTER 4

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

4.0 Introduction

In this chapter and chapter five that follow, I explore the way in which the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews presents the death of Christ as sacrifice. Following the *tripolar interpretive process*, these two chapters form the first pole (the exegesis of the biblical text) of our interrelated interpretive process. In the critical analysis of our biblical text – Heb 9:1 – 10:18, we shall seek to understand its context (historical, social and cultural). The social location of the recipients of the text will be investigated and note will be taken of particular questions being raised by the recipient community: questions which the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews is seeking to address and how he addresses those concerns (i.e. the message for the original readers).

Hebrews, more than any other New Testament book, contains a comprehensive exposition of the sacrificial death of Christ. The writer, in a clear sustained persuasive argument, explains the meaning of the death of Christ to the readers. As A. N. Chester rightly points out, the writer wants his readers to understand that ‘Jesus as high priest has made the perfect offering of himself, atoning for sin once and for all, and thus rendering obsolete the endless, ineffective sacrifice of the cult’.¹ In Hebrews the argument is that the death of Christ is a sacrifice now and for all eternity and that the Old Testament system is therefore no longer necessary. To put it more bluntly, there is a new way that has been opened through the sacrificial death of Christ and the old way through the tabernacle (and the temple) cult has been rendered redundant. The writer warns of real dangers in re-opening and re-using it (3:12; 6:4-6). As if to emphasize that the old order, way and system is really dead, the writer exhorts the readers to approach God through the new and living way which has been opened up by the sacrificial death of Christ (10:19-20).

¹ A. N. Chester ‘Hebrews: The Final Sacrifice’ (1991) in S. Sykes (ed) *Sacrifice and Redemption: Durham Essays in Theology* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1991), p. 57.

It is not known for certain who wrote Hebrews, when it was written, who the recipients were and where they lived.² Unlike most other epistles of the NT, the author's name is not mentioned in the entire body of the letter and the people to whom Hebrews is written are not explicitly mentioned.

However, (through extensive research on the Epistle to the Hebrews over period of time) a number of theories have been advanced in an attempt to provide probable answers to the above questions and we shall examine some of these theories in the section that follows. I must mention that any reconstructions of the situation of readers and their location, probable author, date of writing etc should be understood as tentative and not conclusive or final.

4.1 Overview of History of Research into Hebrews and main theories

In the first part of this section, I will explore the main theories that have been advanced by various scholars regarding the authorship, dating, and audience / recipients of the Epistle to the Hebrews. In the second part I will examine the message of Hebrews (highlighting the main themes that underlie the message in Hebrews).

4.1.1 Main Theories about Hebrews

4.1.1.1 Author of Hebrews

Hebrews has largely remained an anonymous document. Various names have been suggested regarding the probable author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Clement of Alexandria (c150 – c215) in the late second century points to the Apostle Paul as the author of Hebrews.³ Whereas Clement acknowledged that the style of the Epistle to the

² See F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, 1990), pp. 3-21; William L. Lane, *Hebrews 1-8* (Dallas, Texas, 1991), pp. xlvii-lxiii and Paul Ellingworth, *Commentary on Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, 1993), pp. 3-33 for various possible answers to these questions. A full critical discussion of these possibilities will follow later in this chapter.

³ Barnabas Lindars, *The Theology of the Letter to the Hebrews* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1991), pp. 16-17; Bruce, *Hebrews*, pp. 14-15; Donald A. Hagner, *Hebrews* (Peabody, Massachusetts, Hendrickson Publishers, Inc. 1983), p. 8; Harold W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Philadelphia, Philadelphia Fortress Press, 1989), p. 1.

Hebrews was different from that of Paul's other writings (including the fine Greek in Hebrews), he nevertheless sustained the authorship of Paul, arguing that Paul could have written in Hebrew and Luke translated it into Greek.⁴ Lindars has found this line of argument to be impossible since Heb 10:5-10 is heavily dependent on the Greek (Septuagint) version of the Psalms.⁵ Origen did not agree to Paul's authorship but maintained that the content was Pauline. Commenting on the authorship of Hebrews, Origen makes a resigned comment, 'Only God knows'. We find Hebrews placed immediately after Romans in the Pauline Corpus in P⁴⁶, the earliest relevant manuscript that has survived.⁶ A number of reasons seem to support the argument of Paul's authorship. First, Paul and Timothy were friends and often traveled together. In Hebrews 13:23, reference is made to Timothy, clearly indicating that the author knows Timothy and is thinking about him. Second, Hebrews is highly christological. We know that the theme of the person of Jesus Christ and His work is not only dominant in Paul's letters but is central too. Salvation is another theme that is common in both Hebrews and the Pauline corpus.

But a number of factors seem to hold against Paul's authorship.⁷ First, the writer of Hebrews identifies himself with the readers as one who received the message of salvation of Christ from those who heard it from Him (Heb 2:3). This would place Paul in the

⁴ Lindars, *Theology of Hebrews*, pp. 16-17; Bruce, *Hebrews*, pp. 14-15; Hagner, *Hebrews*, p. 8; Attridge, *Hebrews*, p. 1.

⁵ Lindars, *Theology of Hebrews*, p. 16.

⁶ J. Moffat, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Edinburgh, T & T Clark, 1924), p. xiii; Attridge, *Hebrews*, p. 1; Lindars, *Theology of Hebrews*, pp. 16-17; Bruce, *Hebrews*, pp. 14-15; Hagner, *Hebrews*, p. 8.

⁷ For a detailed discussion about why Paul is unlikely to have been author of Hebrews see Lane, *Hebrews*, p. xlix; William L. Lane, 'Hebrews' in Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids (eds), *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and its developments* (Leicester, IVP, 1997), pp. 443-444; Hagner, *Hebrews*, p. 9; Albert Vanhoye, *Structure and Message of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (ET, Rome, Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1989), p. 3; Attridge, *Hebrews*, p. 2; Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Welwyn, Herts, Evangelical Press, 1984), pp. 7-8. However, Vanhoye, *Structure and Message of Hebrews*, p. 4 has countered these by setting out points of connection between the author of Hebrews and Paul giving support to the theory that the author of Hebrews may have belonged to the Pauline circle.

category of those with a secondhand knowledge of the Lord in contrast to his firm assertion that he is an apostle and had seen the risen Lord hence making him an eyewitness of the risen Lord Jesus (cf. Rom 1:1; Gal 1:1, 11-16; 1 Cor 9:1; 15:8; 2 Cor 11). It is unthinkable that Paul would ever contemplate let alone admit to being inferior to the other twelve apostles. This was the very attack made against Paul in Galatians – an attack he vehemently defends against (Gal 1:11-17; 2:1-10). Second, the Greek language in Hebrews is far superior in its construction and vocabulary to that in the Pauline letters.⁸ Third, the author of Hebrews uses images that are not found anywhere in Paul (Heb 2:1; 4:12, 13; 6:7-8, 19). Fourth, the emphasis on the high priesthood of Jesus and his sacrifice are absent in Paul. On the other hand, Paul's dominant themes of 'union with Christ' (expressed by the 'in Christ' phrase), 'justification by faith', 'opposition of faith and works' (notably circumcision) are conspicuous by their absence in the Epistle to the Hebrews. The 'resurrection of Christ' is mentioned only once in 13:20.

Other names have been suggested as possible candidates in the search for the author of Hebrews. Martin Luther, considering the ingenuity in the composition of Hebrews, ascribed its authorship to Apollos of Alexandria, a man who is described in Acts 18:24-25 as 'an eloquent man, well-versed in the scriptures. ... instructed in the Way of the Lord; and he spoke with burning enthusiasm and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus...' Comparisons have been made between the writings of Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews with the suggestion that Apollos may have copied Philo's writing style and philosophy.⁹ Brilliant as it is, Luther's suggestion of Apollos as the author has been described by Bruce as 'a guess'.¹⁰ Priscilla and Aquilla have also been nominated with Aquilla as the dominant character. They both were knowledgeable in the Scriptures. Priscilla and Aquilla had explained to Apollos the way of God more accurately (Acts

⁸ Lane, 'Hebrews', p. 444.

⁹ For the hypothesis that Apollos is the author of Hebrews see further H. W. Montefiore, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (London, Adam and Charles Black, 1964), pp. 9-28 especially page 28 where Montefiore suggests 'that the Epistle to the Hebrews was written at Ephesus by Apollos to the Church at Corinth, and especially to the Jewish Christian members of it in CE 52-54'.

¹⁰ Bruce, *Hebrews*, pp. 17-18.

18:26). Having worked with Paul and Timothy in both Ephesus and Corinth, Priscilla and Aquilla should have known Timothy pretty well to refer to him as in Heb 13.23. But the masculine ending of the participle *διηγούμενον* in Hebrews 11:32 in self-reference to the author implies that our unknown author is a man.¹¹

Barnabas the Levite has also been mentioned as the possible author of Hebrews.¹² One strong point in his favour is that he is a Levite (Acts 4:36) – one who was conversant with the Levitical Law and priesthood both of which are central themes in Hebrews where Jesus is related to the Jewish High Priest. Besides, Barnabas and Paul worked together (Acts 9:27; 11:30; 13:1 – 14:28) fueling speculation that Paul and Barnabas could have co-authored the Epistle to the Hebrews. The name Barnabas itself means ‘Son of Encouragement’ (Acts 4:36) putting Barnabas in the most qualified and favoured position to write a letter of ‘encouragement’ or ‘exhortation’ to the readers. It is to be noted that Barnabas was also a member of the Hellenistic party (as a hellenized Jew from Cyprus – Acts 4:36). Tertullian believed Barnabas wrote Hebrews. However, in spite of this seemingly credible evidence, 2:3 seems to exclude Barnabas from the list of possible authors.¹³ Speaking of the great salvation wrought by Christ, the writer states, ‘It was declared at first through the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard him’ (2:3). Whereas the possibility remains that Barnabas may not have heard Jesus teach, yet he comes so early in the Christian history to write in terms described in 2:3.

John Calvin even suggested Luke as the author of Hebrews based on the reference to Timothy in 13:23. Calvin’s argument is that the style of writing of Hebrews is like that

¹¹ I. H. Marshall, *New Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, Illinois, IVP, 2004), p. 605 is forthright in affirming that, ‘the masculine gender of the participle in Heb 11:32 is decisive’.

¹² See Hagner, *Hebrews*, p. 10.

¹³ According to Heb 2:3, it is clear that both the author and the readers did not receive the message of salvation from the lips of Jesus i.e. they are not among those who heard Jesus preach. They were evangelized by those who had listened to Jesus Christ. This would largely exclude the author and his readers from the first generation believers.

of Luke. But like Barnabas, 2:3 rules out authorship by Luke. Jesus did not choose Luke as a disciple.

Having discussed the main probable authors, I will now mention the rest of the most unlikely authors whose names have been stumbled on, they are: Clement, the Bishop of Rome, Silvanus, Philip the Deacon, Jude, Ariston, Peter, Silas, Epaphras, and Mary the mother of Jesus.

In spite of the uncertainty about the exact identity of the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, facts about the author can be gleaned out of the text.¹⁴ First, it is clear from 2:3 that the author was not one of the twelve apostles and did not directly hear Jesus preach the message of salvation.¹⁵ He received the message of salvation of Jesus Christ secondhand and therefore belonged to the second generation of Christians. Second, he was as Lane puts it, 'a creative theologian who was well trained in the exposition of the Greek Scriptures'.¹⁶ He was especially greatly schooled in the content of the Septuagint¹⁷, which he indeed creatively interprets to make a strong case for the all sufficiency of the sacrificial death of Christ on the Cross. Third, his rhetorical style shows great training in the art and his rich vocabulary greatly aids his interpretation of the Scriptures. Fourth, he is certainly a Hellenistic Jewish Christian with a Hellenistic educational standard comparable to that of Philo. His deep knowledge of the cultic language of the Septuagint is evident throughout the argument in Hebrews. As Lane further observes, the author of Hebrews has 'an architectural mind; he affirms a thesis and then develops it by way of analysis – cf. 1:1-4'¹⁸

Finally, the author's deep spirituality cannot go unmentioned. He writes with deep and intense spiritual passion imploring his audience to hold on firmly to the salvation

¹⁴ See Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 20; Lane, *Hebrews*, p. xlix – l; Lane, 'Hebrews', p. 444.

¹⁵ Lane, 'Hebrews', p. 444.

¹⁶ Lane, *Hebrews*, p. xlix.

¹⁷ Luke Timothy Johnson, 'The Scriptural World of Hebrews' *Interpretation* 57 number 3 (2003) 239.

¹⁸ Lane, *Hebrews*, p. xlix.

message and the Lord Jesus Christ in whom they have come to believe. But who were his audience and where did they live? What situation or circumstances prompted the author to write this 'word of exhortation' as he calls it (13:22)? It is necessary to comment on the situation of the readers in order to understand the argument in Hebrews. The suggested answers to these questions are the subject of the discussion that follows.

4.1.1.2 Audience

Whoever the writer of Hebrews was, and the readers were, one thing is certain from Hebrews: The writer knows the specific community he is writing to and the community knows him. The writer hopes that it will be possible for him to revisit them (13:19, 23). He writes also as one conversant with past events in their life (2:3-4; 5:11-14; 10:32-34); and identifies with the readers (2:3; 6:1-3). It is also clear that both the writer and the readers have a sound knowledge of the Old Testament scriptures (especially the *LXX*) judging from the level of quotation and use of Old Testament passages in the whole argument.¹⁹

The writer extensively quotes and uses material from the *LXX* with an obvious assumption that his readers understand what he is talking about.²⁰ This may mean that the readers who are themselves well versed in the OT scriptures and OT cult are probably Jews. If this reconstruction is correct, they are Jews who have received the saving message of Christ from those who listened to him (2:3-4). That the readers are certainly Christians is evident from the affirmations and appeals made by the writer to the readers (3:6, 14; 4:14; 10:23). It appears that both the writer and the readers did not meet or hear from Jesus directly but received the Gospel message from those who listened to him.

¹⁹ The author quotes the OT 35 times. This number includes repeated quotations. For details of the author's use of the Old Testament, see further Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, pp. 37-42; K. J. Thomas, 'Old Testament Citations in Hebrews', *NTS* 11 (1964-65), pp. 303-25; J. C. McCullough, 'Old Testament Quotations in Hebrews', *NTS* 26 (1979-80), pp. 363-79; H. J. B. Combrink, 'Some thoughts on the Old Testament Citations in the Epistle to the Hebrews', *Neotestamentica* 5 (1971), pp. 22-36; Kistemaker, *Exposition of Hebrews*, pp. 9-10.

²⁰ The writer writes to them as people who are familiar with the Bible stories e.g. when he writes 'You know...' (12:17) when referring to Esau's story.

They have also experienced suffering (10:32) but have not experienced martyrdom (12:4). It seems fair to say then that the readers are probably a community of Jewish Christians.²¹ They are Jews who have been converted to the Christian faith and it appears that they have been Christians for a considerable length of time (5:12) and have been significantly used by God (2:4). The question to ask now is: if this community of Jewish Christian converts has witnessed God working in their midst since their commitment to the Christian way, what now is the problem? What is troubling them? What has prompted the writer to write to them this letter (or homily/word of exhortation as some prefer to call it: Cf. 13: 22)?

The evidence within the text points to some sort of crisis.²² There are those who have defected from the group (10:25) and interest in the message of salvation was ebbing away among those who had remained (2:1-4). Listening to the voice of God both in the scriptures and preaching had markedly diminished (2:1; 3:7b - 4:13; 5:11; 12:25). They had lost their charisma for enduring hardships and persecutions (10:32-34); they are a community that Lane describes as being largely 'lethargic and disheartened (5:11; 6:12; 12:3, 12-13)...weary with the necessity of sustaining their confession... (12:3-4)'.²³

Lane observes that this situation could have been precipitated by the 'problem of the delayed *parousia* (10:25, 35-39), social ostracism and impending persecution (12:4; 13:13-14), or a general waning of enthusiasm and erosion of confidence (3:14; 10:35)'.²⁴ One or more of these factors could have been responsible for the faltering hope among the readers (3:6; 6:18-20; 10:23-25; 11:1).

The writer does put emphasis on other matters as well. For example, he maintains that the OT cult cannot perfect an evil conscience (9:9; 10:2; this will be explained later in the

²¹ It is also probable that this community of Jewish Christians were together with "God fearers" or Gentiles who came to believe in the God of Israel and joined in synagogue worship.

²² Lane, *Hebrews*, p. lxi.

²³ Lane, *Hebrews*, p. lxi.

²⁴ Lane, *Hebrews*, p. lxii. Also see Morna D. Hooker, *Not Ashamed of the Gospel: New Interpretations of the Death of Christ* (Carlisle, Paternoster, 1994), p. 120.

discussion in chapter 5). Only the blood of Jesus Christ shed through his sacrificial death can cleanse an evil conscience of the worshipper (9:14; 10:22). Another phrase the author uses with a lot of emphasis is the phrase which expresses the idea of a 'once for all' aspect of the sacrificial death of Christ (7:27; 9:26, 28; 10:10).

The above emphasis is the basis for Lindars' argument (which is largely a reinterpretation of the traditional view and is by no means definitive) that the readers are troubled by post-baptismal sin.²⁵ It is not that the readers do not believe that in dying on the cross, Jesus Christ 'made purification for sins' (1:3), as long as that means purification for sins that they committed in the past. But since that purification which the readers know they received at their conversion, they have continued to sin and are therefore continually being troubled by this evil conscience. They do not know how to handle this genuine problem and it is probable that those who initially brought the Gospel to them (2:3) may have assumed and not bothered to explain fully how future sins were to be handled under the new system. But where did these troubled Christians live i.e. where were they to be located in the society then?

As stated earlier on, it is not certain from Hebrews, where the readers lived. Various places stretching from Judaea in the East and Spain in the West have been suggested.²⁶ The single reference to Italy (13:24) in the farewell greeting is not conclusive. The phrase 'those from Italy' (οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς Ἰταλίας) can either be understood to refer to 'members of the readers' own group (in which case the destination would be Italy, possibly Rome)', or 'those in Italy with the writer send their greetings'.²⁷ But Lane considering the sole NT parallel of the phrase οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς Ἰταλίας (Acts 18:2) argues

²⁵ Lindars, *Theology of Hebrews*, pp. 13-14. The traditional view is that the readers are Jewish Christians in danger of 'lapsing back into Judaism'. Marshall, *New Testament Theology*, p. 605 is much more guarded in what he says about the situation of the readers. He states, they were 'a group of Christians being tempted to fall away from their Christian faith as a result of a combination of external pressure and internal weakness'.

²⁶ Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 10.

²⁷ Lindars, *Theology of Hebrews*, p. 17.

that this phrase clearly means ‘from Italy’ in the sense of ‘outside the Italian Peninsula’ and adduces evidence for a destination in or near Rome.²⁸ In addition to these suggestions, Montefiore (thinking of Aquila and Prisca) proposes that ‘those from Italy’, could be referring to a group of Italians known both to the readers and the author who at the time of writing this letter were with the author.²⁹

4.1.1.3 Date of composition

Here we shall be guided by both external and internal evidence in suggesting a probable date for the composition of Hebrews. It is evident from the text that both the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews and his addressees did not hear the gospel of salvation from the Lord Jesus during His earthly ministry. The message was brought to them through those who had heard Jesus preach (2:3-4). In the early life of this Christian community, those who had brought the message had become their leaders (13:7). In addition, the addressees had been Christians for a considerable length of time and gifts of the Holy Spirit had been manifested in their midst (Heb 5:12). These facts added together allow for a period of about three to four decades after the death of Christ, which puts the earliest date for the composition of Hebrews at around CE 60.³⁰

There is also reference to persecutions (Heb 10:32-34). The Christian community had suffered abuse and untold suffering. Some of them had been imprisoned and had their ‘possessions plundered’. This they had accepted willingly ‘knowing they had something better and more lasting’. But in Heb 12:4 we read, ‘In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted up to the point of shedding your blood’. The description of this kind of suffering matches the suffering endured by Jewish Christians when they were expelled

²⁸ For a detailed discussion of the evidence, see Lane, *Hebrews*, p. lviii. For other scholars alternative views on destination of the Epistle to the Hebrews and the life setting of the people for which it was intended, see further, F. F. Bruce, ‘Recent Contributions to the Understanding of Hebrews’, *The Expository Times* 80 (1969), pp. 260-4.

²⁹ Montefiore, *Hebrews*, p. 254.

³⁰ See Attridge, *Hebrews*, p. 6; Lane, *Hebrews*, p. lxii; Lane, ‘Hebrews’, pp. 447-448. Marshall, *New Testament Theology*, p. 606 while acknowledging that the date of the letter is disputed states that ‘he favours a date before CE 70’ without giving reasons for suggesting so.

from Rome by the emperor Claudius in CE 49.³¹ This then would put the persecutions referred to above to around the same time (i.e. CE 49).³² These cannot be compared with the persecutions of CE 64 ordered by Emperor Nero that involved loss of life.³³

The external evidence used in determining the upper range for a date in which Hebrews was written points mainly to the implicit quotation of Hebrews in 1 Clement which has been dated between CE 95-96 (but even this date range is heavily contested).³⁴

Further internal considerations within the letter seem to suggest a date before the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. The lack of reference to this important event by the writer seems to imply that it had not yet happened. Besides, the writer's frequent use of the present tenses (e.g. 7:27-28; 8:3-5; 9:6-9, 25; 10:1-3, 8; 13:10-11) in referring to the OT cultic activity makes sense if the Temple in Jerusalem was still standing. If the temple had been destroyed, the writer would probably have made reference to it, as it would have strengthened his argument about the obsolete old cultic activity. Lane has dismissed this argument as being 'untenable'.³⁵ He argues that, 'the writer of Hebrews shows no interest in the Temple in any of its forms nor in contemporary cultic practice'. Besides, Lane continues, 'in Heb 9:1-10, the writer concentrates on the Tabernacle of the Israelites in the wilderness rather than upon the Temple in Jerusalem'.³⁶ He suggests that these present tenses embody the element of 'timeless' and are not related to the existence

³¹ See Lane, 'Hebrews', pp. 448-449 for details of the Edict of Claudius. Aquila and Priscilla who arrived in Corinth about CE 49 / 50 were among the Christian Jews that were expelled from Rome (Acts 18:2).

³² If this hypothesis is correct, it would also explain why 'those from Italy' (Heb 13:24) were outside Italy.

³³ Attridge, *Hebrews*, p. 12 has indicated that this has been used as evidence by some of (a) a non-Roman destination, (b) a Roman destination, but composition prior to CE 64, (c) a Roman destination, but a house church or subsection of the whole congregation that had not experienced the persecution of Nero. Thomas D. Lea, *Hebrews and James* (Nashville, Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1999), p. 2 in support of Rome as the best possible destination has suggested as appropriate a date just before Nero's persecution in CE 64.

³⁴ See Lane, *Hebrews*, pp. lxii-lxiii. Attridge, *Hebrews*, pp. 6-8 has given us a detailed discussion and comparison between 1 Clement and Hebrews. Also see further Moffat, *Hebrews*, pp. xiii-xv.

³⁵ Lane, *Hebrews*, p. lxiii.

³⁶ Lane, *Hebrews*, p. lxiii.

of the Temple and its sacrifices in Jerusalem.³⁷ But Bruce has rightly argued that in ritual terms there is no difference between the Tabernacle of the wilderness and the Temple in Jerusalem – ‘in principle the tabernacle and the temple were one: the ritual of the former was the ritual of the latter’.³⁸ The author writes in a way that seems to vindicate the view that the ritual was still being enacted:

Such preparations having been made, the priests go continually into the first tent to carry out their ritual duties; but only the high priest goes into the second, and he but once a year, and not without taking the blood that he offers for himself and for the sins committed unintentionally by the people. By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the sanctuary has not yet been disclosed as long as the first tent is still standing. This is a symbol of the present time, during which gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshipper (Heb 9:6-9).

Whereas Bruce admits that the recurrent present tenses in this passage could be ‘explained as a literary present, setting forth rather vividly the state of affairs portrayed in the Old Testament record’, he nevertheless holds strongly the possibility that the ritual was still being enacted.³⁹ The same is true for the author’s quotation of Jeremiah’s prophecy to which he adds, ‘In speaking of ‘a new covenant’, he has made the first one obsolete. And what is obsolete and growing old will soon disappear’ (Heb 8:13) which seems to fit very well the situation immediately before the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem that put an end to the ritual.⁴⁰ Most scholars favour a date before CE 70.⁴¹

³⁷ Lane, *Hebrews*, p. lxiii.

³⁸ Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 21.

³⁹ Bruce, *Hebrews*, pp. 21-22. For the argument that the ‘present tenses in Heb 9:7-8 are historic presents, referring to the regulations laid down in the Torah rather than to what may or may not have been operative in Jerusalem temple of our author’s own day’; see Marie E. Isaacs, *Reading Hebrews and James: a Literary and Theological Commentary* (Macon, Georgia, Smyth and Helwys Publishing, Inc. 2002), pp. 111-112.

⁴⁰ Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 22.

⁴¹ See Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 23; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, p. 33; Donald Guthrie, *The Letter to the Hebrews* (Leicester, IVP, 1983), pp. 28-29; Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1977), pp. 30-32; Brooke Foss Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 3rd

In the recent past, J. C. McCullough has in a series of four well researched articles described and assessed some of the trends which have appeared in recent scholarship in connection with a few of the main problems associated with the Epistle to the Hebrews. He has carefully considered the areas of authorship, religious background, date, area to which the epistle was sent, literary genre, literary structure, use of the OT, individual themes and passages. On questions of authorship, date of composition, recipients and their location and religious background: his conclusion has been that 'very little new light has been shed'.⁴² His work demonstrates clearly a lack of consensus among scholars on the issues mentioned above and this impasse seems likely to be with us for much longer.

4.2 Message of Hebrews

Whatever the circumstances or reasons that led to the formulation of this letter, one thing that is clear from the text is that in Hebrews the writer is urgently addressing a problem namely: That of the faltering faith and hope in Jesus Christ by the faithful ones. He writes to persuade the readers not to implement their planned action (that of abandoning that hope and faith in Christ) and warns of real dangers in trying to do so (3:12; 6:4-6). He (the writer) goes to great length in persuading the readers that 'the sacrificial death of

ed. (London, Macmillan, 1906), pp. xlii-xliii; Lane, *Hebrews*, p. lxiii; Thomas Hewitt, *Hebrews* (London, The Tyndale Press, 1960), pp. 38-39.

⁴² J. C. McCullough, 'Hebrews in Recent Scholarship (Part 2)', *Irish Biblical Studies*: Issue 16 (June 1994), p.120. His other three articles in the series are: 'Hebrews in Recent Scholarship (Part 1)', *Irish Biblical Studies*: Issue 16 (April 1994), pp. 66-86; 'Some recent developments in Research on the Epistle to the Hebrews', *Irish Biblical Studies*: Issue 2 (July, 1980), pp. 141-165; 'Some recent developments in Research on the Epistle to the Hebrews II: Use of the Old Testament': *Irish Biblical Studies*: Issue 3 (1981), pp. 28-45. Earlier on George Wesley Buchanan had examined scholarship into the Epistle to the Hebrews dating as far back as 1752 (before the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls). His findings though interesting, did not offer any definite answers to the questions of Authorship, date, destination and situation of the readers of the Epistle to the Hebrews: see George Wesley Buchanan, 'The Present state of Scholarship on Hebrews' in Neusner J. (ed) *Christianity, Judaism and other Greco-Roman Cults* – Volume 1 (Leiden, Brill, 1975), pp. 299-330. The comprehensive discussion by Craig R. Koester, *Hebrews* (NY, Doubleday, 2001), pp. 41-54 regarding the historical setting, authorship / authority, addresses, destination and date is not conclusive either.

Jesus, though an event in the past, has continuing efficacy'.⁴³ Marie E. Isaacs puts it this way: 'The author is working wholly with Jewish religious categories, shaping them in the service of his Christian homily ..., whose main point is that the death and heavenly session of Jesus may be seen as analogous and yet superior to Judaism's Day of Atonement rites'.⁴⁴ This, the writer achieves by focusing the attention of the readers on the superiority of Jesus Christ, his priesthood and the cult, the new Covenant under which this new priesthood is exercised, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and how they are to appropriate the benefits of the sacrificial death of Christ through faith. The theme of the sacrifice of Christ Jesus is the object of our exegetical study in chapter five and we shall defer its discussion until then. But the other themes of the 'superiority of Christ', his priesthood and the new covenant under which Christ's priesthood is exercised are vital for the message in Hebrews (not least the understanding of the death of Christ as sacrifice for sin once and for all) and they deserve detailed treatment here.

4.2.1 *The Superiority of Jesus Christ*

The first three chapters of Hebrews are devoted to the theme of Christ's superiority. Jesus Christ, spoken of in these chapters as the Son of God (which is a messianic and divine title) is not only superior but is also the final revelation of God (1:2ff). Through Christ, God has spoken his last and final word. Christ as 'Son' is God's final and perfect representative '...whom he appointed...'. There is a key understanding in Hebrews for us to note here: that of the divine initiative. It is God who "appointed" Christ.... As Guthrie observes, 'everything goes back to God'.⁴⁵ But what makes God's revelation in Christ as his Son superior and final?

⁴³ Lindars, *Theology of Hebrews*, p. 14. William David Spencer has pointed out that 'the loss of truth' of the all sufficiency of the eternal sacrifice of Christ 'provides an explanation for both the continuation of demands for sacrifice and the reintroduction of such requirements today'; see William David Spencer, 'Christ's Sacrifice as Apologetic: An Application of Heb 10:1-18' in *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 40/2 (June 1997), pp. 198-190.

⁴⁴ Marie E. Isaacs 'Hebrews' in John Barclay and John Sweet (eds), *Early Christian Thought in its Jewish Context* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 145-146.

⁴⁵ Guthrie, *Hebrews*, p. 64. Besides this act of personal initiative on the part of God, he further argues that the aorist ἔθηκεν must be regarded as timeless.

For the Epistle to the Hebrews there are certain facts about God's revelation in Christ as his Son that make it superior and final and I will mention the key ones below.⁴⁶

First, Christ is the 'heir of all things' (1:2b; alluding to the oracle in Ps 2:8 which in Ps. 2:7 is addressed to one whom God calls 'Son').⁴⁷ Bruce argues that Christ's inheritance should not be understood as being limited to earth, saying, 'it embraces the universe and particularly the world to come'.⁴⁸

Second, Jesus Christ as the Son of God is 'His agent in creation'. Through Jesus Christ, God 'created the worlds'.

Third, Christ is 'the reflection of God's glory' (the effulgence of God's splendour - NEB).

The fourth fact is that Jesus Christ as Son is 'the exact imprint of God's very being'. Bruce puts it this way: 'What God essentially is, is made manifest in Christ. To see Christ is to see what the Father is like'.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ For a detailed survey of what makes God's revelation in Christ as 'Son' superior and final, see Lane, *Hebrews*, pp. 3-19; Bruce, *Hebrews*, pp. 46-50; Guthrie, *Hebrews*, pp. 64-69.

⁴⁷ Gert J. Steyn has researched the purpose and traced the origin and text form of Ps 2:7 in Hebrews. In his article, 'Psalm 2 in Hebrews', in *Neotestamentica* 37 (2) 2003, pp. 262, 266, 276 Steyn has established that the author of Hebrews knew this quotation through the early Jewish and Christian traditions. The author of Hebrews, argues Steyn, 'uses this quotation in a messianic sense as proof of the sonship of Jesus, which is confirmed by God himself'.

⁴⁸ Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 46. Guthrie, *Hebrews*, p. 64 suggests, 'It is best to think of the created order as it is, and then to be reminded that it belongs to Jesus Christ'. If we apply the element of 'timelessness' implicit in the aorist *ἐθίκεν*, then we can conclude that there was never a time when Jesus Christ was not Son and heir. Sonship and heirship belong together and are eternally linked.

⁴⁹ Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 46.

Fifth, it is said of Christ that as Son, he 'sustains all things by his powerful word'. The understanding is that 'Jesus Christ is seen at the centre of the continuing stability of the universe'.⁵⁰

From the cosmic functions of the Son of God and his relationship with the Father, the writer now moves on to the sixth fact about the Son of God, which deals with his personal relationship with mankind. The Son of God has 'made purification for sins' (a theme that is to dominate chapter five of this study). The writer does not at this point explain how Jesus Christ has 'made purification for sins' (but he later elaborates this in the epistle as shall be seen). The Greek word *καθαρισμόν* translated here as "purification" also means cleansing in the sense of making pure.

Lane sees in the participial clause *καθαρισμόν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ποιησάμενος* translated above as 'made purification for sins', an early description of the Son's ministry (by the writer) in distinctive cultic terms and slanting in the direction of the later discussion of his priesthood and sacrifice.⁵¹ This clause singles out the 'effect of Christ's death'...as being 'cleansing (*καθαρισμόν*) from sins'.⁵² It is clear that the writer 'views sin as a defilement which must be purged' alluding to the *LXX* where *καθαρίζειν* and its cognates are used to refer to the removal of defilement due to sin either from the altar (cf. Ex 29:37; 30:10; Lev 16:19) or from the people (Lev 16:30).⁵³ It is likely that in

⁵⁰ Guthrie, *Hebrews*, p. 67. Guthrie makes reference to the power of God's *Word* in creation. In Jn 1:1-3, it is said that 'all things were made by the *Word* (*λόγος*), by which term Jesus Christ himself is meant. In the same way, as the Word created, the Word sustains'. Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 49 puts it this way: 'the creative utterance which called the universe into being requires as its complement that sustaining utterance by which it is maintained in being'. Cf. Col 1:17 where Christ is one in whom 'all things were created' and also as the one in whom 'all things hold together'.

⁵¹ Lane, *Hebrews*, p. 15.

⁵² Lane, *Hebrews*, p. 15.

⁵³ Lane, *Hebrews*, p. 15. The understanding is that the sprinkled blood of the sacrificial animals covered and obliterated the sins upon the altar (cf. Ex 30:10). The sins of the people were similarly dealt with by sacrificial blood in an act of expiation (Lev 16:30).

Hebrews 9 and 10, the writer has this framework in mind in interpreting the death of Christ (or in referring to his blood) as the one able to purify or cleanse the conscience from sins and it cleanses from sin once-for-all. As Lane notes, the other six occurrences of *καθαρίζειν* and its cognates are in these chapters (9:13, 14, 22, 23; 10:2, 22).⁵⁴

Commenting on the use of the aorist middle *ποιησάμενος*, Westcott suggests that the thought is

that which the later gloss *δι' ἑαυτοῦ* made more distinct. Christ Himself, in His own person, made the purification: He did not make it as something distinct from Himself, simply provided by His power.⁵⁵

Furthermore, the aorist tense *ποιησάμενος* points to a completed act on the part of Christ. He has 'made purification for sins once-for-all'.⁵⁶ By saying that Christ has 'made purification for sins', the writer wants his readers to know that Christ has achieved for them once-for-all what no one was capable of achieving. The interpretation of the participle phrase *καθαρισμὸν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ποιησάμενος* has shown that Hebrews has sacrificial imagery here.

Having pointed out the finished work of the Son of God, it is not surprising therefore, that in the last important aspect about the Son of God; the writer mentions that he (Christ) 'sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high' (i.e. God) – Heb 1:3. The order of events here is worth noting. The Son ascends to the throne after 'making purification for sins' and as Guthrie suggests, 'the importance of the enthronement finds its key in the act of purifying'⁵⁷ i.e. linking together the themes of sacrifice and exaltation (a link that is maintained throughout the Epistle). The reference to the 'right hand' of God should not be understood literally as a physical location; but rather as the place of honour (an idea

⁵⁴ Lane, *Hebrews*, p. 15.

⁵⁵ Westcott, *Hebrews*, p. 15. See further Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 49.

⁵⁶ Guthrie, *Hebrews*, p. 68 is critical of the Latin Vulgate, which translates the aorist with a present tense. He argues that this is 'incorrect and misleading, as it appears to support the view that in his present position at God's right hand, Christ continues to atone for sins. The force of the aorist points to a finished work'.

⁵⁷ Guthrie, *Hebrews*, p. 68.

that comes from Ps 110:1).⁵⁸ Implicit in the aorist *ἐκάθισεν* is 'the sense of fulfilment, for a sitting position is more suggestive of a finished task than a standing position'.⁵⁹ This contrasts greatly with the 'Aaronic priests who remained standing because their sacrificial services never came to an end' (10:11-14).⁶⁰

The exaltation of Christ at the right hand of God makes him and his message of salvation superior to the angels and their message (1:1-2:18; considering especially 2:1-4). It is most probable that the writer is here counteracting specific attractions of a developed angelology.⁶¹ Charles A. Gieschen, while acknowledging that 'there may have been some veneration of angels since the presence of polemics often presupposes the practice', has nevertheless demonstrated that 'the author's efforts to distinguish clearly between Christ and the angels does not preclude the presence of Angelomorphic Christology'.⁶² Christ alone is given the divine messianic title of Son (1:5)⁶³ and like God; angels worship him (1:6). He alone has been exalted. So set alongside the angels, Christ is

⁵⁸ Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 50; Guthrie, *Hebrews*, p. 69. 'God has no physical right hand or material throne,' says Bruce.

⁵⁹ Guthrie, *Hebrews*, p. 69. This same view is sustained by David J. Macleod, 'The Finality of Christ: An Exposition of Hebrews 1:1-4', *Bibliotheca Sacra* Volume 162 Number 646 (April – June 2005), p. 225. Macleod has clarified that the completed task is that of purification. Sitting versus standing is also an issue in the merkabah literature, where angels stand – sitting implies equality with God.

⁶⁰ Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 50. It is clear from 1:1-4 that the eschatological era has set in and the Messianic hope in the OT eschatological teaching (of the prophets) is now present and revealed in the person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. This element of eschatology is also reflected in 9:26-27, i.e. what Jesus does is the very climax of God's purpose. Christ brings the old age to an end and brings in the new age (cf. 1:1-4). This shows that what was foretold by the Prophets is now fulfilled in Christ. Lindars, *Theology of Hebrews*, p. 31 further suggests that as Messiah, Christ has completed his work at least insofar as 'purification of sins' is concerned. Jesus Christ who pre-existed is now exalted as Messiah and Son of God (1:3).

⁶¹ Chester, 'Hebrews: Final Sacrifice', p. 61.

⁶² Charles A. Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology: Antecedents and Early Evidence* (Leiden; New York; Koln, Brill, 1998), p. 294. See full discussion on pages 294- 314.

⁶³ Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 53 observes that 'angels may be called collectively as the sons of God' (as in Gen 6:2, 4; Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7) but no one of them is ever called the Son of God in terms like this. Besides, the words of Ps 2:7 quoted in 1:5ff were not addressed to angels.

different from the angels (both in person and status). Christ is not only different from the angels but is also superior with a much superior message (2:1-4).

Another comparison is carried out between Moses and Jesus in 3:1-6. 'Jesus is also held to be superior to Moses and Joshua, who did not truly bring those who left Egypt into the rest promised by God' (3:1-4:13).⁶⁴ The point of departure here is that 'Moses as a servant belongs to the side of man, whereas Jesus as Son belongs to the side of God'.⁶⁵ But it is also important to note that Jesus also shares in the humanity (2:17) and so belongs both to the side of man and God. This puts Christ in a unique and advantageous position of being able to mediate between God and mankind: opening a way to God, and this he has achieved through his priestly role: making atonement for the sins of the people.

In this first part of his argument, the writer establishes the superior position and status of Jesus Christ. Using scriptural quotations (from the *LXX*), the writer points out to his readers that Christ is superior to Moses and the angels. Christ's message is much superior too. More significantly he points out the significance of Christ's death as being for 'the purification of sins'.

Having called on his readers to give their allegiance to Jesus Christ rather than Moses or the angels, the author now moves to his main theme (4:14):

Since, then, we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens,
Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession.

The author now reverts to this main theme, which he has already introduced in 2:17 where in writing about Christ he says:

⁶⁴ See Bruce Chilton and Jacob Neusner, *Judaism in the New Testament: Practices and Beliefs* (London, Routledge, 1995), p. 177. See further Isaacs, 'Hebrews', pp. 150-152.

⁶⁵ Chester, 'Hebrews: Final Sacrifice', p. 62.

Therefore he had to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect, so that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people.

But how are the readers to be convinced that Jesus Christ is truly a high priest capable of carrying out the priestly ministry of the temple cult?

4.2.2 *The Priesthood of Jesus Christ and the Cult*

Priesthood and sacrifice are inseparable. They are so closely linked that you cannot consider or discuss one without the other. This explains why we have to think about them both. Interwoven with both themes of Priesthood and sacrifice is the theme of Covenant which will be discussed as well.

Albert Vanhoye observes that Hebrews is consistent in affirming that:

Christians *have a Priest*, “an eminent priest” (10:21); even more, that “Christians have a *high priest*,” “an eminent high priest” (4:14, 15; 8:1). And Hebrews identifies him plainly as “Jesus, the Son of God” (4:14), “Jesus, the apostle and the high priest of our profession of faith” (3:1), “Christ who has appeared as high priest of the good things to come” (9:11).⁶⁶

But the writer knows that the above affirmations are bound to raise questions in the minds of his readers. First, he knows (probably as well as his readers do) that Jesus Christ did not belong to the priestly family and he acknowledges this in 7:14. Secondly, he was fully aware that even the priesthood organised according to the Law of Moses could not accommodate Jesus (8:4) let alone being a high priest, ‘because high priests are those who present the offerings in conformity with the Law’ (8:4).⁶⁷

The main task of the writer now is to convince the readers that the priesthood and the sacrifice of Christ is not only the fulfilment but has also superseded the levitical

⁶⁶ Albert Vanhoye, *Old Testament Priests and the New Priest According to the New Testament* (ET, Massachusetts, Petersham, St. Bede’s Publications, 1986), p. 67.

⁶⁷ Vanhoye, *Old Testament Priests*, p. 67.

priesthood and the cult which they want to relapse into under Judaism. He argues that there is no justification for drifting from their faith since Jesus Christ is duly qualified as a high priest. It is imperative at this point to examine the general qualifications of high priesthood as set out in 5:1-4 (to which Jesus must conform) before we look at Christ's priesthood and its superiority to the Aaronic priesthood.

4.2.2.1 Jesus Christ's high priesthood like that of the Aaronic order

The first task of the writer in establishing the high priesthood of Jesus Christ is to prove to his readers that he (Christ) matches the qualifications for a high priest (of the Aaronic order. Cf. 5:1-4). This he must do before he tries to persuade his readers that the high priesthood of Jesus Christ and his sacrifice is superior to the Aaronic priesthood.

The writer uses language that is very familiar to the readers when he makes the following assertions about the nature of high priesthood.

First, a high priest represents men and women before God (5:1). He is a people's representative chosen from among men to act on their behalf before God. This would for example automatically rule out angels.⁶⁸ This principle of choosing high priests 'from among men' to 'act on behalf of men' before God is seen operating in Ex 28:1; Num. 8:6. It is essentially because the high priest is by nature identified with men so that he can act and plead on their behalf.⁶⁹ He is not only chosen from among men but is 'appointed' (NEB). The Greek word is *καθίσταται*, which in the passive voice implies that the high priest does not put himself in office. Though it is not apparent here, it is made clear in 5:4 that it is God who appoints the high priests to their office.⁷⁰

But the writer describes Jesus Christ as high priest in similar terms as one divinely appointed (1:2; 5:5). Jesus Christ as 'Son' is appointed by God. Christ too was made like his brethren and tempted in every respect (2:14; 2:17; 4:15).

⁶⁸ Hughes, *Hebrews*, p. 175.

⁶⁹ Guthrie, *Hebrews*, p. 125.

⁷⁰ See Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, pp. 272-273; Hughes, *Hebrews*, p. 175.

The high priest was always like (by nature) those he represented before God. In 2:14, the writer points out that, since the children share flesh and blood, he himself likewise shared the same things. This clearly refers to the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Those that Christ represents before God are creatures of 'flesh and blood', frail human beings, and he (Christ) had to be like them in order to be truly their high priest (representative). Bruce states that:

If his (i.e. Christ's) solidarity with them (mankind that he represents before God) is to be real, he also must be a true human being, a genuine partaker of flesh and blood "in the manner" with them - that is to say by the gateway of birth.⁷¹

The reason for which Jesus had to take on flesh and blood is given by 2:14b so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil. This defines the mission of Christ.⁷² This same idea is reflected in 2:17: 'Therefore he had to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect'. The Greek word *ὁμοιωθῆναι*, is used of Jesus to refer to his complete identification with humankind - not only taking on flesh and blood, but also assuming completely all human 'feelings and sensibilities'⁷³ in every respect (apart from sin of course, as is pointed out in 4:15. This will be made more explicit when we come to the differences between the Aaronic high priesthood and that of Christ).

Second, a high priest serves to offer gifts and sacrifices (*δῶρά τε καὶ θυσίας*) for sins (5:1).⁷⁴ It was the express function of the high priest to offer sacrifices for the sins of the

⁷¹ Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 84. Flesh and blood here defines human nature (used of 'men' or human beings). See further Wescott, *Hebrews*, pp. 52-53; Hughes, *Hebrews*, pp. 110-111.

⁷² Guthrie, *Hebrews*, pp. 91-92 hints that in the Greek text the order is 'blood and flesh'. He suggests that 'blood' alludes to Christ's shedding of blood, which is then given as the reason for his becoming flesh, i.e. the atonement required the incarnation. To deliver man, Jesus Christ had to share his nature.

⁷³ Hughes, *Hebrews*, p. 119.

⁷⁴ Wescott, *Hebrews*, p. 121 and Guthrie (1983) 125 while acknowledging that *δῶρά* and *θυσία* are often used as synonyms, nevertheless distinguish here between *δῶρά* (to refer to meal offerings) and *θυσία* (to refer to the bloody offerings). But it appears that the writer is using these expressions in a general sense. See Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 119; Hughes, *Hebrews*, pp. 175-176; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, pp. 273-274.

people. The expressions 'gifts' and 'sacrifices' should be understood here as a general description of the offerings over which the high priest officiated. The writer seems to use them in a general sense here as in 8:3 and he sometimes uses them interchangeably as in the case of Abel's animal sacrifice in 11:4. Most important however, is the purpose for which these gifts and sacrifices are offered, i.e. 'for sins'. It will emerge later that the writer has in mind the sin offerings of the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16), as it was on this day once a year that the high priest was required in person to execute the sacrificial functions.⁷⁵

Jesus Christ as high priest is described by the writer as having made a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people (2:17; also implied in 1:3). The writer does not mention at this point what Jesus Christ offered as a 'sacrifice for sins'. But it will become clear later in the discussion that 'Christ offered a sacrifice of himself' (7:27).

Third, a high priest '...is able to deal gently with the ignorant and the wayward, since he himself is subject to weakness...' (5:2). Hughes puts it this way: 'Sympathy, or compassion, and gentleness in dealing with others go together; and this compassionate gentleness springs from a community of weakness'.⁷⁶ The high priest was to constantly be aware that he was a representative of both the better sections of the society and of the worse.⁷⁷ The high priest was mortal just as these were and it was for this reason that he could identify with them in his weakness. This weakness is not the type that is due to 'human nature' (which Christ shares in); rather it is the 'consequence of human depravity' i.e. results from the fallenness of man.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 119.

⁷⁶ Hughes, *Hebrews*, pp. 176-177.

⁷⁷ Guthrie, *Hebrews*, p. 126. Guthrie sees in the two descriptions i.e. ignorant (*ἀγνοῦσιν*) and wayward (*πλανωμένοις*) the 'origin and character of the kind of sin with which the high priest can deal. Sins of ignorance were carefully distinguished from wilful sins, for which the law made no provision. The wanderers are those who have strayed from God's path, but want to get back. They are not the hardened rebels. The high priest had a special ministry of gentleness to those conscious of their need'.

⁷⁸ Hughes, *Hebrews*, p. 177.

Similarly, Christ as the people's high priest is able to sympathise with human weakness (4:15; 5:2). The idea expressed negatively in 4:15 has been positively expressed in 2:18. The writer reverts to the negative probably to counteract objections that Jesus Christ was 'too remote from human need'.⁷⁹

If at his incarnation (when he took our nature upon himself) Jesus Christ embraced our weaknesses and made them his own, then as Hughes concludes, 'there is no question of any incapacity on his part to sympathize with our weaknesses'.⁸⁰

Lastly but not least, one other important fact about the high priesthood is its origin. And one does not presume to take this honour, but takes it only when called by God, just as Aaron was (5:4). As Guthrie states, 'It was a divine appointment and not a self-appointment or a human appointment'.⁸¹ In this connection Aaron is specifically mentioned as one who was set apart by God. But it has already been demonstrated above (refer back to page 71) that Jesus Christ too was divinely appointed (by God).

In speaking in the above terms, the writer is making his point in a way familiar to his readers. The readers are able to understand that Jesus indeed does meet the qualifications of a high priest and is like the contemporary high priests whose services they probably want to revert to. When the writer speaks of what Christ has done, he highlights the parallels between what Christ achieved and what the contemporary priests achieve through the temple cult. For example the writer presents Christ as having made

⁷⁹ Guthrie, *Hebrews*, p. 122.

⁸⁰ Hughes, *Hebrews*, p. 171. Jesus' sympathizing with our weaknesses should not be understood in a psychological but rather in an existential sense. The exalted Christ suffers together with the weaknesses of the one tempted. Steve Motyer commenting on incarnation and salvation in Hebrews writes, 'Hebrews makes Jesus' humanity, his sharing of our flesh and blood (Heb 2:14), a permanent feature of his identity, for he does not leave it behind when he enters the Most Holy Place as our "forerunner"' – see Steve Motyer, "Not apart from us" (Hebrews 11:40): physical community in the Letter to the Hebrews' in *Evangelical Quarterly* 77.3 (2005), p. 238.

⁸¹ Guthrie, *Hebrews*, p. 127.

purification for sins (1:3; cf. 2:17) and as having offered gifts and sacrifices (5:1; 8:3). So since what they desire to revert to is fulfilled in Christ, there is really no need for them to go. In Christ they still possess a high priest (8:1).

But should the readers understand that the priesthood of Jesus Christ and his cult are compatible with the Jewish priesthood and cultus? Certainly not argues the writer in 5:1-10 and chapters 7-10. The priesthood of Jesus and his cult are different and superior to the tabernacle cult.

4.2.2.2 The high priesthood of Jesus Christ as different from that of the Aaronic order

First, the high priest (of the Aaronic order) too was 'subject to weakness' or 'beset by weakness' (5:2) (NEB). It was therefore necessary for him to 'offer sacrifice for his own sins as well as for those of other people' (5:3). According to the Day of Atonement ritual, it was imperative for the high priest to offer sacrifice for his own sins first (Lev 16:11-14).⁸²

But in contrast, this was not so with Christ because he was holy and guileless (4:15b; 7:28). Jesus Christ (because he is like mankind) was tempted in every respect 'but without sin' (4:15). This aspect of Christ's sinless life will become very essential in our discussion of Christ's sacrifice of himself.

Secondly, Christ is said to be 'a merciful and faithful high priest' (2:17). Mercy is a divine attribute, an attitude of God towards mankind. It was never a requirement for the

⁸² Guthrie, *Hebrews*, p. 127. The use of the present tense of the verb *ὀφείλει* implies that: the high priest "is bound or obliged" to offer sacrifice for his own as well as people's sins. As already stated, the accumulation of the occurrences of the present tense in connection with the function of the high priest and the levitical worship throughout the epistle would seem to imply rather definitely (Lane's argument of the present tenses being 'timeless' notwithstanding – Lane, *Hebrews*, p. lxiii) that the levitical system was still in operation when this epistle was written. If so, the temple would still have been standing, and this in turn would indicate a date for the epistle prior to CE 70. Note the string of present tenses in vss. 1-4 here: *λαμβάνόμενος... καθίσταται ... προσφέρειν μετριοπαθεῖν δυνάμενος ... περίκειται ... ὀφείλει ... προσφέρειν λαμβάνει ... καλούμενος*.

Aaronic high priests to be merciful.⁸³ Christ endured all forms of suffering without distrust and this way he can be said to be faithful. Christ's faithfulness can be defined in two main ways: First, 'as his steadfast loyalty to God (3:2) and second as his utter trustworthiness as far as his people are concerned'.⁸⁴

Thirdly, only Jesus is spoken of as a Son and his priesthood belongs to a completely different and superior order - that of Melchizedek which is eternal (5:6; 7:3) as explained below.

4.2.2.3 The high priesthood of Jesus Christ according to the order of Melchizedek

The writer aims in Hebrews 7 to establish that the high priesthood of Jesus Christ belongs to a completely different and superior order of Melchizedek, which is eternal. Little is said about Melchizedek in the *LXX*. He is first mentioned in Gen 14:18-20 where the information about him is scanty and can be summarized as follows:

Abram is met by Melchizedek after his defeat of the king of Elam. Melchizedek is identified as King of Salem, and as a priest of God Most High. He brings bread, and wine and blesses Abram. In return, Abram gives Melchizedek one tenth of what he has in hand after the victory.⁸⁵

The other *LXX* passage where Melchizedek is mentioned is Ps 109:4 (Heb 110:4) where we read: 'The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek"'.⁸⁶

⁸³ See Guthrie, *Hebrews*, pp. 94-95. Actually the high priests were renowned in Jesus / Paul's time for cruelty and arrogance. See the Dead Sea Scrolls description of the "Wicked Priest" (1QpHab VIII, 8-9; 4QpHos II, 2-3; Ant 8:232; Ant 9:133).

⁸⁴ Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 88. The idea of faithfulness also occurs in 3:5-6; 10:23; 11:11. For the foundations of Christ's priesthood in the Epistle to the Hebrews, see further John D. Kwamena Ekem, *Priesthood in Context: A study of Akan traditional priesthood in dialogical relation to the priest-christology of the epistle to the Hebrews, and its implications for a relevant functional priesthood in selected churches among the Akan of Ghana* (Ammersbek bei Hamburg, Verlag an der Lottebek, 1994), pp. 125-166.

⁸⁵ Bruce Chilton and Jacob Neusner, *Judaism in the New Testament*, p. 178.

The writer does not quote the Melchizedek tradition for its own sake nor is he interested in Melchizedek as a person. His interests in the Melchizedek tradition are laid bare in 7:1-3 'where he brings together those features of Gen 14:18-20 and Ps 110:4 which are useful for his claim that Melchizedek is a divine figure'⁸⁶ who prefigures the high priesthood of Christ.⁸⁷ First, he focuses on Melchizedek's name as meaning 'king of righteousness' and his being King of Salem which the writer interprets as meaning 'king of peace'.⁸⁸ What is important here from the point of view of the writer is that 'righteousness' and 'peace' are attributes of the Messiah 'intended to show that Melchizedek is the one who is ἀφωμοιωμένος δὲ τῷ υἱῷ τοῦ θεοῦ, and are intended as a basis of comparison between Melchizedek and Jesus (cf. Zech 9:9; Mal 3:20; Jer 23:5; Dan 9:24; Isa 9:5; Mic 5:4 where "righteousness" and "peace" are attributed to the Messiah)'.⁸⁹ Furthermore, the writer takes advantage of the silence about the genealogy of Melchizedek in the Genesis account to press home his point that the priesthood of Melchizedek is superior to the Aaronic priesthood. Unlike the Aaronic priesthood, 'for whom Levitical descent was essential for eligibility to hold office, the order of Melchizedek is wholly of a different kind'.⁹⁰ He pushes this argument further when he states that Melchizedek has neither beginning of days nor end of life, which seems to suggest that Melchizedek 'must have been a heavenly being'.⁹¹ There is no

⁸⁶ James W. Thompson, *The beginnings of Christian Philosophy: The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Washington, 1982), p. 117. Besides Gen 14:18-20 and Ps 110:4, II Q Melch from the Qumran sees the Angel of Light as Melchizedek.

⁸⁷ Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 157.

⁸⁸ For details of the Melchizedek tradition, see further Hughes, *Hebrews*, pp. 237-250; Bruce, *Hebrews*, pp. 156-160.

⁸⁹ Thompson, *Beginnings of Christian Philosophy*, p. 118.

⁹⁰ Guthrie, *Hebrews*, p. 156. Thompson, *Beginnings of Christian Philosophy*, p. 122 notes that τάξις, which generally means 'order' or 'rank' refers in Hebrews to the entirely different nature of Christ's priesthood as compared with that of Aaron. In Hebrews τάξις (5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:17) refers to two different spheres of existence. In 7:11-28, the writer shows ways in which the heavenly τάξις is superior to the earthly τάξις.

⁹¹ Guthrie, *Hebrews*, p. 157.

denying that the writer knows (as well as his readers do) that Jesus Christ is descended from Judah (7:14). But Bruce argues that:

in his eternal being the Son of God has really, as Melchizedek has typically, “neither beginning of days nor end of life”; and more especially now, exalted at the right hand of God, he “remains a priest in perpetuity”. Melchizedek remains a priest continually for the duration of his appearance in the biblical narrative; but the anti-type Christ remains a priest continually without qualification.⁹²

The climax of the writer’s interest in the Melchizedek tradition comes in the last phrase of 7:3 where he writes ‘... but resembling the Son of God, he remains a priest forever’. The Greek word *ἀφωμοιωμένος* translated here as ‘resembling’ also carries the sense of a ‘model’ or ‘copy’ i.e. in the same way as producing a facsimile. What is important to the writer here is that Melchizedek not Christ is the type of the superior priestly order. It is Melchizedek who *ἀφωμοιωμένος δὲ τῷ υἱῷ τοῦ Θεοῦ*, while Christ is the one addressed as ‘Son’ of God. Bruce puts it this way:

it is not the type that determines the anti-type, but the anti-type that determines the type; Jesus is not portrayed after the pattern of Melchizedek, but Melchizedek is “made conformable to the Son of God”.⁹³

I must mention again that the writer is not interested in the Melchizedek tradition (or Melchizedek as a person) for its own sake but rather for the emphasis on the order of the priesthood to which both Melchizedek (as the type) and Jesus (as the anti-type) belong.⁹⁴ This priesthood is of the order of the Son of God (Jesus Christ) whose priesthood is eternal (*μένει ἱερεὺς εἰς τὸ διηνεκές*). The remaining verses of Hebrews 7 are essentially an elaboration of 7:1-3 focussing on the differences or contrasts that exist between the Aaronic high priesthood and that according to the order of Melchizedek

⁹² Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 160.

⁹³ Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 160. Guthrie, *Hebrews*, p. 157 states, ‘it is because Jesus Christ is of the order of Melchizedek that the representative of the order is seen to be a model of the true. In other words, it is Christ’s priesthood that is the standard, not that of Melchizedek’.

⁹⁴ And as Marie E. Isaacs has rightly observed, once the author of Hebrews achieves his ‘purpose of establishing Jesus’ non-levitical, superior, priestly credentials’, he quickly abandons the figure of Melchizedek: see Isaacs, *Reading Hebrews and James*, p. 104.

(emphasizing mainly the insufficiency of the Aaronic high priesthood) and I will summarize them in the section that follows.

4.2.2.4 The inadequacy of the Aaronic high priesthood

The writer goes to great length in pointing out the differences that exist between Christ and the tabernacle cult. From the contrasts that exist between the two systems, it is clear that the Jewish temple cult is really inferior to the priesthood and cult of Christ and there is no reason why the readers should opt for an inferior and obsolete system. These contrasts are:

First, the cultic priests were many (7:23). It is not that they were many all at the same time but that they were many in succession. The reason the former priests (i.e. the Aaronic priests) were many is that they were prevented by death from continuing in office. The office of the priesthood continued but the priests being mortal died in succession.⁹⁵ This is in great contrast to the priesthood of Jesus, which is eternal... 'but he (referring to Jesus Christ) holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever'(7:24).⁹⁶

Second, the Aaronic priesthood required constant repetition because of the high priests' repeated sins (7:27; cf. 5:3; 9:7). The writer has already demonstrated that the Aaronic priests being mortal and sharing in the fallen human nature were 'subject to weakness'

⁹⁵ A record of the death of some of them can be traced in the *LXX*. The death of Aaron is recorded in Num 20:28, the death of his son Eleazar who replaced him as high priest is recorded in Josh 24:33. This trend continued and Josephus puts the number of high priests who officiated from Aaron to the fall of the second temple in CE 70 at eighty-three (Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 20: 227).

⁹⁶ Guthrie, *Hebrews*, p. 166 commenting on the the perpetuity of Christ's priesthood maintains that even at his death, 'Christ's priesthood did not cease, nor was it passed on to others, because his death was not a final act. It was eclipsed by his resurrection (for he continues forever), thus setting him apart from all other priests'.

requiring them 'to offer sacrifice for their own sins' (5:3). But not so with Jesus Christ whose sinless nature is maintained all through the epistle (4:15; 7:26-28)⁹⁷.

Third, the Aaronic priesthood was impermanent, limited to this earth, and the sacrifices they offered were unable to cleanse the conscience of the worshippers from sin or offer access to God (and in our discussion on the sacrifice of Christ we shall explore what the writer thinks these sacrifices achieved). Jesus as high priest, is alone sinless, unique, eternal and in heaven (4:15; 7:23-8:13).

Fourth, unlike the levitical sacrifices, the sacrifice of Christ is once-for-all, effective for all sin for ever, for others not for himself, and opening up heaven and full access to God (7:27; 9:6-14). I shall say more about this in the section on the 'sacrifice of Christ'.

Fifth, in contrast to the tabernacle of the cult, which is fashioned by a human being and belongs to this world, Jesus enters the true tabernacle, both greater and more perfect, which is neither made with hands nor belongs to this creation (8:1-5; 9:23-4). The writer is here building on the tradition that the earthly tabernacle is a copy of the heavenly tabernacle (cf. Ex 25:40. Also cf. Ex 25:9; 26:30; 27:8).

Sixth, the Levitical priests operated under a covenant which is now obsolete and faulty while Jesus Christ is the mediator of the new covenant.

4.3 The New Covenant

Just as the Aaronic priesthood gives way to the permanent and eternal priesthood after the order of Melchizedek (which is superior) so does the old covenant give way to the new covenant whose guarantee and mediator is Jesus Christ (7:22; 8:8-12; 9:15). Christ is the one whose blood inaugurates the new covenant (making Christ the covenant sacrifice: but in 9:12, the blood of Christ is at the same time the sacrifice for sins). The writer adds that

⁹⁷ For further comment on the sinless nature of Jesus Christ, see further David J. Macleod, 'Christ, the Believer's High Priest: An Exposition of Hebrews 7:26-28', *Bibliotheca Sacra* Volume 162 Number 647 (July – September 2005), pp. 336-337.

in speaking of 'a new covenant', he has made the first one obsolete.⁹⁸ And what is obsolete and growing old will soon disappear (8:13). The writer is making use of the prophetic oracle in Jer 31:31-34 which he sets in contrast with the covenant which Yahweh made with the Israelites when delivering them from Egypt as recorded in Ex 24:1-8 and referred to in Heb 9:18-20. The Israelites did not keep this Covenant and so God in Jer 31:31-34 promises that he will make a new covenant with his people on completely new terms. The writer of Hebrews sees Christ as the eschatological fulfilment of this prophecy inaugurating a new era of the new covenant as foretold by the prophet Jeremiah. As the old covenant is now obsolete, all its institutions become obsolete with it. The animal sacrifices and other rites, which made provision for external pollution but could never cleanse the conscience of the worshippers, disappear with it (though this is an interpretation that the writer's fellow Jews would find difficult to agree with). The earthly sanctuary is also obsolete. All these institutions were shadows of what was heavenly, permanent and eternal (8:5ff).

It should be noted that the superiority and uniqueness of Jesus Christ's priesthood (belonging to the order of Melchizedek which is eternal and permanent) coupled with the eschatological concept of the inauguration of the new covenant, give to Christ's sacrifice its permanent efficacy because they open an era of salvation in which fresh sacrifices for sin are no longer required. Besides, the writer has argued in 5:1-10 that Jesus Christ as messiah and high priest is duly qualified to perform the sacrifice which is required for the atonement of sins.⁹⁹ The question that needs to be resolved in the minds of the readers is whether the sacrifice of the new covenant (i.e. Jesus Christ) can be regarded as a sacrifice for sins and how that works out in the lives of believers. The exegetical study of Hebrews 9:1 – 10:18 in chapter five will seek to answer these pertinent questions.

⁹⁸ Clark M. Williamson, 'Anti-Judaism in Hebrews', *Interpretation* 57 number 3 (2003), pp. 267-279 has ably demonstrated that there is no ground for interpreting verses like 8:13 as being anti-semitic.

⁹⁹ See Lindars, *Theology of Hebrews*, p. 72. For further explanations of the high priestly office of Jesus Christ – see Marshall, *New Testament Theology*, pp. 608-610.

CHAPTER 5

SACRIFICE OF CHRIST IN THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS 9:1 – 10:18

5.0 Introduction

I consider Hebrews 9:1 – 10:18 as the climax of the author's argument and certainly the pinnacle of the epistle itself.¹ Clearly in Hebrews 1 – 8, the author has been building up and looking forward to this point in his argument. The chapters that follow (Hebrews 11 – 13) with all the challenge and encouragement of the examples of faith (Hebrews 12) should be read and understood in light of the conclusions reached in Hebrews 9:1 – 10:18. My task is to examine critically how the author understands and explains the death of Jesus Christ on the cross as a sacrifice in Hebrews 9:1 – 10:18, and the benefits that accrue from the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ for the believer. This is a crucial moment for the writer. The physical and ceremonial attractions of Judaism are very real for his readers. They are able to remember that the Jewish cult has rituals, which make an atoning sacrifice. The writer will have to persuade the readers that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ can be spoken of precisely in these terms and 'prove that everything that is essential for atonement has been done in the sacrifice of Christ'.²

As a basis for his argument, the writer finds the annual event of the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16) very helpful. The readers must have been very conversant with it. Besides, it is probably what they desire to return to. If the sacrifice of Jesus Christ is to be considered as an atoning sacrifice in any meaningful sense, then it has to meet the set standards of the Day of Atonement sacrifice. It is precisely on this Day of Atonement

¹ William G. Johnson's criticism of the the scholarship of Hebrews of his time was what he termed 'the neglect of the cultus by Protestant writers'. He observed that a large section of Hebrews (7:1 – 10:18) was assigned to the cultus. To Johnson, Hebrews 7:1 – 10:18 was 'not only central in location but one which is almost certainly central to the over-all plan of the work' – William G. Johnson, 'The Cultus of Hebrews in Twentieth-Century Scholarship', *The Expository Times* 89 (1978), p. 104. N. T. Wright on his part calls this section 'the very heart of the letter', see N. T. Wright, *Hebrews for Everyone* (London, SPCK, 2003), p. 91.

² Lindars, *Theology of Hebrews*, p. 84.

that the sins of the Israelites (accumulated over a period of a year) were atoned for (Lev 16:30). The readers, whom we have taken to probably be Jewish converts to the Christian faith, also may have known from the scriptures that they were to keep this 'statute forever' (Lev 16:31).

The overriding motif of the writer in this discussion is that of comparison. He has already used it in considering the priesthood of Christ and the Aaronic priesthood; the Old Covenant and the New Covenant (see section 4.2.2.1, 4.2.2.2 and 4.3 respectively). The priesthood of Christ belongs to a different and superior order (that according to Melchizedek - which is heavenly and eternal) while that of Aaron is limited to this earth and impermanent. The writer applies the same principle of comparison (evidenced by the μένδέ construction of 9:1, 11)³ to the sacrifice of Christ, which he discusses together with the heavenly sanctuary, comparing it with the sacrifices of the levitical cultus and the earthly sanctuary.

5.1 The insufficiency of the Levitical cultus and earthly sanctuary (Heb 9:1-10)

Chapter 9 begins with the phrase μέν οὖν which serves as a link between chapter 8 and 9 (showing a continuation of what has been said in chapter 8).⁴ The writer in Heb 9:1-10 starts his argument with the description of the architecture of the tent. Some words and phrases in this pericope are key to the understanding of what the author is saying about the sanctuary of the Old Covenant and the transitory nature of its ritual. I will now explain these below.⁵

In the first three verses of Hebrews 9, we find the phrases τὸ ἅγιον, ἅγια and ἅγια ἁγίων in verses 1, 2, and 3 respectively. It is true that τὸ ἅγιον is in Lev 16 (LXX) translated as 'Holy of Holies'. But as N. H. Young has clarified, this neuter singular is

³ Thompson, *The Beginnings of Christian Philosophy*, p. 104.

⁴ Lane, *Hebrews*, p. 214. It is used here in the same sense as used in Heb 7:11; 8:4.

⁵ I will proceed in a similar manner when I exegete other pericopae in Hebrews 9:1 – 10:18.

used in Heb 9:1 'to refer to the whole sanctuary'.⁶ Young has further rightly argued for ἁγία in verse 2 to be taken as a neuter plural and allow for its exceptional interpretation as the outer tent. As for ἁγία ἁγίων (though also unusual), its 'context leaves no doubt' that it refers to the Holy of Holies.⁷

The Greek word ἁγία in Heb 9:8, 12, 24, and 25 has also generated controversy among scholars regarding the way it is to be interpreted. There is consensus among scholars now that in all these verses, the word is constantly used to refer to the 'Holy of Holies' or as it is sometimes called 'the inner tent'.⁸ The word ἁγία in Heb 9:8, 12, 24, and 25 is often translated variously as 'holy place', (or 'Holy Place') and sanctuary. But it is to be maintained that in all these cases it denotes 'The Holy of Holies'.⁹

Of particular importance to the argument of the writer are these two chambers of the Tabernacle. First was *the Holy place* (9:2) beyond which was *the Holy of Holies* (9:3). A curtain separated these two chambers. In Heb 9:2-7, the writer describes these two compartments vividly, detailing the contents of each. In the Holy of Holies was the Ark of the Covenant also called the 'Ark of testimony' (Ex 25:22), which was the symbol of God's presence. The wilderness tent (Exodus 25) rather than the Jerusalem temple is referred to here.¹⁰ Our writer is keen not only to point out the spatial distinctions

⁶ N. H. Young, 'The Gospel According to Hebrews' *NTS* 27 (1980-81) 198.

⁷ Young, 'Gospel According', p.198

⁸ Young, 'Gospel According', pp. 198-199.

⁹ Young, 'Gospel According', pp. 198-199.

¹⁰ The writer constantly refers to the wilderness tent rather than the Jerusalem temple. But this is no proof that the Jerusalem tent was no longer standing. Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 198 suggests that this may indicate (though not conclusively) that neither the writer nor his readers belonged to the Jerusalem temple, adding that what it does prove however, is that 'our author's argument is biblical through and through. Even Solomon's temple is not so apposite to his purpose as the Mosaic tabernacle, which is introduced (Ex 25:1ff.)'. I contend that referring to the 'tent' rather than the Jerusalem temple also strengthens the writer's point about the transitoriness and impermanence of the entire levitical system. This argument may also be preferred because of the tradition attested in 2 Sam 7 that the physical temple in Jerusalem should have never been built. This may be the basis for the attitudes towards the temple – cf. Acts, John, and Qumran.

between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place, but also emphasizes very strongly, as Lane puts it, 'the distinction and independent significance of the front and rear compartments of the desert sanctuary'.¹¹ This prepares for the writer's argument in Heb 9:6-7 which as will be noted focuses on the meaning of the cultic actions that mirror the arrangement of these two distinct and independent compartments.¹²

In 9:6-7, the writer describes the operations in the tent. Priests go continually into the outer compartment of the tent (vs. 6) but only the high priest goes into the second, and he but once a year, and not without taking the blood that he offers for himself and for the sins committed unintentionally by the people (9:7). The phrase εἰς τὴν δευττήραν (9:7) is to be understood as 'into the second *tent*' which is the Holy of Holies. For it was in the Holy of Holies that the High Priest alone went once each year (cf. the atonement ritual of Leviticus 16). The δευττήραν in (9:7) is to be contrasted with the πρώτην σκηνὴν of (9:6). The μέν and δέ construction in verses 6 and 7 respectively indicate that δευττήραν and πρώτην are being compared – 'on the one hand into the front compartment'... but 'on the other hand into the rear compartment'.¹³ They are therefore to be understood as Holy Place and Most Holy Place respectively.¹⁴ The interpretation of πρώτην as the Holy Place is consistent with the understanding of πρώτη in 9:2, 6, and 8. This puts to rest misleading interpretations that the author was in Heb 9:7 speaking of two separate tents: 'a first tent' and 'a second tent' (NEB) or an 'inner tent' and 'outer tent' (RSV, TEV).¹⁵

From our discussion above, the writer draws the following conclusions about the tabernacle and its provisions for cultic worship:

Also see further, Jonathan A. Draper, 'Temple, Tabernacle and Mystical experience in John' in *Neotestamentica* 31 (2) 1997: 263-288 especially pp. 263; 271-273 for the summary of his arguments.

¹¹ Lane, *Hebrews*, p. 217.

¹² Lane, *Hebrews*, p. 217.

¹³ See, Lane, *Hebrews*, p. 215; Young, 'Gospel According', p. 199.

¹⁴ See, Lane, *Hebrews*, p. 215; Young, 'Gospel According', p. 199.

¹⁵ Lane, *Hebrews*, p. 215.

First, this tent is a constructed and therefore a material one (9:2). Even the sanctuary itself is referred to as ‘an earthly sanctuary’ (the Greek *ἅγιον κοσμικόν*). *Κοσμικόν* here should not be understood in the sense of ‘cosmic’, rather ‘it denotes something “which belongs to this world”, with the suggestion of the transitoriness characteristics of the cosmos’.¹⁶ Here in 9:1 (also cf. 9:9, 14; 8:5), the writer uses *λατρείας* to refer to sacrificial ministry and the closeness of *λατρείας* and *ἅγιον κοσμικόν* seem to indicate that the writer intends to discuss ‘sanctuary and sacrifice’ together.¹⁷ The writer will later argue that the material nature of this earthly sanctuary makes it (and the entire sacrificial ministry offered on it) inferior to Christ’s heavenly sanctuary and his sacrificial ministry. The nature of Christ’s sanctuary and his sacrifice make his sacrificial ministry superior (9:11-14).

Second, only the high priest can enter the Holy of Holies and only once a year. As already mentioned, it is the Day of Atonement ritual in Leviticus 16 that is in the writer’s mind here. Even when the high priest did receive permission to enter, his entry was safeguarded by sacrificial blood (pointing to his own limitations because of his sins or sinful nature).¹⁸ This, superimposed on the fact that there existed a curtain between the two chambers, shows that entry was restricted and therefore access to God was restricted too (9:8), not least for the rest of the Israelites.

Third, the fact that these rituals had to be repeated over and over shows that these sacrifices could not perfect the conscience of the worshipper (9:9); and if they were able to perfect the conscience of the worshipper once and for all, they would have stopped being offered since the worshipper would have no more consciousness of sin (10: 1-3).

¹⁶ Thompson, *The Beginnings of Christian Philosophy*, p. 105. *Κοσμικόν* should be taken to be equivalent to *ἐπὶ γῆς* in 8:4.

¹⁷ Thompson, *The Beginnings of Christian Philosophy*, p. 104.

¹⁸ Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 208.

This in itself means, as Bruce states, ‘this sacrificial blood was not finally efficacious, for fresh blood had to be shed and a fresh entry made into the holy of holies year by year’.¹⁹

Fourth, the scope of the sacrificial ministry of the Aaronic high priests is defined in vs. 7b i.e. ‘... and not without taking the blood that he offers for himself and for the sins committed unintentionally by the people’. First, the high priest sacrificed for his own sins (Lev 16:11) and then for the sins of the people (Lev 16:15). The second point made in this verse is that the sacrifices offered by the Aaronic high priests only covered the sins committed unintentionally by the people (alluding to Lev 4:1f; 5:17ff; also cf. Num 15:24-29), ‘as distinct from those who sin in deliberate and rebellious defiance of God and his law’²⁰ for which there was no sacrifice (Num 15:30f). The Greek word *ἀγνοημάτων* designates those sins committed in ‘error’ or ‘ignorance’. Its use fits well with the ‘ignorant’ (*ἀγνοοῦσιν*) and ‘wayward’ (*πλανωμένοις*) of 5:2 i.e. those who sin unintentionally or out of human weakness. Hughes observes, ‘High-handed sin was a mutinous repudiation of the covenant bond between God and his people, a willful withdrawal from membership in the people of God, and as such was irremediable’.²¹

¹⁹ Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 208.

²⁰ Hughes, *Hebrews*, pp. 320-321; see further Moffat, *Hebrews*, p. 117; Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 206. For further arguments that sins with a high hand were not expiable by sacrifice, see Timothy R. Ashley, *The Book of Numbers* (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1993), pp. 285-289; Gordon J. Wenham, *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary* (Leicester, IVP, 1981), p. 131. Baruch A. Levine, *Numbers 1-20* (New York, Doubleday, 1993), p. 398.

²¹ Hughes, *Hebrews*, p. 321. But Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, pp. 435-436 has argued that the Day of Atonement ritual of Leviticus 16 does not restrict forgiveness to *ἀγνοήματα* but rather covers all sin (including deliberate sins). But it is not explicit from Lev 16:30 whether the .. ‘from all your sins ...’ includes ‘high-handed sins or deliberate sins’ or is to be understood as .. ‘from all your sins..’ as was prescribed for the ‘sin-offering’. Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16* (New York, Doubleday, 1991), p. 1056 explains that the Hebrew word *mikkol hatto tekem* (translated ‘of all your sins’) in Lev 16:30, ‘is the all-inclusive term of wrong doing (found in vss. 16, 21), which therefore combines both the pollution of the sanctuary and the iniquities of the people’. I understand Milgrom to mean that the ‘from all your sins’ of Lev 16:30, does not refer to all sin in the sense that it includes sins committed with a high hand. This contrasts with Ellingworth’s interpretation above. Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 206 has observed that at Qumran, sins of inadvertence incurred penance, but deliberate sins excommunication (cf. 1QS 9.1f.). Ellingworth himself

The writer's teaching in 10:26 'For if we willfully persist in sin after having received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins', has troubled a number of Christians. But it should be remembered that it is the sin of apostasy (3:12) that the writer has in mind. To persist in sin is to show contempt for Christ and his sacrifice: which is an open rejection of Christ (and therefore God who sent him) equivalent to 'an evil and unbelieving heart, which turns away from the living God' (3:12).²² For such people, there remains no sacrifice for sins. This should in no way be confused with the forgiveness of the repentant sinner.

The writer in Heb 9:1-10 presents the Levitical cultus as severely defective essentially at two levels. First, it is limited and restricted in providing access to God. Second, its offerings are inadequate in perfecting the conscience of the worshipper. This is so because the cultus is material in nature.²³ But our author maintains, all is not lost. A new era has set in with the advent of Jesus Christ whose high priesthood and sacrifice are the sole hope of the people out of their predicament. 'But when Christ came as high priest ... then through the greater and perfect tent he entered once for all into the Holy Place ... with his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption' (Heb 9:11-12). The high priesthood and sacrifice of Jesus Christ are superior and have superseded the levitical cultus. We now turn to a full discussion and implication of this in Heb 9:11-14.

5.2 The ground for the superiority of Christ's sacrifice (9:11- 10:18)

Our author in Heb 9:11 introduces his argument with the now characteristic *δέ* construction (*but*) which should be understood as a complement of the *μὲν οὖν* clause

(Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, p. 435) states that 'Rabbinic tradition as early as R. Ishmael (d. CE 135) placed explicit limits on the Day of Atonement...noting that R. Ishmael, t. Yoma 5.6, distinguishes between sins requiring repentance; those covered by the Day of Atonement; those which called for corporal punishment; and desecration of God's name, which could be atoned for only by death'.

²² Lane, *Hebrews*, p. 292; Hooker, *Not Ashamed of Gospel*, p. 124.

²³ Lane, *Hebrews*, p. 217. Commenting on Heb 9:1-10, Wright, *Hebrews*, p. 92 states 'The present age – the period of time right up to the coming of the Messiah – was simply the time of temporary arrangements (and the temporary arrangements included, confusingly, the entire tabernacle or the Temple itself!)'.

of Heb 9: 1 ('Now on the one hand' 'But on the other hand').²⁴ The use of the 'adversative participle' δέ ushers in a major shift in our author's argument establishing Heb 9:11-14 (and the pericopae that follow) as counterpart of what has been said in 9:1-10.²⁵ It is to be noted that this is no ordinary counterpart but 'the ultimate counterpart' in the sense that 'the work of Christ is final, absolute, definitive, complete and perfect'.²⁶ Heb 9:11-12 is one continuous sentence in the Greek text and it is better to handle these two verses (vss 11-12) together for a proper flow of interpretation and meaning. The author draws the attention of the readers to the completed work of Jesus Christ on the cross. He is keen to assure the readers that with the advent of Christ their hope has been realized because Jesus Christ is 'the high priest of the good things that have come' (the Greek phrase τῶν γενομένων ἀγαθῶν). The Greek word γενομένων, which allows for the translation 'which have already come', is favoured by most scholars as opposed to the reading τῶν μελλόντων ἀγαθῶν where the variant μελλόντων would allow for the phrase to be translated as 'the good things that are to come'.²⁷ The evidence in the text clearly shows that the author is focusing on what Jesus has already completed on the cross and not to some future benefits. Those who have put their faith in Jesus Christ are already experiencing the benefits of what Christ has achieved for them on the cross.²⁸ If

²⁴ Lane, *Hebrews*, p. 229.

²⁵ Lane, *Hebrews*, p. 229; Donald A. Hagner, *Hebrews*, NIBC (Peabody, Massachusetts, Hendrickson Publishers 1983), p. 135.

²⁶ Hagner, *Hebrews*, p. 135.

²⁷ Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 211; Lane, *Hebrews*, p. 229; Hagner, *Hebrews*, p. 135. Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart, German Bible Society, 1994), p. 598 has pointed out that 'Although both readings are well supported, on the whole γενομένων appears to have superior attestation on the score of age and diversity of text type (P⁴⁶ B D* 1739 it^d syr^{p, h, pal} Origen *al*)'. He further states 'The presence of the expression τῶν μελλόντων ἀγαθῶν in 10:1, where the text is firm, seems to have influenced copyists here'.

²⁸ Hagner, *Hebrews*, p. 135 has suggested that this 'realized eschatology', also mentioned in Heb 1:2; 12:18-24 should be kept in tension with affirmations of 'future eschatology' that are found in the book (Heb 6:11, 18; 9:28; 10:25). For an extended discussion of the alternation between 'realised' and 'futuristic' eschatologies in the Epistle to the Hebrews see Graham Hughes, *Hebrews and Hermeneutics* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 66-74 and Isaacs, *Reading Hebrews and James*, 112.

we are to pursue our reconstruction that the readers were Jewish converts to the Christian faith, then they must have had specific expectations of the promised messiah. Our author is keen to emphasize that ‘the good things’ that were associated with the ‘promised messianic redemption’ are ‘now the good things that have come’ with the priestly ministry of Jesus Christ. They are there to be experienced by the believers now – a process, which according to the author has already begun.²⁹

Controversy has reigned over the proper interpretation and understanding of the ‘greater and perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation)’.³⁰ Lane, through a detailed examination of the Greek words, seems to suggest very strongly that σκηνή should be understood in a local sense to mean ‘compartment’ as in Heb 8:2, 5; 9:2, 3, 6, 8.³¹ According to Lane, this means that Christ like the Levitical high priest had to pass through (a space), a front compartment before entering the holy of holies to make atonement for sins with his blood. With due respect for the process that Lane takes to arrive at this conclusion, I am afraid he is stretching the analogy beyond its limits. This would mean that Christ’s work on the cross was incomplete until Christ entered the holy of holies and I am convinced this is not what the author intends his readers to understand. First we know that Jesus did not carry his blood into heaven to sprinkle it on some object in the Heavenly sanctuary. The death of Christ interpreted as sacrifice by our author here should not be given this ritualistic sense. Rather, the ‘greater and perfect tent’ also called the ‘heavenly sanctuary’ is the place of the very presence of God Himself, ‘For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made by human hands, a mere copy of the true one, but he entered into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf’ (9:24).³² It would

²⁹ Lane, *Hebrews*, p. 229.

³⁰ For the various interpretations and their proponents, see George H. Guthrie, *Hebrews, The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Zondervan Publishing House, 1998), p. 310.

³¹ See Lane, *Hebrews*, pp. 230, 236-238. Attridge, *Hebrews*, pp. 245-248; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, pp. 450-451. All take this understanding as authentic and applicable given the context and taking the grammatical use of διὰ plus genitive to mean ‘through’.

³² Hagner, *Hebrews*, p. 135; Guthrie, *NIV Application Commentary*, p. 310. ‘This is about the passing away of everything regarding worship that is temporary, provisional, and imperfect’ – see further Thomas G. Long, *Hebrews* (Louisville, John Knox Press, 1997), pp. 96-97.

be misleading, to interpret the 'tabernacle' in 9:11 as some definite space or 'compartment' that Christ went through *en route* to the Holy of Holies. The 'tabernacle' or sanctuary referred to here as 'not made with hands and not of this creation' is as Hagner puts it 'the heavenly reality, the place of God's presence'.³³ What the author wants his readers to understand is that Jesus Christ has passed into the very presence of God in Heaven (8:1) as echoed in 9:24. This interpretation is consistent with the understanding that atonement through the sacrificial death of Christ is dependent on his completed work on the cross and not on something subsequent to the cross event.³⁴

According to 9:12, 'he (Christ) entered once for all into the Holy Place, not with the blood of goats and calves, but with his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption'. Understandably, the Levitical high priests, on the Day of Atonement, entered the Holy of Holies with the blood of goats and calves. The sacrifice of the animals facilitated their entry into the Holy of Holies. They carried the sacrificial blood into the Most Holy Place to sprinkle it 'on the front of the mercy seat, and before the mercy seat' (Lev 16: 14, 15).

³³ Hagner, *Hebrews*, p. 136. The evidence in the New Testament is consistent with the author's understanding that the place of God's abode is not material. Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 212 note 77 suggests that though 'the words of Mk 14:58 are put into Jesus' mouth by 'false witnesses', they are not a fabrication, but a misrepresentation of something that he really said' cf. Jn 2:19-22. Luke in Acts 7:48; 17:24 records Stephen and Paul as stating that God does not dwell in buildings made with hands. Further, Marie E. Isaacs, *Sacred Space: An Approach to the Theology of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), pp. 205-219, writing about Heaven as the Eschatological Goal of the people of God, has rightly warned against understanding "heaven" as 'a geographical location'; rather it is to be understood 'as a symbol of the divine' – adding that in Hebrews, "heaven" symbolizes the sphere of divine sovereignty' (see especially pages 205 and 206). In addition, Isaacs has observed that 'the author of Hebrews also depicts heaven in terms of Israel's cult place'. But it is to be sustained that for the author of Hebrews 'there can be no altar of sacrifice in the heaven's sanctuary, since the death of Jesus Christ is that "altar", and that was located on earth' – the author of Hebrews interpretes 'the death of Jesus as the expiatory sacrifice by means of which he was able to enter heaven's holy of holies' (see pages 209, 214). For a detailed discussion of Heb 9:4 where the author of Hebrews places the altar of incense (Θυμιατήριον) inside rather than outside the inner sanctum see further Isaacs, *Sacred Space*, pp. 211-212).

³⁴ Hagner, *Hebrews*, p. 136.

But this is not so with Christ Jesus. We read ‘... but with his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption’ (Heb 9:12). Much more needs to be said at this point about the phrase ‘the blood of Christ’. The reference to ‘Christ’s blood’ keeps surfacing in this epistle (see 9:14; 10:19, 29; 12:24; 13:12, 20). The author is using ‘blood’ here to refer to the life of Christ given up in death as a sacrifice. He is certainly alluding to the OT blood ritual of the cult sacrifice (Leviticus 16).³⁵

In the OT, blood is identified with life (cf. Deut 12:23), and in Lev 17:11, life is located in blood so that blood is equal to life. It is on the basis of this that blood is able to atone for sins.³⁶ There is no reason to doubt that when the author talks of ‘the blood of Christ’, he is referring to his sacrificial death. Given that the death of Christ was not particularly ‘bloody’ as most of the people executed by crucifixion died of exhaustion rather than through loss of blood or wounds, the reference to the ‘blood of Christ’ can only be taken in the OT cultic sense to mean life given up in death.³⁷ Our author is in Heb 9:12

³⁵ Elsewhere in the book of Leviticus (besides Leviticus 16 - the Day of Atonement ritual), ‘blood’ is associated with atoning sacrifice as in Lev 4:5, 6, 7, 16-18, 25, 30, 34; 5:9; 8:15; 9:9; 17:11.

³⁶ See S. David Sperling (1992) his article on ‘blood’ in David Noel Freedman (ed) *The Anchor Bible Dictionary Volume 1* (New York, Doubleday, 1992), pp. 761. For further studies on the use of the word ‘blood’ in NT in this sense see Morris, *Apostolic Preaching*, pp. 117-122; J. Behm (1994) in his article αἷμα, αἱματεκχυσία in G. Kittel (ed) *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Volume 1 (ET Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1964), pp. 174-77; F. Laubach (1986) in his article on ‘blood’ in Colin Brown (ed) *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* Volume 1, Revised Edition (Carlisle, Paternoster, 1986), pp. 221-4. Also see the section on the significance of blood in both the OT and NT in McKnight E & Church C. *Hebrews and James* (Macon, Georgia, Smyth & Helwys Publishing, Inc. 2004), pp. 198.

³⁷ See further Marshall, *Work of Christ*, p. 79; David Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 138 where he states “‘The blood of Christ’ is a synonym for the death that achieves deliverance from sins (9:15): our writer refers ‘not to matter or substance but to an action’”. Elsewhere in the NT (as for example in Rom 5:9; 1 Pet 1:19; Rev 1:5; 5:9) the phrases ‘the precious blood of Christ’ or ‘by his blood’ should be understood in sacrificial terms. There is a strong correlation between the understanding of ‘blood’ as life given up in death here and the significance of blood in the Ganda sacrificial rituals. We shall examine this in chapters 6 and 8 of this study.

grounding our redemption in the sacrificial death of Christ. Eternal redemption is by means of Christ's death.

The easy temptation to overstretch the author's analogy must be resisted. He does not actually say that Christ carried his blood into the heavenly sanctuary. Under the New Covenant, Christ achieved in 'reality' in the one single event on the cross, 'what Aaron and his successors performed in type by the twofold act of slaying the victim and presenting its blood in the Holy of Holies that is, by virtue of the infinitely acceptable oblation of his life – he could appear before God, not on sufferance but by right, as his people's prevailing representative and high priest'.³⁸ He (Christ) entered 'once for all' into the Holy Place (v12). The writer to the Hebrews emphasizes this theme. The sacrificial death of Christ is an unrepeatable event – the sense of a once-for-all event in the past. Hebrews maintains too that the sacrificial death of Christ is once-for-all (the Greek word *ἐφάπαξ* - meaning once for all time) and that its efficacy is eternal (7:27; 9:11-14; 10:12). This indeed is 'eternal redemption' (9:12) - the Greek *αἰωνίου λύτρωσιν*. The readers, (whom we have supposed to be Jewish converts to the Christian faith) had deliverance or liberation from their enemies (particularly their Roman oppressors) as a function of the expected and awaited messiah. According to the author, the predicament is sin and its penalty and it is from this that the sacrificial death of Christ has delivered them.³⁹ This redemption is eternal since Christ has entered the true Holy of Holies 'with his own blood' once for all.⁴⁰ This incomparable efficacy of the blood of Christ is continued in the discussion of Heb 9:13-14.

Heb 9:13 is introduced by an 'if clause' while in 9:14 there is the 'how much more clause'. The author by the phrase 'blood of bulls and goats' seems to include all other general sacrifices in addition to the Day of Atonement ritual.⁴¹ There is an additional

³⁸ Bruce, Hagner, *Hebrews*, p. 214.

³⁹ It is interesting to note here the connection between sin and war as punishment for sin. So atonement comes to be linked with or means liberation.

⁴⁰ Guthrie, *NIV Application Commentary*, p. 310.

⁴¹ Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 214.

element of 'the sprinkling of the ashes of the heifer'.⁴² Implicit in the 'if clause' is the acknowledgement that these did have some limited cleansing potency. However, this cleansing or purification was only external – they could only purify the flesh.⁴³ This cleansing that was limited to the 'flesh' – (i.e. external) accounts for the 'how much more' phrase in 9:14 in respect of the superior blood of Christ that brings about the reality of a far more significant and perfect, definitive 'cleansing of the conscience from dead works to worship the living God' (9:14).⁴⁴ In 9:14, Christ offered (the Greek προσήνεγκεν)⁴⁵ himself without blemish to God, through the eternal spirit. Here then is one of the benefits of the sacrificial death of Christ. Unlike the levitical cultus which would only sanctify (ἀγιάζει) the flesh, the blood of Christ will purge (καθαριεῖ) the conscience from (as Lane has translated this) 'acts that lead to death'.⁴⁶ It is probable that

⁴² The ashes of a heifer were mixed with water and the mixture used in cleansing rituals – read the full details of this in Num 19, noting especially verses: 9, 17-19).

⁴³ I must point out here as I have done before, that it is unbelievable that the Jews ever thought of the atonement rituals in terms of external cleansing only. For the Jews, atonement secured by sacrifices for atonement was complete and not partial and so was the cleansing – it was total and wholesome. The separation of flesh and conscience is not characteristically Jewish but as shall be discussed later, 'the author of Hebrews assumes a dualistic anthropology, which corresponds to the dualism of heaven and earth' – Thompson, *The Beginnings of Christian Philosophy*, pp. 108-109.

⁴⁴ Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 214-215; Hagner, *Hebrews*, p. 136-137. Writing about the efficacy of the blood of Christ, John Dunnill writes 'The blood of Jesus is better than that of the old covenant in being human blood, voluntarily offered, and therefore embracing a moral as well as a ritual dimension; it alone may truly be said to have intrinsic power as the body and blood of the one sent by God, a purifying and hallowing force coming into the defiled system from outside; as such, it can be claimed to be different in kind, and therefore final and unique, leaving no need of repetition'. See John Dunnill, *Covenant and Sacrifice in the Letter to the Hebrews* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 231.

⁴⁵ For an excellent summary of the use and meanings of the various sacrificial terms in the Epistle to the Hebrews see Wilfrid Stott, 'The Conception of 'Offering' in the Epistle to the Hebrews' in *New Testament Studies* 9, pp 62-67.

⁴⁶ Lane, *Hebrews*, p. 240. Wright, *Hebrews for everyone*, p. 96-97 candidly puts it this way, '... the sacrifice of Christ is "better". It reaches to the depths of the personality. Just as Jesus has gone into the very heart of the presence of God, not simply into a man-made building with an inner chamber but into the place where God lives in light and holiness, so the effects of his sacrifice are to be felt not in the outer lives of his people, in terms of restoration to fellowship or being made "clean" again in a bodily sense, but in the

the reference to the 'eternal spirit' should be understood to refer to the "Holy Spirit" emphasizing the role of the Holy Spirit in the ministry of Jesus.⁴⁷

In terms of the flow of the author's argument, Heb 9:11-14 is to Hebrews 9:1 – 10:18 what these two chapters are to the whole Epistle. Heb 9:11-14 is the core paragraph and occupies center stage in the progression of the author's argument. What follows in the rest of chapter 9 and chapter 10, has its basis as the sacrificial death of Christ. Even issues hinted at earlier on e.g. Christ's priestly ministry (8:1-5) and the new covenant (8:6-13) are made possible because of the 'blood of Christ' i.e. the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on the cross of calvary. The fact of Jesus Christ as the mediator of this new covenant ratified in his blood with the associated benefits for the believer is the author's point of emphasis in Heb 9:15-22.

So on the basis of 9:11-14, the author is able to draw the conclusion stated in verse 15. The phrase 'For this reason...' implies that the author takes the previous paragraph as the context and basis for what he is to say in 9:15-22, which is the immediate paragraph. So the role of Christ as 'mediator' of the new covenant is grounded in what he has already done and achieved. According to 9:11-14, Christ has entered the heavenly sanctuary once and for all through his death on the cross and obtained eternal redemption (12), which as we have already stated, is being enjoyed now (realized eschatology) by those who have put their trust in him. The incomparable efficacy of his redemptive sacrificial death and his exaltation, qualify him as the mediator of the new covenant (διαθήκης καινῆς μεσίτης).⁴⁸

Heb 9:16-17 is closely linked to 9:15. Whereas in 9:15 the author has stressed that the mediatorial role of Christ grounded in his sacrificial death has earned the believers

inward depths, the 'holy of holies' at the core of each individual person, the place where we really are who we are. ... the "conscience" of worshippers (Heb 9:14; 10:2; 10:22; 13:18).

⁴⁷ Hagner, *Hebrews*, p. 137.

⁴⁸ For detailed discussion, see Lane, *Hebrews*, pp. 234, 241; Bruce, *Hebrews*, pp. 219-220; Guthrie, *NIV Application Commentary*, pp. 312-313.

eternal redemption, in verses 16-17, the author labours to explain why it was necessary for Christ to die in order to become the mediator of the new covenant.⁴⁹ Scholars are not agreed on whether διαθήκη in these verses should be interpreted in the same way as διαθήκη in verses 15 and 18 where it refers to 'covenant' as it is used in the LXX⁵⁰ or whether it should be understood to refer to a 'will' or 'testament'.⁵¹ Lane has argued that 'there is no evidence in hellenistic, Egyptian, or Roman legal practice to the effect that a will or testament was legally valid only when the testator died', adding that 'a will became operative as soon as it was properly drafted, witnessed and notarized'.⁵² Bruce does not agree, arguing that this kind of διαθήκη could not be operational until the death of the maker was validated, a view supported by Gordon.⁵³ But in spite of Lane's

⁴⁹ Lane, *Hebrews*, pp. 234, 242. For a schematic representation of the contrasting features of the cult under the old covenant and cult under the new covenant see Susanne Lehne, *The New Covenant in Hebrews* (Sheffield, JSOT Press, 1990), pp. 98-99.

⁵⁰ So Westcott, *Hebrews*, pp. 265-266; Lane, *Hebrews*, pp. 230-231; and recently Guthrie, *NIV Application Commentary*, pp. 313-314 and Lucy Lincoln 'Translating Hebrews 9:15-22 in Its Hebraic Context' in *Journal of Translation and Textlinguistics* Volume 12 (1999), pp. 1-29. For a detailed discussion of the use of διαθήκη in the LXX, see Gottfried Quell, 'διαθήκη' in G. Kittel (ed), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* Volume 2 (ET, Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1964), pp. 106-124.

⁵¹ So Bruce, *Hebrews*, pp. 221-222; Attridge, *Hebrews*, pp. 255-256; Hagner, *Hebrews*, p. 144; Neva F. Miller, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: An Analytical and Exegetical Handbook* (Dallas, Summer Institute of Linguistics, Inc., 1988), pp. 262-263; W. G. Buchanan, *To the Hebrews - Anchor Bible Volume 36* (NY, Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1972), pp. 150-151; Koester, *Hebrews*, pp. 417-418; Kistemaker, *Hebrews*, p. 256; Robert P. Gordon, *Hebrews* (Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), pp. 103-104; Isaacs, 'Hebrews', p. 155.

⁵² See Lane, *Hebrews*, p. 231 for a detailed argument. John J. Hughes 'Hebrews 9:15ff and Galatians 3:15ff. A Study in Covenant Practice and Procedure' in *Novum Testamentum*, Vol. 21 (1979), pp. 27 - 66 has made a detailed argument as to why διαθήκη here should not be translated as 'will' or 'testament' but as 'covenant'.

⁵³ Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 224. Gordon, *Hebrews*, p. 103 bases his argument on the common view that διαθήκη which translates the Hebrew *b'rit* (covenant) in the Greek Old Testament was also the regular Greek term for "testament". He suggests that there is a probable similar play on the meanings of διαθήκη as in the case of Gal 3:15, 17. According to Gordon, 'the death of the 'testator' is required for the

careful argument, it is hard to believe that the author did not intend his readers to understand διαθήκη in Heb 9:16-17 as 'will' or 'testament'. There are two factors that militate against interpreting διαθήκη in verses 16-17 as 'covenant'. First, it is to be noted that the content of the *LXX* largely influences our author. Recalling the covenant God made with Abraham (Gen 15:1-18) and that made with Israel on Mount Sinai (Ex 24:3-8), it is not suggested that the victims that were slaughtered represented God the covenant maker nor did they represent Abraham and Israel.⁵⁴ Second, interpreting διαθήκη as covenant would make the word lose its natural force / reading in this context. The literal death of the 'covenant' maker is here meant and not merely symbolized. Since διαθήκη can be translated as 'covenant' and 'testament' (as its variants⁵⁵) we should allow for this shift and translate it as 'testament' or 'will'. There can be no doubt that the language in verses 16-17 is such that it seeks the certification of the death of the διαθήκη maker (here to be called the 'testator').⁵⁶ As Bruce has rightly concluded, 'a testament is the only kind of διαθήκη which depends for its ratification on the death of the person who makes it'.⁵⁷

implementation of a will whereas the enforcement of covenant agreements does not involve the death of contracting parties".

⁵⁴ Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 223.

⁵⁵ Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 219; Hagner, *Hebrews*, p. 144.

⁵⁶ Hagner, *Hebrews*, p. 144.

⁵⁷ Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 223. See further Koester, *Hebrews*, pp. 418-419 for the legal implications for 'a will' or 'testament'. E. A. C Pretorius, 'ΔΙΑΘΗΚΗ in the Epistle to the Hebrews', *Neotestamentica* 5 (1971), p. 44 carefully examined the use of διαθήκη both in the *LXX* and the New Testament and observed that Heb 9:16 and 17 are the 'only two instances in the Epistle to the Hebrews where διαθήκη conveys the Koiné meaning "testament"'. While Johannes Behm (who has extensively examined the use of διαθήκη to mean "testament" in secular Greek) agrees, he nevertheless adds, 'In the light of the external similarity that there is both death and a διαθήκη, he (*meaning author of Hebrews*) jumps from the religious to the current legal sense of διαθήκη, even at the risk of involving himself in contradictions which show that there is no real parallel'; See Johannes Behm, 'διαθήκη' in G. Kittel (ed) *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* Volume 2 (ET, Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1964), p. 131. For details of the article read pages 124-134. Most recently, Scott W. Hahn taking into account all the grammatical, lexical,

The point of our author is that as it was necessary for the death of the testator to be validated in order to have the 'testament' ratified,⁵⁸ so is the new διαθήκη, its validity depends upon the fact that its author (Jesus Christ) has died.⁵⁹

In Heb 9:18-22, the author takes us back in history and draws parallels from God's first covenant with the children of Israel on foot of Mount Sinai (Ex 24:3-8). This too required death for its ratification albeit not the death of the one who made it. But the point is that this too was inaugurated with blood (9:18). The activities of that event are outlined in verses 19-21. Blood (the giving up of life in death) is instrumental in the covenant ratification ritual of this event.⁶⁰ This first covenant was sealed in the sprinkling of blood.⁶¹ The phrase '... almost everything...' in verse 19 takes care of those amongst the Israelite community who could not afford blood sacrifices and were allowed the

syntactical and contextual issues has reviewed and evaluated the arguments for understanding διαθήκη as either "testament" or "covenant" in Heb 9:16-17. Taking as his context the broken first covenant in Heb 9:15 and in an effort to retain the word "covenant" in the interpretation of διαθήκη in Heb 9:16-17, he concludes: 'If a broken covenant is assumed as the basis for the assertions of vv. 16-17, the meaning of the text becomes intelligible: a broken covenant requires the death of the covenant maker (v. 16); it would invalidate the covenant if the covenant breaker were to remain alive (v.17)'. For details See Scott W. Hahn, 'A Broken Covenant and the Curse of Death: A Study of Hebrews 9:15-22' in *Catholic-Biblical-Quarterly* 66 number 3 (2004), pp. 416-436 and especially page 436 for his conclusions. Hahn's re-interpretation though interesting is not convincing and does not make matters any clearer. Heb 9:17 is talking about the necessity of the death of the διαθήκη maker to ratify the διαθήκη and not the death of the διαθήκη breaker as Hahn seems to assert.

⁵⁸ Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 219 has even translated διαθήκη in 9:16 as 'testamentary covenant'.

⁵⁹ Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 224.

⁶⁰ Bruce, *Hebrews*, pp. 219, 225 notes 108, 134 respectively for a possible explanation of the addition of 'goats' among the sacrificial animals in verse 19. The author could be using 'bulls and goats' to mean 'sacrificial animals' as in 9:12f: 10:4. On the whole the phrase καὶ τῶν τράγων is missing in P⁴⁶ X^c K L Ψ 1739, about 30 Byzantine manuscripts, Chrysostom and the Syriac versions. Bruce suspects that if 'goats' are an authentic part of Hebrews, then it may have been dropped out of P⁴⁶ in order to harmonize it with Ex 24:5.

⁶¹ Elsewhere in the New Testament, the blood of Christ is linked with the new covenant (as in Lk 22:20; I Cor 11:25; Mt 26:28; Mk 14:24).

offering of fine flour (Lev 5:11-13). But the author underscores the centrality of blood in the atonement ritual for 'without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins' (22b). This is in line with God's command to Moses: 'For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you for making atonement for your lives on the altar; for, as life, it is the blood that makes atonement' (Lev 17:11). In Heb 9:23-28, the author while continuing the theme of the covenant, also seems to bring the discussion in the entire chapter of Hebrews 9 to a logical conclusion as seen in the section that follows.

The author begins by affirming the necessity for the purification of the elements of the earthly tabernacle (v 23) explained in the preceding paragraph (9:19-22). The Mosaic Law required this. The author (here again as in 9:13) acknowledges that ritual cleansing under the levitical cultus was real and effective as prescribed by the law – i.e. for the purification of the copies of the spiritual realities (ὑπόδειγμα, as in 8:5). But the author is keen to emphasize, 'the heavenly things (τὰ ἐπουράνια, as in 8:5) themselves need better sacrifices than these' (verse 23b). This raises the question of the necessity for the heavenly things to be cleansed at all. Was the heavenly sanctuary defiled so as to require purification?

We have noted that the author is using the framework of the Day of Atonement ritual to explain the death of Christ and there is found the necessity for the cleansing of the heavenly realities.⁶² Leviticus 16:16-19 leads us to the explanation why the Holy of Holies needed purification.

Thus he shall make atonement for the sanctuary, because of the uncleanness of the people of Israel, and because of their transgressions, all their sins; and so he shall do for the tent of meeting, which remains with them in the midst of their uncleanness. No one shall be in the tent of meeting from the time he enters to make atonement in the sanctuary until he comes out and has made atonement for himself and for his house and for all the assembly of Israel. Then he shall go out

⁶² See Guthrie, *NIV Application Commentary*, pp. 314-315.

to the altar that is before the Lord and make atonement on its behalf, and shall take some of the blood of the bull and of the blood of the goat, and put it on each of the horns of the altar. He shall sprinkle some of the blood on it with his finger seven times, and cleanse it and hallow it from the uncleanness of the people of Israel (Lev 16:16-19).

It is apparent from the above quotation that the cleansing of the earthly sanctuary was on behalf of sinful Israel.⁶³ So the heavenly realities spoken of here should be understood in the context of the author to refer to the conscience (9:14). The defiled conscience of human beings, which belongs to the spiritual realm, is the one that needs the cleansing of better sacrifices.⁶⁴ To think of the heavenly sanctuary in material terms and therefore in need of cleansing is to deviate from the author's line of thought and argument.⁶⁵

The emphasis made in 9:11 is repeated in 9:24. Christ did not enter a material sanctuary. Christ offered a sacrifice of himself in heaven itself where he continues his priestly ministry in the very presence of God.⁶⁶ In the same way, 9:25-26 repeat (possibly for emphasis of an important point) what the author has mentioned in 9:12. The sacrifice of Christ, unlike the levitical cultus, is unrepeatable and has been offered once and for all – is effective in dealing (removing) with sin for all eternity.

The author concludes Heb. 9 with mention of the destiny of human beings, the completed work of Christ and the *parousia* (verses 27-28). As Bruce has so well summed up this section, 'Men and women die once, by divine appointment, and in their case death is followed by judgment. Christ died once, by divine appointment, and his death is followed by salvation for all his people. This is so because in his death he bore "the sins

⁶³ See Guthrie, *NIV Application Commentary*, pp. 314-315.

⁶⁴ Bruce, *Hebrews*, pp. 228-229; Guthrie, *NIV Application Commentary*, p. 315; Hagner, *Hebrews*, pp. 146, 148. Elsewhere in the New Testament, believers can be spoken of as the 'house of the Lord' or 'the dwelling place of God' as in Eph 2:22; 1Pet 2:5. As the dwelling place of a Holy God, the believers need a cleansing with the blood of Christ to purify their defiled consciences (1 Pet 1:2, 9, 22f).

⁶⁵ Bruce, *Hebrews*, pp. 228-229.

⁶⁶ Referring to his intercessory ministry (6:20; 7:25; Rom 8:34).

of many,” offering up his life to God as an atonement on their behalf.⁶⁷ When Christ returns (at the parousia – second coming), it will be to save those who are eagerly waiting for him (28b). At his second coming, Christ will not ‘deal with sin’ – for that he (Christ) has dealt with decisively once for all through the sacrifice of himself in the perfect tent – the heavenly sanctuary.

Heb 10:1-18 is the last segment of the author’s cultic argument proper in the Epistle to the Hebrews.⁶⁸ As in previous paragraphs examined (9:6-9, 11-14), here the author is unrelenting in stressing that the blood of Christ has done effectually in a decisive, definitive and final way what the blood of bulls and goats could only do ineffectually. Only the blood of Christ is able to perfect the conscience of the worshippers. The material sacrifices of the levitical cultus were concerned with ineffectual external cleansing (hence the need for them to be repeated) but could never purge the conscience of the worshippers. But, this the blood of Christ has done once for all, rendering obsolete the levitical order. Hagner is right in observing that Heb 10:1-18 is a restating of what has been said in chapters 8 and 9.⁶⁹ We shall now turn to the details of the author’s final cultic argument in Heb 10:1-18.

The author in 10:1-4 points out that the levitical cultus was ineffective essentially because it was intrinsically inadequate.⁷⁰ Such inadequacy therefore required that they be repeated.

⁶⁷ Bruce, *Hebrews*, pp. 231-232. Bruce sees in these verses the language of the suffering Servant in Isa 53:12; and also verse 10.

⁶⁸ Sometimes the cultic material in Hebrews can be said to stretch from Hebrews 7:1 – 10:18: See Lane, *Hebrews*, p. 257. But for purposes of this study, it has been narrowed down to 9:1 – 10: 1-18.

⁶⁹ Hagner, *Hebrews*, p. 151. The only new material identified is in 10:5-10 where Psalm 40:6-8 is quoted. Lane, *Hebrews*, p. 257 has even mapped out a structural correspondence of ideas between Heb 10:1-18 and Heb 9:1-28. According to him, the cultic provisions of the Sinai Covenant in 9:1-10 are linked to the ineffectiveness of the repeated sacrifices in 10:1-4. The superior achievement of Christ’s sacrifice is rooted in the prophetic and historical aspects in 10:5-10. The death of Christ as the sacrifice that inaugurates the new covenant in 9:15-28 corresponds to its complement in 10:11-18.

⁷⁰ Hagner, *Hebrews*, p. 151.

In 10:1, the law that established the levitical cultus was itself defective – no wonder the system established by it is inadequate too. The author describes the law as a shadow (cf. 8:5) of the good things that are to come and not the true form of these realities (cf. 9:23-24). The ‘law’ in the author’s mind is the law that established the priesthood and the entire sacrificial system in the wilderness tent and the Jerusalem temple.⁷¹ Bruce and Lane caution that shadow (σκιά) should not be understood to ‘signify unreal or deceptive, as in Platonism, but rather imperfect or incomplete’.⁷² The author, therefore, understands ‘Christ and the new order as the perfect reality to which the earlier ordinances pointed forward’.⁷³ The ineffectiveness of the levitical cultus was intrinsically linked with the ineffectiveness of the law that put it in place. The conclusion drawn from the ineffective law and ineffective sacrificial system established by it is that it was impossible for it to perfect the worshippers: ‘... it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually (*endlessly*) offered year after year (*a reference to the Day of Atonement ritual*), make perfect those who approach (*the worshippers*) – 10:1b’.⁷⁴ Here that author is clearly restating what he has already said in 7:11, 19. The law and the levitical cultus were powerless in as far as perfecting the worshippers.⁷⁵

In 10:2-3 the author raises a question, which further points to the futility of the sacrifices of the old order in perfecting the worshippers. Because of the impotence of the levitical

⁷¹ Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 235.

⁷² Lane, *Hebrews*, p. 259; Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 235.

⁷³ Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 235.

⁷⁴ Italics in the biblical text are mine.

⁷⁵ Hagner, *Hebrews*, pp. 151-2 has pointed out that God has a salvation goal purposed for his people. They need to arrive at that goal in their salvation journey – which is the sense in which ‘perfection’ is used and understood by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. By their very nature, ‘the sacrifices of the Old Covenant could not bring humanity to the full salvation God intended. This fulfillment depends upon that towards which those sacrifices pointed’. Guthrie, *NIV Application Commentary*, pp. 326-7 defines this perfection as ‘a state of right relationship with God, in which the worshippers are once for all cleansed from sin and delivered from a nagging sense of guilt’. Elsewhere, Paul, in describing the purpose of the law says, ‘Therefore the law was our disciplinarian until Christ came, so that we must be justified by faith’ (Gal 3:24).

sacrifices, argues the author, they are endlessly offered, 'Otherwise, would they not have ceased being offered, since the worshippers, cleansed once for all, would no longer have any consciousness of sin (10:3)?' The inadequacy of these sacrifices lies in their repetition (9:9, 14). They are unable, as Hagner puts it 'to cleanse the conscience of the worshippers i.e. to remove sin from the conscience'.⁷⁶ The sacrifices of the old order are just helpless when it comes to definitive purgation. The author further emphasises the limited nature of the sacrifices of the old order: 'But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sin year after year' (10:3). For the author, the Day of Atonement ritual served as a 'reminder' of sin year after year.⁷⁷ On the basis of this exposition, he draws a firm conclusion: 'For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins' (10:4; cf. 9:12, 13, 19). The fact that 'the blood of bulls and goats' belong to the material world, it is impossible (the author stresses) for them to make 'a decisive cleansing of the conscience which is a prerequisite for unhindered access to God (10:22), and this has been achieved only through the sacrifice of Christ (9:14)'.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Hagner, *Hebrews*, p. 153.

⁷⁷ Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 237. This is not mere intellectual memory. Remembering in Biblical language involves action that may take the form of repentance on the part of the worshippers (Deut 9:7). On the part of God, this action could be in the form of retribution (1 Kings 17:18; Rev 16:19), pardon (Ps 25:7). But also there is evidence that in certain situations, God's remembrance could result into blessings as a result of answered prayer (1 Sam 1:19-20). It is also unbelievable that any practicing Jew would ever understand the Day of Atonement ritual in this sense – 'a reminder of sins'. For them, the Day of Atonement ritual was to remove sin (Leviticus 16) and they made no distinction between what was material (the flesh) and the 'conscience', which according to the author of Hebrews is to be understood as belonging to the 'spiritual' or 'heavenly' realm hence desiring 'better sacrifices' for effective and definitive purgation (9:23).

⁷⁸ Lane, *Hebrews*, p. 261. Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 238, the understanding of the futility of the levitical sacrifices in decisively dealing with sin was already there in the *LXX* especially among the Prophets: see Isa 1:11ff; 66:1ff; Jer 7:21ff; Hos 6:6; 14:2; Amos 5:21ff; Mic 6:6ff. Also Ps 51:10; 16ff; cf. 1 Sam 15:22; Ps 50:8ff. The Qumran community had also begun to reinterpret the law in a way that would allow right living and obedience to the law be a substitute for animal sacrifice: 'then the oblation of the lips according to right judgment shall be as a sweet savor of righteousness, and the perfectness of one's ways as an acceptable free will offering' (1 QS 9.4f).

The pattern of our author is now easily discernable. A critique of the levitical cultus as being impotent and defunct (in as far as the perfecting of the worshippers), is always followed by a refocusing of the readers on the definitive purgation by the blood of Christ – made once for all time. This is the function of paragraph 10:5-10. The author is emphatic in stating that the levitical cultus – the old order, has been overtaken and rendered obsolete by the effective sacrifice of Christ.⁷⁹ I shall now consider the details of this argument below.

For the support of his thesis that the levitical cultus has been superseded by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the author finds help in Psalm 40:6-8 quoted here in 10:5-7 followed by a short exposition in 10:8-10. The author ascribes the words of the Psalm to Christ in conversation with God.⁸⁰ That the author understands Christ as ‘pre-existing’ is evident in the phrase ‘... when Christ came into the world’ (10:5).⁸¹ The four terminologies of the old order i.e. sacrificial system (sacrifices and offerings; burnt-offerings and sin-offerings) are employed by the author to emphasize the ineffectiveness of the entire system and not simply sections of it.⁸² The point of the author is that God neither desired ‘sacrifices and offerings’ nor was he pleased with ‘burnt-offerings and sin-offerings’ (10:5-6). They are completely out of place in God’s economy of dealing with sin, which he has decisively done in the death of Christ. The phrase ‘a body you have prepared for me’ (10:5b) for the author refers to the incarnation of Jesus Christ.⁸³ The uniqueness and definitive nature of the sacrifice of Christ here lies in the ‘wholehearted obedience which God really desires – the sacrifice which he received in perfection from his Servant-Son

⁷⁹ Lane, *Hebrews*, p. 262.

⁸⁰ Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 239; Hagner, *Hebrews*, p. 154; Lane, *Hebrews*, p. 262. It is clear that Psalm 40 in the Masoretic and Septuagint texts is ascribed to David. But this the author quickly turns to his advantage because he knows that David did offer sacrifices and so it cannot be referring to him as a person. His interpretation therefore is that it must be referring to, as Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 62 puts it “great David’s greater Son.”

⁸¹ Hagner, *Hebrews*, p. 154.

⁸² See Bruce, *Hebrews*, pp. 240-241. I have discussed these types of sacrifices and their functions in chapter three of this study.

⁸³ Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 241.

when he came into the world'.⁸⁴ Whereas Christ willingly and voluntarily offered himself as sacrifice for sin in obedience to God's will, this cannot be said of the sacrificial victims of the now defunct levitical cultus.

By appropriating the words of Psalm 40 to Jesus Christ, the author then draws the conclusion in 10:9-10. The levitical sacrifices (in which God neither desires nor takes pleasure) which are offered under the law (which we found was only a shadow – 10:1) are obsolete. Even the covenant under which they were established has been abolished (ἀναιρεῖ - 10:9) by virtue of the establishment of the new order inaugurated by the blood of Christ according to the will of God. The author wants his readers to understand that there are not two covenants but one. The old covenant has been abolished by the establishment of the new covenant in death of Christ. They are to know that by God's will 'we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all' (10:10) which is the very reason why Christ had to come into the world: incarnation (10:5, 8-9). As Bruce so beautifully puts it: 'It is the Atonement which explains the Incarnation: the Incarnation takes place so that the sin of the world may be put away by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ'.⁸⁵ It is to be noted that as the perfect sacrifice of Christ is offered once for all (ἐφάπαξ cf. 7:27; 9:12); 'the sanctification through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ' is also 'once for all' – expressed in the Greek perfect tense (completed state or condition) – ἡγιασμένοι ἐσμέν – 'we have been sanctified' (10:10). Both the sacrifice of Christ and the sanctification that it effects are unrepeatable – they have taken place once and for all.⁸⁶

There was no better way for the author to conclude his cultic argument than by refocusing his readers on Jesus Christ as the final sacrifice in this last segment (10:11-

⁸⁴ Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 240.

⁸⁵ Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 240. Bruce clarifies further that 'the offering of his body is just the offering of himself; if here sanctification and access to God are made available through his body, in verses 19 and 29 they are made available through his blood'. Either way, it is 'the incarnate life of Jesus Christ yielded to God in obedience' for the salvation of humankind referred to.

⁸⁶ Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 243.

18). This has all along been his goal in this his 'short exhortation' (13:22): that his readers may appreciate the sacrifice of Christ as final, definitive and incomparable. Not that they have a choice: it is God's only way of dealing with their troubled conscience defiled by sin. The old order to which they may have desired to revert is obsolete and its covenant abolished. Other than emphasizing earlier points and rounding up his argument, the author is not saying anything new in 10:11-18. The material quoted from the *LXX* has already been applied in earlier sections e.g. Jer 31:33-34 quoted in verses 16 and 17 has been applied in 8:8-12. Psalm 110:1 in verses 12-13 has been referred to (cf. 1:3, 13; 8:1; and later in 12:2).⁸⁷

In 10:11, the ineffectiveness of the levitical sacrifices is evidenced by their 'repetitious character' (cf. 7:27; 9:25; 10:1, 3)⁸⁸. 'Every priest, stands day after day in his service, offering again and again, the same sacrifices that can never take away sins'. As it were, the priests labored in vain. That the 'priests' are said to be in 'standing stance' is evidence of their uncompleted task. In contrast, Christ completed his task – offering one, single, sufficient sacrifice of himself (7:27; 9:12, 26, 26, 28; 10:10) and now sits at the right hand of God (10:12-13).⁸⁹ As far as the work of salvation of humankind from the predicament of sin is concerned, Christ has completed the task once and for all time. What remains is a time for 'his enemies to be made a footstool for his feet' (13:b). This appears to refer to a time when all the enemies of Christ Jesus will be fully subjected to him – a time of the 'final vindication'.⁹⁰ The passive voice of τεθωσιγ means that God

⁸⁷ Hagner, *Hebrews*, p. 159. Also Bruce, *Hebrews*, pp. 244-246.

⁸⁸ Hagner, *Hebrews*, p. 159.

⁸⁹ Hagner, *Hebrews*, p. 159. It is difficult to ascribe a physical location to God. The right hand of God here as elsewhere should be understood as the place of honor and exaltation. Christ having completed his task now reigns as King at the right hand of the Father (cf. 1 Cor 15:25). Elsewhere in this study (refer back to page 74 note 59) I have mentioned that 'sitting versus standing is also an issue in the merkabah literature, where angels stand – sitting implies equality with God'. Even angels dare not sit in the presence of God as that would be interpreted as claiming equality with God. It is reasonable to argue that Christ's seated position is a ontological statement – i.e. Jesus is equal to God.

⁹⁰ Hagner, *Hebrews*, pp. 160-161.

is the one to put the enemies of Christ firmly under his feet.⁹¹ In 10:14; the author points out to his readers what the once for all sacrifice of Christ has achieved for the worshippers. 'For by a single offering, he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified'.⁹² The perfect tense τετελείωκεν⁹³ used in combination with εἰς τὸ διηνεκές points to the 'permanent result of Christ's offering'.⁹⁴ Christ in his sacrifice of himself once for all time is able to maintain the worshippers in a 'permanent right relation with God'.⁹⁵

In 10:15-17, the author finds authority for the finality of the sacrifice of Christ in the prophecy of Jeremiah (Jer 31:31-34). All he has said with regard to the definitive purgation of the sacrifice of Christ is in conformity with the new covenant prophesied in Jer 31:31-34. The Holy Spirit here regarded as the person behind what Jeremiah prophesied now bears witness. In other words, Jeremiah did not prophesy on his own. The Holy Spirit inspired him and it is therefore right to conclude, according to the author, that the words of prophesy in Jer 31:31-34 are words of testimony by the Holy Spirit himself – he is the one 'testifying' (c.f. 3:7; 9:8; 8:8). The 'remembrance of sins', which was so characteristic of the 'repeated sacrifices', has disappeared with them (10:17) which is all to the credit of the worshippers.⁹⁶ This leads the author to the inevitable and logical conclusion: 'Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin' (10:18).⁹⁷ Why on earth would any one offer (or even contemplate offering)

⁹¹ Lane, *Hebrews*, pp. 256, 267. Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 246 acknowledges that this is one passage for which the author does not offer an exegesis and suggests that it could be understood as a warning to the readers to guard against setting themselves as enemies of Christ but rather to be among his friends by being faithful to the end (3:14).

⁹² This, the levitical cultus was unable to do and would never do.

⁹³ Implicit in this perfect tense is the sense of a completed action of a one-time event with continuing results.

⁹⁴ Lane, *Hebrews*, p. 267.

⁹⁵ Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 247.

⁹⁶ Bruce, *Hebrews*, pp. 247-258.

⁹⁷ The remaining part of the Epistle (Heb 10:19 – 13:25) explains how the benefits of the sacrificial death of Christ are appropriated by faith. There is also mention of the faithful ancestors who have walked the

sacrifices for sin that has been taken care of once for all!⁹⁸ To use Hagner's words, 'Christ' sacrifice is the definitive, final, and fully efficacious answer to the universal problem of human sin'.⁹⁹

I will now bring together the findings of our exegetical journey through Heb 9:1 – 10:18, pointing out the ground for the superiority of Christ's sacrifice and what he has achieved for the believer.

5.2.1 *The superior tent*

It is clear from 9:11 that the sacrifice of Christ is better than that of the levitical cultus because it was offered through a superior tent described as the greater and perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation). The writer's assumption is that the levitical tent or sanctuary was a mere copy of this better one (8:5; 10:1), was material, earthly, created with hands (9:1). What is a copy, material and hand-made is certainly inferior to the 'true and perfect tent'. To use Thompson's words: 'the greater and more perfect tent' of 9:11 is equivalent to the 'true tent which the Lord made' in 8:2 and to the 'true' sanctuary of 9:24. It is 'greater and more perfect' because it is not material, as the contrast to *κοσμικός* in 9:1 suggests. The sanctuary of Christ according to 9:24 is 'heaven itself'.¹⁰⁰ The superiority of the greater and perfect tent is also seen in the

path of faith and are seen as examples to the living. Interestingly, the departed faithful (ancestors) – Heb 11:2 are included in the cloud of witnesses still in fellowship with the living – Heb 12:1. This will be a point of connection when we later examine the role of ancestors in African spirituality and particularly the place of ancestors in the celebration of the eucharistic sacrifice in chapter eight of this study. In Heb 13, the writer concludes with an exhortation and prayer.

⁹⁸ This is key to my argument for a sacrificial understanding of the eucharist as will be demonstrated in chapters seven and eight of this study. It will no longer be necessary for the Ganda to continue to practice the traditional sacrifices if the significance of Christ's sacrifice as presented in Heb 9:1 – 10:18 is clarified to them. I have maintained in this study, that the way to do this is through an inculturated eucharistic sacrifice – which, in my opinion is a participatory celebration of the sacrifice of Christ as presented in Heb 9:1 – 10:18.

⁹⁹ Hagner, *Hebrews*, p. 161.

¹⁰⁰ Thompson, *The Beginnings of Christian Philosophy*, p. 106.

double negative assertion that it is not made with hands, that is, not of this creation, while ‘the earthly sanctuary is characterized as “hand-made” in 9:11 and 9:23, and as “man-made” in 8:2’.¹⁰¹

5.2.2 *The blood of Christ*

Just as the heavenly sanctuary is contrasted with the earthly sanctuary in 9:11, the blood of goats and bulls is contrasted with the blood of Christ in 9:12. The writer is fully aware of the role played by blood in an atoning sacrifice (9:7, 18-25; 13:11). Against this background, he therefore sees the offering of the blood of Jesus Christ as necessary in a genuine sacrificial cult (9:25; 10:19; 13:12). The difference between the blood of goats and bulls and the blood of Christ as suggested by Thompson is that of ‘quality’.¹⁰² The Greek word *ἀδύνατον* in the phrase *ἀδύνατον γὰρ αἷμα ταύρων καὶ τράγων ἀφαιρεῖν ἀμαρτίας* ‘suggests the impotence of cultic rites’ (10:4).¹⁰³ Its impotence stems from the fact that it is material. I will come back to this when examining the writer’s dualistic understanding of humankind and of sacrifice (I have already discussed the writer’s concept of an earthly sanctuary and heavenly sanctuary).

5.2.3 *Christ as both high priest and sacrifice*

The question arises, ‘if Christ is high priest, what did he offer as a sacrifice for sins?’ The answer is in the phrase *διὰ δε τοῦ ἰδίου αἵματος*, which suggests that Christ entered once for all into the Holy Place with his own blood (9:12). That Christ entered the Holy place, points to him as high priest. That he entered the Holy place not with the blood of goats and calves but with his own blood means that Christ is the

¹⁰¹ *The Beginnings of Christian Philosophy*, p. 106.

¹⁰² Thompson, *The Beginnings of Christian Philosophy*, p. 107.

¹⁰³ Thompson, *The Beginnings of Christian Philosophy*, p. 107. I have to keep pointing out that this is something that other Jews would not say. Lane *Hebrews*, pp. 261-162 argues that ‘The issue is not whether the blood of bulls and goats sacrificed during the annual observances of the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:3, 6, 11, 14-16, 18-19) has any power to effect cleansing, but whether it has the potency to effect a *decisive* cleansing’. This would help to clarify the “how much more” phrase found in Heb 9:13-14.

sacrifice and in this way, 'Christ is the offering as well as the high priest'.¹⁰⁴ Elsewhere, the writer can say that the way to the sanctuary has been opened *ἐν τῷ αἵματι Ἰησοῦ* (10:19) and that Christ has opened for us 'a new and living way.... through the curtain (that is, through his flesh)' (10:20). We have already seen that the sanctuary of Christ is 'heaven itself' (9:24) and if he has entered the holy place with his own blood, then it is in the heavenly tabernacle that the blood of Jesus was offered. These two facts 'give Jesus' sacrifice a metaphysical superiority to the blood of bulls and goats. The sacrifice of Christ is qualitatively superior because it is not material'.¹⁰⁵

In 9:14, 25, 26 the writer refers to 'the blood of Jesus Christ' in the OT understanding to mean 'life' given up in death (Lev 17:11) and not merely blood as 'substance'. I have maintained throughout this study that since the death of Christ was not particularly a 'bloody' event, this is the most probable meaning.¹⁰⁶ So 'blood' here refers to Christ's self-giving on the cross. In contrast to the levitical sacrifices, the redemption obtained by the superior sacrifice of Christ is described as eternal redemption (9:12).

5.2.4 Christ's Obedience to the divine will

The sacrifice of Christ is described as an act of divine obedience in Heb 10:5-9 (quoting Ps 40:6-8). The emphasis seems to be that obedience rather than ritual sacrifice is what God requires. Christ demonstrated this at his incarnation. The sacrifice of Christ is voluntary, springing from whole-hearted obedience to the will of His Father.¹⁰⁷ It is a sacrifice of 'willing obedience'. This seems to move us away from the mechanics of ritual sacrifice. We know that the body of Jesus Christ was not offered on an actual

¹⁰⁴ Thompson, *The Beginnings of Christian Philosophy*, p. 107. Isaacs has clarified that 'Hebrews works within a system which assumes that sacrifice is the *sine qua non* of entry into the presence of God (Heb 9:22), since it removes the barrier of sin which divides the sacred from the profane. ... Nonetheless, Hebrews claims for Jesus, as both expiatory victim and High Priest, an effectiveness which far surpasses anything achieved by the cult' – see Isaacs, 'Hebrews', pp. 152-153.

¹⁰⁵ Thompson, *The Beginnings of Christian Philosophy*, pp. 107-108.

¹⁰⁶ Refer back to page 99.

¹⁰⁷ Richard D. Nelson, "'He Offered Himself': Sacrifice in Hebrews", *Interpretation* 57 number 3 (2003) 254.

physical altar and his blood was not smeared on a sacred object. Because of this one cannot speak of the sacrifice of Christ in a ritual sense. But as Grayston states, 'When the death of Jesus is regarded as if it were a sacrifice, the consequences of it can be displayed and understood'.¹⁰⁸

5.2.5 *The sacrifice of Christ is able to cleanse the conscience*

This is another definitive point, which contrasts the effects of the sacrifice of Christ and the levitical sacrifices. The writer's argument in 9:13-14 is that the blood of the levitical sacrifices offered on earth *ἀγιάζει πρὸς τὴν τῆς σαρκὸς καθαρότητα* while the blood of Christ offered in heaven *καθαριεῖ τὴν συνείδησιν*. It is clear from the writer's argument that he takes the purification of the conscience as the equivalent of the eternal redemption of 9:12. Also in 9:9-10, the writer distinguishes between flesh and conscience 'where the rites of the earthly cultus are unable to perfect the worshipper with respect to conscience, but deal only with fleshly ordinances'.

There are important facts to unravel here. There is no denying that the writer takes *σάρξ* and *συνείδησις* as constituting the two sides of human existence i.e. earthly and heavenly respectively. Thompson in his discussion of this says:

The author assumes a dualistic anthropology, which corresponds to his dualism of heaven and earth. The earthly side of human existence (i.e. *σάρξ* belonging to the earthly sphere of existence) can be cleansed by an earthly cultus. But the *συνείδησις* is the heavenly side of human existence, which requires superior sacrifice. *Συνείδησις* refers to the "consciousness" (10:4) which can be

¹⁰⁸ Grayston, *Dying we Live*, p. 267. Mogomme A. Masoga, in my opinion, was unconvincing in his attempt to apply anthropological theories of ritual sacrifice to the sacrifice of Christ in Heb 9:1-28 simply because it is not possible to rigidly transfer the mechanics of ritual sacrifice to the sacrifice of Christ in Hebrews – see A. M. Masoga, 'Hebrews 9:1-28, in the light of the anthropology of sacrificial ritual, with special reference to Pedi responses to the text', Unpublished Master of Theology dissertation, in the School of Theology, University of Natal, 1995, pp.52-59.

cleansed only by the entrance of Christ into the heavenly tent (cf. 10:22) ... The purification of the flesh in 9:13 corresponds to the cleansing of the "copies" in 9:23. The purification of the conscience in 9:13 corresponds to the cleansing of the "heavenly things" in 9:23. Thus if the conscience is that part of man which belongs to a higher world, the perfection and cleansing of the conscience can occur only when the way is opened into the heavenly world.¹⁰⁹

It is on the basis of this that the writer is able to state in very strong terms that: '...it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins' (10:4). This is because the problem of 'sin' is a moral one and there is no way in which material sacrifices can remove moral defilement.¹¹⁰ For this better sacrifices are required (9:23). Of what use then were the sacrifices of the Jewish cult? It was to deal only with food and drink and various baptisms, regulations for the body imposed until the time comes to set things right (9:10). There is however, no evidence in the OT or in the literature of Judaism of this era that this 'distinction between the cleansing of the flesh and the conscience' existed, and it can only be taken to be unique to the writer of Hebrews.¹¹¹ According to the writer, this time has now come with the priesthood and sacrifice of Jesus Christ. There is a need to abandon the material, temporary and ineffective old system under the Old Covenant which was 'only a shadow of the good things to come and not the true form of these realities' (10:1). The shadow has now been superseded by the reality located in Jesus Christ.

In 9:11-14, the writer emphasizes that the redemptive work of Christ is eternal. The 'good things to come' are now 'the good things that have come' (9:11).¹¹² Christ has entered into a heavenly sanctuary and not a material sanctuary and this he has done once

¹⁰⁹ Thompson, *The Beginnings of Christian Philosophy*, pp. 108-109. This distinction between different aspects of human existence can be made whether or not one sees in Hebrews a distinct dualism of a Platonic kind. For the argument that our author's anthropology can be described as wholistic dualism: See S. H. Travis, 'Psychology' in Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids (ed) *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and its Developments* (Leicester, IVP, 1997), pp. 984-988.

¹¹⁰ Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 238.

¹¹¹ See Thompson, *The Beginnings of Christian Philosophy*, p. 110.

¹¹² Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 211.

and for all (9:12) with his own blood. Only his blood is able to purify the conscience of the worshipper. What bars us from worshipping God is not a physical barrier but an evil conscience. The readers should understand that through the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ this has been dealt with and the readers now have 'confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus' (10:19). Just as the old covenant was sealed by the blood of animals so has the better and new covenant been sealed with the better sacrifice of Jesus Christ (9:23) opening for the people a new and free access to God.

The redemptive work of Christ through his sacrificial death is complete (10:11-13) and now he sits at the right hand of God where he continues his intercessory priestly role. The readers should know that in the sacrificial death of Christ there is purification of sins for all eternity and therefore where such an arrangement exists for the continued purification of sins, 'there is no longer any offering for sin' (10:18). The sacrificial death of Christ is unrepeatable and readers should know that the death of Christ, though an event in the past, provides atonement for their post-baptismal sins as well. The readers should guard against the dangers of apostasy (6:4-6) and should hold fast to their confession (10:23), namely: that in Jesus Christ they have a real high priest who has offered a perfect sacrifice of himself once and for all to atone for their sins and opened up an access to the heavenly sanctuary for every believer. They should stand firm in the faith and not drift away (2:1; 10:23).

5.2.6 The once-for-all aspect of the sacrifice of Christ

The writer to the Hebrews emphasizes this theme. The sacrificial death of Christ is an unrepeatable event – the sense of a once-for-all event in the past. Hebrews maintains too that the sacrificial death of Christ is once-for-all (the Greek word *ἐφάπαξ* - meaning once for all time) and that its efficacy is eternal (7:27; 9:11-14; 10:12). Two Greek perfect tenses strengthen further the lasting results of the death of Christ (though an event in the past). One is *ἡγιασμένοι* in 10:10 '...we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all'. The use of a perfect passive participle here points to a status (i.e. completed state or condition) which continues into the present. The other is *τετελείωκεν* in 10:14 'For by a single offering he has perfected for all

time those who are sanctified'. Implicit in *τετελείωκεν* is the sense of a one-time event in the past with continuing effect. The fact is simple and straightforward; the sacrificial death of Christ is final. The writer takes up this unrepitive nature of the sacrifice of Christ further and contrasts the sacrifice of Christ with the levitical sacrifices which were by nature repetitive (7:27a; 9:6-10). The repetitive nature of the levitical sacrifices was in itself testimony to their impotence.¹¹³

5.2.7 *The sacrifice of Christ as providing unlimited access to God*

The author builds on the architecture of the tabernacle with its two chambers (separated by a curtain/veil - 9:1-5) and the limited entry by the high priest into the second chamber - the Holy of Holies (only once a year on the Day of Atonement) to make his conclusion that:

By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the sanctuary has not yet been disclosed as long as the first tent is still standing (9:8).

To the writer of Hebrews, this is one way in which the levitical system was incomplete. It never allowed full access to God. Even for the high priest, his annual entry into the sanctuary was safeguarded by the blood of sacrifice (9:6-7).

But now through the sacrificial death of Christ the situation has changed. Christ has opened a new way to God:

Therefore, my friends... we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain (that is, through his flesh)...(10:19-20).

As Westcott puts it, 'That which was under the Law a privilege of one only, once a year, is now the privilege of all Christians at all times'.¹¹⁴ The curtain according to the writer of Hebrews is the very body of Christ, ripped down on the cross hence creating a new and

¹¹³ See C.F.D. Moule *The Sacrifice of Christ* (London, 1956), p. 22-25.

¹¹⁴ Westcott, *Hebrews*, p. 320.

living way into the very presence of God – ‘access via the human Person who was put to death’.¹¹⁵

5.2.8 *The sacrifice of Christ is sacrifice for ALL sin*

Unlike the sacrifices of the levitical system, the sacrifice of Christ deals with all sins (all different types of sin). The OT cult divides sins into two broad categories. First, the inadvertent sins (Lev 4:1-5:13; Num 15:24-29), which were expiable by sacrifice. Second, were the premeditated sins (Num 15:30f; cf. example in vss. 32-36), which no form of sacrifice could ever expiate, and individuals who committed sins with a high hand paid by being ‘cut off from the community’ (usually by death as is the case in the example quoted above).

The Good News is that this is not so with the sacrifice of Christ which deals with both sins of ignorance and deliberate sins. The author makes it even more explicit when he states that the Day of Atonement ritual dealt only with ... ‘the sins committed unintentionally by the people’ (9:7). In our earlier discussion on the Day of Atonement ritual,¹¹⁶ it was not possible to find evidence to the contrary. Compared to the OT sacrifices (which were limited in scope), the sacrifice of Christ has this unlimited scope in dealing with sins.

5.3 Summary

In Hebrews 9:1 – 10:18, the writer has demonstrated that Jesus Christ as high priest has offered his very life as sacrifice for sins (9:12). Christ has offered himself (i.e. voluntarily) in willing obedience to God (and that is precisely the kind of sacrifice that God required: 10:5-9). The sacrifice of Christ is effective for all sin and is for all time.

¹¹⁵ Moule, *Sacrifice of Christ*, pp. 22-23. Westcott, *Hebrews*, pp. 320-321 suggests that this be translated as ‘...a fresh and and living way through the veil, that is to say of His flesh....’. Westcott understands the veil as excluding from Divine Presence and not the door that provides access to the Divine Presence. He argues on the basis of this that ‘The veil is not indeed removed so long as we live on earth, but we can pass through it in Christ’. But this is in conflict with what the writer of Hebrews is saying. He takes the curtain to be Christ’s own body as Moule has explained above.

¹¹⁶ Refer to chapter 3 of this study: pages 39-40.

Having completed his work (at least in as far as purification of sins is concerned), Christ now sits exalted at the right hand of God (1:3; 10:12). The believers are therefore exhorted to 'enter the sanctuary through the blood of Christ'...an access to God has been opened through the sacrifice of Christ...having removed all the barriers (10:19-20). All this makes the sacrifice of Christ much superior in comparison with the Levitical sacrifices.

Having examined the way in which Hebrews 9:1 – 10:18 presents the death of Christ as sacrifice, in the chapter that follows, I explore the understanding and practice of sacrifice among the Ganda. This moves us to the contextualization pole of our tripolar interpretive process. Of equal value to the critical analysis of the biblical text - Hebrews 9:1 – 10:18 (our first pole) is the analysis and evaluation of the context of the readers (the Ganda). I will explore who they are and their religious experience.

CHAPTER 6

THE UNDERSTANDING AND PRACTICE OF SACRIFICE AMONG THE GANDA

6.0 Introduction

A brief knowledge of Buganda as a region and the Ganda as a people is imperative for the understanding of the religious life of the Ganda. It opens a window into their identity and self-understanding (the contextualization pole of our tripolar interpretive process). The first part of this chapter, therefore, will give a general overview of the Ganda and their history. Their political organization and socio-economic life will also be discussed.

The second and larger detailed section of this chapter will focus on the various types of sacrifices that were offered in the daily life of the Ganda and what they were meant to achieve. I must mention that I am describing a system that no longer exists in totality. It is a system partly as it was, as far as we can get information from historians and anthropologists writing about the previous era. But I must hasten to add that it is not a completely dead system. Those ritual sacrifices that are now defunct will be pointed out and those still being carried out will equally be indicated. The specific sacrifices will be identified, what they are and their various meanings.

As will be realized in the body of this study, for Ganda anthropology (including the survey of ancient ritual sacrificial practices) I have relied mainly on the anthropological works of Roscoe and Kaggwa.¹ Kyewalyanga's publication² has also been of great help in this regard. Other written sources consulted have been acknowledged in the study. But all these have been supplemented by information gathered from my own field work (particularly information on the recipients of the numerous Ganda sacrifices and current trends in Ganda sacrifice).

¹ See full reference to these works on page 3 notes 4 and 5 of this study.

² See full reference on page 8 note 16 of this study.

6.1 Buganda and the Ganda as a people

6.1.1 Geographical Location

Buganda Kingdom (i.e. Buganda area) as it is called today is located in the Central Southern part of Uganda. Buganda lies between latitudes two degrees north and one degree south of the Equator; its longitude is between 30 degrees and 34 degrees East of Greenwich.³ Buganda is bordered on the north by Bunyoro Kingdom, on the East by Busoga Kingdom and Lake Victoria (also known as *Ennyaja Nalubaale*). On the western border are Toro Kingdom and the region of Ankole. Buganda is bordered on the south by Kiziba county of Tanzania.⁴

Buganda lies at altitudes of between 3,000 – 5000 feet above sea level. The area consists of mainly lowlands with few undulating highlands. Most of the land in Buganda is suitable for agriculture and most people depend on growing crops and keeping animals. Due to the abundant rainfall (about 50 inches of rain a year), most of the land in Buganda is covered by Savanna grassland (very luxuriant vegetation). Two water bodies enrich the land viz: Lake Victoria and Lake Wamala. The prominent river in the land is River Sezibwa while Mabira forest is one significant forest in Buganda.

³ See Map 1 on p. iv showing the location of Buganda Kingdom in Uganda .

⁴ See Map 2 on p. v showing the bordering regions of Buganda and counties in Buganda Kingdom – 1962.

6.1.2 The People of Buganda

The Baganda are the people that inhabit Buganda.⁵ Previous studies have categorized them as Bantu.⁶ The Ganda are said to number slightly over three million people.⁷ The Ganda existed as discrete groups of people around the western shores of Lake Victoria as early as about 1000 years ago. According to John M. Lukwata, the Baganda as a united group trace their origins from the fifteenth century and there are no original written records of the Ganda history before the nineteenth century. The bulk of their history is preserved in their oral traditions, proverbs and folktales.⁸ This being said, the Ganda have a rich dynamic cultural heritage. Their songs, myths, legends, symbols, prayers and proverbs are great deposits of this cultural heritage. It can be said with certainty, that these have been sources from which tenets of the Ganda culture including the Ganda philosophy of life have been derived.⁹

6.1.3 The Ganda Kingdom: Origins, Socio-economic and Political Organisation

Central in the history and life of the Ganda is a strong monarchy extending centuries back before the arrival of both the Arabs and the Europeans. The Ganda ruling dynasty was

⁵ It is to be noted that while the Ganda are the dominant tribe in Buganda, there are peoples from other tribes that have come to reside in Buganda. Buganda is home to Uganda's Capital City (Kampala) and International Airport (Entebbe). Kampala is both the commercial centre of Uganda and the seat of the Government of Uganda. The Ganda who are generally a welcoming people have allowed residence to other tribes and so you find within Buganda people from other parts of Uganda like Ankore, Arua, Apach, Bunyoro, Lira, Gulu, and Toro etc.

⁶ The term Bantu is used mainly by anthropologists to refer to many ethnic groups of people who are related because of the similarities in the languages they speak. The Bantu are widely distributed over tropical Africa.

⁷ The National Population figures of the 1991 national population census put the Ganda at 3,015,980. This is about 16% of the country's total population at the time.

⁸ John M. Lukwata, *The First Hundred years of the Bugandan Church and Her Worship*, (Roma, 1991), p. 3. See further Jan Vansina *Oral Tradition as History* (Wisconsin, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), pp. 25-32 for an elaborate discussion of tales, proverbs, sayings and Oral tradition as a source of history. Later, we shall examine what Vansina has pointed out as limitations of oral tradition as a source of information on human communities.

⁹ Lukwata, *First Hundred years*, p. 3.

established in the mid fourteenth century CE. Due to lack of recorded history prior to the coming of the Arabs and later the Europeans, one cannot speak of dates with accuracy. Kingship is cherished in the Ganda society. It is their symbol of unity and being. To the Baganda, it is unthinkable to be without a King. Writing about the Ganda dynasty, Parrinder states

The Kingship in Uganda was looked upon as so important that all the country was the King's possession and conversely the welfare of the King was believed to be vital for the people. The King did not necessarily administer all the justice, or lead in battle or perform ritual sacrifices, but while he could delegate these powers to officials he was the final source of the law and leadership. To be without a King was regarded as disastrous.¹⁰

6.1.3.1 Origins of the Ganda dynasty

There is a lot of speculation surrounding the origins of the Ganda dynasty. At the centre of this speculation is a man called Kintu who is thought by some to be a mythical figure. Kintu is understood by the Ganda to be the founder Father of the Ganda dynasty. He was the first King and all the Kings of Buganda are descended from him through the male line.¹¹ There are various versions of the Kintu story. One version is that Kintu and his wife Nnambi are the first Baganda and were the first to inhabit Buganda (and by implication the whole earth). This is a legendary story told by the Ganda to explain the story of creation. Creation stories abound in most cultures and that there is such a story among the Ganda comes as no surprise to anyone.

The Ganda regard Kintu in the legend as the father of all people who came to Buganda as a conquering hero in the early part of the fourteenth century. The people who lived in

¹⁰ Geoffrey E. Parrinder *African Traditional Religion*, 3rd ed. (London, Sheldon Press, 1974), p. 59. Parrinder was writing at a time when the Ugandan Republican Constitution of 1967 had abolished the Kingdoms in Uganda. But the 1995 Constitution restored the Kingdoms. The Ganda cannot conceive of any other form of existence other than that under their King whom they call *Kabaka*.

¹¹ To date, every Muganda prides in being called a '*muzukulu*' (grandchild) of Kintu – their great and heroic ancestor.

Buganda prior to that period were not organized as a single political entity. The people were organized into groups that had a common ancestry and constituted the most important unit in Buganda's culture – the clan. The clans were loosely autonomous despite a common language and culture. The clan leaders (known as *abataka*) ruled over their respective clans. At the time of Kintu's conquest, there are said to have been five original such clans (also called *bannansangwawo*) namely: *Effumbe* (civet cat), *Olugave* (ant-eater), *Engeye* (colubus monkey), *Ennyonyi* (bird), *Enjaza* (roe buck) and *Emmamba* (lung-fish). When Kintu invaded Buganda, he is said to have come with about thirteen more clans. With this strength of numbers, it was comparatively easy for Kintu to establish himself as King.

Some stories suggest that Kato and his elder brother Rukidi Isingoma Mpunga originated from the East of Uganda near Mount Elgon. According to this version of the story, Rukidi established himself as King in Bunyoro while Kato established himself as King in Buganda. Kato later married Nantululu. In order to assert himself as the great parent of Buganda, Kato took on the name Kintu (becoming Kato Kintu) and named his wife as Nnambi (names of the great ancestors of the Ganda according to the creation myth).¹²

¹² The issue of whether the Kintu story is a myth or an historical issue is hard to resolve. There are supporters on both sides of the divide. Kiwanuka and Ssekamwa and more recently Lukwata seem to suggest that Kintu the founder of the Ganda dynasty was a historical figure: see S. M. Kiwanuka, *A History of Buganda*, (London, Longman, 1971), pp. 94-96; J. C. Ssekamwa, *Ebisoko N'Engero* (Kampala, Fountain Publishers, 1995), pp. 1-6; Lukwata, *First Hundred years*, p. 4. On the other hand C. Wrigley, Kyewalyanga, suggest that Kintu was a mythical figure: See C. Wrigley, *Kingship and State: The Buganda Dynasty* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 43-56; Kyewalyanga, *Traditional Religion*, p. 9. C. B. Ray, *African Religions: Symbol, Ritual and Community*, 2nd ed. (New Jersey, Prentice-Hall Inc., 2000), pp. 10-13 has examined the origins of life and death among the Baganda based on the story of Kintu and explained the Christian interpretations of Kintu's story. I think the story of Kintu will remain shrouded in mystery. Futile efforts to establish the historicity of the story should be abandoned. The story of Kintu as part of Kiganda myth serves to explain the origins of the Ganda as a people and to legitimate possession of the land, and their dynasty and should not be stretched beyond that. For more detailed information about Kintu: the coming of Kintu, alternative versions of the Kintu story, Kintu the Person vs Kintu the legend – see <http://www.buganda.com/kintu.htm>

6.1.3.2 The Ganda Socio-economic Organisation

Socially, the Ganda are a highly organised people. Their social structure is based on the clan (*kika*), which is the basic and central unit of their culture. A clan represents a group of people who can trace their lineage to a common ancestor in the distant past and share a common totem (*omuziro*).¹³ Each clan has a main totem (*omuziro*) and a secondary totem (*akabbiro*).¹⁴ It is by the main totem that clans are ordinarily known. Members from the same clan consider each other as brothers and sisters regardless of how far removed from one another in terms of actual blood ties. To put it differently, members of the same clan form one big extended family and no one may marry a member of his or her clan (making these clans exogamic).¹⁵ Though polygamy in Buganda was acceptable, it was not compulsory. Marrying many women was considered an asset, as one would then raise more children for the clan and tribe. It was also done for economic reasons: providing cheap labour for production. It was also claimed that polygamy guarded against 'prostitution and enhanced the prestige of the chiefs'.¹⁶ Children were considered to be a divine blessing. A marriage without children was unthinkable and often led to polygamy if divination failed to result in the birth of children.

The names and naming of children followed the norms of the clan. Each clan has a stock of names from which a name could be picked and assigned to the newborn. From one's name, it is possible to tell the clan the person belongs to.¹⁷

¹³ A totem among the Ganda is a symbol that represents a particular clan. This symbol could be of an animal, a bird, insect, fish, or a particular plant. There is for example the Elephant clan (*Njovu* clan). I have mentioned some clans with their totems on the previous page. These totems were considered as sacred and greatly revered by the clan who were warned never to harm them. Members of another clan could kill them for a reasonable purpose (like for food) without hurting the feelings of the clan for which that particular animal was considered sacred.

¹⁴ The exception to this is the Royal clan (*abalangira*), which has no totem.

¹⁵ Roscoe, *The Baganda*, p. 134 has singled out the Lung-fish clan (*Mmamba* clan) as an exception to this rule. It appears that the two branches of the Lung-fish clan originated from different parts of the country and had different fathers. Their secondary totems are also said to be different.

¹⁶ Lukwata, *First Hundred years*, p. 8.

¹⁷ M. B. Nsimbi, *Amanyanya amaganda n'ennono zaago* (Ganda names and their etymology: Kampala, 1956), p. 175.

In the customs of Buganda, lineage is passed down along patrilineal lines save for the royal family, which is matrilineal. 'Every child belonged to his or her father's clan and took his or her father's totem. ... But with royalty it was different. Every prince belonged to the clan of his mother, not of his father, and took his mother's totem'.¹⁸ The family is still regarded as the basic unit of the society and also the basic unit of clan membership.¹⁹ But it is clear that the cultural norms are derived from the level of the clan. It was at the clan level that issues of origin, identity and relationships were explained.²⁰ Life among the Ganda is lived in community and more specifically clan community life. The members of the clan live for one another, share in all joys and problems and there is a very deep sense of belonging among clan members. Roscoe captured well this life lived in community when he wrote

The Baganda are charitable and liberal; no one ever went hungry while the old customs were observed, because everyone was welcome to go and sit and share a meal with equals. Real poverty did not exist. When a member of a clan wished to buy a wife, it was the duty of all other members to help him do so; when a person got into debt, the clan combined to assist him to pay the fine.²¹

However, with the increased influence of western culture and urbanisation coupled with increased mobility among Ganda communities, this clan communitarian spirit is diminishing. But the clan remains the only available avenue through which the Ganda trace their ancestry.

Most clans had their family god (*lubaale* – plural *balubaale*). There is more to say about this later. It will suffice to mention at this point that clans were in addition, centres of the Ganda religious life. It was often the case that one of the clans would be requested to take charge of one of the national gods. When this was done, the chief of the clan on

¹⁸ See Roscoe, *The Baganda*, pp. 82, 128.

¹⁹ See Lukwata, *First hundred years*, p. 6.

²⁰ Dunstan Kopoliano Bukenya, 'The Development of Neo-Traditional Religion: The Baganda Experience' – (Unpublished M.Litt, Aberdeen, 1980), p. 14.

²¹ Roscoe, *The Baganda*, p. 12.

whose land / estate the temple for the god was built became the priest and the person in charge of the temple.²² Because members of each clan acted collectively and responsibly as a community, great care was taken not to anger or offend the clan gods. It was strongly believed that an offence committed by one member of the clan could have implications for the whole clan. If for example one of the members of the clan committed a serious offence, it was traditionally believed that the gods could punish the entire clan.²³ Crimes like incest, assaulting parents and pregnancy outside marriage would lead to one being ostracised from the clan though as Lukwata has stated, there were reconciliation rituals that gave one opportunity to be readmitted in the clan.²⁴ It was a disastrous thing for one to be without a clan.

Oral history maintains that there are fifty-two clans in Buganda. A survey done at the coronation of the current King – Kabaka Ronald Mutebi II in 1993 revealed forty-six clans with the possibility that the other six could now be extinct.²⁵ Clans have subdivisions.²⁶ At the top of the clan hierarchical structure is the clan leader (also called *Owakasolya*). The first subdivision of the clan is the *Ssiga* (also variously referred to as *Amasiga* or *Owessiga*). The segment of the *Ssiga* was called *mutuba*, which was in turn divided into *ennyiriri*. There are leaders appointed for all these subdivisions.

²² Roscoe, *The Baganda*, p. 134.

²³ Lukwata, *First Hundred years*, p. 7.

²⁴ Lukwata, *First Hundred years*, p. 7.

²⁵ See Roscoe, *The Baganda*, pp. 138-140. For an alternative list of the clans in Buganda with a section on the value of clans in Buganda, see M. B. Nsimbi, 'The Clan System in Buganda' in *Uganda Journal*, 28, 1 (1964) 27-29. According to Lukwata, *First Hundred years*, p. 6, only twenty-six clans actually exist today. It is possible that some clans may have become extinct or joined some other powerful and bigger clans.

²⁶ For details of these clan sub-divisions, see further Roscoe, *The Baganda*, pp. 135-136; Martin Southwold, 'The Ganda of Uganda' in James L. Gibbs (ed), *Peoples of Africa* (NY, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1965), pp. 95-96; Nsimbi, 'Clan System', p. 26.

Language is one of the tools for mediating culture. The Ganda speak Luganda, which is a Bantu language. The language is quite versatile.²⁷

Economically, Buganda is largely an agricultural society. The tropical climate favours the cultivation of various crops. The area is self-sufficient in food production and feeds the huge cosmopolitan urban population in Kampala. Most of the population live on subsistence agriculture. The dominant crops are *matooke* (plantain), cassava, sweet potatoes, and beans. A number of cattle farms can now be found in Mawagola County. Traditionally, men made barkcloth, built huts, made boats, fished, hunted, and fought wars while women grew crops like plantain (*matooke*) and raised chicken and goats.

6.1.3.3 The Ganda Political Organisation

As mentioned before, Buganda's ruling dynasty of Kings was established in the mid fourteenth century. The first acknowledged king of the dynasty was called Kato Kintu. There have been a total of thirty-six kings from Kintu's time to the current King, Mutebi II. Buganda Kingdom was essentially an expansionist Kingdom. It quickly increased its territory from the original counties of Busiro, Busujju, Kyaddondo and Mawokota as well

²⁷ Kyewalyanga, *Traditional Religion*, p. 8 has done some study on the Ganda language and I will quote the summary of his findings here. According to him, The Luganda language uses prefixes, infixes and suffixes. 'Luganda has ten classes to classify names of living and non-living things. These ten classes: mu-ba, mu-mi, ki-bi, n-n, ku-ma, bu-bi, lu-na, li-ma, ka-bu, and ku are used in the place of genders used in the European languages. The prefix 'lu-' in the Luganda language is normally used to signify language, for example, Luganda, Lunyoro, Lusoga, Lungereza (English) ... Languages are classified under 'lu-na'. Class mu-ba is for human beings. Therefore the people of Buganda are called in the singular 'Muganda', and in the plural form, 'Baganda'. The root, '-ganda' is used to denote everything pertaining to Baganda. By adding other prefixes to the root, "-ganda", other words may be formulated, for example, in class "mu-ba" one can find the word "owoluganda" (relative), and "aboluganda" (relatives). In class "mu-mi", the word with the root "ganda" changes its meaning. It has nothing to do with the Baganda, for example: "muganda" (bundle). In class "ki-bi", there is the word "kiganda". This word is used to denote anything pertaining to Ganda customs and beliefs, for instance: Kiganda religion, to dress kiganda (to dress like the Baganda)'. See further T. D. Cole, , *Some Features of Ganda Linguistic Structure*, (Johannesburg, Witwatersrand University Press, 1967), pp. 46, 71-72; John D. Murphy, *Luganda-English Dictionary* (Washington, The Catholic University of America Press, 1972), pp. 89, 353.

as parts of Ssingi and Bulemezi, to twenty counties largely by going to war and annexing land from its archrival, The Kingdom of Bunyoro.²⁸ As Lukwata has noted, 'the Baganda, eager to preserve their monarchy, were often at war with their neighbours of Ankole and Busoga'.²⁹

The highly centralised political power in Buganda is supported by a strong and bureaucratic hierarchical power structure.³⁰ Interestingly, unlike other Kingdoms in the region like Ankole and Rwanda, Buganda had no 'castes'.³¹

In Buganda, the *Kabaka* (the King) is the head and top man of the Kingdom. He rules firmly over his people while showing justice for his great chiefs, clan heads and the traditions of Buganda. The *Kabaka* is not to be questioned about anything. There is a Chief Minister – the Prime Minister (called *Katikkiro*) elected by the *Lukiiko*. He runs the affairs of the Buganda Parliament (known as the *Lukiiko*). The *Katikkiro* is also the official spokesman of the Kingdom and with the King's approval, he appoints the other ministers in the *Lukiiko*. Under the ministers are the various clan heads (*bakulu b'ebika*).

The key political administrative structures include County (*saza*), Sub-county (*Gombolola*), Parish (*Omuluka*), Sub-parish (*Obutongole*) and Villages (*Ebyaalo*) in that descending order. At all these levels of the political administrative structure were chiefs who were directly chosen and appointed by the King. The *kabaka* also had the powers to dismiss or transfer any of the chiefs. Needless to say that this kept the chiefs loyal to the appointing authority – the King. As Southwold has noted, 'this made it difficult for any chief to get too familiar with the people in any one area'.³² The primary task of the chiefs was the maintenance of Law and Order. In the event of war, chiefs collected and led

²⁸ See Map 3 on p. vi for the location and demarcations of these counties and districts in the Buganda Kingdom – 1995.

²⁹ Lukwata, *First Hundred years*, p. 9.

³⁰ See Lukwata, *First Hundred years*, p. 5; Southwold, 'The Ganda', pp. 86, 88.

³¹ Southwold, 'The Ganda', p. 85.

³² Southwold, 'The Ganda', p. 89.

their men to war. The collection of taxes was not the responsibility of the chiefs. Tax collectors were appointed directly by the King.³³ So it is clear that the *kabaka* who almost commands absolute power is in charge of the Kingdom and its political administrative structure. Mbiti has rightly observed, 'The Ganda regarded the *kabaka* (king) as being ultimately their religious head and the symbol of their prosperity'.³⁴ The hierarchical power structure looks like this:

King or *Kabaka*

Prime Minister or *Katikkiro*

County chiefs (*Bataka*)

Sub county chiefs (*Ggombolola chiefs*)

Parish chief (*Muluka* chief in charge of several villages)

Mutongole chief (Village chief – not appointed by the King but by the landowners)

6.2 The Ganda traditional religious beliefs and experience

Writing about the African peoples, John Mbiti said, 'Africans are notoriously religious'.³⁵ Parrinder writing almost a decade later, reaffirms the same truth by referring to the Africans as, 'This incurably religious people'.³⁶ These two quotations are an apt description of the Ganda in Uganda. Every aspect of the Ganda life is a religious phenomenon. Of the Ganda, Roscoe states, 'The Baganda have always been a religious nation, most zealous in their observance of the rites and ceremonies connected with their

³³ Southwold, 'The Ganda', p. 89.

³⁴ John S. Mbiti, *Concepts of God in Africa*, (London, SPCK, 1970), p. 228.

³⁵ Mbiti, *African Religions*, p. 1.

³⁶ Parrinder, *African Traditional*, p. 9.

religion'.³⁷ The entire spectrum of a Muganda's life is punctuated by religious ceremonies, which begin long before one is even born. Conception is itself a religious phenomenon. It is not simply an issue of a man mating successfully with woman: it is not understood as a purely biological phenomenon. There is the divinity Mukasa responsible for fertility and the blessing of children. Then there are the rituals associated with birth, the elaborate initiation rites, in marriage and procreation (as already mentioned), at death and burial and in the life after death when one joins the company of the honorable departed ancestors who still interact, affect and impact on the life of the living. Mbiti sums up this religious experience of the Africans when he writes,

The whole of the African life is a religious phenomenon, and every person who comes into this world is, *ipso facto*, a religious being: he cannot run away from that, and he cannot reject it because he belongs to a religious phenomenon and a religious community. ... His vocabulary, his thought forms, his actions, and every portion of his life, is a participation in a religious experience. ... all through the life of the individual, he participates in religious activities and ideas, sometimes passively, sometimes actively: he cannot stand aloof from them and just become a spectator. Religious ideas and activities will enter into his marriage, his hunting, his sowing the seeds in the field, his drinking beer in the house, his traveling from one part of the country to another, and I dare say even his examinations ... The man of Africa feels extremely uncomfortable when he is left in an empty religionless vacuum: he does not know how to exist except within the framework of religious life.³⁸

In the discussion that follows, I examine the key aspects of Ganda traditional religion: beliefs and practices. I will start with the objects of veneration and worship among the Ganda that in turn shaped their religious beliefs, practice and experience.

³⁷ Roscoe, *The Baganda*, p. 271.

³⁸ See John Mbiti, 'Christianity and East African Culture and Religions' in *Dini na Mila: Revealed Religion and Traditional Custom*, Volume 3 Number 1 (May 1968), pp. 1, 4. Also see Mbiti, *African Religions*, pp. 2-5 where the same ideas have been greatly expanded.

6.2.1 *God among the Ganda*

6.2.1.1 Belief in the Supreme Being

Most of the recent studies on the Ganda (i.e. studies that include an aspect of their traditional religion) have argued very strongly for the belief in the Supreme Being.³⁹ Sometimes the defense has been so strong as to make early traditional beliefs about the Supreme Being indistinguishable from the present belief in the Christian God. I will attempt to proceed logically in my discussion not as a way of trying to counteract earlier studies but to put the Ganda understanding of the said 'Supreme Being' in perspective and later in subsequent sections and chapters demonstrate how that understanding relates to this study as a whole.

The name for the 'Supreme Being' in Ganda traditional religion is *Katonda*. Etymologically, the root word for the name '*Katonda*' is '*tonda*' which means to create. Consequently, the god *Katonda* was traditionally known among the Ganda as the Creator.⁴⁰ According to Roscoe, 'he received little honour or attention. ... He was spoken of as the father of the gods because he had created all things, but not much was known about him'.⁴¹ Whereas he was recognized to be superior to all and was referred to as the 'father of all the gods', little was known of him and he was not thought or expected to be involved or intervene routinely in human affairs. Consequently, the cult of *Katonda* was not considered to be of great consequence.⁴² Kaggwa writing earlier on simply lists *Katonda* among other deities (called *balubaale* – about seventy-three in number) and says nothing of his central role.⁴³ His earthly official estate was the village of *Butonda* in

³⁹ See for example Kyewalyanga, *Traditional Religion*, pp. 98-101; Bukenya, 'Neo-Traditional Religion', pp. 20-24; Ssempungu, *Ganda Sacrifice*, pp. 24-29; Lukwata, *First Hundred years*, pp. 9-10.

⁴⁰ See Roscoe, *The Baganda*, p. 312.

⁴¹ See Roscoe, *The Baganda*, p. 312.

⁴² See Southwold, 'The Ganda', p. 112.

⁴³ Kaggwa, *Mpisa*, p. 199. John Musaazi 'Baganda Traditional Divination and Treatment of People's Troubles' in Occasional Papers Vol. 1 No 8 (1971), p. 5 while acknowledging *Katonda* as the creator, suggests that he is a *lubaale* (deity) like any other *lubaale* (deity) – he is *lubaale Katonda*. The difference between *lubaale Katonda* and other *balubaale* according to Musaazi, is that *lubaale Katonda* was not of human origin; had no brother (and I suppose sister) and children; had a permanent place in which he lived

Kyaggwe where a temple that was built for him still stands to this day.⁴⁴ His priests came from the Njovu (Elephant) clan. The name of his medium was *Kifomusana*.⁴⁵

Despite the fact that not much attention was given to Katonda and his cult was not considered as vital, occasionally, offerings of cattle were made to him. Some of the cattle would be killed but the majority would simply be decorated with bells and allowed to roam and during the night they would be brought into the huts.⁴⁶ Besides being creator of all, Katonda was known to be gracious. He was neither a God of Hell-fire nor one who could kill.⁴⁷

In this initial discussion about the Supreme Being (*Katonda*), I need to say something about functional names and attributes that have been ascribed to him which, as I mentioned earlier on, make the traditional belief about *Katonda* indistinguishable from the present belief in the Christian God. The two major works of Alois M. Lugira⁴⁸ have increasingly influenced and convinced subsequent writers on the Ganda traditional religion into this direction. For example, Lugira states,

From time immemorial, Katonda has been known under several other names denoting his attributes: *Liisodene* (the Big eyed), *Kagingo* (The Master of life), *Mukama* (the Master), *Sewannaku* (though in the reference it is translated the 'External' but I think what was meant is 'eternal' for that is the correct translation

on earth called Butonda in Kyaggwe county; could not do any harm to anybody – he was the lubaale of peace (*lubaale* wa Mirembe and some people even went as far as calling him the giver of peace - Kiwa Mirembe).

⁴⁴ Additional information suggests that there were three shrines dedicated to *Katonda* at *Namakwa*, *Buzu* and *Bukule*, all in Kyaggwe.

⁴⁵ See Roscoe, *The Baganda*, p. 312.

⁴⁶ See Roscoe, *The Baganda*, p. 312.

⁴⁷ A. M. Lugira, 'Redemption in Ganda Traditional Belief' in *Uganda Journal*, 32, 2 (1968), p. 201.

⁴⁸ These important works are: A. M. Lugira, *Ganda Art. A study of the Ganda mentality with respect to possibilities of acculturation in Christian Art*, Kampala, Osasa Publication, 1970; and the second one already referenced in note forty-seven above is A. M. Lugira, 'Redemption in Ganda Traditional Belief' in *Uganda Journal*, 32, 2 (1968), pp. 199-203.

of the Luganda word – *Sewannaku*). Other names listed are: *Ddunda* (the Pastor), *Lugaba* (the Giver), *Ssebintu* (the Possessor of all things).⁴⁹

Kyewalyanga writing eight years later, goes a step further and states,

“Katonda” to summarize, is Almighty (Muyinza wa byonna), the Creator (Mutonzi), Omnipresent (Ali buli wantu wonna), Good (Wakisa), and the Giver (Lugaba). “Katonda” is Providence (Omutereeza); he arranges everything and settles every trouble. “Katonda” is Omniscient (Omumanyi wa byonna), he is unlimited (Oyo ali waggulu ddala). “Katonda” is the Life Giver (Oyo agaba obulamu).⁵⁰

Lukwata has been more guarded in his emphasis of the supremacy of Katonda.⁵¹ But Bukenya and Ssempungu quoting and relying heavily on the writings of Lugira and Kyewalyanga have been more emphatic in equating Katonda to the Christian God.⁵² Contributing to this debate, Thomas suggests, ‘... the Supreme Being seems not to have been so well established an element of belief. Katonda, the creator in Buganda, is perhaps a comparatively recent promotion to paramountcy, and his name has now been adopted as that of the Christian God’.⁵³ I am not at all disputing the fact that the Ganda believed in a Supreme Being called ‘Katonda’, (albeit his negligible involvement / role in the daily life of the Ganda), my point of departure and contention is that he was not the central preoccupation and centre of Ganda traditional worship. The names and attributes mentioned above are to me a reflection of the Christian influence on the Christian authors. There is no evidence that the traditional Ganda believed that Katonda was that relevant in their daily life. Ssempungu acknowledges this but goes to explain that Katonda mediated all these functions through the various deities. There is no evidence to

⁴⁹ Lugira, ‘Redemption in Ganda’, p. 201. Also see further Lugira, *Ganda Art*, p. 19.

⁵⁰ Kyewalyanga, *Traditional Religion*, p. 101.

⁵¹ Lukwata, *First Hundred years*, pp. 9-10.

⁵² Bukenya, ‘Neo-Traditional Religion’, pp. 20-24; Ssempungu, *Ganda Sacrifice*, 24-29.

⁵³ H. B. Thomas, ‘The Doctrine of God in Uganda’ in Edwin W Smith (ed), *African Ideas of God*, 3rd ed. (London, Edinburgh House of Press, 1966), p. 204.

support that line of argument. As we shall be discussing later, when the ordinary Muganda went to sacrifice or offer his or her prayers, there is nothing to indicate that he was worshipping the 'Supreme God – Katonda' by proxy. They did not imagine a 'Supreme Being' beyond that particular *lubaale* as their ultimate object of worship (i.e. when they offered prayers or sacrifice). Worship was largely a preserve (though not exclusively) of the numerous deities (*abalubaale*) to whom we now turn.

6.2.1.2 Belief in the divinities (deities) known in the Ganda as *Balubaale*

If the belief in the Supreme God formed the first level in the Ganda spirit world, then the *balubaale* (singular *lubaale*) formed the second level. *Balubaale* were of a major significance to the nation of Buganda and the day-to-day life of the people. The word '*lubaale*' was translated as 'god' by early writers in English on Buganda but the histories of the *balubaale*, which were well known to the Baganda, all tell of them having been humans who, having shown exceptional powers when alive, were venerated after death and whose spirits were expected to intercede favorably in national, family and individual affairs when asked. As Roscoe notes, *balubaale* 'appear to have been at one time human beings, noted for their skill and bravery, who were afterwards deified by the people and invested with supernatural powers'.⁵⁴ It was the case, however, that in addition to the

⁵⁴ See Kagwa, *Mpisa*, p. 201 'Naye balubaale boona okusooka baali bantu buntu' (meaning: the gods that were being venerated and worshipped were spirits of human beings who had once lived). Elsewhere Kagwa, *Mpisa*, p. 189 writing about Lubaale Mukasa states, 'Lubaale Mukasa yalinanga abakazi basatu: Nalwanga wa Nnyonyi, oyo ye yazaala Lwanga ne Musozi. Najjemba wa Ngoge, oyo ye yazaala Bugunga ne Kisituka. Nakku wa Ffumbe, oyo ye yazaala Kawumpuli, Nayiruma ne Nanziri. Era abo bonna ne bannyaabwe baafuuka balubaale oluvannyuma nga bamaze okufa. Ekyo kitulaga bulungi nga buli lubaale yenna yali muntu buntu kubanga okuwasa okwo okw'abakazi abasatu kwe kuukwo okw'Abaganda ab'edda' (Literally: Lubaale Mukasa had three wives: Nalwanga of the bird clan, she gave birth to Lwanga and Musozi. Najjemba of the Otter clan, she gave birth to Bugunga and Kisituka. Nakku of the Civet cat clan, she gave birth to Kawumpuli, Nayiruma and Nanziri. All these and their mothers became balubaale (deities) after they died. This demonstrates to us clearly that every lubaale (deity) was once a living person because the marriage of three wives was the marriage custom of the Ganda of long time ago). Also see M. Nsimbi, *Ammanya Amaganda* (Kampala, 1956) 122; Roscoe, *The Baganda*, p. 271; Southwold, 'The Ganda', p. 89. 112; Kyewalyanga, *Traditional Religion*, p. 102; Lukwata, *First Hundred years*, p. 11;

deification of these human beings, there were also animal and reptile gods. Certain trees and stones were also believed to possess occult power and were objects of veneration too.⁵⁵ Another important point to note is that the *balubaale* could be of either gender (male or female).

The *balubaale* were the focus of elaborate and organized regular religious activity of the Ganda. There is no one who was exempt from this central cult of the *balubaale*. Even key institutions of Buganda like the monarchy respected the *balubaale*. The Kabaka (the King) whom we described as wielding a lot of power and authority venerated the *balubaale*. So it was the case that at major national events, such as coronations and wars, the oracles at the major temples were consulted and offerings were made. For the King or any other person to ignore the oracles of the *balubaale* or desecrate any of their temples was a recipe for disaster.

The Ganda strongly believed that the *balubaale* were endowed with supernatural power to help them in all situations. But they were also careful not to anger the *balubaale* to guard against any punishment that could be meted to the individual offender or to the community as a whole. It appears that the *balubaale* were hierarchical. They all did not have the same functions and did not have the same powers or status. Most of the *balubaale* are believed to have come from the Ssesse Islands in Lake Victoria. Ssesse Islands were popularly known among the Ganda as the 'Islands of the gods'. Two major categories of the *balubaale* are notable. First, there were the national *balubaale* who were known to all the Ganda and were invoked by them all. Their primary function was to ensure the welfare of the King and the Kingdom of Buganda. Examples of these are *lubaale* Mukasa and *lubaale* Kibuuka. Second, there were private *balubaale* who were known only to particular clans.⁵⁶

Mbiti, *African Religions*, p. 86. It appears to me, the *balubaale* were more like the Christian Saints than 'gods'.

⁵⁵ Roscoe, *The Baganda*, p. 112.

⁵⁶ See Kyewalyanga, *Traditional Religion*, p. 102.

There was a temple (*ssabo*) built for each *lubaale*. A priest (*kabona*) and a medium (*mmandwa*) were appointed for each *lubaale*. As we shall be exploring later on, the *lubaale* often demanded sacrifices. People offered them animals or other objects to placate them, as thank offerings for answered petitions. Sacrifices were also offered to them to ask for certain favors.

It is not my intention to give a detailed account of the function of each of the *lubaale* in this study.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, I consider it important to briefly clarify the functions of the national *balubaale* and a few others in the section that follows.

Lubaale Mukasa

The cult of Mukasa was the most popular and most revered national cult. *Lubaale* Mukasa ranked highest among the Ganda gods and was considered to be the chief of all gods. Mukasa is known to be the first son of Wannema and the brother of Kibuuka (the war god). *Lubaale* Mukasa's other name was Sserwanga. It is most likely that the name Mukasa originated from the Island 'Bukasa' where Mukasa was born. Legendary stories about Mukasa speak of him as a human being who was uniquely benevolent and because of this people came to regard him as a god. He was the god of plenty and gave people an increase of food, cattle and children. He had several temples built for him in all parts of Buganda because of his national character and importance. His chief temple however, was on the Island of Bubembe in Lake Victoria. It was to this temple that the King

⁵⁷ Some of the names of the Ganda *balubaale* are: Mukasa, Kibuuka, Walumbe, Wanga, Musisi, Wamala, Wannema, Nnende, Mirimu, Kawumpuli, Nagawonyi, Nagaddya, Kiwanuka, Namalere, Ndaula Kawali, Ddungu, Nabuzaana, Mujoobe, Kagole, Nabagesera, Muwanga, Lunfuwa, Kisugula, Masonga, Ssemafumu, Mpumula, Luwunga, Lwanga, Ssekundi, Ddamulira, Nanvuma, Ddamba, Buwanga, Kyato, Ssekitende, Bugonga, Ssimba, Ngoma, Kyanga, Banga, Kibanga, Kinyamira, Lutoboka, Kyabuyima, Nkubanjero, Bugungu, Mwesera, Bukuku, Wadda, Bugana, Nambubi, Hanga, Ssese, Ssemuganja, Nkose, Kabale, Bunjazi, Buyovu, Nsangi, Kayindu, Kitinda, Mayanja, Ssezibwa, Kawenda, Lwamirindi, Nawandigi, Mbajjwe, Ssali, Kisozi, Nakalanga, Mubiru. For another listing, see Kyawalyanga, *Traditional Religion*, p. 102. These lists are by no means exhaustive. For a detailed account of the *balubaale* see Roscoe, *The Baganda*, pp. 290-323; Kagwa, *Empisa*, pp. 182-207.

would send annual offerings of cows and a request for prosperity and good harvests. Next to his temple was one to his wife, Nalwanga, to whom women would pray for fertility. *Lubaale* Mukasa had three priests namely: Ggugu, Ssebandide, and Ssemagumba.

The ordinary people had access to the many temples built in honour of *lubaale* Mukasa throughout the country. They would seek the assistance of the god as each one of them required or had need. But only the King with one or two leading chiefs and the immediate followers of the god who lived on the Island would have access to the chief temple at Bubembe. At this temple were four important drums namely: *Betobanga* (which was the chief drum), the second was *Nabirye*, the third was *Nabikono* and the fourth *Kikasa* (which had ten other drums that went with it).⁵⁸

In the temples of Mukasa, which were spread over the countryside, was always found a paddle as the sacred emblem of Mukasa. However, the chief temple at Bubembe had no paddle. Instead, a large meteoric stone is said to have been in the temple. This stone was turned first to the East and then to the West depending on the phases of the moon. The significance of this is not clearly known. Needless to say that each temple had its own priest, its medium and number of other followers and retainers belonging to the god.⁵⁹

As mentioned earlier, *lubaale* Mukasa was known for his benevolent acts. He never asked for life of any human being and hated seeing blood. People who sought his assistance or invoked him had to abstain from sex.⁶⁰

Lubaale Kibuuka

The other nationally renowned *lubaale* was Kibuuka of Mbaale. He was the second son of Wannnema and brother to Mukasa. His legend tells that he was a general of such great

⁵⁸ See Kaggwa, *Empisa*, p 189.

⁵⁹ See Roscoe, *The Baganda*, p. 290.

⁶⁰ For details about the Lubaale Mukasa see Roscoe, *The Baganda*, pp. 290-301; Kaggwa, *Empisa*, pp. 185-190

prowess that it was said of him that he could fly like a bird over the battlefield. According to legend, Kibuuka would fly up into the sky and hover over the enemy in a cloud. From his position in the cloud, Kibuuka shot down arrows and spears upon the enemy army while the Baganda pressed against the Banyoro. The Battle ended in victory for the Ganda. The Baganda took some Banyoro as prisoners and among them was a woman whom Kibuuka requested that she be sent to his hut. The woman escaped at night after learning where Kibuuka hid during the battle and went and told her countrymen. During the next battle, Kibuuka was killed in action in the time of Kabaka Nakibinge, while he was helping the King with the battle against the Banyoro (the archrival of Buganda Kingdom). His remains were enshrined at Mbaale (now known as Mpigi) and he became the *lubaale* of war (the war god).

Lubaale Kibuuka had three temples. Buggyabukula was the chief temple. The other two were Bagambamunyoro and Namirembe (which also doubled as a prison). He had three priests: Luwoma, Kituma, and Nakatandigira. Kibuuka's principal medium was Najambubu and Nakanga was the second medium. But it is said that there were about forty mediums in all and some of them accompanied the Ganda army in war. Kibuuka as a *lubaale* had three important drums namely: Nakku, Kababembe, and Nalubaale. Nalubaale was sounded everyday while Kababembe always accompanied the medium that went on war expeditions.⁶¹ *Lubaale* Kibuuka was charged with the responsibility of foretelling when war would take place and send his representatives to the war. The representative would take some emblem of power from the god to ensure victory in the battle for Buganda.⁶² Besides Bunyoro, Buganda was always at war with her other neighboring Kingdoms of Busoga and Ankole. So the help and services of *lubaale* Kibuuka in all these battles became vital in as far as securing the security of Buganda as a Kingdom.

⁶¹ Kaggwa, *Empisa*, p. 192.

⁶² See Roscoe, *The Baganda*, p. 305.

Lubaale Walumbe

Walumbe was the god of sickness and death. According to the legendary story of Kintu the first King, Walumbe is said to have been the brother-in-law of Kintu. He was brother to Nambi Nantutululu the wife of Kintu. Before coming to earth with his sister Nambi, Walumbe is said to have lived with his father Gulu in the sky.⁶³ His temple was built at Ntanda, in Nsingo. There was a deep ravine in that place in which god Walumbe was thought to live. The temple was on a ridge near this ravine.⁶⁴ His priest was Nakabaale taken from the Colobus-monkey clan (*Engeye* clan).

Only the King made offerings to this god and did so at the bidding of other gods in order to prevent Walumbe from sending death to kill people randomly. Also each King after being crowned King, sent an offering to Walumbe to appease him. The offering to Walumbe consisted of nine cows and nine chickens. When a person died and the cause of death could not be established, it was usual to say that Walumbe had taken the person. Whenever someone got a sudden attack of an illness and fainted, his friends or neighbours would be heard saying: *‘Munnaffe olumbe lubadde lwagala ku mutwala*

⁶³ The legendary story of Walumbe the cause of death is a common one among the Ganda. It is used to explain the cause of death. According to the story, Kintu having decided to marry Nambi (daughter of Gulu) went up to fetch her from the sky – for that is where Nambi and her family lived. When the married couple was returning to earth, the king of heaven (Gulu) warned them never to go back even if they forgot anything. They left in the absence of Walumbe (Nambi’s brother). But Nambi who was carrying her fowls suddenly remembered that she had forgotten to bring grain for her fowls and so against the advice of Kintu, she insisted and went back for some. And as fate would have it, she found her brother Walumbe at home and he insisted on coming to earth along with her. So Walumbe (death) followed the couple and lived with them on earth. Nambi began to have children. Her brother Walumbe (living on his own) asked for one of Nambi’s children as cook and when they refused, Walumbe killed the child. Later, Walumbe killed the other children. When Kintu went to Gulu to complain, Gulu pointed out that it was all Nambi’s fault. Gulu sent Kaizuki (Walumbe’s brother) with Kintu to come and convince him to go back but all Kaizuki’s efforts ended in vain. So Kaizuki returned to heaven and death (Walumbe) has lived on earth since then, killing whom he can and hiding underground.

⁶⁴ See Roscoe, *The Baganda*, p. 315.

*Ttanda ewa Walumbe*⁶⁵ – meaning ‘our friend, death wanted to take him to Walumbe in Ttanda’.

Lubaale Nagawonyi

This was the god of the harvest.⁶⁶ This *lubaale* was also called the god of hunger because he was thought to end drought and famine by influencing the gods *Musoke* and *Ggulu* who were directly responsible for the rain. His temple was at Bbanda in Bulemezi and his priests belonged to the Bird clan (Nnyonyi clan). In the event of a prolonged period of drought and failed crop, people took offerings to him with samples of withered crops and prayed him to have mercy on his dying children. They asked him to intercede with *Musoke* and *Ggulu* on their behalf. When the medium was possessed, then he often told the people when they would expect rain. After the crop yielded, people took part of the harvest to *lubaale* Nagawonyi to thank him and ask for the blessing.

I will now but mention the functions of a few more *balubaale*. *Ggulu* (the god of the sky who caused lightening and thunder that often destroyed people’s property), *Musoke* (god responsible for the rainbow), *Kaumpuli* (the god of plague), *Kitaka* (the earth-god), *Musisi* (the god responsible for earthquakes), *Kiwanuka* (specialized in fertility and thunder), *Ddungu* (specialized in game hunting), *Nagaddya* (for marriage and harvest), *Kitinda* (for wealth and long life).

6.2.1.3 Belief in ancestral spirits

I want to echo the words of Mbiti, who in writing about Christianity and East African Culture and Religions states, for the African ‘to live is to be religious, to die is to be religious still’.⁶⁷ When you come in contact with the Ganda, you cannot fail to notice the reverence and care given to the dead and the honour with which the accompanying elaborate burial and post-burial (known as *okwabya-olumbe*) ceremonies are conducted.

⁶⁵ Kagwa, *Empisa*, p. 182.

⁶⁶ Roscoe, *The Baganda*, p. 315 refers to this god as ‘goddess Nagawonyi’ implying that she could have been a female god.

⁶⁷ See Mbiti, ‘Christianity and East African Culture’, p. 4.

This reverence for the departed member of the family does not stop at the celebration of the last funeral rites (*okwabya-olumbe*) but continues to be extended to the spirit of the departed. I am making a deliberate use of the word 'departed' and not 'dead' because according to the Ganda concept of death, death is not thought of or understood as total annihilation but a moving on to another real sphere of life – the spirit realm of the departed ancestors. The existence in another form following death was a reality to the Ganda and all looked forward to living and moving in the next state.⁶⁸

The Ganda believed that when a person died, his soul (singular *muzimu*: plural *mizimu*) went to Ntanda first to give an account of itself and its deeds in the flesh to Walumbe (the god of disease and death). When this was done and after its respects to Walumbe, the *muzimu*⁶⁹ returned to his/her own clan, so as to be near the grave in which the body was laid. Among the Ganda, the spirit (*muzimu*) of the dead was thought to remain attached to the lower jaw. Quite often the lower jaw was detached from the remains and placed in the shrine dedicated to that particular ancestor. The *muzimu*, according to the Ganda was the transformation of the living following death and was considered to be immortal.⁷⁰ According to Kyewalyanga, 'It was supposed that the spirit (*muzimu*) of the deceased retained all the qualities of the living; they carried into their future state their physical and their moral character'.⁷¹ No wonder, any form of mutilation was taboo among the Ganda. One would rather die of a sick leg or arm than have it amputated for fear of appearing in

⁶⁸ Roscoe, *The Baganda*, p. 281.

⁶⁹ See Roscoe, *The Baganda*, pp. 285-286. John V. Taylor, *Growth of the Church in Buganda* (London, SCM, 1958), p. 203 noted that there was a difference in understanding of the word 'soul' or 'spirit' between the missionaries and the way it was understood among the Ganda. For the Christian missionaries, 'the concept of soul and spirit originally bore a purely metaphysical sense (*omwoyo* = spiritual character; *obulamu* = life), or a purely physical meaning (*emmeeme* = sternal cartilage, *omutima* = heart; both, *per ext.* = seat of the emotions)'. But Taylor observed 'the traditional Kiganda conception of man saw him, rather as the ancient Hebrews did, as an essentially this-worldly creature, consisting of a material body in which was a semi-material *muzimu*'.

⁷⁰ See Kyewalyanga, *Traditional Religion*, p. 107; F. B. Welbourn, 'Some Aspects of Kiganda Religion' in *Uganda Journal*, 26 (1962), p. 177; Mbiti, *African Religions*, p. 86 calls *mizimu* the living-dead.

⁷¹ See Kyewalyanga, *Traditional Religion*, p. 107.

the next world without it. One with a missing limb or any organ of his / her body would lose the opportunity to exercise full powers in the next world.⁷² Roscoe suggests that the spirits of the departed relatives were the most venerated class of religious objects among the Ganda, adding that, 'the power of the ghosts for good or evil was incalculable'.⁷³

Furthermore, the *mizimu* were believed to have wants and needs just as the living. It was believed that *mizimu* suffered cold and thirst. They had emotions and could consequently get angry and inflict disease, misfortunes and even death upon the living relatives if their wants were not met. So they were not distant beings, they were thought to live in close association with relatives who were living. Some of the obvious demands of the *muzimu* were that relatives handle the dead body in a fitting manner soon after death, they should not have been neglected when the person was alive and sick, that the burial and post-burial ceremonies be carried out meticulously, and that their graves be properly tended and not allowed to be overgrown with weeds.⁷⁴ As we shall be discussing later (see section on sacrifices), if there was this kind of neglect, the *muzimu* would get very angry and would only be appeased by an offering of a goat or cow. Animals that were offered to shades were never killed but were allowed to roam around the vicinity of the shrine. It was not uncommon for the heir of the deceased to inquire from the spirit medium on how best to please the *muzimu* of the dead.⁷⁵ According to Ganda traditional belief, the spirit of the dead (*muzimu*) was always attached to the lower jawbone. If the jawbone was moved, the *muzimu* would follow it. The shrines of *mizumu* were built near the graves and it was in these small shrines that relatives placed the regular little offerings of coffee berries, beer, clothing and occasionally a chicken.⁷⁶

⁷² See Roscoe, *The Baganda*, p. 281.

⁷³ Roscoe, *The Baganda*, p. 273. In this study I have used the expressions 'spirit', 'shade' instead of the expression 'ghost' which is often loaded with negative Western connotations about the African ancestors or living dead as Mbiti calls them.

⁷⁴ See Roscoe, *The Baganda*, p. 286; Kyewalyanga, *Traditional Religion*, p. 107.

⁷⁵ Taylor, *Growth of the Church*, p. 207.

⁷⁶ Roscoe, *The Baganda*, p. 286. Sometimes (and this was only in a few cases), the lower jawbone of a noted chief would be removed and placed in some special shrine of the family away from the grave.

Graves were often dug in the gardens of plantains. So plantains and trees were thought of as favorite places for *mizimu*. Shades were particularly thought to be most available at midday and children were often forbidden to go out playing in the gardens at noon when the sun shone brightly. When wind suddenly started blowing causing the leaves of trees or banana leaves to rattle, the *mizimu* were said to be talking or passing by. When there was a whirlwind lifting spirals of dust and leaves, the *mizimu* were said to be at play or passing by. Even adults did not go to the gardens at the heat of the day unless they had to.⁷⁷

Mizimu were thought to be malevolent. The most troublesome *muzimu* was always that of one's paternal aunt (*Ssenga*). But *mizimu* were believed to be benevolent too. They were kind and of good will to the relatives - assisting family members and the clan in various ways. Every good fortune was attributed to the influence of the gods and so was misfortune. To this end, the *mizimu* were highly esteemed among the Ganda. It is important to note that the *mizimu* 'of kings were placed on an equality with the gods, and received the same honour and worship; they foretold events concerning the State, and advised the living king, warning him when war was likely to break out'.⁷⁸

The dead visited the living in a variety of ways. The commonest way in which the *mizimu* manifested and demonstrated their power was by possessing a living person. According to Taylor, possession took three major forms:

There is that which is regarded as a malevolent attack from which the victim can only be saved by the use of supernatural means of exorcism. There is possession of a *muzimu* of a dead king, which is regarded as a call to the individual to dedicate himself or herself to lifelong service at the royal shrine. And there is supernatural possession of a medium for purposes of divination.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ See Taylor, *Growth of the Church*, p. 207; Roscoe *The Baganda*, p. 282.

⁷⁸ Roscoe, *The Baganda*, p. 283.

⁷⁹ Taylor, *Growth of the Church*, p. 208. 'It is said that a *muzimu* cannot possess anyone with whom it has no personal acquaintance, but the victim may not know whose spirit has possessed him and will need to consult a diviner to find out that.'

Besides possession, the spirits of the dead (*mizimu*) appeared to the living through dreams (known as *birooto*). *Mizimu* could also appear to the living in form of human beings or even as animals.⁸⁰ The *muzimu* could also send illness or fortune without necessarily appearing to the individual.

Ganda were mainly preoccupied with *mizimu* of relatives since *mizimu* of neighbours or unknown person (s) would never have any influence on anybody: whether for good or for evil. But the *muzimu* of a relative had unlimited range of activity in the life of an individual – and this created a lot of fear and anxiety in the members of the respective family and clan. On the malevolence and benevolence of *mizimu*, Kyewalyanga sums it up as follows:

The hostility of the spirit of a close relative could depend upon a wish to avenge the fate, which has put him in the situation in which he finds himself, or for any maltreatment, which he had to suffer while still alive. The spirit of one's paternal aunt (*Ssenga*) was thought to be the most troublesome, her malice venting itself more especially on her brother's children, but the spirit of a parent, paternal and maternal grandparents, and of great grandparents are mentioned as returning to set right the footsteps of one who has strayed from the path of wisdom. A spirit of an ancestor, which is no longer dangerous to the relatives but is only willing to help them, is deified by the people and is invested with supernatural powers. A spirit, which had reached the status of '*lubaale*', was invoked and asked for help; for example, he would be requested to cure some diseases, to grant fertility and richness, and to protect one's family.⁸¹

⁸⁰ Kyewalyanga, *Traditional Religion*, p. 109.

⁸¹ Kyewalyanga, *Traditional Religion*, p. 109. A *muzimu* would be invoked as follows: 'Gwe mukadde waffe, Jjajjaffe! Olaba ffe abaanabo bwetufanana era nobuzibu bwetulimu, tukubagize, ffe abaanabo tuwonye endwadde eza buli ngeri nze (gundi) byenetaaga (kinonakiri). Literally, 'You are our elder / parent our grand parent! You see us your children beset by these our predicaments, console us, we your children, and beseech you to heal our varied diseases. I (so and so) I need (this and that).

Whereas Southwold acknowledges that the shades of the dead were greatly feared in Buganda since they could punish the living who offended them by neglect or sin (hence the need to placate them with offerings), he contends that one can not speak of an established ancestor cult among the Ganda. The nearest to an ancestor cult would be the remembrance of past kings if such was to be considered as one.⁸²

6.2.1.4 Belief in *emisambwa* (tutelary deities)

We have examined *Katonda* (Supreme Being), *balubaale* (deities) and *mizimu* (spirits) as objects of worship among the Ganda. Besides these, the Ganda venerated tutelary deities known as '*misambwa*' (plural), the singular form being '*musambwa*'. The Ganda believed that the *mizimu* of long dead and forgotten ancestors revealed themselves in natural objects like animals, snakes (and other reptiles), swarms of bees, trees, rivers, rocks / stones, hills and mountains. These natural objects in which the spirits manifested themselves came to be known as *misambwa*. There is a way in which the *misambwa* were related to and associated with the *balubaale* and so they were revered. In as far as both *misambwa* and *balubaale* were all spirits of human beings who once lived in history, they were related.⁸³ The difference lay in the fact that 'unlike the *balubaale*, who are

⁸² Southwold, 'The Ganda', pp. 112-113.

⁸³ Kaggwa, *Empisa*, p. 201 has detailed for us the genesis of the worship of divinities among the Ganda: how this progressed through the *balubaale* to the *misambwa* and I will quote the relevant section here. 'Naye *balubaale* boona okusooka baali bantu buntu, awo abantu, abaabaweeezanga nga bakyali balamu, era nga bamaze n'okukwata amaloboozi gabwe, ne balyoka babasamira nga bagamba nti, "Omuzimu gwa Mukasa gukutte gundi", kubanga ayogera nga ye bwe yayogeranga, era alagula n'ebigambo bingi. Naye abantu bwe baasoka okukkiriza omu ne bonna abeeyongerangako oluvannyuma nga babakkiriza, era nga babawerera ddala ekitiibwa okusinga n'abo be basamira. Abantu bwe baasooka bwe batyo okusamira emizimu gy'abafa, mu biro ebyasooka. Abaganda tebaalina *balubaale* wabula baalaguzanga ngatto zokka. Naye oluvannyuma n'effuukira ddala empisa, era n'abantu bangi ne beeyongerera nnyo okusamiranga n'ebitaliimu, ensozi ennene, amayinja, emiti eminene, emigga, emisota era n'ensolo enkambwe, kubanga buli ayasamiranga era eyalagulanga mu ngeri endala yonna ye yafunanga ebintu ewatali kwetaaga'. What follows is an abridged translation of the above: The gods that were being venerated and worshipped were spirits of human beings who had once lived. People who worked with them while they were still alive and could accurately imitate their voices often claimed that the spirits of the dead possessed them and spoke through them. People who listened to the accurate imitation of the voices of the dead believed that indeed

known 'in the spirit only' (*mu mwoyo gwokka*), and are tribal figures, the *misambwa* require a material object through which to reveal themselves and are confined in their activities to a lineage group or locality'.⁸⁴ For example, *musambwa* Magala is said to be only active on Mountain Magala, which is the highest mountain in Bugerere while *musambwa* Ssezzibwa confines its activity to the river Ssezzibwa.⁸⁵

The Ganda strongly believed that the *misambwa* were endowed with supernatural powers. By these supernatural powers they could cure diseases, grant fertility, and riches. *Misambwa* were also believed to protect against enemies.⁸⁶ We shall briefly examine examples of the various categories of *misambwa* and where possible state what their specific functions were.⁸⁷

Among those that manifested themselves in animals was *musambwa* Ddungu who was a lion (*mpologoma*) with three temples located in Bulemezi county, Mabira forest in Kyaggwe county, and Busennya in Buddu county. *Musambwa* Ddungu was invoked mainly by hunters in order for them to get a good prey. The hunters in turn offered

the dead were giving oracles through these people. So the people began to revere and venerate the spirits of the dead (now called the *balubaale*). This belief in the *balubaale* became widespread. So the Ganda who originally practiced divination now began to invoke the *balubaale*. Later people began to extend this veneration to natural objects like big hills and mountains, stones, big trees, rivers, vicious animals, snakes, etc, which they believed to be the habitation of spirits of the dead. Also see Mbiti, *African Religions*, p. 86; Southwold, 'The Ganda', p. 112.

⁸⁴ Welbourn, *Aspects of Kiganda Religion*, 174. Also see Kyewalyanga, *Traditional Religion*, p. 111 who gives the following list of names of the known *Misambwa* (tutelary deities) of the Ganda: Bakka, Bowa, Bulonda, Busowa, Buvuma, Bwanja, Ddungu, Kagaba, Katerandulu, Kawenda, Kayindu, Kigozi, Kisitu, Kisozi, Kitinda, Kungu, Kyogya, Lubanga, Lubowa, Lwamirindi, Magala, Mayanja, Mayanja-Kato, Mbajjwe, Mpanga, Mubende, Mubiru, Nakalanga, Nakitondo, Naludugavu, Nawandige, Ntinda, Ssabwe, Ssali, Ssempa, Ssezzibwa, Ssogesi, Wagala, and Musisi.

⁸⁵ See Damiano Kato, 'Traditional Beliefs of the people of Bugerere Area', no. 29. In *Occasional Papers in African Traditional Religion and Philosophy* Vol. 3 (1971), p. 2.

⁸⁶ Kyewalyanga, *Traditional Religion*, p. 111.

⁸⁷ For details of the various categories of *misambwa* and functions see Kaggwa, *Empisa*, pp. 200-202; Kyewalyanga, *Traditional Religion*, pp. 112-114.

musambwa Ddungu bundles of firewood and some meat. Then there were *misambwa* that manifested themselves in reptiles notably *musambwa* Kitinda who was a crocodile (*goonya*) and lived on the Island of Ddamba in the Ssesse Islands in Lake Victoria. Often the King (*Kabaka*) took people to be killed there and be fed to the crocodiles as an offering. Also in this category was *musambwa* Mbajjwe. This was a snake with a temple in Butambala County. *Musambwa* Lubanga was a big lizard (*kkonkome*) living in Kyaggwe County.

Large forests that were manifestations of *misambwa* and were therefore venerated are Nakalanga and Mubiru both in Kyagwe. *Musambwa* Kikalanga was the one that caused dwarfism and lived in Mabira forest. *Musambwa* Nabambe and *musambwa* Ntamaaso were the chief *misambwa* of the forests. The hunters and woodcutters visited them and consulted them. It was believed that these *misambwa* made the hunters bold and protected them against the attacks of wild animals.⁸⁸ As an offering, they were offered beer and a guinea fowl. *Musambwa* Kayindu was a tree in Kiwambya in Bulemezi County.

The following big rivers were well known *misambwa* among the Ganda: Ssezibwa in Kyaggwe, Nawandigi in Mawakota, Lwamirindi in Bulemezi, Kawenda / Katonga in Mawakota county. Others are rivers Mayanja and Wajale. It was believed that these rivers originated from human beings particularly women. Every person crossing any of these rivers would stop and first make an offering of coffee-berries⁸⁹. The person or traveller would take the coffee berries, ask the *musambwa* or spirit to give him / her a safe crossing, throw the coffee berries into the water and then cross safely.⁹⁰ Sometimes offerings of animal, fowl, beer, grass or sticks were made.⁹¹

⁸⁸ See Kyewalyanga, *Traditional Religion*, p. 113.

⁸⁹ It is interesting to note how coffee brought in by white settlers quickly came to be adopted as item that could be offered to the Ganda tutelary deities.

⁹⁰ See Roscoe, *The Baganda*, pp. 318-319.

⁹¹ See Kyewalyanga, *Traditional Religion*, p. 113.

Mention should also be made of the hills and mountains that were believed to be manifestations of the *misambwa*. Uniquely, these hills and mountains were believed to be possessed by the spirits of wild animals and were greatly feared by human beings. No one dared approach these hills anyhow. Whenever these sacred hills were approached, care would be taken and sacrifices and offerings were made to appease the spirit when they had to work on one side of the hills or when their path lay over one of them.⁹² These sacred hills were: 'Walusi, Kiima, and Sempa in Bulemezi, which had a lion spirit. Boa, Naube, Luunga, and Kyangabi in Bulemezi, which had a leopard spirit. Walaga in Kyaggwe had a lion spirit. Buku in Kyaggwe had a leopard spirit.'⁹³ These hills and mountains were so sacred that not even the King or his servants dared approach them. Because of this, they were places of refuge. Whenever the King sent to plunder or rob people, the people would escape to the nearest of these hills and they would be safe with their property. But they would have to wait there until the King had withdrawn his ravaging party.

Lastly but not least, venerated sacred rocks or stones included among others, Ssali in Lake Victoria near Bunjako and Kungu, which is found at Kungu.

6.2.1.5 Belief in *Mayembe* (Fetiches)

Fetiches (known as *mayembe*) are part of the seemingly unending list of the Ganda form of spiritual beings and power. *Mayembe* literally means 'horns'. *Mayembe* were an assortment of objects, mainly made of entire horns of buffaloes, antelopes, and bucks.⁹⁴ Sometimes only tips of horns of small antelopes (not exceeding two inches long) were used. The hollow part of the horn was filled with herbs, clay and other substances that were only known to the diviners and medicine-men (who were the designers of the *mayembe*).⁹⁵ Such arrangements having been made, then, the diviner or medicine-man

⁹² See Roscoe, *The Baganda*, pp. 319-320.

⁹³ See Roscoe, *The Baganda*, pp. 319-320.

⁹⁴ Roscoe, *The Baganda*, pp. 271, 279; Mbiti, *African Religions*, p. 87.

⁹⁵ Roscoe, *The Baganda*, pp. 271, 279. Most recently, Stanley Kakangula, 'The resurgence of Pagan Rituals in Buganda: The Implications for the Mission of the Church' - (Unpublished Bachelor of Divinity

would summon the spirits that would then be attached to the horns. A wooden plug, studded with pieces of iron or brass was placed over the decorated open end of the horn. The size and shape of the *mayembe* varied. It was strongly believed by the Ganda that *mayembe* 'possessed supernatural powers for averting evil and bringing good to their fortunate owners'.⁹⁶ It was further believed that the spirits attached to the horns were in a better position to be able to 'hear and answer supplications in the most practical manner'.⁹⁷ *Mayembe* were used in 'divination, diagnosing and healing diseases, 'creating' more love between a man and his wife, finding lost articles, preventing attack by magic or by other *mayembe* from an enemy'.⁹⁸

As Mbiti has rightly observed, the horns alone did not constitute the *mayembe*; and the spirits alone were not the *mayembe*. The efficacy of the *mayembe* lay in the mystical combination of the two. Only the diviners and the medicine-men (who were the experts) knew the methods of bringing these two together.⁹⁹ It was only when this combination was successfully achieved, that 'the horns were thought to have become vehicles of the god by whose name they were called, and whose powers they were supposed to convey to those who owned them'.¹⁰⁰

dissertation, Uganda Christian University, Mukono, 2002), p. 22 has compiled a list of items that diviners / medicine-men put in fetishes in varying proportions. They are: Traditional herbs, tail of a chameleon, tongue of a white cock, human hair, human nails, human dried blood, small pieces of flesh cut from human sexual organs, pieces of animal nails, pieces of human bones, feathers and claws of an eagle, animal fur, horns and bones; cuttings of roots of sacred trees, wood cuttings, broken pot, dried animal blood and waste matter. It is to be noted that all these do not to be in one fetiche all at the same time.

⁹⁶ See Roscoe, *The Baganda*, p. 271.

⁹⁷ See Roscoe, *The Baganda*, p. 271.

⁹⁸ See Mbiti, *African Religions*, p. 87.

⁹⁹ See Mbiti, *African Religions*, p. 87.

¹⁰⁰ Roscoe, *The Baganda*, p. 279. Kaggwa, *Empisa*, p. 205 has listed for us the names of the most respected *mayembe* among the Ganda: Kizuuzi, Namuzinda, Nambaga, Lukenge, Nakavuma, Nakangu, Kibazinga, Bayisemuggwanga, Sekabembe, and Kasajja. This list is by no means exhaustive. See further Roscoe, *The Baganda*, pp. 323-329 for names of fetiches / *mayembe*, their individual descriptions and functions. One group of *mayembe* that is common and considered as most deadly by the Ganda is the *Kifaalu*. It has variously been translated as military tank, tractor or rhino. It came into being during or

6.2.1.6 Belief in *nsiriba* (amulets)

Like *mayembe* (fetiches), human beings made *nsiriba* (amulets) – they were manufactured objects, so to say. However there were two major differences between *mayembe* and *nsiriba*. First, whereas *mayembe* were endowed with supernatural powers, *nsiriba* seldom possessed supernatural powers: *nsiriba* were used largely for medicinal purposes. Second, there were no offerings or supplications made to *nsiriba* and were not accorded the same reverence as the fetiches.¹⁰¹ Each *nsiriba* was believed to possess one healing virtue and there were various types of *nsiriba*: each one of them being disease specific. Medicine-persons could prescribe and make *nsiriba* almost for every type of illness.

Medicine-persons made *nsiriba* from selected types of woods, roots and herbs known particularly for their medicinal properties. They were carried or often worn by the people for whom they had been prescribed. Some people continued using them as ornaments long after they had recovered from the particular illness.

6.3 The Ganda elders and their role in sacrifice

Ganda religious life as a whole was highly organized. Though this was not documented anywhere (for they were not literary people that time), through the oral tradition, the Ganda knew what persons were charged with particular responsibilities pertaining to their religious life. The religious affairs of the Ganda were not conducted in a haphazard manner. This was particularly so when it came to matters of sacrifice. We shall now examine the practitioners and mediums that were involved in the Ganda cult.

after the Second World War. Kifaalo will haunt, kill or bewitch their enemies or offenders, such as those who take other men's wives or do not pay their debts (Mbiti, *African Religions*, p. 87; Musaazi, 'Baganda Traditional Divination', p. 10). A diviner is able to send a *kifaalo* on a vengeful or harmful mission and they are a big enterprise among the Ganda and have spread to other areas as well. They bring in a lot of money to their owners by supposedly hiring them out to customers! Rev. Brother Anatoli Wasswa (retired Catholic priest) and now renowned herbalist, has recently disputed the 'reality' of the *mayembe* in his recent publication: *Amayembe Gaayiwa Abasamize* (Amayembe (horns or kifaalo) betray the Diviners) Marianum Press, Kisubi, (RJ 12/2004).

¹⁰¹ See Roscoe, *The Baganda*, pp. 272-273; 329-331 for detailed information about *nsiriba* (amulets).

6.3.1 Kabona (Priest)

In our earlier discussion of the *balubaale* (deities), I did state that each *lubaale* had a priest who in some cases was the head of the clan that was directly charged with the welfare and ministry of that *lubaale*. However, there were *balubaale* who had more than one priest. *Lubaale* Kibuuka and *lubaale* Mukasa had five and three priests (plural: *bakabona*) respectively. In all cases, the *kabona* was the person who was in charge of the estates (*ekiggwa*) of the *lubaale* and his/her temple (*ssabo*).¹⁰² The *bakabona* were highly esteemed among the Ganda communities, more so where they also doubled as the clan heads. No one ever set himself up as a *kabona*. This was the prerogative of the clan. Whereas the priesthood continued within the clan, when the serving *kabona* died, his son did not succeed him automatically. The clan as already mentioned was the appointing authority though their choice had to be confirmed by the King (Kabaka).¹⁰³

The specific functions of the *kabona* included among others: receiving and welcoming all persons who came to consult with the god. Some people would have come to offer prayers to the *lubaale* or make offerings to him. He also received the people's offerings and announced them to the '*lubaale*'. The *kabona* mentioned specifically what the people had brought as offering and why they had come to him (*lubaale*). When the *lubaale* was satisfied with all this, then he granted the people an interview in which the offerers made their requests, problems etc to the *lubaale*. But since the *lubaale's* language was often not intelligible to the ordinary people, the oracle was often interpreted by the priest through a medium (*mmandwa*).¹⁰⁴ Only the medium (*mmandwa*) understood the language of the *lubaale* (I will say more about the mediums in the section that follows).

It was the function of the priest (*kabona*) to ensure that the special scented grass (called '*tteete*') that covered the floor of the temple was well set and maintained. This grass served as the floor carpet on which people sat in the section of the temple that was

¹⁰² See Kyewalyanga, *Traditional Religion*, p. 115; Roscoe, *The Baganda*, pp. 273-274, 303.

¹⁰³ Roscoe, *The Baganda*, p. 274.

¹⁰⁴ Roscoe, *The Baganda*, p. 274.

accessible to the inquirers. The fire which in Ganda culture is a symbol of life was kept burning in the temple. It was the duty of the priest to make sure that this fire did not go out. Besides taking care of the general comfort of the *lubaale*, the priest was also responsible for the welfare of the people who came to inquire of the *lubaale*. He also made sure that all offerings made to the *lubaale* (especially animals that may not have been ritually killed) were well looked after.¹⁰⁵ The *kabona* and his property (the equipment he used e.g. vessels, ceremonial special clothes) were considered to be sacred and therefore 'taboo'. Any offence against him, according to Kyewalyanga was revenged by death.¹⁰⁶ Lastly, the residences of the priests (*bakabona*) were next or close to the temples of the *lubaale*. It was in these houses that the priests kept their vestments and rest of their belongings. This is also where they robed themselves before starting their official religious engagements.

6.3.2 *Emmandwa* (medium=intermediary)

There are other names that have been used to refer to the *emmandwa* and these are: *mukongozzi* (one who carries *lubaale*), *mulaguzi* (prophet), *mulubaale* (diviner), *musamize* (one who gets possessed by a *lubaale* or deity).¹⁰⁷ *Emmandwa* is a person (male or female) whose express responsibility is to act as the spokesperson of the *lubaale* (deity). The *emmandwa* is the person who was able to understand and explain the mysteries and secrets of the *lubaale* to the inquirers. The *emmandwa*, through the enabling of the *lubaale* was able to foretell future events. Again as was the case with the priests, each *lubaale* had one *mandwa* (medium) save for the national *balubaale* Kibuuka and Mukasa who because of their national character and responsibilities had several mediums at the various temples in the countryside. *Lubaale* Nende who too was a war god had more than one *mmandwa*. Besides being mouthpieces of the *lubaale* the

¹⁰⁵ See Kyewalyanga, *Traditional Religion*, p. 116.

¹⁰⁶ See Kyewalyanga, *Traditional Religion*, p. 116. Also see Roscoe, *The Baganda*, p. 274 and Mbiti, *Concepts of*, p. 222 where they mention that no one could approach or touch a *kabona* (priest) once he was robed for duty. The *kabona* (priest) wore barkcloths, nine white goat skins round the waist, and a head-dress of a jackal skin.

¹⁰⁷ See Kyewalyanga, *Traditional Religion*, p. 117.

emmandwa represented, they also made fetiches and demonstrated and put to use all the magical knowledge such as might have been revealed to them by the *lubaale*.¹⁰⁸

In the Ganda proverbial language were proverbs that pointed to the nature, power, abilities and work of the *mmandwa*.¹⁰⁹ Unlike the *kabona* (priest) who was chosen by the clan, *emmandwa* was chosen by the *lubaale* (god or deity) himself. Since the *mmandwa* was a representative of the *lubaale*, each *lubaale* selected his or her own *mmandwa*. Depending on the wishes of the *lubaale*, a woman or a man could be chosen. It was not difficult for the people to know the person who had been selected by the *lubaale* as *mmandwa* (medium). The choice of the person chosen was indicated by the individual being suddenly possessed by the *lubaale* (deity); the person so possessed then began to utter secrets or predict future events – something that was impossible for anyone to do without the influence of the *lubaale*. This way, the people around knew and confirmed that indeed such a person had been chosen by the *lubaale* to be his *mmandwa* (medium). If a woman was chosen as *mmandwa* by a *lubaale*, the woman was considered as married to the deity and remained chaste for the rest of her life.¹¹⁰ This initial possession of a person by the *lubaale* was known as ‘*okuwasibwa lubaale*’ (literally: being married to the

¹⁰⁸ See Kyewalyanga, *Traditional Religion*, p. 117.

¹⁰⁹ Kyewalyanga, *Traditional Religion*, pp. 117-118 has mentioned some of these and will quote them here. ‘Ssegulira emmandwa etuule, nga bye yamulagula bya tuukirira’ (literally: let the medium have a sit, when what the medium prophesied comes true); ‘mmandwa mbi, evumaganya agisamira’ (literally: A bad medium is a source of contempt to those who trust that medium); ‘Ky’okisa ewannyu omulubaale y’akyogera’ (literally: What one holds secret is put to light by the medium); ‘Sigatta mugugu na mmandwa’ (literally: I do not carry one load with a medium); ‘Ayita n’emmandwa y’amanya ky’era’ (literally: Who accompanies a medium is the one who knows what it eats); ‘Twagenda Buganda kulya nnyama, ge maddu agassa emmandwa e Masajja’ (literally: We went to Buganda to eat meat. That is the greed of mediums, which caused their death at Masajja); ‘Obubulwa ggye, busembeza emmandwa ku lubu’ (literally: When one is in need, he is forced to invite a medium to his meal); ‘Emmandwa lwe bagisingira tesula’ (literally: when emmandwa has got what he wanted, he departs immediately).

¹¹⁰ Mbiti, *Concepts of*, p. 223. However, this absolute continence was not required of male *mmandwa* (mediums). Additionally, the female *mmandwa* had to be removed from the temple service during her menstruation period because it was considered as taboo for a menstruating woman to enter the temple of any deity – see further Kyawalyanga, *Traditional Religion*, p. 118; Roscoe, *The Baganda*, p. 275.

lubaale or deity). Subsequent possessions were referred to as '*lubaale okukwata oba okulinya ku mutwe*' (literally: being seized by the head).¹¹¹

6.3.3 *Omusawo (medicine - person)*

Basawo (plural of *omusawo*)¹¹² were not directly related to the temples and the *balubaale* but nevertheless had a role to play in the religious life and experience of the Ganda. They doubled as both physicians and religious people (in as far as they were involved in exorcising evil spirits from haunted people and homes). This made them even more powerful in the communities than the *bakabona* and the *mmandwa* (priests and mediums). Usually each clan had its own medicine-person who: 'diagnosed illness, prescribed for the sick, and understood how to deal with sickness caused by ghosts; they were surgeons, and saved lives of men who had been wounded in battle or whose limbs had been amputated by their masters for some offence, and who would have died from loss of blood had not those men come to their aid'.¹¹³ Because of their skill and cunningness they were respected and feared by all. Even mediums and priests respected the medicine people. In our discussion of fetiches, we mentioned medicine people as the architects of fetiches. But they were also renowned for an assortment of compounded drugs and objects that worked magic on people (commonly called *eddogo*).¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ See Roscoe, *The Baganda*, pp. 274-275 for details.

¹¹² Mbiti in his writings, see Mbiti, *African Religions*, p. 162; Mbiti, *Concepts of*, p. 224; Mbiti, 'Christianity and East African Culture', p. 1 has complained about the negative publicity given to these traditional doctors by foreign writers going as far as 'maliciously calling them withdoctors' – a term he suggests should be 'buried and forgotten forever'. For Mbiti this was due to misconceived notions on the part of foreign colleagues that do not match the facts on the ground. Medicine-persons, Mbiti affirms, 'are the greatest friends of African societies, and each community has one or more of them'. Later in the discussion, I will be referring to herbalists like Revd Brother Anatoli Wasswa (retired Roman Catholic priest) I have encountered among the Ganda, whose medical services and skills are greatly sought after. This is not to say that there are no people who under the guise of herbalists are involved in all sorts of withcraft – incompatible with both community life and the Christian faith.

¹¹³ Roscoe, *The Baganda*, p. 278.

¹¹⁴ Roscoe, *The Baganda*, p. 278.

6.3.4 *Abawala abawonge* (dedicated girls)

Helping with the sundry duties of the temple were a number of girls called *abawala abawonge*. These were girls whose parents had dedicated them to the *lubaale* (deity) as a fulfillment of a vow previously made to the deity. There were situations when some women failed to conceive and bear children or cases when some women's pregnancies would end up in stillbirths. Still others habitually miscarried and would never carry their pregnancy to term. Such couples often went to seek the help of a deity (*lubaale*) with a promise that they would offer the child to the *lubaale* for the service of the temple if the deity heeds their request. So when such a girl was born, as soon as she was old enough to be weaned and be separated from her mother, she was brought into the temple enclosure to live and be raised there. These girls were kept as virgins, hence the name vestal virgins.¹¹⁵

Their specific duties were to keep the temple fire burning day and night; to ensure that the temple was not desecrated by bringing in the temple anything that was considered taboo; to collect and to maintain supplies of both water and firewood; to replenish the scented grass that covered the temple floor; and guarded the sacred pipe and tobacco used by the medium before giving the oracle.¹¹⁶

These girls were sacred and men were cautioned never to enter any form of relationship with them as they were considered as an offering to the *lubaale* (deity). They remained in the service of the deity in the temple until they attained puberty. At this age, the *kabona* or *mmandwa* acting on behalf of the deity would choose the man she was to marry. No girl (or woman for that matter) would have anything to do with the gods when she was in her menstruation period. So only immature virgin girls were allowed to be in this service and as soon as they reached puberty (just before their very first menstrual period), they were removed from the temple and temple enclosure. Before winding up this section, I need to say something about the sacred places of worship.

¹¹⁵ Roscoe, *The Baganda*, pp. 275-276.

¹¹⁶ Roscoe, *The Baganda*, pp. 275-276.

6.4 Sacred places of worship

Whereas I acknowledge that there were recognized places of worship among the Ganda (especially for ritual sacrifice), it appears to me there was a way in which the Ganda environment (their entire surroundings) was considered as all religious space. The Ganda were always conscious that wherever they were, the powerful force of the various objects of worship was with them (providing protection and also keeping watch over them). Nothing could be done or said that would escape the knowledge of the gods. So one was always warned of this fact from childhood. The deities were there in their gardens, forests, lakes and rivers, their homes, certainly in the courtyards (where ancestors were buried), along the pathways / roads. Having said this, there were specific places where organized worship among the Ganda took place. The key places included: temples, shrines, and homes. There were also a number of designated places where especially human sacrifice was carried out.

6.4.1 Temple (*Ssabo*)

Whereas temples (plural: *masabo*) varied in size and internal configuration, the external structure was always conical in shape just like the king's house. They were grass thatched and the floor was covered with carpet-like grass that was always well arranged and maintained by the temple attendants. The internal structure consisted of the 'sanctuary' to which only the priests (in the case of national deities) could go. In some temples of less important deities, mediums (*mmandwa*) as well as priests (*bakabona*) could enter the sanctuary. The second compartment was for the participants. Temples were traditional sacred places of worship. In the case of the national deities, space around the temple was sacred too and was often enclosed and guarded by chaste virgins. In the case of national deities only the priests (*bakabona*) and mediums (*mmandwa*) could enter the courts. But in the case of the less important gods, temple attendants as well as women slaves dedicated to the deity had their houses in the courts. As shall be discussed later, besides the chief temples, the national deities had other several temples spread throughout the country of Buganda. In all temples, sacred fire was kept burning.

6.4.2 Shrine

Shrines retained the same conical shape but were markedly smaller in size compared to temples. They were grass thatched too. These were for the ordinary ancestral spirits and were often built near their graves. In situations where the ancestral spirits were thought to dwell in rocks and large trees, shrines would be constructed there and offerings of barkcloth, banana beer, firewood, cowrie shells would be brought there by the worshippers. In some shrines, there was a fireplace on which the fire was kept burning. It was believed that ancestral spirits could feel cold just like the living.

6.4.3 Homes

For the Ganda, ordinary people's homes were convenient meeting places where relatives could easily gather to invoke the gods. Most ordinary Ganda who wanted to demonstrate their religiosity or piety would even construct shrines in courtyards, backyards or plantains where offerings of banana beer would be poured right at the front door of the shrine.

6.4.4 Designated sacrificial places

Besides temples, shrines and homes, there existed designated sacrificial places where particularly ritual human sacrifices were carried out following the demands of the gods – mainly the national *balubaale* (gods). There were thirteen such special places (commonly called *matambiro* i.e. sacrificial places).¹¹⁷ It was the prerogative of the god

¹¹⁷ See Roscoe, *The Baganda*, pp. 331, 334-338; Kyewalyanga, *Traditional Religion*, pp. 127-128. These (*matambiro*) sacrificial places were as follows: Seguku on the Seguku hill in Busiro where the victims were either clubbed or speared to death. Torture here consisted of cutting of the flesh of the victims with splinters of reeds, which were as sharp as razors and later the victim was killed. Kitinda was on the Island Damba and was dedicated to the crocodiles. The crocodiles in this part of the lake were sacred and were not to be killed. The victims were taken to the Island, given medicated beer to drink, marched down to the beach and had their legs and arms broken to immobilize them. They were placed in a row and crocodiles came and carried them into the lake. Benga was in Bunyoro and was the sacrificial place for princes. The princes were burnt to death (bound on a heap of fire). Sacrificial place Namugongo is in Kyaggwe. Captives were burnt to death. After being given medicated beer, they were bound each with his head on its knees, and his feet and hands secured to his neck and then thrown into the fire. Instead of being taken to

to inform the King of the occasions at which the victims would be sacrificed and the place of execution. The King's responsibility was to ensure that there was always a constant supply of sacrificial victims and to supply them in the right numbers when demanded by the deity. These sacrificial places were different in their sizes, and the type of people that were sacrificed at each site, including peculiar methods of putting the victims to death. But they also had many things in common. First, each sacrificial place had a temple, a priest and a custodian.¹¹⁸ Second, the custodian at each sacrificial site kept a large pot with multiple 'mouths' at the top. This pot contained medicated beer, which each victim was forced to drink before the execution. If the sacrificial victim refused to drink it, it was poured on his head. This too was thought to serve the same purpose as drinking it. This medicated beer had the potency of giving the King control over the sacrificial victim's shade (*muzimu*).¹¹⁹ The medicated beer prevented the shade (*muzimu*) of the sacrificial victim from coming to haunt the King and the people. Third, at each *itambiro* (singular for 'sacrificial place') was a big sacred tree under which the pot containing the medicated beer was placed and upon which the victims placed their outer garments before they proceeded to the place of execution.

There were two main ways of supplying the *matambiro* (sacrificial places) with the required number of victims. In the majority of the cases, sacrificial victims were men and women who in one way or another would have broken one of the state laws and had been put in prison. So in the event of need, the King would authorize that those in the prisons be rounded up and offered to the deity that demanded them. But as was often the

Benga, princes were brought to this place. This is the sacrificial place where the celebrated Ugandan Martyrs were burnt to death on 3rd June 1886. Mutukulu is in Singo. The captives were taken to the shores of Lake Wamala and after being given medicated beer to drink, they were bound hand and feet, then speared and thrown into the lake. Kubamitwe is the place where any of the King's unfaithful wives were sent for execution. People who had knowingly or unknowingly committed incest were sent to Ekulu Tuyana on Kyebando Hill in Busiro. Here they were clubbed or speared to death. Other sacrificial places had no particular regulations and these were: Nalulangade, Kasangalabi in Katambala, Kafumita in Kyaggwe, Wakitembe in Kinawa, Jokero in Basanyi Buinja, Mpima-elembera in Busega.

¹¹⁸ See Roscoe, *The Baganda*, pp. 331, 334-338.

¹¹⁹ Roscoe, *The Baganda*, pp. 331, 334.

case, the number of those in the stocks was less than the number demanded by the deity. In this case, innocent people would be rounded up to complete the number. The way this was done was through a decree of a certain god declaring that whoever would be found using specified access roads to the capital be arrested. Of course the ordinary people would not know which of the access roads had been declared as taboo to them on that day and many people were arrested in this manner to complete the number of victims for *lubaale* Kibuuka or *lubaale* Nende – the war gods.¹²⁰

In addition to the above two methods of getting sacrificial victims, sometimes the god would give an order to the King that people with certain peculiarities (e.g. people having marks like a cast in the eye, wearing a particular dress) be arrested on the roads by the palace guards or police to complete the number demanded by the deity. According to Roscoe, 'The full number (*kiwendo*) was from two to five hundred persons'.¹²¹

6.5 Ganda sacrifice and types of sacrifice

It is no exaggeration to state that any form of religious activity / expression among the Ganda involved sacrifice and offerings in one-way or another. The life cycle of every Muganda (singular for Baganda – the people) was punctuated by many religious

¹²⁰ The deity determined the number of people to be sacrificed through an oracle by its *mmandwa* (medium). The *mmandwa* through the same oracle would decide how many of the victims were to be sacrificed at each of the sacrificial places (*matambiro*).

¹²¹ Roscoe, *The Baganda*, pp. 332-333. Kaggwa, *Empisa*, p. 121 confirms this further when he states, 'Bwe waabeeranga ekigambo ku kibuga, gamba abavubuka bayinze obungi oba bayonoonye enguudo z'omu kibuga, oba kuganza bambejja, oba abalaguzi beetaaga omuntu w'eriiso ery'ensenke, oba ow'engalo ezitukula ku mukono ogumu oba engeri endala yonna ebeera ku muntu eyetaagisa okutambira, Kabaka ng'atuma abambowa ne bagenda bakwata abantu bonna mu nguudo zo mu kibuga. Emirundi egimu baakwatirangamu n'abatalina musango. Ekyyo kye kyayitibwanga *Ekiwendo*' [meaning: If there was any problem in the town, such as big numbers of youth idlers, who could sometimes make the town filthy or befriend princesses; or if diviners wanted a person with an eye infected with cataract, a person with light patches on his hand or any abnormality for purposes of sacrifice, then the king would order his pages to go and capture people in streets in the town. Sometimes they could even capture innocent people. This is what was commonly known as *ekiwendo* (mass rounding up of people)]. On the numbers of people that were sacrificed (often numbering five hundred) see further Kaggwa, *Empisa*, p. 122.

ceremonies that included sacrifices and offerings. I am aware of the rather academic distinction between sacrifices and offerings. As Mbiti has so clearly put this distinction, "Sacrifices" refer to cases where animal life is destroyed in order to present the animal, in part or in whole, to God, supernatural beings, spirits or the living dead. "Offerings" refer to the remaining cases which do not involve the killing of an animal, being chiefly the presentation of foodstuffs and other items'.¹²² However, there is no evidence to show that this distinction was rigidly applied in Ganda religious life and most of the religious ceremonies included both sacrifices and offerings (all at the same time or function). Another distinction, which I need to clarify at this point because of its importance in this study, is that between sacrifice and ritual. Quite often sacrifice and ritual have been used interchangeably (consciously or unconsciously). But this can be confusing. I understand ritual to be much broader than sacrifice. Ritual refers to any religious ceremony, which may or may not include sacrifice. Sacrifice on the other hand is one ritual among others and the best way to refer to sacrifice, as ritual, would be 'sacrificial ritual'.

Still on definition of terms, I should mention that for the Ganda, the word for 'sacrifice' (sacrificial ritual in this case) is *Kitambiro*. The sacrificial place is called *tambiro* (*matambiro* for the plural).¹²³ Etymologically, the verb from which all these words are derived is *kutamba* which can variously be translated as 'to protect', 'to heal' or 'to cure'. This understanding will become pertinent when we examine both the motivation and purpose of sacrifices and offerings made to the various deities among the Ganda.

Given the elaborate pantheon of deities among the Ganda, it comes as no surprise to anyone to find numerous religious ceremonies – some of which include ritual sacrifice. Some of these are very elaborate indeed in terms of content and time taken to go through them while some are simple and easy to carry out in the confines of a home. It is not possible to cover in this study the whole extent / spectrum of ritual sacrifice among the Ganda. But representative sacrificial rituals will be highlighted to enable us to understand the nature and purpose of sacrifice in the daily life of the Ganda.

¹²² Mbiti, *African Religions*, p. 58.

¹²³ See Roscoe, *The Baganda*, p. 331; Ssempungu, *Ganda Sacrifice*, p. 43.

For purposes of this study, I have chosen to categorize ritual sacrifice among the Ganda into two broad categories. These two categories are: National sacrifices – also called community sacrifices and Occasional sacrifices. We shall now turn our discussion to each one of these categories.

6.5.1 National (Community) sacrifices

These were sacrifices of a national nature. All people in Buganda were involved in these annual sacrifices and offerings. A number of factors contributed to the national character of these sacrifices. First, they were mainly offered in threatening calamities of a national nature e.g. pending drought, epidemics and war. Second, these sacrifices were presided over by the *Kabaka* (the King). If for any reason the King was unable to be present in person, he sent personal representatives who delivered his gifts and offerings to the deity. Third, these sacrifices were made to the national *balubaale* (deities) only, namely *lubaale* Mukasa, *lubaale* Kibuuka and *lubaale* Nnende. I will examine in detail key aspects of these sacrifices below.¹²⁴

6.5.1.1 Sacrifices offered to the national *lubaale* Mukasa

As mentioned in the discussion of the national deities, *lubaale* Mukasa¹²⁵ was the most esteemed of the *balubaale* and was considered to be of the highest and noble rank among the Ganda deities. Jubilation, pomp and high expectations accompanied the sacrifices and offerings made to him. There were two sets of sacrifices and offerings made to *lubaale* Mukasa. One was at the construction of his temple and the other was at the annual festival to celebrate his bounty or generosity to the people. We shall examine both of these two.

Whereas there were numerous temples erected for *lubaale* Mukasa throughout Buganda (because of his national character and importance), his chief temple was on the Island of

¹²⁴ The description of these National (Community) sacrifices follows closely (without being limited to) the descriptions given by Roscoe, *The Baganda*, pp. 290-308; Kagawa, *Empisa*, pp. 185-197, 202.

¹²⁵ *Lubaale* Mukasa was the deity of plenty – wealth as well as children, peace and everything that was considered good for the community.

Bubembe in Lake Victoria. So it was that the King would give a directive that a temple be constructed for *lubaale* Mukasa in the event that the existing temple had fallen into disuse (possibly having grown old as many of the temples were made of wooden poles, reeds and were grass thatched). No construction of this temple could be done without the express permission of the reigning *Kabaka* (King). Since the temple site was rocky, when posts were let down into holes well dug in the rocky ground, the poles would be protected from both termites and damp – leading to a long life of the temple thus constructed. Mukasa's temple once constructed could last several years before it was replaced.

Whenever it was time for the temple to be constructed, the *Kabaka* (King) would send nine oxen and the chief would send a similar number.¹²⁶ The blood from the animals was for *lubaale* Mukasa while the people (the children of the *lubaale*) ate the meat. Besides, the cattle supplied the hides that were often cut into thongs for binding the timbers together and also for serving as curtains for the doors and gates of the temple.¹²⁷ *Lubaale* Mukasa's chief priest having accordingly been notified of the scheduled arrival of the *Kabaka*'s representatives and his gifts (nine oxen), would send word to the inhabitants of the Island to bring their gifts in preparation for the construction of the temple.

The men on the Island have thus been notified, they were given four days within which to purify themselves. During this period of purification, the men were required to separate themselves from their wives. At the end of the purification period (on the fourth day), the chief priest went to the shore of the lake and cut a tree for the temple building. This

¹²⁶ It will constantly be noted that the sacrifices and offerings to the *balubaale* (Ganda deities) consisted of nine pieces of each item. Roscoe, *The Baganda*, p. 292 has observed, 'Nine was the sacred number for all gifts and offerings to the gods'. Kaggwa, *Empisa*, p. 185 states, Omugabe wa Kabaka, 'Era yatwalanga n'abakazi mwenda, n'abaddu mwenda, n'ente mwenda, n'ensimbi mwenda. Okwo kwayitbwanga kutambira' (literally: The representative of the King took nine women, nine slaves, nine cows and nine cowry-shells, and this is what was called the sacrifice). It appears that the *Kabaka*'s gifts and offerings to *lubaale* Mukasa always included all these and it is possible that even at the construction of the Temple the sacrifices and offerings from the King were likewise constituted.

¹²⁷ Roscoe, *The Baganda*, p. 292.

signaled to everybody the start of the temple construction for *lubaale* Mukasa. All the women gathered under the leadership and command of the senior wife of the chief priest. Their special task was to dig up all the roads radiating from the temple into the different directions of the lake.

A chief (one named *Sekayonga*) and his men constructed small huts (about twenty in number). Significant among these huts was one called 'Sleep' in which *lubaale* Mukasa resided while the temple was being constructed. The remaining huts provided accommodation for the priests and the guards. The construction of these huts had to be done in one day. There was always enough labour to accomplish whatever task needed to be done.

This was then followed by the examination and preparation of the animals brought for sacrifice. The chief priest (*kabona*) had all the animals driven into the open space before the temple. The cattle were examined one by one to see if they were accepted by *lubaale* Mukasa. The test was simple: 'any cow that lowed, or that dropped her dung during the time fixed for testing was discarded, for she was thought to have been rejected by the god; and she had to be replaced by another'.¹²⁸ When the examination of all the animals was completed, a gutter was laid to carry the blood from the sacrificial animals into the lake. This gutter was made of the outer-layer of the plantain stems (locally known as *emigongo gyo ku bitooke*). These were joined together, end overlapping end. As mentioned, *lubaale* Mukasa was thought to have come from lake Nalubaale (lake Victoria) and was often called the god of the lake (waters).¹²⁹ So the course followed for

¹²⁸ See Roscoe, Roscoe, *The Baganda*, p. 293. Strangely, the rejection of any animal by the god was believed to be due to someone (most likely the slaves) having broken the taboo of chastity. So the temple slaves would be examined to ascertain who among them could have committed such an abominable act. But as it turned out on some occasions, a person of a high rank was found to have been responsible. In that case, he was deposed and fined. If the person belonged to the lower ranks, he was only fined.

¹²⁹ According to Roscoe, *The Baganda*, p. 300, 'Mukasa as the god of the lake, controlled the storms, and gave the increase of fish; he also gave good passage to people traveling by water. The boatmen sought his blessing before they set out on a voyage, and called to him when in danger of a storm. They made their offerings and supplications, however, through the priests of inferior temples and not at the chief temple'.

the laying of this gutter was the one understood to have been the path taken by *lubaale* Mukasa when he was coming to the Island of Bubembe. The animals were killed at the upper end of the gutter and at this upper end a big hide was laid to form a receptacle for collecting the blood and draining or redirecting it into the laid gutter. When all these preparations were completed, the rest of the task was left to the presiding priests (*bakabona*).

Clad in their official dresses and each one of them carrying their instruments of office (insignia), the priests came forward to perform their sacred duties. These priests were Semagumba, Gugu, Sebadide, Semukade, and Sendowoza. Semagumba carried a large bowl used for the collection of blood. Gugu was armed with the sacred knife that was used in the ritual killing of the animals. Sebadide was the bearer of the stone that had been used to sharpen the sacred knife while Semukade was in possession of the sacred spear and Sendowoza carried the chief drum *Betobanga*. When they arrived at the place where the animals were, *kabona* Semagumba selected and picked one of the animals, which was then taken into the sacred enclosure and tied to the hut just built. The lower cadre priests present, assisted by peasants then began to seize the animals one by one while Gugu (who carried the sacred knife) killed them one by one until the whole lot was done away with. As each animal was ritually killed, Semagumba scooped some of its blood and emptied it in a bigger container nearer by. The rest of the blood was allowed to flow along the laid gutter into the lake. At the point where the gutter linked up with the lake, a group of faithful ones and watchers waited anxiously and patiently for the blood draining down the gutter to reach the lake waters. As soon as the blood touched the lake waters, they all cried out aloud, 'He has drunk it'.¹³⁰ This loud cry was accompanied by loud hand clapping.

After this, the priests then moved to the sacred enclosure and killed the animal that had been tied on the temporary temple – the hut 'Sleep'. The five senior priests shared the meat of this animal. The lower cadre priests were not even allowed to touch it. Kaggwa states, '*Era omusayi ogwagivangamu baagumansiranga ku mayumba ago*' (literally: 'the

¹³⁰ Roscoe, *The Baganda*, p. 294.

blood from this cow was sprinkled or smeared on the huts that had been constructed').¹³¹ The rest of the priests and the workmen shared the meat from the other animals but women were not allowed to eat any of the meat from the ritual animals.

Only the chief priest Semagumba entered the temporary temple with the vessel containing the blood and presented the blood to *lubaale* Mukasa. The rest of the priests remained standing in the sacred enclosure. When Semagumba entered the temple, he knelt down before *lubaale* Mukasa and asked him to 'accept the blood and grant an increase of children, cattle, and food'.¹³² After the chief priest completed this task of praying to the deity, he moved out of the temple backwards leaving the vessel containing the blood before the deity.

What followed was the construction of the permanent temple for *lubaale* Mukasa by the principal chiefs from the all the Islands. Each principal chief had a specific assigned task to accomplish on the construction of the permanent temple for *lubaale* Mukasa.

Lubaale Mukasa's annual festival

Besides the sacrifices made to *lubaale* Mukasa at the construction of his temple; there was a national annual festival that was presided over by the King or his representatives. This was a prime ceremony at which the *Kabaka* (King) sent offerings to the *lubaale* Mukasa in order to 'secure blessings on the crops and people for the year'.¹³³ The offerings from the King at this annual important festival comprised of 'nine men, nine women, nine white cows, nine white goats, nine white fowls, nine loads of backcloths, and nine loads of cowry-shells'.¹³⁴ This ceremony too, took place at *lubaale* Mukasa's

¹³¹ Kaggwa, *Empisa*, pp. 186-187. Commenting on the huts that were constructed, Kaggwa further states, '... Ssekayonga ow'Enkima, omutaka w'e Bunyama naye n'azimba ennyumba zino:- Kuuma ne Ttuulo, era n'endala entonotono kkumi na munaana' (literally: 'Ssekayonga of the small grey monkey clan, the chief of Bunyama constructed the following huts / houses:- 'Keep' and 'Sleep', and eighteen other small ones').

¹³² Roscoe, *The Baganda*, p. 294.

¹³³ See Roscoe, *The Baganda*, p. 298.

¹³⁴ Roscoe, *The Baganda*, p. 298. Earlier on we noted that nine was the sacred number among the Baganda. Ssempungu, *Ganda Sacrifice*, p. 44 has on the other hand pointed out that the colours black and

main temple on Bubembe Island in Lake Victoria. A man called Gabunga who was the chief of the canoes accompanied the King's representative to the Island to deliver the King's annual offerings on behalf of the Kingdom and the people.

On arrival on the Island, the chief priest welcomed the King's representative and ushered him in the open space before the temple. Later, the chief priest assigned a house to the King's representative and his entourage where they stayed until the ceremony ended. This ceremony lasted at least twenty days and during the whole of this period the men were required to observe the law of chastity. During the ceremony the men lived separately from their wives as a way of enforcing strict adherence to the rule of chastity.

Having received the King's representative and his offering, *kabona* (the chief priest) went to inform *lubaale* Mukasa of the arrival of the King's representative and all the people he came with. There a specific way in which the *kabona* informed the god about the arrival of the King's representative. He would say, 'Your son-in-law', and the god in like manner said: 'Tell my son-in-law so and so'.¹³⁵

The cattle that were brought to this festival were reserved for the sacrifices. They were sacrificed in a manner that we described for the ritual sacrifice when a new temple was being constructed and it will not be repeated here. As a sign of his generosity, the god often made presents of animals to the priests, which they kept for either milk or killed for food. *Lubaale* Mukasa being the god of life and peace never demanded the sacrifice of human beings. So the nine men and nine women that were offered as part of the King's present remained in the temple enclosure and were considered as *lubaale* Mukasa's children. They worked on the temple estate.

white among the Ganda symbolize purity. Also Mbiti, *Concepts of*, p. 183 affirms the composition of the sacrifices and offerings to *lubaale* Mukasa when he states, 'the divinity of the waters (Mukasa) received annual sacrifices and offerings consisting of nine men, nine women, nine white goats, nine fowls, nine loads of barkcloth, and nine cowrie-shells presented at the temple'.

¹³⁵ See Roscoe, Roscoe, *The Baganda*, p. 298.

At the end of the function, the *kabona* (chief priest) gave the King's representative a message from the god. The King's representative also received a gift of a cow. He did not however receive this cow directly from the *kabona*. It was given to Gugu (the priest who carried the sacred knife) to hand to Gabunga (the chief of the canoes) who in turn handed it to the King's representative.

The end of this ceremony was keenly awaited by the huge crowds of people that always assemble to join in the worship and festival. It was at the end of the ceremony that the chief priest, who as it were, was the custodian of the blessings of the god, gave the blessings to the people, their wives, children, cattle, and crops. The blessings of twins was understood to come from *lubaale* Mukasa and at this festival many women expected to be favoured in this way as the god was known to be in his most favorable disposition to do it at this festival. According to Roscoe,

Sometimes childless women made vows to give Mukasa a child if he would grant their request and cause them to become mothers. If the prayer was fulfilled, then the parents took the child as soon as it was weaned and presented it to the priests; it was called by the name of the god, and grew up among the slaves of the estate.¹³⁶

Besides these two significant religious ceremonies (i.e. sacrifices and offerings at the construction of the new temple and the annual festival), there existed in the life of the Ganda other situations that required the reigning *Kabaka* (King) to send offerings to *lubaale* Mukasa. It was obligatory for any new *Kabaka* (King) who ascended the throne to send offerings to *lubaale* Mukasa and ask for his blessings. This would happen in the event of an incumbent King dying and a new King being enthroned. Also after a

¹³⁶ Roscoe, *The Baganda*, p. 300. I have already mentioned that all human offerings were considered, as the children of Mukasa and so were all slaves. They worked and grew up on the estate of the god and could not be moved or taken away without the express permission of the god through his *mmandwa* (medium). With the permission of the god again, some female slaves were married to the priests. Slaves were also allowed to marry amongst themselves in which case their offsprings remained as children of the god. However, when a priest married one of the slaves and they had children, those children were free to marry into any clan outside the temple estate.

successful retaliatory expedition, the King often sent a thank-offering to *lubaale* Mukasa. If there was plague in the country of Buganda or there was sickness in the palace, the King would immediately dispatch a messenger to inquire of *lubaale* Mukasa and to implore his help and intervention. The approach and the prescription of the god would almost invariably involve some offering and ritual sacrifice. In the event that the King was sick, it was the responsibility of all the gods to ensure the quick recovery of the King and his good health thereafter.

6.5.1.2 Sacrifices offered to the national *lubaale* Kibuuka

Lubaale Kibuuka was the war god and took charge of state security and ensured victory in all war expeditions that the *Kabaka* (King) sanctioned and undertook. We have already mentioned that it was his responsibility to foretell when war was likely and to make all the necessary arrangements to ensure victory for the King and the people of Buganda. This he did through his numerous mediums who at times numbered as many as forty. There was nothing short of victory that was expected of him and to this end the *Kabaka* did all what it took to meet *lubaale* Kibuuka's demands in order to keep him favorable toward the King. It was considered disgraceful for a King to lose any battle and worse still to die in battle, since the King often led his army in war against the enemies. Sometimes the success of a King was measured against the number of battles he had successfully won and the size of territory he had been able to annex from his enemies.

It was to *lubaale* Kibuuka¹³⁷ that most of the numerous human sacrifices were made. The King and powerful chiefs regularly offered Kibuuka men and women slaves and cattle, which made him very rich. When a new temple was to be constructed for *lubaale* Kibuuka, each chieftaincy contributed workmen. No person that was not involved in the construction was allowed to pass along the roads near the temple during the construction phase. Whoever was found, would be arrested, imprisoned until the construction was completed and then executed thereafter.

¹³⁷ The other war gods that received human sacrifices were *lubaale* Nende and *lubaale* Kirabira his brother. They were thought to be sons of Mukasa. See further Roscoe, *The Baganda*, p. 308.

Whenever *lubaale* Kibuuka possessed medium *Kainja*, the drum for regular use was sounded and Kibuuka instructed the medium to catch and kill people. As was always the case, in the evening, *lubaale* possessed one of the mediums and ordered that a number of prisoners be put to death. Kaggwa writes,

Era abasibe abo abaakwatibwanga nga Kibuuka y'ali ku mutwe ng'asamidde, awo n'alagira nti, 'Bakwate abantu mwenda, oba emyenda ebiri, abo bwe banaabatamba ekigambo kino kinaalongooka ... Era bonna bwe baakwatanga nga bwe ba batta nga tekuwona n'omu (meaning: "All prisoners that were brought in when Kibuuka had possessed his medium, he (Kibuuka) would direct that they should get nine of them or two nines (which was eighteen), saying that if those were sacrificed the matter at stake would be solved. And his directive would be obeyed without delay and the required number would be ritually killed leaving none to survive").¹³⁸

The King and chiefs kept the stock of men and women for ritual killing replenished through a constant supply. Whenever the King wished to consult Kibuuka, he sent a present of slaves and cattle. These slaves inevitably ended up being ritually killed at the bidding of *lubaale* Kibuuka.

The messenger who brought the King's offering of slaves and cattle would be met on arrival at the temple-court by one of the junior priests of *lubaale* Kibuuka. The junior priest received the offering from the King's messenger and went to announce him to the senior priests: Luwona, Kituma, and Nakatandagira. These then allowed the King's messenger into the temple and arranged an interview with *lubaale* Kibuuka. Sometimes they would wait several days before an interview was allowed. They were allocated a house nearby where they stayed until a time for the interview with the god was possible. Ironically the slaves and prisoners sent to Kibuuka by the King were allowed to argue their case before the god prior to their execution. But it was very rare for any of them to be acquitted. So it was more of a mock trial than a real trial that would end in possible acquittal and consequent release.

¹³⁸ Kaggwa, *Empisa*, p. 192.

Following this, all the prisoners and slaves destined to be ritually executed, were led away from the temple by the chief guard called *Sabata* to a sacred tree in the neighborhood that bore the name *Segibugo*. It was on this tree that the slaves and prisoners hung their outer clothes in preparation for the ritual killing. As mentioned earlier on, before they were sacrificed, the prisoners were 'given some special kind of doctored beer, which was supposed to prevent their ghosts from coming to injure the King'.¹³⁹ If any prisoner refused to drink the doctored beer, it was poured on his head. After they had all drunk the beer, 'they were all led to the sacrificial place where they were either speared or clubbed to death. Their bodies were left where they fell. No prisoner put to death at any of the sacrificial places was ever claimed by the clan for burial, but his body was left for the wild beasts and birds'.¹⁴⁰ No relatives could be allowed to claim the bodies of such people for burial because they were believed to have been given to the god. But not all ritual killings followed this prescribed format. Sometimes within the temple itself, *lubaale* Kibuuka would get enraged with a particular prisoner and such prisoner would be put to death within the temple while the medium was still possessed with the deity. The medium possessed with the *lubaale* Kibuuka would immediately snatch a spear and kill the prisoner.

Given the amount of information available about the veneration of *lubaale* Kibuuka and the activity at the various human sacrificial places that we examined, I find as irreconcilable Kyewalyanga's assertion, which seems to downplay the extent of human sacrifice among the Ganda. Kyewalyanga states, 'Human sacrifices (*okutambira abantu*) were made very rarely, and this was only done at the request of a national '*lubaale*' in order to avert a threatening danger, such as invasion, pestilence or famine'.¹⁴¹ I contend that human sacrifice was a frequent occurrence among the Ganda, the full extent of which

¹³⁹ Kaggwa, *Empisa*, p. 123; Roscoe, *The Baganda*, pp. 306-307, 331-334. It has been said that the victims rarely protested or appealed against the execution once it was decided that they were to die. Nor did they raise their voices to complain about the treatment they received prior to the execution itself. The victims were made fully aware that their death would save their people and country from an impending catastrophe and so as Roscoe (1911) 338 puts it, 'they laid down their lives without a murmur or a struggle'.

¹⁴⁰ Roscoe, *The Baganda*, pp. 306-307.

¹⁴¹ Kyewalyanga, *Traditional Religion*, p. 124.

may not be possible to uncover. No one controlled or predicted the moods of the deity. The deity alone determined the timing and the number of the sacrificial victims. It is likely that this practice partly underlies the current increased instances of human sacrifice that we shall examine when we consider the modern trends in ritual sacrifice among the Ganda.

6.5.1.3 The scapegoat offering for the nation and the king

As mentioned earlier on, Buganda was always at war with its neighbours notably Bunyoro that was considered as the archenemy of Buganda. Each kingdom was always rumored to be plotting evil against the other. It was the responsibility of the gods to monitor and foretell such catastrophes (often mediated through magic) and advise the *kabaka* (king) on the appropriate course of action.

The scapegoat offering (*kyonziira*) was made in the event of a threatening and imminent pestilence from the neighboring Kingdom of Bunyoro (or sometimes from another kingdom). The gods would foretell of such pestilence and would advise the king to take immediate steps to avert the impending catastrophe from befalling the country. The scapegoat offering (*kyonziira*) consisted of either a man and a boy or a woman and her child. Together with these human beings the following were also added: a cow, a goat, a fowl, and unusually a dog. The god would have mentioned the name of the country from which the pestilence was supposed to come. So under guard of a strong escort, all the victims were accompanied into the country that the god had mentioned. While well into the territory of the other country, the victims' limbs would be broken to stop them from crawling back into Buganda and they would be left there to die a slow death or as was often the case, wild animals came and ravaged these weakened / crippled individuals or scavenged on their carcasses. It was believed that 'the disease or plague would have been transferred to the victims, and to have returned to the country whence it came'.¹⁴²

Sometimes after the *kabaka* (king) had returned from a successful punitive expedition, the gods would advise that the king offers a *kyonziira* (scapegoat offering) to send back

¹⁴² Kyewalyanga, *Traditional Religion*, p. 125; Roscoe, *The Baganda*, p. 342.

any evil that may have attached itself to the army. In this case, a woman slave, a cow, a goat, a fowl and a dog would be taken into the country where the army had been for this retaliatory expedition, had their limbs broken and left to die. This way the army was cleansed, declared clean and allowed into the capital of Buganda. Often, it was the King's or the chief's illness that was to be transferred to an animal. The god through an oracle would order that a particular type of cow be brought in. The medicine-person then took the herbs and passed them over the sick king and tied them to the animal before driving it to some wasteland. Here the medicine-person would kill the animal and take the meat as benefit. The king was expected to recover.¹⁴³

6.5.1.4 Sacrifices to the dead *kabaka* (king)

It was noted before that the *muzimu* (shade) of a dead Kabaka had the same dignity as the *balubaale* (deities) and received the same honour and worship. This worship needless to say included the offering of sacrifices. It was the custom of the reigning *kabaka* to regularly visit the temple of the dead king also known as *ssekabaka* (*ssekabaka* means 'late king', while the reigning king is called '*kabaka*'). Whenever the *kabaka* visited the temple of his predecessor, a great number of people assembled to witness the event and also to hear the oracle. It was a great day for both the people and the *kabaka*. When all the necessary rituals were performed including the giving of the oracle by the *mmandwa* of the spirit of the *ssekabaka* (dead king), the *kabaka* was then escorted out of the temple and temple area.

Having left the temple and temple area, the *kabaka* suddenly gave orders to his bodyguards to arrest and bind up any person found on routes other than those designated by the *kabaka*. This order was quickly executed and all captives were bundled up and taken back to the temple of the *ssekabaka* and slain within its confines.¹⁴⁴ It was believed that the spirits of these persons were required to minister to the spirit of the dead king. It is said that in very rare cases, the spirit of the dead king prompted the slaughter of men

¹⁴³ Roscoe, *The Baganda*, pp. 342-343. In the above two cases, the people and the animals would be rubbed with some herbs, which in turn would be tied on them – symbolically carrying back the evil.

¹⁴⁴ Roscoe, *The Baganda*, p. 284.

by demanding that he needed slaves to attend to him. Ordinarily, the spirit of the dead king (as was the case for any spirit) was content to have a fire that kept burning in the shrine, regular presents of cattle, clothing and beer.¹⁴⁵

6.5.2 Occasional sacrifices

6.5.2.1 *Mmandwa* (medium) initiation sacrifice

One became marked out as *mmandwa* through a process whose pattern was familiar to the people (though sometimes a *musawo* – ‘medicine-person’ was called to help in the diagnostic process).

There was an initial possession of the person by the spirit of the *lubaale* (deity). This possession is what marked the individual out as the one chosen to be the *mmandwa*.¹⁴⁶ This initial possession was called *okuwasibwa lubaale* (literally: being married to the deity) while subsequent possessions for purposes of divination were called *lubaale okukwata oba okulinya ku mutwe* (literally: being seized by the head).¹⁴⁷ The onlookers suddenly noticed a change in the life of the person so possessed. The person began to make utterances of secrets or predictions about future occurrences. In some cases ‘the person concerned ‘went mad’, went about in a distraught manner, and slept out doors’.¹⁴⁸ Alternatively, the individual became seriously ill, a kind of illness that defied all forms of medication.¹⁴⁹ When this happened, the services of the *musawo* (medicine-person) were required to make a proper diagnosis of the situation and make a prescription (which in this case was that the person had been chosen by one of the *balubaale* to be its *mmandwa*

¹⁴⁵ Roscoe, *The Baganda*, p. 284.

¹⁴⁶ Taylor, *Growth of the Church*, p. 208 has distinguished the three forms of spirit possession among the Ganda. First, there was one that was considered as a malevolent attack. The person so possessed could only be relieved by supernatural means of exorcism. Second, there was the possession by the spirit (*muzimu*) of a dead king. This was understood as a special calling for the individual to a dedicated life-long service at the royal shrine. Third, was the supernatural possession of a medium for purposes of divination.

¹⁴⁷ Roscoe, *The Baganda*, p. 275; Kyewalyanga, *Traditional Religion*, p. 118.

¹⁴⁸ Mair, *An African People*, p. 238.

¹⁴⁹ Mair, *An African People*, p. 238.

(medium)).¹⁵⁰ This was then followed by the initiation ritual proper (as outlined below). The purpose of the initiation ritual ceremony (known as *kutendeka*) was twofold: First, to make the *lubaale* (deity) that had possessed the individual speak and identify itself (by mentioning its name and sex). Second, to officially welcome the person so initiated into the body of *mmandwa* practitioners (*mmandwa* profession). The initiation also included special instructions to the person so initiated. The person was dedicated fully to the service of the *lubaale* (deity) during this initiation.¹⁵¹ This ritual ceremony took place in the temple (*ssabo*) and often lasted three days or more.

The ritual ceremony of initiating one into the profession of the *mmandwa* was known as '*kutendeka*' and the initiator (s) was called '*mutendesi*' (plural: *batendesi*) also called *basamize* (singular: *musamize*). The ritual was presided over by the leading *mmandwa* of the area – the one who was most reputable because as Mair puts it, 'there was no fixed order of superiority' among the *mmandwa* of any given area.¹⁵² As already mentioned, the technical term for the initiator (s) was *mutendesi* or *musamize* (one already possessed by a *lubaale*).¹⁵³ The father of the person who was possessed organized the initiation ceremony. All the family elders were present at the initiation ceremony. People in the area who wished to witness the ceremony were encouraged and welcomed.

¹⁵⁰ Musaazi, 'Baganda Traditional Divination', p. 6 states additionally that the choice of the *mmandwa* was revealed through a dream. But he has hastened to add that in both cases (i.e. of illness and dreams) the person who became ill (as was often the case that a child became ill) or the person who dreamt did not necessarily become the *mmandwa* (medium). Through the skills of the medicine-person, it was eventually known who the *lubaale* had chosen as *mmandwa*.

¹⁵¹ Mair, *An African People*, p. 238.

¹⁵² Mair, *An African People*, p. 238.

¹⁵³ Musaazi, 'Baganda Traditional Divination', p. 6 has given more detail about the initiators (*batendesi* or *basamize*). He states that at this initiation ceremony, three expert *basamize* / *batendesi* were sought from different places. They need not have known each other. They were known by particular names among the Ganda: Ssenkulu, Nnankulu, and Nnakatagala. The initiation ceremony according to Musaazi took place at the home of Nnakatagala though all the three experts were invited to attend the ceremony.

The ritual process started in the usual manner of invoking a *lubaale*: drumming, drinking beer, loud singing of various songs and shaking of the *ensaasi* (rattles), accompanied by rhythmic dancing around a big fire. Since the function took place at night, the fire provided light to both the participants and the attendants. But as mentioned earlier on, fire was a symbol of life among the Ganda.¹⁵⁴ When the song of that particular *lubaale* was sung, the possessed person rose to his feet and then fell down in a trance as if dead. The presiding *mutendesi* then covered the initiate with a new barkcloth and prayed thus to the *lubaale*: ‘*lubaale nga gwe ota omuntu oyo, muleke. Alame, kwata lubugo luno*’ (literally: *lubaale*, you who are killing this man, leave him; may he recover, take this barkcloth).¹⁵⁵ The initiate then rose up and the *mutendesi* took him on his knees and called him his child. This father – son relationship between the *mutendesi* and the initiate remained throughout their lives (with the initiate pledging absolute obedience to the *mutendesi*).

A number of events followed on. The initiate was then taken into the inner part of the house. He was either left to sleep or given instruction by those who were already in the practice. When the initiate (now *mmandwa*) emerged from the house, he was given the insignia of office: a pear and stick, a pair of *ensaasi* (rattles), a pair of baskets for receiving small offerings, and a cow-hair fly-whisk, which he apparently used to fan himself with when in the frenzy of possession.¹⁵⁶ Other materials at the initiation ceremony were: cowrie-shells (*ensimbi*) used in divination, Kiganda medicine called ‘*ekitembe*’, *akampe* (knife), *butiko* (mushrooms), *ebibbo* (baskets).¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴ See Ssempungu, *Ganda Sacrifice*, p. 67.

¹⁵⁵ Mair, *An African People*, p. 239. The father of the initiate provided the barkcloth and it was later to be used by the initiate during the divination process. Besides this particular barkcloth, the initiate got other pieces of barkcloth: all of which were well decorated.

¹⁵⁶ Mair, *An African People*, pp. 239-240.

¹⁵⁷ See further Kyewalyanga, *Traditional Religion*, pp. 118-119; Musaazi, ‘Baganda Traditional Divination’, pp. 7-8 where he has clarified the significance of each item used in the initiation ceremony.

Finally, the ceremony concluded with the ritual sacrifice of a black and a white dotted goat, or a white sheep or three white, black and red cocks.¹⁵⁸ The *mutendesi* (initiator) presided over the slaughter too. The animals and birds destined for slaughter were placed in such a way that their heads faced the temple (*ssabo*). 'After the slaughter, the initiated medium (*mmandwa*) jumped over the slaughtered animals or birds four times'.¹⁵⁹ The accounts of both Musaazi and Mair indicate that the initiated *mmandwa* (medium) was made to drink some of the blood of the slaughtered animals. Part of the blood was also poured in the door way so that every one who came out of the house stepped in it.¹⁶⁰ The animals and the cocks were later prepared for cooking. The *mmandwa* ensures that the fire in the *ssabo* is kept burning. This fire symbolizes the presence of the spirit of the *lubaale*.¹⁶¹

6.5.2.2 The scapegoat offering (*kyonziira*) for an individual

We have already mentioned that the *kyonzira* (scapegoat) was offered to ward off catastrophe from a nation and evil from the national army. In some cases the *kyonzira* was offered in order to take away the king's or chief's illness. In all these instances; the pestilence, King's or chief's illness and the evil that was thought to be attached to an army that returned from a military expedition was understood to be transferred to the animal(s) that were banished.

The same principle was applied (though slightly differently) in situations that involved ordinary persons. When an ordinary person was struck down by an illness; based on the oracle given by the god, the medicine-person would direct the sick person to provide an animal. The medicine-person would then kill the animal thus presented near a selected plantain-tree next to the house. The medicine-person would then anoint the sick person with the animal's blood on the person's 'forehead, on each side of his chest and on his

¹⁵⁸ Musaazi, 'Baganda Traditional Divination', p. 8.

¹⁵⁹ Kyawalyanga, *Traditional Religion*, p. 119.

¹⁶⁰ See Musaazi, 'Baganda Traditional Divination', p. 9; Mair, *An African People*, p. 240.

¹⁶¹ See Musaazi, 'Baganda Traditional Divination', p. 10.

legs above the knees'.¹⁶² The plantain-tree so selected (it should have been nearing fruiting) would then be split open leaving it attached a few inches from each end. The sick person would then be asked to go through it leaving the clothes on the plantain-tree as the person passed through. The person entered the house without looking backwards and was given new cloths in the house. The medicine-person took away the plantain-tree, the slaughtered animal and the clothes – he threw the plantain-tree on wasteland but retained the meat and the clothing for his own use.

There was an alternative way of performing this ritual. The animal would be killed near the hut. The medicine-person would narrow the entrance to the hut using some tree branches on either side. He would then put some of the blood on either side of the narrow entrance, and would anoint the sick person with some of the blood. The sick person who would have been brought out of the house would then be asked to enter the hut through the narrowed down entrance leaving his clothing behind as the person entered. The medicine-person would then pick up the clothes, tree-branches and the meat. The tree-branches he would cast on wasteland but would take the meat and clothes for personal use. In both cases, the person was expected to recover.¹⁶³

In case the sick person was too poor to afford a cow, goat or even a fowl as a 'scapegoat', the medicine-man bundled together some grass or herbs and passed them over the sick person, and after which, he threw them on wasteland. The medicine-man was paid a fee when the person recovered.¹⁶⁴

6.5.2.3 Sacrifices to the ancestral spirits (*mizimu*)

In our earlier section on the Ganda objects of worship, we examined the extent to which Ganda religious life and experience is governed by the reality and belief in the fellowship and activity of ancestral spirits. The spirits of the dead remain for a considerable length of time part of the living community – hence Mbiti's reference to them as at the 'living

¹⁶² Roscoe, *The Baganda*, p. 343.

¹⁶³ Roscoe, *The Baganda*, p. 343.

¹⁶⁴ Roscoe, *The Baganda*, p. 343.

dead'.¹⁶⁵ It is not only the awareness of the presence of the living dead but also their potency (what they do / are capable of doing) for or against the living. In some societies where there is no pantheon of deities, e.g. the Xhosa of South Africa, ancestral spirits are the only deities that are the recipient of any and every sacrifice. Here all ritual sacrifices so to say are directed to the ancestors.¹⁶⁶

The preoccupation of the Ganda with sacrifices and offerings to the ancestral spirits (*mizimu*) therefore comes as no surprise. Here we shall consider sacrifices and offerings made to both malevolent and benevolent ancestral spirits separately.

6.5.2.3.1 Sacrifices to malevolent ancestral spirits (*mizimu emibi*)

Most Baganda dread the harmful effects of an angry ancestral spirit (*muzimu emibi*) and immediate steps are always taken to placate it or annihilate it altogether. The *muzimu* of one's sister (*Ssenga*) is said to be the most notoriously harmful endangering the lives of the brother's children. If the *ssenga's muzimu* is not immediately placated or its demands met, it will kill the children of her living brother. There were a number of circumstances that led to anger of the ancestral spirit causing it to take vengeance. Shades (*mizimu*) were thought to suffer cold and thirst and failure to offer barkcloths and libations of beer regularly could breed anger. There were those ancestral spirits that inhabited large tracks of land and forests. They claimed these as their exclusive territory and no person may go to these areas or fell trees (either for construction or firewood) in such forests. Such actions were considered as trespassing and would earn one the full wrath of the deities. Failure to appoint and install an heir or heiress was also a constant source of anger and so was the failure to tend the graves. Other reasons included: failure to take care of the

¹⁶⁵ Mbiti, *African Religions*, pp. 81-89.

¹⁶⁶ See further Sitembele Sipuka, 'The Sacrifice of the Mass and the concept of Sacrifice among the Xhosa: Towards an Inculcated understanding of the Eucharist' (PhD dissertation, University of South Africa, 2000), pp. 133-135. For a clearer understanding read whole section (pp. 133 – 151). Sipuka has made the point that all sacrifices and offerings among the Xhosa are made to the ancestors. This has led to specific definition of sacrifice among the Xhosa to be: 'Sacrifice is the killing of an animal by a designated person for the purpose of propitiating and offering a gift to the ancestors'.

person while still alive, not performing the elaborate burial and last funeral rites (known as *okwabya olumbe*: literally casting out or cleansing the house of death).

When there was trouble in the family, e.g. sickness of one of the family members, a medicine-man would be called in and by consulting an oracle would tell which *muzimu* was troubling the family and also prescribe how they were to appease the angry *muzimu*. Usually a goat or cow was given to placate the angry spirits. Poor people who could not afford goats and cows offered a fowl to placate an angry *muzimu*. If the person was not able to even offer a fowl, 'they offered a few feathers and a shred or two of barkcloth, tying them to the roof of the shrine'.¹⁶⁷ Uniquely, the animals offered to appease an angry *muzimu* were never killed. They were allowed to roam the area around the shrine. If the animal died it was replaced. If it was killed, this rekindled the anger and the consequences of this could be dire if immediate care was not taken to replace it.

In other situations libations of beer were made to the angry ancestral spirit. In this case, the beer was 'poured on the ground near the door of the shrine or at the head of the grave'.¹⁶⁸ In addition, a pot of beer was placed inside the shrine for use by the deity.

6.5.2.3.2 Sacrifices to benevolent ancestral spirits (*mizimu emirungi*)

It is usual to think of ancestral spirits as being ill intentioned. But this was never and is not always the case. In Ganda society, the benevolence of ancestral spirits far outweighs the nasty effects of a few ancestral spirits. Every Muganda knew that the benefits of treating the clan ancestral spirits well were enormous. Great care was taken to care for the sick in the family and in the unpleasant event of death, the burial and post-burial ceremonies would be conducted in the most meticulous manner. All this was to make the *muzimu* of the deceased relative favourable to the living relatives.

¹⁶⁷ Roscoe, *The Baganda*, p. 286.

¹⁶⁸ Roscoe, *The Baganda*, p. 286. In situations where the ancestral spirit became so violent threatening destruction of life, arrangements were made to have it annihilated – see Roscoe, *The Baganda*, pp. 286-287 for details.

Besides the regular libations of beer poured out at the entrance of the shrine, a clan or family member would occasionally make a banquet for the ancestral spirit (*muzimu*) of a relative. The size of the feast would depend on what the person was able to offer. But many of these feasts were great occasions of celebration for the family or clan. A number of animals would be slaughtered at the shrine of that particular ancestral spirit. All the family / clan members would share in the meal. The blood of the ritual sacrifice was allowed to flow by the door of the shrine. Beer too was poured out at the entrance of the shrine during the meal.¹⁶⁹ As Roscoe puts it, 'In return for such attentions a ghost would cause the King to show favour to the man, or would increase his wealth and the number of children, so that to be favoured by a ghost and by the gods was a sure road to fortune'.¹⁷⁰

Whenever one was the recipient of an unusual blessing or fortune, a thank offering would quickly be organized and offered to the ancestral spirits. It was believed that any and every blessing that one received in this life was due to the influence of the deities and spirits: and the obligation to be grateful to them for any acts of mercy was always with the Ganda. The usefulness of ancestral spirits was not limited to this. Benevolent ancestral spirits also helped in neutralizing the negative effects of the malevolent ancestral spirits. If there was an unfriendly ancestral spirit that continuously troubled the family, help of a friendly ancestral spirit would be sought. In this case, a man would make an offering of beer and place it at the entrance of the shrine invoking the help of the friendly ancestral spirit and concluding with the words, 'And let him that overcomes drink'.¹⁷¹ Then he would pour out the beer on the ground with the assurance that he had secured the help of the benevolent ancestral spirit.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁹ See Roscoe, *The Baganda*, p. 288.

¹⁷⁰ See Roscoe, *The Baganda*, p. 288.

¹⁷¹ Roscoe, *The Baganda*, p. 286.

¹⁷² Roscoe, *The Baganda*, p. 286.

6.6 Current trends in Ganda Sacrifice

6.6.1 Introduction

The recent past has seen an escalation in ritual sacrifice in Buganda. Kakangula has attributed this escalation partly to the restoration of the traditional Buganda Kingdom (by the 1995 Uganda Constitution) and Government's official recognition of traditional healers and diviners.¹⁷³ Religious leaders of all faiths have spoken against the increased cases of sorcery and human sacrifice. Most recently, on Saturday 19th June 2004, the Catholic Bishop of Lugazi in Mukono district decried the rampant cases of sorcery and human sacrifice in Mukono. He called upon the public to join religious leaders in stamping out the evil acts. Speaking at Mukono town council, the Bishop was quoted as saying, 'Countrywide, Mukono is well known for witchcraft, robbery and human sacrifices. This is because many people want to get rich very quickly without working hard and consult sorcerers (*abalogo*) in order to "buy" riches'.¹⁷⁴ Many of the sacrificial rituals have been shrouded in secrecy. However, the local newspaper 'Bukeede' (a sister paper of the Government National newspaper – The New Vision) has been at the forefront of revealing and publishing some of these sacrificial rituals. The paper is published in '*luganda*', the Ganda language. Most of its reporters and writers live in the communities where these rituals occur. Among the six districts of Buganda, Mukono District is said to have the highest incidence of ritual sacrifice. Sadly, together with this, is the increase in sacrificial rituals that involve human sacrifice. Sometimes a child is abducted as demanded by the diviner while some reported cases indicate that only the head of the victim goes missing. There are situations where the sexual organs have been excised and taken to the diviner as well. I will quote few of the published cases below to illustrate the point.

¹⁷³ Stanley Kakangula, 'The Resurgence of Pagan Rituals in Buganda' (Bachelor of Divinity dissertation, Uganda Christian University, 2002), pp. 1, 12. Under the current Government Legislation, traditional healers and diviners get certificates from government permitting them to carry out their activities freely and anywhere.

¹⁷⁴ The New Vision News Paper online: <http://www.newvision.co.ug/D/8/19/367771> published Wednesday, 23rd June 2004.

6.6.2 Cases of human sacrifice

The desire to get rich quickly has been the reason given for some of the stories involving human sacrifice. One such story involved a fourteen-year girl who had been taken to a diviner by her father and sacrificed with the hope of getting the blessing of wealth. According to the story, Florence Namakula, of Ssembabule – Mateete Subcounty, Ssembabule district testified and gave evidence against her husband. They have been married since 1963.¹⁷⁵ In a related incident, a woman only identified as Nassaka (aged 23), was beaten to death by an angry mob, after beheading a three-year old at Makumi village, Bukango parish, Bukomansimbi County – Masaka district.¹⁷⁶ Meanwhile in Mukono district in a village called Nagojje, a body of a girl aged four years was found without a head, legs, arms, intestines, heart and liver.¹⁷⁷ Peter Bagatendeka (aged 23) beheaded Paulina Nassiwa (aged 14) in broad daylight in Nakawuka village, Kasuku B zone in Ssisa Sub County. After beheading the girl, he put the head in his bag and disappeared with it supposedly to a diviner.¹⁷⁸ The body of Juliet Namwanje was found in the shrine of a diviner (one Madina Nakanwagi) in Mutundwe (one of the suburbs of Kampala) without a head and legs in what was understood to be a case of ritual human sacrifice.¹⁷⁹ Augustine Nyanzi aged 38, was arrested when he was about to kill Ramadhan Kalule (a boy aged ten) in Kawempe zone (a suburb of Kampala). The diviner had supposedly demanded human blood in return for blessings of wealth for Nyanzi.¹⁸⁰ A number of people have also been arrested in the process of selling children as sacrificial victims. Edward Ssande aged twenty one (of Kasongi village, Lugusuulu

¹⁷⁵ See Bukedde Volume 1 Number 25 of Sunday July 9, 2000, p. 9.

¹⁷⁶ See Bukedde Volume 7 Number 225 of Monday May 21, 2001, p. 1

¹⁷⁷ See Bukedde, Vol. 7 No 22 of Saturday September 23, 2000, pp. 1-2.

¹⁷⁸ See Bukedde, Vol. 6 No 280 of Friday July 21, 2000, pp. 1-2. But cases of human sacrifice are not limited to Buganda. According to the story in Bukedde, Vol. 6 No 304 of Friday August 18, 2000, pp. 1-2, a man's body was found without a head and sexual organs in the village of Bulyowa that separates the districts of Pallisa and Iganga in the parish of Nabitula – in Eastern Uganda.

¹⁷⁹ Bukedde of Friday April 5, 2002.

¹⁸⁰ See Ngoma (another Luganda Newspaper), Number 095 of Friday April 5, 2002 pages 1-2.

Sub-county, in Sembabule) was arrested by police while attempting to sell Charles Mutebi (six years old) to a diviner for four million Uganda Shillings.¹⁸¹

But not all reported cases involve human sacrifice. Three daring young men namely: Kato Senyonga, Hassad and Zubairi (all from Nakasoga village of Nabigasa County – Rakai district) unknowingly involved themselves in what turned out to be a sacrilegious act. The trio found a snake having bred under a stone. There were thirteen snakes under the stone and so considering them dangerous if allowed to roam the village, they killed all of them. On hearing this, Lozio Mugumya, a diviner in the area warned that these were no ordinary snakes but rather they were ‘*misambwa*’ (tutelary deities).¹⁸² According to Mugumya, it was a grave mistake for the youngsters to kill the snakes, which were the spirits of ancestors now manifested as snakes. The ancestral spirits were therefore enraged and would avenge themselves if efforts were not made to placate them and avert the catastrophe. To appease the spirits, Mugumya ordered the boys to prepare a sacrifice constituting of: one white goat (male), local beer and four hundred thousand Uganda Shillings. The sacrificial ritual was carried out at the venue where the snakes were found and the sacrificial victim, beer and money were left under the stone.¹⁸³ A popular pilgrimage site is the traditional shrine of the monkey clan on a mountain known as Nyendo in Misali village – Masaka Town. People throng this shrine to ask for blessings from the ancestral spirits and for purification rituals. The *kabona* (priest for the shrine) is ever busy. Barren women seeking blessings of children, sick people – in search of healing and many other people with various problems keep him occupied at the shrine. The chief spirit at the shrine is known as Ssalongo Buttambogo who lives there with his wife Nnalongo. Ritual victims to the spirits include goats and chicken. Also offered are libations of local beer and coffee berries amidst singing and dancing.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸¹ See Bukedde, Vol. 6 No 149 of Saturday February 19, 2000 pages 1-2; Bukedde, Vol. 1 No 5 of Sunday February 20, 2000 page 1.

¹⁸² Refer to discussion of *emisambwa* (tutelary deities) in section 6.2.1.4 of this work.

¹⁸³ See Bukedde Volume 6 Number 269 of Saturday July 8, 2000 pages 1-2.

¹⁸⁴ See Bukedde Volume 7 Number 244 of Tuesday June 12, 2001, p. 18.

6.6.3 Ritual sacrifice: a participant's story

The following story as told by one of my informants is representative of a number of ritual sacrifices that many people currently get involved in. The story gives insights into the various rituals carried out and why people (and supposedly church going people) still visit the *basamize* (mediums) as they are popularly referred to. Justine Nakasi (not true name – true name withheld on request), before sharing her story, by way of introduction first recounted to me some current trends in Ganda sacrifice. According to Justine, issues of sacrifice among the Ganda are more widespread than ordinarily thought to be. The practice also involves a cross section of people from the various strata of Ganda society. People will offer sacrifices for various reasons: warding off evil and evil spirits, healing in case of chronic illnesses, jobs and seeking promotions, getting marriage partners and stable families. Others are looking for peace while others are gripped by fear – the fear that their dead relatives who are understood to still have an influence on their lives are responsible for all sorts of scary dreams / nightmares. The list is by no means exhaustive. But according to Justine, the current high incidence of sacrifice in Buganda is by people seeking to amass as much wealth as possible and quickly. Once they get the wealth, they will offer more and more sacrifices to maintain the wealth or their business enterprises. Most of human sacrifices are for wealth creation and maintenance with the belief that for this to happen, the highest valued sacrifice (i.e. human life) must be offered in addition to other sacrificial victims.

Most sacrificial rituals however, involve the offering of animals: cows, sheep, goats, fowl as demanded by the spirit possessing the *mmandwa* (medium) or diviner. The type of sacrificial victim also varies depending on the magnitude of the problem. Colours of these victims also matter. If one is looking for luck or good fortune, white is desired. If one is haunted by *mizimu* evil spirits and wants them banished or exorcised, a black hen or victim would be required. When one is dealing with *mayembe* (literally: horns – one of the Ganda objects of worship examined earlier), a black and red fowl is prescribed in the ritual known as '*okugoba amayembe*' (literally: chasing away the horns). It is to be noted that all sacrifices (whatever their nature and purpose) are accompanied with money (whose amount is determined by the diviner). There seems to be a misconception among

people that the higher the amount of money or price of the sacrifice, the greater the potency and efficacy of the sacrificial ritual. So some sacrifices have been known to involve millions of Uganda Shillings often leaving the families concerned in a destitute situation (after selling off all they had in life including land and houses in some cases). Other clients have been involved in crime (e.g. abduction of children or beheading children) in search of highly priced sacrificial victims as demanded by the diviners.

When dealing with evil spirits, important herbs like *omwetango* are mixed with *kawunyira*.¹⁸⁵ These medicines are mixed in a basin. When the chicken is slaughtered, the blood is drained directly into the basin and mixed with the medicinal herbs. Water is added to make a good mixture. The offerer is washed with this mixture as medicine. If the calamity for which the sacrifice is offered is severe (problem leading to death – in the case of evil spirits sent to cause accidents), the meat is thrown away. Sometimes after slaughtering the cock, the diviner passes it around you seven times or throws it over your head before finally discarding it. But if the misfortune is not severe or sacrifice is offered for luck, then the meat of the sacrificial victim is eaten.

Justine's particular predicament was that in the late 1980's, the husband she had been married to for eight years went missing. She searched for him in all prison cells in vain. Later she got to know that her husband had been kidnapped and murdered. The family has never been able to recover the body or get the full story of events that led to his death. After the period of mourning, Justine was advised that she had to offer sacrifices to stop this calamity from continuing in the family. She went and consulted a diviner who prescribed what she was to bring for the sacrificial ritual. The day for the sacrificial ritual was agreed on and the venue was the diviner's shrine.

As had been requested by the diviner, Justine took the following: one black goat (for this was a calamity of a severe nature – life threatening), one brown sheep, *enkooko nkazi* (female chicken) black in colour, *enkonko mpanga (lujumba)* – (a red cock), *enjibwa*

¹⁸⁵ *Omwetango* and *kaunyira* are important herbs among the Ganda. I have so far failed to get their English translation.

(pigeon). She was also asked to take one large piece of barkcloth (*olubugu*).¹⁸⁶ At the diviner's shrine, while the animals were still alive, Justine was asked to lay her hands on the animals to symbolically transmit the calamity to the animals. Before each animal was ritually killed, it was made to go around Justine seven times. When the animals were slaughtered, their blood was collected and mixed together, and Justine was bathed in it. Some of the blood was later poured on her and then washed off with lake water mixed with herbs.¹⁸⁷ In this ritual, she was told she had dealt with the impending death that was threatening her life and that of the family.

After seven days, Justine and the children had to go to the same diviner for a cleansing ceremony and for good luck. So this time, they took a white hen. They were cleansed with various medicines: *Namirembe* – *aleta emirembe* (brings peace); *Omwetango* – *okwetanga* (to safe guard you from calamity i.e. *gutangira*); *Kayayana* – *bakayayanira* (positive yearning); *kalaza* (to calm down the tempest so that it does not occur again). There is a sense in which predicaments are understood as tempests or storms that need to be calmed down.

After another week, Justine was asked to go for another general cleansing ceremony with the entire family. In addition to the white hen, she was asked to take seven metres of white cloth. They were bathed with the same herbal medicines as indicated above. Then the seven metres of white cloth was spread out and they were ordered to sit on it. They now had to go through a ritual known as '*okukusala omukisa*' (literally: cutting the blessing into your body). What happened is that the diviner using a sharp object cut through the skin and implanted powdered medicines, which bestowed the blessings. The diviner then dismissed them in peace.

¹⁸⁶ *Olubugu* (barkcloth) is the traditional Ganda cloth used for dressing. But it is also used for burying the dead – a practice that still continues today. Justin was asked to take barkcloth to symbolically mean that in the sacrificial ritual, she was going to bury death (*olumbe*) that was threatening her family.

¹⁸⁷ There is a strong connection between lake water and the Ganda deities. Most of the Ganda deities are said to have originated from the numerous Islands in lake *Nalubaale* (Lake Victoria).

6.7 Significance of Ganda Sacrifice

Having examined the Ganda objects of worship and the various types of sacrifice in the previous sections of this chapter, it is now time to focus our attention on the place of sacrifice in religious, social, economic and political life of the Ganda. What was the purpose of all the sacrifices and offerings we have explored? What benefits did they bring to the offerer, be it an individual, the family, community and the nation at large. First, it is important to remind ourselves that behind these sacrifices and offerings, was a system of beliefs and values that formed the backbone of the Ganda society. We examined some of these beliefs when looking at the Ganda objects of worship. It is in this context that the various sacrifices and offerings derive their meaning. Second, I found it helpful to discuss the whole spectrum of sacrifices and offerings among the Ganda, including those sacrifices whose public enactment has long ceased. I am hesitant to refer to them as 'dead sacrifices'.¹⁸⁸ This all-inclusive approach has not only broadened our knowledge of Ganda sacrifice but has also given us a fairly complete picture of Ganda sacrifice which in turn makes our reflection on the meaning of Ganda sacrifice complete. With those introductory remarks, I need now to point out what sacrifice meant for the Ganda. I will consider four major areas below which should not be understood as operating independent of each other for the Ganda's life is lived as a whole and no attempts should be made to compartmentalize it.

6.7.1 Sacrifice as facilitating communication between the physical and spiritual world

In previous sections of this chapter, we have looked at aspects of Ganda worldview. One pertinent element is the way in which two identifiable realms of existence complement each other in Ganda cosmology. There is the realm of the physical and the realm of the spiritual. In his notable work on the growth of the church in Buganda, John V. Taylor

¹⁸⁸ Not long ago, the Ganda religious leaders were barred from a cleansing ceremony of the 'Twekobe', which is the main official Palace (residence) of the 'Kabaka' (King). This was after the *Twekobe* had been renovated and refurbished. The official explanation was that the organizers of the function did not want any particular religious group to dominate the function. But it was later learnt that the cleansing rituals, which the religious leaders had objected to as being incompatible with Christianity, had to be carried out in their absence. Apart from the cultural cleansing rituals, no Christian prayers were offered at the function. See further Kakangula, 'Resurgence of Pagan Rituals in Buganda', p. 1.

devoted a large section on the Traditional World-view of the Ganda and clearly pointed this out.¹⁸⁹ What is physical is visible and accessible in ordinary life and includes physical existence of human beings, animals, and all other objects of nature. These can be seen and touched and felt. Some of what is visible is a creation of human beings. There is continuous direct interaction amongst the elements of the visible world without much ado.

The second distinct realm is the domain of the spiritual beings. Included here are the various *balubale* (deities – over seventy three in number), the *mizimu* (ancestral spirits), the *misambwa* (tutelary deities), and the whole host of invisible spirits and spiritual powers behind physical objects like *mayembe* (fetiches), *nsiriba* (amulets). One would call this the spirit world of the Ganda. Three key points are to be noted about the visible and the invisible domains of the Ganda world-view. First, whereas in the visible domain, there is free interaction between the elements that exist there, this same interaction is not ordinarily possible between the visible and the invisible realms. The visible domain cannot ordinarily access the invisible realm. Second, contrary to what we have just said about the inaccessibility of the invisible realm by the visible realm, the invisible realm has unlimited access to the visible realm. This accessibility and free interaction is not dependent on the knowledge or permission of what inhabits the visible realm. Furthermore, the elements of the spiritual / invisible realm are at liberty to take any action deemed necessary on those in the visible world without prior notice or knowledge of those who inhabit the physical or visible domain. Third, the inhabitants of the invisible realm are the custodians of all the good fortunes and misfortunes that impact on the existence of those in the visible realm.

This apparent disparity in the ability of the visible domain to relate to the invisible domain on equal terms does not augur well with particularly the human beings. They

¹⁸⁹ See Taylor, *Growth of the Church*, pp. 190-217. Ukpong, *Ibibio Sacrifices*, pp. 82-85 has ably made the same observation among the Ibibio of Nigeria. This same work on Ibibio sacrifices had earlier been published (almost word for word) in the *Journal of Religion in Africa* – See Justin S. Ukpong, 'Sacrificial Worship in Ibibio Traditional Religion', *Journal of Religion in Africa* XIII, 3 (1982), pp. 161-188.

(human beings) realize it is for their own benefit, if channels of communication are established between the visible and the invisible realm. There is a real desire to reach out to those spiritual beings that are the authors of especially good fortune. And as loyal subjects, through this established channel of communication, they would be able to pay homage and express their gratitude for the good they receive. In the same vein, they would also be able to ask the authors of fortune to always act favorably towards them. This is the stage at which the all-important point needs to be made. For the Ganda, ritual and especially sacrificial ritual becomes the key that opens the door into the invisible realm. With the door open and access established, then the visible is able to communicate to the invisible realm and the powers that be. This then puts the spirits of human beings in the visible domain at rest. Through sacrifices and offerings, the invisible world is made accessible, hence facilitating communication between these complementary spheres of life in Ganda cosmology. So I submit that sacrifice among the Ganda serves to establish and enhance communication with the spiritual beings. Sacrifices and offerings make it possible for human beings to establish contact with the invisible domain. In the event of need of any kind, they know how 'to get in touch' with the spiritual beings – to use an expression from our modern day technological language of communication.

6.7.2 *Sacrifice as a gift to the deity*

This has been a popular and possibly the most expounded theory of sacrifice in many cultures not least in Africa. Gift giving and taking is part of the Ganda culture. Interestingly, one is expected to give even a bigger gift in return for any gift received.¹⁹⁰ It is also very offensive for one to refuse a gift. That is just how life is lived in the Ganda communities. There is nowhere that this gift exchange and Ganda generosity is more evident than at the elaborate marriage feasts and *okwabya olumbye* (last funeral rites). The Ganda are only too aware of the role played by the exchange of gifts in maintaining relationships – gift exchange is a normal expression of human relationships.

¹⁹⁰ H. Sawyer, 'Sacrifice', in Kewsi A. Dickson and P. Ellingworth (eds), *Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs* (London, Lutterworth Press, 1969), p. 71 suggest that in the African context it is considered bad for one not to receive a gift, and worse still for one not to give even a bigger gift in return.

In the previous section, we saw how sacrifice opens and establishes a communication channel between humans and the invisible spirits. One of the instruments of communication is the giving of gifts to the spiritual beings. Gift objects to the deity, become the important signals of communicating with the deity. They convey specific messages and this is what makes giving of a gift a normal expression. One does not spend valuable time debating whether to give a gift to the deity or not – people just know it is the right thing to do. Sometimes gifts are given as thanksgiving for favours / good fortunes received from the deity. We also mentioned that the *balubaale* (deities) were thought to suffer cold and thirst. So gifts of barkcloths and libations of beer were regularly offered at the shrines. Sometimes a pot of local beer was placed in the shrine for the use by the deity. It was also usual for offerings of firewood to be made to the deity as gifts so that the fire in the temple or shrine could keep burning. As already discussed, the *kabaka* (king) regularly sent gifts of slaves (often to be offered as sacrificial victims), goats, women, men, barkcloths, and beer to the national *balubaale*.

I must emphasise that it was perfectly normal among the Ganda for one to expect some form of reward for the gifts that one gave. Not that one would understand this as giving with ‘strings attached’ as often said, but again that was the way life was lived. It was therefore not transgressing to expect favours / blessings / fortunes from the deity for the gifts given.¹⁹¹ It was naturally believed that the deity would respond favourably to the offerer. So in return, the offerer could receive an increase of cattle, children, and crop or find favour in the presence of the *kabaka* (king).

¹⁹¹ G. Parrinder, *Africa's Three Religions* (London, Sheldon Press, 1969), p. 72 commenting generally on the offering of gifts to the deity state, ‘In its crude sense this becomes a bargain, a gift made with the understanding that help is needed. A gift is presented in hope, but it is known that the deity is more powerful than the worshipper and thy will be done, this is characteristic to all religions’. Likewise J. Beattie, *Other Cultures* (London, Cohen and West, 1964), p. 235 comments thus: ‘Sacrifice then is symbolic gift-giving. Now in giving a gift a man gives, in a sense, part of himself. In sacrifice his identification is often made explicit. This is why the sacrifice of living things, in some cases even living beings themselves, is often prescribed’. See further, Ssempugu, *Ganda Sacrifice*, pp. 49-51.

Whereas there were no prescribed items that were to be given as gifts, one had to be careful not to offer anything that was offensive to the gods or give anything in an inappropriate manner. For such a gift would not only be rejected by the deity but the offerer could be punished for disgracing the deity. It was clear in the mind of both the offerer and the priest who received the gift on behalf of the deity that the gifts were intended for the deity and this was clarified in the invocations and prayers (especially of thanksgiving / gratitude) that often accompanied the gifts. True some of the gifts were left to rot at the shrines or left to be eaten by wild animals or predators. Some of the fowls were slaughtered and their carcasses left at the various shrines and vultures often carried them away (as was the case in most gifts given to the *mizimu* - ancestral spirits). But there was no doubt in the mind of the worshipper that the essence of what had been offered (the vital force – the life) had been received and been accepted by the deity. Clearly then, these gifts were no ordinary gifts – they were sacrifices to the deities. One may ask the necessary question: how did one ever know that the deity had accepted the gift offering? Here I would like to apply the eternal principle so well put by Ukpog, ‘There is of course no visible way of verifying this, but once the gift is proper and the rituals are rightly performed, there is no need to doubt the acceptance of the sacrifice’.¹⁹² He, however, cautions against understanding the acceptance of the sacrifice in ‘terms of physical human acceptance that would involve the gift being taken away by the spirits’.¹⁹³

6.7.3 Sacrifice to foster and enhance communion with good spirits

Ritual sacrifices of this nature were occasions of great celebrations for families or clans. They follow naturally from the communication and gift sacrifices. There was no happier moment than for the individual, family or clan to enjoy the fellowship of the deity or ancestral spirits thought to be favourable to the living relatives. The host at these communion / fellowship meals was particularly generous – there was always plenty of everything to enjoy with all who turned up for the occasion (be it local beer, *matooke* – ‘plantain bananas’, meat of all kinds etc.). The blood of the animals would have been made to flow at the shrine and beer is poured out there during the meal. It was common

¹⁹² Ukpog, *Ibibio Sacrifices*, p. 88.

¹⁹³ Ukpog, *Ibibio Sacrifices*, p. 88.

for what was essentially a sacrificial gift ceremony to celebrate and thank the deity for particular fortunes to end up into a fellowship or communion meal. We should not think of the functional distinctions of Ganda sacrifice in rigid terms. The communion meal also demonstrated friendship not only among the living but also friendship between the living and the living dead (the ancestors and in this case the good spirits of benevolent ancestors). Needless to say that through this enhanced communion and fellowship with the deity, one would undoubtedly expect favourable rewards from the deity (of good health, prosperity – increase in wealth and children).

6.7.4 Sacrifice to propitiate / appease evil spirits

While most of the *balubaale* (deities) and *mizimu* (ancestral spirits) were benevolent, there were some that were malevolent. We have already discussed this at length in preceding sections of this chapter. It was the case then that some sacrifices were offered to ward off or avert the negative effects of these unfavourable spiritual beings. Some angry ancestral spirits and deities had to be offered propitiatory sacrifices to turn away the consequences of the wrath vented on the living human beings. Sometimes such sacrifices were offered to spirits that were inherently evil intentioned towards the living. The aversion and propitiatory sacrifices would therefore be offered to keep these evil spirits at bay. These sacrifices are offered to keep the evil spirits away.

As is the case in many other African cultures, there were no sacrificial meals at such rituals and the sacrificial victims were often left abandoned at the shrine or temple of the deity.¹⁹⁴

6.7.5 Sacrifice as a way of atoning

Evil among the Ganda (was and still is) something taken seriously. Evil (*ekibi* as known among the Ganda) is considered detrimental to the wellbeing of the individual, family and society. *Ekibi* (evil) threatens the very existence of the community. Olivia Nassaka Banja's study on the concept of evil among the Ganda has revealed that the Ganda's understanding of evil was not limited to the western or biblical moralistic categories of

¹⁹⁴ See also Ukpong, *Ibibio Sacrifices*, p. 90 for a comparative situation among the Ibibio of Nigeria.

‘right’ and ‘wrong’.¹⁹⁵ According to Banja, *ekibi* (evil) understood as ‘a violation of taboos and social norms did not only pollute individuals and the community but also destabilised the ontological balance and harmony between the living, the ancestors and the creator Katonda’.¹⁹⁶ Writing about the need to maintain harmony among these different spheres of existence, Mbiti states,

One may add that an ontological balance must be maintained between God and man, spirit and man, the departed and the living. When this balance is upset, people experience misfortune, and sufferings, or fear that these will strike them. The making of sacrifices and offerings on the other hand, is a psychological device to restore this ontological balance.¹⁹⁷

As mentioned earlier on, anything that threatened the wellbeing and existence of the community was understood as *ekibi* (evil). So often ‘sacrifices were offered if disease and death, the anti-life and most feared *ebibi* (evils), threatened the Kingdom’.¹⁹⁸ The

¹⁹⁵ Olivia N. Banja, ‘Kiganda and Christian Ideas of *Ekibi* in Contemporary Baganda Society’ (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2004), pp. 4-5, 42 has shown that etymologically, the noun *ekibi* comes from the adjective ‘bi’ meaning something bad / ugly like the case of a bad or ugly picture that could be referred to as *ekifaananyi ekibi*. She has catalogued a number of situations that could be referred to as *ekibi* and these are: First, ‘*okusobya*, as in the case of violating *emizizo* (taboos) such as *emizizo gy’obuko* (relational taboos). *Okusobya* also includes *okujeema* (disobeying) or failure to do what is expected in society, or making mistakes, as in the case of a child who refuses to follow the parents’ instructions. Second, *ekivve* (abomination), such as *Okwetta* (committing suicide) and *okutemula* (murder). Third, *Okwonoona* (wrongdoing), which encompasses all *empisa embi* or *emize* (bad / dangerous behaviour) such as *okubba* (stealing) and *okutulugunya* (oppressing). Fourth, *okuloga* (sorcery) and *okusera* (prowling). Fifth, *obubi*, (badness), *akabi* (danger) and all undesirable states of being such as *obulwadde* (illness / afflictions), *entalo* (wars) and *okulumbibwa emizimu emibi* (attacks from malevolent spirits) and other life-threatening conditions’. Her study reveals that any thing that was opposed to the ideas of *obulungi* (goodness), which refers or relates to the entire wellbeing of a person, family or society and *obulamu* (life) was referred to as *ekibi* (evil). In her words, *ekibi* comes to refer to all forms of evil: ‘all human or spiritual activities and conditions which threaten or diminish life’ i.e. all anti-life forces listed above from one – five.

¹⁹⁶ See Banja, ‘Kiganda and Christian Ideas’, p. 42.

¹⁹⁷ Mbiti, *African Religions*, p. 59.

¹⁹⁸ Banja, ‘Kiganda and Christian Ideas’, p. 44.

sacrifice in this case was meant to placate *lubaale* Walumbe (the god of disease and death), so that he would not annihilate the entire population. We have already seen how in the face of threats and calamities such as death in the Kingdom due to an epidemic, the *Kabaka* (King) made sacrifices to *lubaale* Walumbe for himself and the people. The substitutionary and cleansing elements of the scapegoat sacrifices covered earlier on, would fit the atonement function in as far as they served to avert and also cleanse *obubi* (badness or danger). Once the danger is averted or removed, then wholeness of life is restored. This wholeness of life is to be understood to include harmony between the invisible and visible spheres of life as well.

Obwenzi (adultery) was one among many other evils (*ebibi*) that polluted the individual, the community and destabilised their relationships with the deities.¹⁹⁹ As noted, sexual intercourse (even) among the married people was forbidden at most of the ritual sacrifices. One who committed adultery was required to make a public confession of the partner the sin was committed with before the duo would be taken through a cleansing ritual. It was believed that ‘the confession and the cleansing rituals would remove the pollution and threat of death in a home and also help to reconcile the couple and the community’.²⁰⁰ An individual’s *ekibi* (evil) could result into suffering for the whole family or even community. Conversely, when the community sinned, the individuals shared in the punishment meted out by the deity. When there was *ekibi* (evil) or *ebibi* (evils), inevitably both the communication and communion and the entire relationship with the sacred order was affected and immediate steps had to be taken to restore this if punishment was to be averted, broken relationship and friendship restored and expected good fortunes allowed to flow. Ritual sacrifices for evil (*ekibi*) therefore, restored the

¹⁹⁹ Ukpong, *Ibibio Sacrifices*, p. 91 observed, ‘... sin interferes with what is regarded as an essential channel linking the sacred beings with the world visible or directed to the person of the invisible beings. Adultery for example, interferes with such a channel in that it is through marriage that the lineage in which the sacred beings also function, is kept alive’. Among the Ganda, *lubaale* Mukasa was thought to operate through the institution of marriage to bless people with children and more especially the much-coveted birth of twins. It was therefore imperative that this channel be kept free of any form of pollution.

²⁰⁰ Banja, ‘Kiganda and Christian Ideas’, p. 43.

individual's and community's *obulamu* (life), wholeness and stability.²⁰¹ For the Ganda, there cannot be any better understanding and appropriation of atonement than this – a restoration of broken communication, communion and friendship particularly with the sacred order.

Throughout my discussion of the significance of Ganda sacrifice, I have deliberately avoided espousing one theory of sacrifice over and above the other. I was convinced such discussion would be irrelevant to this study. Ganda sacrifices were often multifunctional. What was a gift sacrifice was at the same time a thanksgiving sacrifice that ended in a communal meal that enhanced communication, friendship and communion with the deity.²⁰²

6.8 Critique

I now need to turn to the perennial question of the recipient of the numerous Ganda sacrifices. Mbiti has drawn a parallel between the Ganda hierarchical monarchy and the Ganda pantheon of deities. He states,

²⁰¹ Banja, 'Kiganda and Christian Ideas', p. 42.

²⁰² I am aware of the following excellent anthropological studies in which the various theories of sacrifice have been examined at great depth: The more traditional classical works of E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *Nuer Religion* (Oxford, OUP, 1962), Henri Hebert, and Marcel Mauss, *Sacrifice: Its nature and function* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1964), and more recently W. Burkett, *Homo Necans* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1983) 1-83 and A. J. Barret, *Sacrifice and Prophecy in Turkana Cosmology* (Nairobi, Paulines Publications Africa, 1998) to mention but a few. Barret, *Sacrifice and Prophecy*, pp. 23-41 has examined and made an evaluation of the various theoretical approaches to sacrifice. Key theories of sacrifice explained by these authors are the gift theory, the propitiation theory, the communion theory and the thank-offering theory. It is not hard to see that most of these functional ideas about sacrifice are present in Ganda sacrifice. Burkett, *Homo Necans*, pp. 1-83 theory of sacrifice as ritualized hunting has no parallels in Ganda ritual sacrifice and so is Girard's theory of 'Violence Diverting Sacrifice' that excludes the concept of sacrifice as a 'gift' or as a 'representational action'. See René Girard, *Violence and Sacred*. Translated by Patrick Gregory. (Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), pp. 1-10, 93-96. Girard has singled out the principle of violence as both the origin and the reason for the sacrificial ritual. He makes violence the object of the sacrificial act since the whole sacrificial act is aimed at diverting this violence unto a surrogate victim to save the community from the violence that generated it in the first place.

The Ganda regarded the King as being ultimately their religious head and the symbol of their prosperity. In the traditional structure, the King ruled through chiefs and subchiefs under him. The people conceive of God in a parallel structure, in which the creator God has under him divinities who are in charge of different departments of nature.²⁰³

Elsewhere, in an effort to emphasize the intermediary role of the lesser divinities and strengthen the point that the Supreme Being is the ultimate recipient of the sacrifices, Mbiti again writes,

In some cases, sacrifices and offerings are directed to one or more of the following: God, spirits and living dead. Recipients in the second and third categories are regarded as intermediaries between God and men, so that God is the ultimate Recipient whether or not the worshippers are aware of that.²⁰⁴

Other distinguished scholars of African Religions among them, E.B. Idowu, have independently arrived at the same conclusion that, 'Technically the divinities are only means to an end and not ends in themselves'.²⁰⁵ Most recent writers on Ganda religious culture have uncritically (consciously or unconsciously) followed this line of thinking and applied it to the Ganda pantheon of deities. In a spirited effort to emphasize the Supreme Being (*Katonda*), they have ended up relegating the rest of the deities to an intermediary role between the people and the Supreme Being.²⁰⁶ Ssempungu has called

²⁰³ Mbiti, *Concepts of*, p. 228.

²⁰⁴ Mbiti, *African Religions*, p. 58.

²⁰⁵ See Idowu, *African Traditional Religion*, p. 171. The classic work of Evans-Pritchard on *Nuer Religion* published in 1956 can be considered as having given new impetus and provided fertile ground for the development and spread of this understanding among subsequent scholars of African Religions. Evans-Pritchard, *Nuer Religion*, pp. 48-49 discusses extensively the relation of God and the other spirits of the air – drawing the conclusion that 'the spirits of the air are not thought of as independent gods but in some way as hypostases of the modes and attributes of a single God'. Further Evans-Pritchard, *Nuer Religion*, p. 200 acknowledges that sacrifices are made to various spirits of the air or of the below but insists that if such spirits can be regarded 'as hypostases, representation or refractions of God' then all sacrifices can be said in the last resort to be made to God or Spirit.

²⁰⁶ This has been the case with Kyewalyanga, *Traditional Religion*, pp. 98-101; Bukenya, 'Neo-Traditional Religion', pp. 20-24; Ssempungu, *Ganda Sacrifice*, 24-29, 31; Lukwata, *First Hundred years*, pp. 9-10.

the lesser deities 'agents' of the Supreme Being (*Katonda*) and makes a theological error of judgment by implying that the lesser deities were 'means' of accessing the Supreme Being (*Katonda*) when he states, 'In seeking a way to the invisible and Supreme Being, various means were devised; and these gave popularity of a variety of gods'.²⁰⁷ I see a theological error of judgment because I have argued that 'ritual sacrifice' and not the 'deities' were the means (available to the Ganda) of establishing contact with the invisible world. According to Lukwata, it got to a point in the history of the Ganda when the Supreme Being (*Katonda*) became 'aloof' and 'abstract' that the Baganda thought he had delegated his responsibilities to the lesser deities. He puts it this way: 'There existed the belief in smaller gods too and in the second half of the nineteenth century, *Katonda* seems to have become aloof and abstract and the Baganda thought that he had handed over the preservation of all things to the smaller gods'.²⁰⁸ I have not come across any historical facts to support this assertion. Commenting on the relationship of the Supreme Being (*Katonda*) and the *balubaale* (deities), Bukenya states,

He (*Katonda*) therefore has assigned duties to each Lubaale to rule the world and order the cosmos. The *balubaale*, have each departmental duties and detailed management of the world, each at his temple. *Katonda* in this scheme seems to have delegated some of his power and duties so as not to get involved in the daily needs and wants of the people.²⁰⁹

As intermediaries or agents therefore, the lesser deities should not be thought of as the ultimate recipients of the sacrifices and offerings. The logical conclusion drawn from this is that the Supreme Being is the ultimate recipient of each and every sacrifice with all the other deities acting as intermediaries or agents.²¹⁰

I suppose that Ssempungu, Lukwata, Bukenya and Kyewalyanga have done this in an effort to reconcile the apparent contradiction of two realities in Ganda religious life

²⁰⁷ Ssempungu, *Ganda Sacrifice*, p. 31.

²⁰⁸ Lukwata, *First Hundred years*, pp. 10-11.

²⁰⁹ Bukenya, 'Neo-Traditional Religion', p. 22.

²¹⁰ See Ssempungu, *Ganda Sacrifice*, pp. 58-60.

especially in the important area of sacrifice and offerings. One is the reality of a 'Supreme Being' (*Katonda*) who inspite of his attributes²¹¹ seems to receive no or little attention among the Ganda. This Supreme Being was little known among the Ganda and was not expected to be involved in the daily life of the people. Indeed, there are no defined sacrifices and offerings that are specified for him. The second reality is that for the Ganda, the lesser gods – the *balubaale*, are the focus (almost exclusively) of the spiritual worship (particually ritual sacrificial worship). They are the ones understood to be nearest to the people and the ones that impact in various ways on the life and well being of the people. Kyewalyanga seems to unconvincingly suggest that the Ganda's reverence for the *balubaale* was out of fear when he states,

The Ganda did this probably out of fear of these spirits who were considered to be nearer to them and could cause harm to them. That is the reason why some Baganda ignored *Katonda*, though they recognized his power, and turned to other deities for help.²¹²

Even if this was true, Kyewalyanga seems to contradict the very fact he emphasizes, namely: that not all spirits were thought to be harmful to the people.²¹³ In fact as we have already observed, the malevolent spirits were in the minority category. Most of the ancestral spirits were thought to be benevolent and therefore beneficial to the people.

The suggestions put forward to resolve the above two apparent contradictions are not new nor are they confined to the Ganda but have been put forward by other scholars of African religions in other African societies as observed earlier. These suggestions fall into two broad categories or theories. First, is the theory, which stipulates that, 'Africans are said to conceive of God as retiring into heaven after creation, leaving the running of the world in the hands of lesser gods. He is thus not involved in the day to day affairs of

²¹¹ See Lugira, 'Redemption in Ganda', p. 201 and Kyewalyanga, *Traditional Religion*, p. 101quoted on page 137.

²¹² Kyewalyanga, *Traditional Religion*, p. 98.

²¹³ Kyewalyanga, *Traditional Religion*, p. 108 states, 'It was believed among the Ganda that the spirits could be malevolent and benevolent. The majority of the spirits were beneficent and assisted members of the clan to which they belonged'.

man and so is not given sacrifice often'.²¹⁴ The issue here as crystallized by Ukpung 'is not that of worshipping God in general, or offering him sacrifices at all, but rather that of not sacrificing frequently to him'.²¹⁵ The second is often referred to as the 'mediumistic theory'. 'According to this theory, the gods and ancestors who receive frequent sacrifices are intermediaries between God and man so that any sacrifice offered to them is offered ultimately to God. These beings are therefore the medium for sending sacrifices to God'.²¹⁶ I do not intend to debate these theories here. Ukpung has in a convincing way done this and pointed out the merits and demerits of each theory before drawing helpful conclusions in the context of the Ibibio people of Nigeria.²¹⁷ What I will do is to build on his general and insightful conclusions (without being limited to them) and suggest what in my view is the most reasonable explanation why Ganda's sacrifices and offerings are mainly to the *balubaale* and other lesser deities while the Supreme Being (*Katonda*) seemingly appears to receive limited or no ritual sacrifice.

The reality of the lesser gods is not denied. The point of contention however, is whether 'these gods are recognized as *free beings* capable of initiating actions and carrying them through, and *responsible* for such actions and therefore meriting praise or blame, or they are mere instruments or channels without *free will* and *responsibility*'.²¹⁸ As rightly argued, 'To say that the gods are both free beings and instruments does not make sense'²¹⁹ and I would like to add that it is a contradiction in terms. They cannot be both. But 'to reduce them to mere instruments poignantly contradicts the conceptions of many African peoples about the nature and functions of these gods'.²²⁰ And this is true for the Ganda

²¹⁴ See Justin S. Ukpung, 'The Problem of God and Sacrifice in African Traditional Religion' in *Journal of Religion in Africa* XIV, 3 (1983), p. 187. This has also been referred to as the Deus Otiosus Theory. See further Peter Bolink, "God in Traditional African Religion: 'A Deus Otiosus'?" in *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 5 (1973), pp. 19-28.

²¹⁵ Ukpung, 'The Problem of God and Sacrifice', p. 188.

²¹⁶ Ukpung, 'The Problem of God and Sacrifice', p. 187.

²¹⁷ See Ukpung, 'The Problem of God and Sacrifice', pp. 187-203

²¹⁸ Ukpung, 'The Problem of God and Sacrifice', p. 196.

²¹⁹ Ukpung, 'The Problem of God and Sacrifice', p. 196.

²²⁰ Ukpung, 'The Problem of God and Sacrifice', p. 196.

society. Almost all my informants were unequivocal about the ability of the *balubaale* and other lesser deities to freely and independently carry out actions that would impact on individuals, family, community and nation (either for good or for evil). It is this understanding that makes the Ganda revere and live in awe or fear of these deities. But it is also the reason some are so loved because they can act in favour of the people. They do not implement orders given to them but initiate courses of action for which they are believed to be responsible. Thus *lubaale* Mukasa is believed to be able to grant health, children (and particularly twins) and increase of wealth (i.e. cattle, crop) while *lubaale* Walumbe is believed to be the source and cause (and not the channel) of all diseases and death. It is strongly believed that if the benevolent spirits of the ancestors are offered sacrifices they will act in favour of the living relatives. Likewise, if the malevolent spirits were not placated with sacrifices, they would strike at the living. In all these cases, there is not the slightest understanding that these deities are acting under instruction or simply mediating passively. This seems to be in line with Ukpong's conclusion:

These gods are not mere instruments but free and responsible beings, indeed masters within their limited spheres and have a wide range of powers. They must therefore be seen as being responsible for their actions, meriting praise or blame, and capable of demanding, accepting or rejecting sacrifices without necessarily having to refer to God. It only becomes valid to talk of them as intermediaries when they are specifically requested to intercede before God on behalf of man.²²¹

Mbiti's comparison between the Ganda's traditional structure and Ganda pantheon of deities will be my starting point without following his methodology and certainly not adopting his conclusion.²²² Ukpong has suggested that if we are to understand why few sacrifices are offered to God by some African people, we must as of primary importance 'inquire into what sacrifice means for them and then see how this meaning affects their

²²¹ Ukpong, 'The Problem of God and Sacrifice', p. 197. This conclusion is drawn from a careful examination of deities and sacrifice among various peoples of West Africa drawn largely from Ghana and Nigeria.

²²² See Mbiti, *Concepts of*, p. 228 quoted already on page 201 of this study.

relationship with God'.²²³ I have already done this in the section on the significance of Ganda sacrifice and will not repeat the details here.²²⁴ I will only mention the key elements of the meaning of sacrifice for the Ganda. Sacrifice for the Ganda, I have argued, first and foremost enables communication with the invisible world – the spirit world. Once this contact was established, then the door was open for those in the visible world to have communion and friendship with the spirit world. Sacrifice among the Ganda is the way to get in touch with the spirit world. This in part answers our question of why the Ganda offered sacrifices to the lesser gods more frequently than the Supreme Being (*Katonda*). It can simply be explained that given the functional roles of the lesser deities, it was required or it became necessary that they be contacted more often.²²⁵

The question to ask is whether there is an appropriate analogy in the social norms and practices of the Ganda that fits this explanation. This is where the Ganda traditional structure becomes crucial. Here I agree with what Mbiti says namely, 'The Ganda regarded the King as being ultimately their religious head and the symbol of their prosperity. In the traditional structure, the King ruled through chiefs and subchiefs under him'.²²⁶ It is the conclusion he draws from this that I find unacceptable namely, 'The people conceive of God in a parallel structure, in which the creator God has under him divinities who are in charge of different departments of nature'.²²⁷ The point to examine is the relationship between the *kabaka* (king) and the rest of the people (his subjects). As Mbiti has rightly pointed out, 'the *kabaka* ruled through chiefs and subjects under him'. What he did not mention however is that no subject was to put himself or herself in a position of familiarity with the *kabaka*. The *kabaka* is not to deal directly (and worse still publicly) with any of his subjects.

²²³ Ukpong, 'The Problem of God and Sacrifice', p. 199.

²²⁴ Refer back to section 6:7

²²⁵ Ukpong, 'The Problem of God and Sacrifice', p. 200 for details of this approach.

²²⁶ Mbiti, *Concepts of*, p. 228.

²²⁷ Mbiti, *Concepts of*, p. 228.

Revd Mrs Rose Kayira recently told the following story in our University Chapel. The reigning *kabaka* – His Majesty Ronald Muwenda Mutebi II attended a service at Kako Cathedral (West Buganda Diocese). As the clergy and Christians lined up after the service to see the *kabaka* as he left, he suddenly stopped when he got to Rose Kayira, shook her hand and greeted her to the disbelief of all who watched. Later Rose Kayira was inundated with questions from the people wanting to know why the *kabaka* had stopped at her station and the contents of their conversation.²²⁸

The *kabaka* (king) is not to be approached or be seen often by ordinary people. For this the *katiikiro* (Prime Minister) also called *kamalabyoona* (literally: the one who handles and resolves all issues) is appointed and is available. He is the official spokesman and representative of the *kabaka* (king) and the kingdom. The majority of the Ganda are content with the fact that the *kabaka* is on the throne and reigning and that he is supreme regardless of how often they see him or hear from him. For that the *katiikiro* (Prime Minister), *lukiiko* (Governing Council) and the chiefs are always there. The question of why the people do not contact the *kabaka* so often does not arise at all. Interestingly, even when the *kabaka* does not visit the people for a prolonged time, it is never understood as lack of care or concern for them. Additionally, ordinary Ganda subjects are not expected to make offers of gifts of any kind to the (*kabaka*) king. In the past it was acceptable for some prominent chiefs to offer the *kabaka* some of their daughters as gifts (with the hope that they could become married to the *kabaka*). But this is no longer the case.

I submit that this is a more appropriate analogy for explaining why the Ganda do not sacrifice to God so often. Indeed once in a while an invocation to the Supreme Being (*Katonda*) may be made or even (in very rare situations) sacrifices and offerings made to him: but to do that so often is not acceptable or expected. We have seen that sacrifice for the Ganda ‘flung’ the door open into the invisible world so to say. This could not be done with the *Kabaka* they so revered and so was the case with the Supreme Being

²²⁸ Story told by Revd Mrs Rose Kayira in a sermon preached at Uganda Christian University Chapel in 2001.

(*Katonda*). This is the way to show respect – you do not familiarize the person you respect so much.

6.9 Summary

I must now draw our discussion on the Ganda religious experience and particularly Ganda sacrifice to a close. That Ganda cosmology consisted of the visible world and the invisible world is not in doubt. The visible world was the world of human beings, animals, trees and all other forms of crops, the earth – i.e. everything that could be touched, felt and seen. The invisible spirits of all kinds – the spirit world, on the other hand inhabited the invisible world. Whereas the elements in the spirit world had unlimited access to and control of the visible world, the visible world did not ordinarily have the privilege of influencing (let alone having access to) anything in the spirit world. Sacrifices served to change this status quo. Sacrifices we have stated functioned to establish communication, communion and friendship between the visible and the invisible world. Furthermore, through sacrifices, evil spirits were appeased and all forms of evil to the individuals, families, communities and kingdom averted. The various deities were the ultimate recipients of these sacrifices and offerings and should not be thought of as transit channels to higher spiritual powers. This does not in anyway question the existence and power of the Supreme Being or suggest that he abandoned creation to the fate of the lesser deities but that to sacrifice or give offerings to the Supreme Being so often was neither acceptable nor expected.

This then is the context of the Ganda (their identity and religious experience) – the contextualization pole of the tripolar interpretive process. In chapters seven and eight that follow, I will demonstrate how the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as presented in Heb 9:1 - 10:18 (the critical analysis of the biblical text pole) can be appropriated among the Ganda (contextualization pole) through an inculturated sacrificial theology of the Eucharist (appropriation pole). My task will be to show how Heb 9:1 - 10:18 speaks specifically into the Ganda situation – eucharistic sacrifice, which is the Ganda's participatory celebration of the sacrificial death of Christ as presented in our biblical text (Heb 9:1 - 10:18).

CHAPTER 7

THE EUCHARIST

7.0 Introduction

In chapter five we examined how the writer of Hebrews presents the death of Jesus Christ as sacrifice using the Levitical framework of the Day of Atonement ritual (Leviticus 16). Christ who is both priest and sacrifice has offered himself once-for-all as a sacrifice for sin. This then, as argued and sustained by the writer of Hebrews, has rendered the Aaronic sacrificial ritual obsolete. In chapter six, the understanding and practice of Ganda sacrifice was explored. Sacrifice among the Ganda makes possible communication between the visible and the invisible world (the spirit world). Additionally, sacrifice enhances communion and friendship between the two spheres of existence – maintaining what Mbiti has called ‘an ontological balance’ between the two domains of life.¹

This chapter introduces and focuses on the eucharist (also variously referred to as Holy Communion, Lord’s Supper and Breaking of Bread).² In this work, I will not attempt to re-open christological debates or claim to present solutions to the issues relating to the history and theology of the eucharist: issues that have indeed been subject of extended theological debate. True, in the first sections of this chapter, I will consider the eucharistic theology but only with the view of answering later the question of whether this theology has changed over the years and how it has changed. The later part of this

¹ Mbiti, *African Religions*, p. 58 quoted earlier on in this study.

² I. H. Marshall, *Last Supper and Lord’s Supper* (Carlisle, The Paternoster Press, 1980), pp. 14-16 has argued that Holy Communion (1 Cor 10:16), the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor 11:20 cf. 1 Cor 10:21), Breaking of Bread (Acts 2:42 cf. Lk 24:35; 1 Cor 10:16; Acts 2:46; 20:7, 11; 27:35) and Sacrament derived from the Greek word for ‘thanksgiving’ (Mk 14:23; Lk 22:17, 19; 1 Cor 11:24) are the biblically-based terms to refer to this sacrament. Geoffrey Wainwright, ‘Eucharist’ in Adrian Hastings, Alistair Mason and Hugh Pyper (eds), *The Oxford Companion to Christian Thought* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 214 has introduced another terminology ‘divine liturgy’ to refer to the eucharist without explaining the biblical or traditional basis for calling it so.

work will focus on the sacrificial language in the Ganda liturgy of the Christian sacrament of the Eucharist (the Ganda's participatory celebration of the sacrificial death of Christ as presented in our biblical text – Heb 9:1 - 10:18). This in turn will help me bring about a dialogue between the Ganda traditional sacrificial understanding and that of Hebrews 9:1 – 10:18 in the next chapter. As mentioned before, this then (chapters seven and eight – constituting the appropriation pole) will illustrate how the sacrificial death of Christ, as explained in Heb 9:1 - 10:18, can be appropriated among the Ganda through the celebration of the eucharistic sacrifice – making it no longer necessary for Ganda believers to participate in the Ganda traditional sacrificial rituals and cult.³

As I pointed out in chapter one of this study, the Christian sacrament of the eucharist is one key tradition of the church where the understanding of Christ's death as sacrifice in Heb 9:1 - 10:18 and Ganda sacrifice meet. The eucharist represents the 'Christian' religious experience of the Ganda and represents the only point of connection for the sacrifice of Christ and ritual sacrifice / cult among the Ganda. It will be demonstrated in chapter eight of this study that by creatively weaving together the sacrificial elements of these two traditions in the eucharist we achieve two main goals.⁴ First, it leads to a meaningful celebration of the eucharistic sacrifice for the Ganda. Second, it helps clarify the understanding of Christian sacrifice for the Ganda – for whom sacrifice is at the heart of their traditional religion. I do not need to labour the point: unless the appropriation of

³ And this is where I differ from some advocates of inculturation like the Roman Catholic Archbishop Buti Tlhagale (of Bloemfontein in South Africa) who argue that inculturation involves a return to the ancestor sacrificial cult – See Buti Tlhagale's arguments in *The Southern Cross* (Catholic weekly for Southern Africa) of: Sunday, January 23, 2000, p. 2; Sunday, February 13, 2000, p. 2; Sunday, March 26, 2000, p. 2; Sunday, April 2, 2000, p. 2. Tlhagale has not convincingly explained how ritual sacrifice to the ancestors relates to the once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus Christ as presented for example in Heb 9:1 – 10:18 (refer to chapter five of this study). On the contrary, as demonstrated in chapter eight of this study, I have advocated for an incarnational model of inculturation that aims at discontinuing rather than continuing the ancestor sacrificial cult.

⁴ The 'creative weaving together of the sacrificial traditions' spoken of here is not to be confused with the Western construct and definition of syncretism which is a 'mixing' of two traditions. The creative weaving together of elements of the sacrifice of Christ, Ganda sacrifice and Eucharistic sacrifice has been demonstrated in chapter eight of this study.

the sacrificial death of Christ (as for example we have it presented in Heb 9:1 - 10:18) is made through the eucharistic sacrificial celebration, the Ganda Christians will remain torn between two religious domains: the traditional ritual sacrifice and the sacrifice of Christ (as presented in the biblical texts e.g. Heb 9:1 - 10:18). I have suggested in chapter eight of this study, that the integration of all the three sacrificial traditions (Bible, Ganda and eucharistic) is the only way out of this impasse – consideration of any two of these⁵ has not and will not work.

7.1 The New Testament Background to the Eucharist

The New Testament remains the starting point in any attempt to understand the Christian sacrament of the eucharist. As will be discussed later in this study, Paul in 1 Corinthians 10 has the earliest account of the eucharist in the NT. The doubts regarding the historical reliability of the Gospel narratives notwithstanding, I am convinced that any meaningful historical and theological inquiry into the Lord's Supper must begin with what Jesus did and said as recorded in the synoptic gospels by the evangelists – the events of the Last Supper.⁶ Jerome Kodell has noted that while most Christian churches disagree on how the eucharist is to be interpreted, they seem to be unanimous at least on one point: the eucharist's connection with the Last Supper.⁷ It is generally accepted by scholars that the Jewish annual festival of 'the Passover provides the most obvious background for the Last Supper of Jesus and his disciples'.⁸ It is therefore helpful at this point to explore

⁵ Ssempungu's study [See J. K. Ssempungu, *Ganda Sacrifice and the Catechesis of the Eucharistic Sacrifice* (Rome, Pontificia Universitas Urbaniana, 1985)] which did not integrate any of the the biblical sacrificial texts failed to help clarify the issue of sacrifice among the Ganda.

⁶ Jerome Kodell, *The Eucharist in the New Testament* (Collegeville, Minnesota, The Liturgical Press, 1988), p. 22 has helpfully clarified the distinction between the Last Supper and the Lord's Supper. According to Kodell, the Last Supper is 'the final meal Jesus shared with his disciples before he died' while the Lord's Supper is 'the community re-enactment of that meal after Jesus' death and resurrection'.

⁷ Kodell, *The Eucharist*, p. 12. See further A. J. B. Higgins, *The Lord's Supper in the New Testament* (London, SCM Press, 1952), p. 9; Robert J. Daly, *Christian Sacrifice: The Judaeo-Christian Background before Origen* (Washington, The Catholic University of America Press, 1978), p. 499.

⁸ Marshall, *Last Supper*, p. 23; Higgins, *The Lord's Supper*, p. 13, 45, 51. Eduard Schweizer, *The Lord's Supper According to the New Testament* (ET, Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1967), p. 32, while

how the Passover feast was celebrated by Jews of Jesus' time before we examine the events of the Last Supper in the Synoptic gospels and other New Testaments writings.

7.1.1 *The Jewish Passover Festival*

The Passover festival was an ordinance that the Jews kept to remember and celebrate God's act of deliverance from bondage in Egypt (Exodus 12).⁹ Below is an outline of how the Passover festival and particularly the Passover meal was celebrated in the New Testament times.¹⁰

The Passover was celebrated on the fifteenth day of the month of Nisan. At the centre of the Passover celebration was the Passover meal. Given that the Jewish day began at sunset, the Passover meal was held in the evening at the beginning of the festival day. According to Marshall,

During the afternoon of what would be the same day by our reckoning but was the end of the fourteenth day by the Jewish reckoning the lambs which were intended for the consumption at the Passover meal were brought to the temple and there they were personally slain by the persons offering them instead of, as was usual,

acknowledging an inherent relationship between the Last Supper and the Passover tradition, does not take it to mean that the two are necessarily or obviously linked.

⁹ The Lord commanded Moses; 'This day shall be a day of remembrance for you. You shall celebrate it as a festival to the LORD; throughout your generations you shall observe it as a perpetual ordinance' (Ex 12:14). In Ex 12: 1-20, Moses and Aaron received detailed specific instructions from God regarding the observance of the Passover Feast. Additional instruction is given in Ex 12:24-27. Besides the texts in Exodus, similar instructions for the Israelites to observe the Passover ordinance are found in Deut 16:1-4.

¹⁰ This outline is an abridged form of the description given by Marshall, *Last Supper*, pp. 21-23. Two important Jewish feasts overlapped and were consequently celebrated together. The feast of Unleavened Bread (lasting seven days) overlapped the Passover feast. Both feasts were celebrated in the Jewish month of Nisan (the equivalent being the months of March or April of our Calendar). Other Passover outlines of comparable significance detailing the key elements of the Passover as celebrated by Jews of Jesus' time can be found in J. Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, 2nd ed. (ET, Translated by Arnold Ehrhardt, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1955), pp. 57-60; Alasdair Heron, *Table and Tradition: Towards an Ecumenical Understanding of the Eucharist* (Edinburgh, The Handsel Press, 1983), p. 21; William Barclay, *The Lord's Supper* (London, SCM Press Ltd, 1967), pp. 20-24.

by the priests.¹¹ The priests took the blood from the slaughtered animals and poured it out at the foot of the altar of burnt offering. Then the people gathered together in family groups or in *ad hoc* gatherings of friends, at least ten in number, to celebrate the meal after sunset.¹²

At the beginning of the Passover meal, the head of the household said a prayer of thanksgiving for the feast day – the Passover *Kiddush*. The words of the prayer also covered the first of the four cups of wine,¹³ which was then served to the guests. Following this was the preliminary course of greens, bitter herbs and *haroseth* sauce (a mixture of fruits and sauces in vinegar). Then the main course of the meal was served to the guests. The *haggadah* – which was the Passover story recounting the events of the redemption symbolized in the Passover meal, was recited. A son would begin the story by asking the father why the night was different from others – particularly the significance of the constituents of the meal: why seasoned food was served twice and not once as was always the case, unleavened bread instead of leavened bread, roast meat only instead of the usual combination of roast meat, stewed and cooked meat? The father's response started with: 'A wandering Aramean was my father...' (Deut 26:5-11). The whole of this section constituted the explanation.

The second course of the meal was served with the second cup of wine with grace being said over the unleavened bread, which was served for the first time in the course of the meal.¹⁴ A third cup of wine (also called the cup of blessing) was served accompanied by

¹¹ Barclay, *The Lord's Supper*, p. 18 states, the Passover lamb was slain by the priest, as was the case in other blood sacrifices.

¹² Marshall, *Last Supper*, p. 21.

¹³ Barclay, *The Lord's Supper*, pp. 21-22 has clarified that the four cups of wine that were served at various stages of the Passover meal represented the four promises of Ex 6:6-7, 'I am the LORD, and I will free you from the burdens of the Egyptians and deliver you from slavery to them. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. I will take you as my people and I will be your God'. For detailed comments on the meaning and significance of the various constituent elements of the Passover meal – see further Barclay, *The Lord's Supper*, pp. 22-24.

¹⁴ Sometimes, if the main course had not yet been served, it was served at this point. The main course consisted of the roasted Passover lamb, served with bitter herbs and fruit puree.

grace. A dessert course, which would have been served by this time in a normal meal, was omitted in the Passover meal. The fourth and final cup of wine was served to the guests though it is doubtful whether this custom goes back to the time of Jesus.¹⁵ When all the eating and festivities were done, the guests were expected to spend the night in prayer.

Marshall states, the Passover feast was ‘one of remembrance and praise to God for his redemption of the people of Israel from Egypt. It also became an occasion for looking forward to the future redemption which God would bring through the Messiah’.¹⁶ For Heron, the Passover feast was ‘a feast of liberation, and marked as such by the fact that a quite exceptional quantity of wine – four cups in all – was drunk. It was also a meal at which Jews then would commonly recline on couches rather than sit on chairs, thus symbolizing their status as free people, freed by God himself’.¹⁷ Inescapable are the family associations of the Passover – the Passover celebration was a family festival. The point to be noted here is that God’s redemptive work was not the benefit of individuals *per se* but families whose object of love and service would be God their creator, sustainer and deliverer.¹⁸ Finally, the Passover had become both the fountain and beacon of hope as Jews looked ‘forward to the future redemption of Israel from its sorry plight at the coming of the Messiah’.¹⁹

I need at this point to address the question relevant to our study: In what sense was the Passover meal a sacrifice? Or was it simply a recounting of the great deliverance acts of God? From the description of the Passover feast above, it can be inferred that the

¹⁵ As will be noted later in this study, Luke’s gospel has a different ‘cup’ arrangement – one cup precede the breaking of the bread and another cup is shared after the sharing of the bread (Lk 22:17-20).

¹⁶ Marshall, *Last Supper*, p. 23.

¹⁷ Heron, *Table and Tradition*, p. 21. It is however difficult to ascertain whether ordinary peasants had chairs. The possibility is there for the wealthy to have had these chairs since the rich and powerful often sat on the ‘*thronos*’ or chair.

¹⁸ Marshall, *Last Supper*, p. 77.

¹⁹ Marshall, *Last Supper*, p. 77.

Passover was indeed a sacrifice, though as Heron clarifies it was ‘not a sacrifice for sin’.²⁰ We noted that the Passover lambs were slaughtered in the temple and the blood of sacrifice was poured at the altar, ‘and thus given to God; but unlike the sin offerings, it was not smeared on the horns of the altar’.²¹ Further, Heron sees in the Passover the two key elements that characterized cultic sacrifice in general and these were: ‘the giving of one part to God, and the sharing by the worshippers in the other part’.²² This way, the Passover sacrifice was a ‘means of communion with God’.²³ So we need not belabor the point: the Passover feast was a sacrifice. It was not merely a mental reflection of the Exodus event. And as Heron has put it, ‘In the Passover was the link between past and present and of a future hope’.²⁴ Paul in referring to Christ can say, ‘For our paschal lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed’ (1 Cor 5:7). We shall be returning to this later in our discussion. For now we need to turn to the New Testament accounts of the Last Supper and the Lord’s Supper.

²⁰ Heron, *Table and Tradition*, p. 32. However, Marshall, *Last Supper*, p. 77 while agreeing that the Passover sacrifice did not have all the requirements of an atoning sacrifice for sin, states ‘all sacrifices contained some element of atonement for sin, and it is unlikely that the Passover sacrifice was thought of any differently’. He goes on to argue ‘that in broad terms the Passover sacrifice with its reminder of the original offering in Egypt had redemptive and expiatory associations and was seen as one of the ways in which the covenant between God and Israel was maintained in being’. Earlier on Higgins, *The Lord’s Supper*, p. 50 had advanced a similar argument. ‘The Paschal victim was not a sin-offering or regarded as a means of expiating or removing sins’.

²¹ Heron, *Table and Tradition*, p. 32.

²² Heron, *Table and Tradition*, p. 33. Barclay, *The Lord’s Supper*, p. 18 acknowledges ‘the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed before it was eaten at the feast. It was not simply bought and taken home and cooked and eaten. It was bought; it was taken to the temple to be slain by the priests; the blood of it was drained away, and offered to God ... Only then could it be taken away and prepared for the meal’.

²³ Marshall, *Last Supper*, p. 77. For further arguments to demonstrate that the Passover was indeed a sacrifice see Daly, *Christian Sacrifice*, 197-198.

²⁴ Heron, *Table and Tradition*, p. 20. Daly, *Christian Sacrifice*, p. 207 sees in the ‘Jewish Passover, as it was understood at the time of Christ, ... not merely the background but the very foundation of Christian soteriology’

7.1.2 *The New Testament Accounts of the Last Supper and Lord's Supper*

It seems reasonable to say that Jesus had a historical meal (the Last Supper) with a section of his disciples (the twelve apostles to be precise) before his death.²⁵ However, differences of opinion abound in discussions of the details of what took place at that historical meal. This together with questions raised by the nature and meaning of the Last Supper continue to dominate the agenda of current theological debate and reflection on this issue.²⁶ It is not the primary focus of this study to engage the various opinions in the ongoing scholarly discussions concerning the Last Supper and Lord's Supper.²⁷ I will now examine the New Testament accounts of the Last Supper.²⁸

7.1.2.1 The Pauline account

Chronologically, in the New Testament, Paul has the earliest description of the Last Supper in his first letter to the believers in Corinth.²⁹ Here we have the evidence of the celebration of the Lord's Supper as it came to be known in the early Church (1 Cor 11:23-25). It is clear from the preceding verses (1 Cor 11:17-22), that there were abuses in the celebration of the Lord's Supper that Paul now seeks to correct through the instruction in this letter. Evidence within the text further shows that Paul is quoting existing tradition: 'For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you ...' (1 Cor

²⁵ Marshall, *Last Supper*, p. 31.

²⁶ Marshall, *Last Supper*, p. 31. Later, in the relevant sections of this study, I have analysed the views of other scholars like J. D. Crossan and J. Jeremias on the theological debate regarding the nature and meaning of the Last Supper.

²⁷ For a detailed study of the various scholarly opinions regarding the Last Supper and the Lord's Supper, see Kodell, *The Eucharist*, pp. 22-37; Marshall, *Last Supper*, pp. 30-31, 36-41.

²⁸ I share Marshall's view that in the absence of 'any serious historical doubts about the historicity of the Last Supper, its character and its exemplary significance'; the meal Jesus had with the twelve should be our starting point. But given that the earliest record of this historical meal is found in Paul's letter to the 1 Corinthians in the context of the Church life, it seems prudent then to start with Church's re-enactment of the events of the Last Supper in what came to be celebrated as the Lord's Supper in the early Church. See further Marshall, *Last Supper*, p. 30-31.

²⁹ Marshall, *Last Supper*, p. 31-32.

11:23).³⁰ Implicit also in the passage is that Paul had already passed on to them this tradition before (possibly when he founded the Corinthian Church around CE 51 or there about). If this reconstruction is true (and there is no substantial evidence for doubting that it is not so), then as Marshall suggests, 'this means that Paul's statement was in existence within some twenty years of the death of Jesus'.³¹

Of greater relevance to our study are Paul's words in 1 Cor 10:16-18 quoted in full below:

The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.

Consider the people of Israel; are those who eat the sacrifices partners in the altar? In our study of Heb 9:1 – 10:18, I argued that the phrase 'blood of Christ' refers to his life sacrificially given up in death.³² The sacrificial meaning of the 'cup' and 'bread' will become clearer when we examine the cup and bread sayings of Jesus at the celebration of the Last Supper in the synoptic gospels.³³

Commenting on 1 Cor 10:16-18, Kwesi A. Dickson writes: 'What Paul is saying here is that eating and drinking at the Lord's Table is sharing in the death of Christ, and also sharing in life with the other'.³⁴ The sacrifice of Christ in Heb 9:1 – 10:18 among other things establishes fellowship and communion with God (Heb 10:19-20). Communion

³⁰ As observed by Marshall, *Last Supper*, p. 32, the analysis of the words and vocabulary in this section is not that of Paul, strengthening the evidence that Paul is quoting existing tradition. According to Marshall, the phrase 'I received from the Lord' is not rigidly to be understood in the sense of 'special divine revelation', 'rather he is referring to tradition that was current in the Church and which ultimately came from the Lord himself'. For the suggestion that Paul could have got this tradition from three possible places: Antioch, Damascus, and Jerusalem see further Marshall, *Last Supper*, pp. 32-33.

³¹ Marshall, *Last Supper*, p. 32.

³² Refer back to pp. 99, 117.

³³ See pp. 226-229.

³⁴ Kwesi A. Dickson, *Theology in Africa* (London, Darton, Longman and Todd, 1984), p. 196.

and fellowship with the deity is at the heart of Ganda sacrifice.³⁵ It will be demonstrated in this chapter that the eucharist (which is the participatory celebration of the sacrificial death of Christ) brings the faithful into an intimate relationship with the risen Lord Jesus Christ and with one another.

7.1.2.2 The Synoptic Gospels' account of the Last Supper

The Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke in varying details, describe the meal that Jesus had with the twelve apostles. The Accounts in Matthew 26:26-28 and Mark 14:22-25 are so similar that it has been generally accepted that what we have in Matthew is simply a modified version of Mark's account and in this discussion they will be taken together.³⁶ Luke's narrative (Lk 22:14-20)³⁷ is distinctive in its details and emphases. Marshall and Kodell have worked out the differences and similarities in the Synoptic narratives of the Last Supper and the section that follows is largely depended on their assessment of the Synoptic accounts.³⁸

³⁵ Refer back to pp. 196- 197.

³⁶ See Marshall, *Last Supper*, p. 33, 161 note 11 for details.

³⁷ In many ways Luke's account is similar to that of Paul in his first letter to the Church in Corinth (1 Cor 11:23-26) and Luke / Paul are often considered together. John's Gospel says nothing about the institution of the eucharist at the Supper and instead has a unique story about the foot -washing (John 13). But implicit Eucharistic teaching can be discerned in the bread of life discourse in John 6:35-58 (note especially verses 51-58). It is also possible to argue for a Eucharistic interpretation of the image of the True Vine in John 15 of Didache 9. In John the death of Jesus coincides with the slaughter of the Passover lambs probably to strengthen his understanding of Jesus as the 'lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world' (John 1:29). For John, the Supper takes place the previous night before the Passover lambs are slaughtered (a day earlier than in the Synoptics). While John relates the death of Jesus to the Passover, as Kodell (1988) 19 notes, in John 'the Last Supper is not a Passover'. Godfrey W Ashby's has argued that the words of Jesus in John 6:41-65 be interpreted in the context of the Passover which he considers to be a recurring theme in John. While this argument is interesting it is to be maintained that the Last Supper in John's Gospel is not a Passover – see Godfrey W. Ashby, 'Body and Blood' in *Neotestamentica* 36 (1-2) 2002, pp. 57-61. However, Stephen W. Need, 'Jesus the Bread of God: The Eucharist as a Metaphor in John 6' *Theology* Vol. CV No. 825 (May / June 2002), pp. 194-200 has made a strong and convincing case for a metaphorical understanding of the eucharist in John 6 without necessarily undermining the question of Jesus' presence at the Eucharistic celebration.

³⁸ For details see Kodell, *The Eucharist*, pp. 19-21; Marshall, *Last Supper*, pp. 33-56.

The significant differences between the Mark / Matthew and Luke can be summed up as follows: Mark / Matthew records Jesus instructing the apostles to 'Take (and eat)' which is absent in Luke. Luke's account shows that the cup was shared 'after the supper' and records Jesus' words over the cup as 'the new covenant in my blood' whereas in Mark / Matthew we have 'This is my blood of the new covenant'. Jesus' authorization of the apostles to repeat what he had done is conspicuously absent in Mark / Matthew while in Luke we have Jesus mandating the apostles – 'Do this in remembrance of me'.

Besides the differences, there are similarities too. All the accounts show that this meal (the Last Supper) took place the night before Jesus died – what other authors have referred to as taking place 'in the shadow of Jesus' death'.³⁹ The Synoptic gospels are very categorical; the Last Meal that Jesus had with the apostles 'was a Passover meal, taking place on the first evening of the Passover, while the Lambs are being slaughtered in the temple'.⁴⁰ Mark / Matthew and Luke's accounts all make use of the word 'covenant' in respect to the 'cup' and it is clear that Mark / Matthew have the sprinkling of the blood of the 'Sinai covenant' on the people (Ex 24:5-8) in mind here. Luke on the other hand quotes Jesus speaking of the cup as a 'new covenant in my blood' and it is likely that Luke is here making a link between the actions of Jesus and the prophecy about the new covenant by Jeremiah (Jer 31:31-34).⁴¹ Also worth noting is the sense in which eschatological overtones are reflected in the Last Supper. Implied in the accounts

³⁹ Edward Ratchliff, 'The Holy Communion. Its Beginnings and Early Development', in David Cairns [et al.], *The Holy Communion* (London, SCM Press, 1947), p. 19.

⁴⁰ Kodell, *The Eucharist*, p. 19.

⁴¹ I must admit that the comparison made here is not exhaustive. As Kodell, *The Eucharist*, p. 20 has observed, the situation regarding 'exactly what Jesus did (*ipsissima facta*) and said (*ipsissima verba*)' at the Last Supper is more complicated than this. For example, was there one cup as in Mark / Matthew or two as in Luke's account? Did the apostles drink before the words of institution as in Mark (14:23-24) or afterwards? Did Jesus say his blood was being poured out 'for many' (Mark / Matthew) or 'for you' (as in Luke)? To try to address these issues here would be to deviate from the primary focus of this study.

of the Synoptic gospels is the important theme of the fulfillment of the Kingdom of God.⁴²

Kodell's summary of the Synoptic narratives of the Last Supper is so elucidating to warrant being quoted in full here:

At a festive meal on the eve of his death, which may have been a Passover meal, Jesus gave a new interpretation to a familiar Jewish family / social ritual. During the main course of the meal, acting as the host or as the *paterfamilias* he said a blessing over the bread, broke it, and passed it to his friends, saying, "This is my body". After the main meal, he held a cup of wine (the third or fourth in a Paschal meal), blessed it as he had the bread, and gave it to the rest with words identifying the wine as his blood. The disciples understood that Jesus was sharing himself with them in an intimate way through this gesture. The convictions which appear in the Supper narratives include the understanding that Jesus is foretelling his death, a death which will bring forgiveness of sins: that he is inaugurating a new covenant, that this meal is a harbinger of the banquet in the kingdom, and that he is giving them something to imitate.⁴³

7.1.3 *The Nature and Significance of the Last Supper*

The twin questions that need to be addressed now are: What type of meal was the Last Supper and what did Jesus mean the apostles to understand by both his actions and words at that historical meal? I will respond to these questions in the order in which I have stated them.

At various points in our discussion thus far, I have mentioned that the Last Supper was a Passover meal. Joachim Jeremias more than any other scholar has convincingly argued for this view and in the section that follows (drawing hugely on his work) I examine the

⁴² For Paul however, the eschatological links with the Last Supper are in terms of the Parousia – the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul writes, 'For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes' (1 Cor 11:26).

⁴³ Kodell, *The Eucharist*, p. 21.

evidence he adduces to support this view.⁴⁴ This evidence is summed up in twelve points put forward by Jeremias.

1. Jesus ate the meal with his disciples in Jerusalem. According to the Jewish Law, the Passover meal could be eaten only in Jerusalem. It is attested that during this time, Jesus and his disciples were staying in Bethany. He would be in Jerusalem during the day and in the evening he would retire to Bethany. As was his custom, he would have retreated to his lodging place in Bethany. But despite the overcrowding in Jerusalem at the time, Jesus and his apostles chose to stay in Jerusalem.
2. Matthew, Mark and Luke all date the meal on the Day of the Passover. Mark 14:12 puts it explicitly, "On the first day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lamb is sacrificed, his disciples said to him, 'where do you want us to go and make the preparations for you to eat the Passover'. As Marshall has stated, 'If the meal was not a Passover meal, it follows that this statement must be either a historical error or that it needs some kind of reinterpretation'.⁴⁵
3. According to the New Testament narratives the meal was eaten in the night (1 Cor 11:23; Jn. 13:30; Mk 14:17; Mt 26:20). Ordinary Jewish meals were eaten in the morning and afternoons – the only exception to this recorded in the gospels is the case of feeding the five thousand in Mt 14:15. But even in this case, argues

⁴⁴ See Jeremias, *Eucharistic Words*, pp. 14-37. Other scholars of similar academic standing who have supported this view include among others: Barclay, *The Lord's Supper*, pp. 17, 27-28, 34; Daly, *Christian Sacrifice*, pp. 219-221 and recently Marshall, *Last Supper*, pp. 57-75. This is not to say that scholars have been unanimous on this matter. For scholars with dissenting views who argue that the Last Supper was not a Passover meal, see further Jeremias, *Eucharistic Words*, pp. 37-57; Barclay, *The Lord's Supper*, pp. 25-26, 28-29. Marshall, *Last Supper*, pp. 62-68 has explored the difficulties and objections with the paschal setting of the meal. Kodell, *The Eucharist*, p. 55 while acknowledging that all gospels relate the Last Supper to the Jewish Passover, can in the same vein dogmatically state that the last meal Jesus had with the twelve was not the Passover meal of that year (pp 56-57, 66). His unsuccessful attempt to fit the Last Supper in the framework of ordinary 'festive Jewish meal' fails to adequately account for the conspicuous paschal features in the Last Supper. Jeremias, Barclays and Marshall agree that on the balance the available evidence that the Last Supper was a Passover meal far outweighs the arguments suggesting that it was not.

⁴⁵ Marshall, *Last Supper*, p. 59.

Jeremias, it is mentioned, “the time (for the meal) was already passed”. The Passover meal however, was always eaten in the evening.

4. It is specifically mentioned that Jesus at this historical meal dined with the twelve (Mk 14:17; Mt 26:20). The minimum number required for the Passover meal was 10. The small number of intimate friends is typical of the Passover meal.
5. The Gospel narratives all agree that Jesus and the twelve reclined at the Last Supper (Mk 14:18; Mt 26:20; Lk 22:14; Jn 13:12, 23, 25, 28; cf. Jn 20:21), as was uniquely the case at the Passover meal (reclining was a sign of freedom). Sitting was the usual posture taken at ordinary meals.⁴⁶
6. Jesus broke the bread during the course of the meal rather than at the beginning (Mk 14:22; Mt 26:26). Only in the Passover meal did the serving of a dish precede the breaking of the bread.
7. Water was served as a drink at ordinary Jewish meals. But here it is specifically mentioned that wine was served (Mk 14:23, 25; Mt 26:27; Lk 22:20) – which was a requirement for the Passover meal.
8. From Jesus’ comparison of the wine with his blood, it can be inferred that red wine was served at the Last Supper. The Rabbis required that red wine be served at the Passover meal.⁴⁷
9. When Judas leaves the table after the meal at night (Jn 13: 26, 29, 30), the Apostles assume that Judas had either gone to buy something they needed or give something to the poor. Judas would not have needed to make purchases at night unless it was near the Passover. Relatedly, giving alms to the poor was customary on the night of the Passover festival.

⁴⁶ Markus J. Borg, *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time: The Historical Jesus and the Heart of Contemporary Faith* (New York, Harper San Francisco: A division of Harper Collins Publishers, 1994), p. 56 seems to support the idea that ‘Ordinary meals were eaten sitting’, adding ‘at festive meals, one reclined. Reclining turns a meal into a banquet, a celebration’.

⁴⁷ Higgins, *The Lord’s Supper*, p. 52 cites examples in the Old Testament where wine is called ‘the blood of the grape’ (Gen 49:11; Deut 32:14; cf. Rev 14:20).

10. According to Mk 14:26 and Mt 26:30, the meal ended with singing which unmistakably appears to be the second part of the Passover *hallel*. There is no credible evidence to show that singing was part of any other Jewish meal.⁴⁸
11. It is also significant to note that after the meal Jesus did not return to Bethany but instead went to the Mount of Olives (Mk 14:26 and parallels). According to the command in Deut 16:7, the night of the Passover had to be spent in Jerusalem.
12. For Jeremias, Jesus' interpretation of the bread and wine to the disciples at the meal corresponds to the *haggadah* interpretation of the Passover.

According to Jeremias, there is compelling evidence to support the argument that the meal that Jesus had with the twelve – the Last Supper was a Passover. N. T. Wright agrees when he writes, 'It seems to me virtually certain that the meal in question [*referring to the Last Supper*]⁴⁹ was some kind of Passover meal'⁵⁰. The force of the argument to the contrary is so weak when balanced with the volume of evidence in favour of understanding the Last Supper as a Passover.⁵¹

⁴⁸ It is likely that Jeremias has made this conclusion based on an argument from silence – since it is not mentioned that singing was part of any other Jewish meal. But 'silence' may not necessarily mean that singing was forbidden or did not take place at other Jewish meals.

⁴⁹ Italics mine.

⁵⁰ N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1996), p. 555. His conclusion is based on reasons that are similar in many ways to those of Jeremias. The Last Supper was eaten at night, and in Jerusalem; Jesus and his followers normally returned to Bethany for the night, but Passover meals had to be eaten within the city limits and after dark ... The meal ended with a hymn, presumably the *hallel* psalms sung at the end of the Passover meal, Jesus' crucial words just like the head of the household would normally explain certain parts of the Passover meal in relation to the exodus narrative. Passover would normally be celebrated by families...' For details of his argument see Wright, *Jesus and the Victory*, pp. 554-559. Daly, *Origins*, p. 38 states that 'The first Christians looked upon the Christ-event as a Passover event'.

⁵¹ Marshall, *Last Supper*, pp. 80-82 has expounded other aspects of the nature of the Last Supper besides its paschal nature. The words of Jesus in the Last Supper Gospel narratives (consider especially Lk 22:15-16) clearly indicate that Jesus is having a 'farewell meal' with his closest associates and torch-bearers of his mission here on earth. It is a way in which Jesus is preparing his disciples both for his impending death and final physical departure. It is also an undisputed fact that Jesus had very close links with the twelve and these close ties were about to be severed by the violent death parceled out for him. Jesus particularly

While it is acknowledged that the majority of scholarly opinion holds that the Last Supper was a Passover meal, this is nevertheless still a hotly contested matter. There are those strongly arguing that the origin of the eucharist is in the fellowship meal Jesus shared with his followers. Markus J. Borg points to inclusive table fellowship that was characteristic of Jesus' ministry. That Jesus regularly shared in ordinary meals is clearly attested to in the Gospel narratives. According to Borg, 'the meals of Jesus embodied his alternative vision of an inclusive community. The ethos of compassion led to an inclusive table fellowship, just as the ethos of purity led to a closed fellowship'.⁵² This leads Borg to conclude that 'Ultimately, the meals of Jesus are the ancestor of the Christian eucharist. The centrality of meals in the early Christian movement and throughout Christian history goes back to the table fellowship of Jesus'.⁵³

But John Dominic Crossan sees this matter differently. For Crossan, 'the Supper and Eucharist does not derive from the historical Jesus'.⁵⁴ He locates the Eucharist in a Graeco-Roman formal meal where he identifies 'a two-part sequence of eating and drinking, or more simply, of bread and wine ...'.⁵⁵ Crossan dismisses any Eucharistic interpretations of *Didache* 9-10 on the grounds that they contain no 'hint of a Passover, of a Last Supper, or of either connection to or celebration of the death of Jesus'.⁵⁶

The above arguments notwithstanding, we have established that the Last meal Jesus had with the Apostles is best to be understood as a Passover meal. We need to move a step

wanted to share this meal with the twelve while having fellowship with them. This element of sharing argues Marshall is not to be underestimated. So in a way, the Last Supper was a 'Fellowship meal' between Jesus and his disciples. So here we have a complete picture of what the Last supper was: it was first, a Passover meal, second, a Farewell meal, and lastly a Fellowship meal.

⁵² Borg, *Meeting Jesus Again*, p. 56.

⁵³ Borg, *Meeting Jesus Again*, p. 56.

⁵⁴ D. J. Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (New York, Harper San Francisco, 1991), p. 360.

⁵⁵ Crossan, *Historical Jesus*, p. 361.

⁵⁶ Crossan, *Historical Jesus*, pp. 361-364 especially pages 362 and 363.

further and address the question related to the heart of this study namely: Was the Last Supper a Sacrifice?

7.1.4 The Sacrificial character of the Last Supper

In our earlier discussion of the Passover as it was celebrated by the Jews of Jesus' time, it was demonstrated that the Passover was in all probability a sacrifice though one could not speak of it in definite terms as a sacrifice for sin. In the just concluded section, we have made the point that the Last Supper is best understood as a Passover meal. If this rendering is correct (and most of the examined evidence and discussions point in this direction), one would be right in concluding that based on this analysis, there is a sense in which the Last Supper can be understood as a sacrifice. To explore this and other related issues raised above, we need to examine the actions and words of Jesus in the Last Supper as presented to us by the New Testament accounts notably the gospels. The bread and cup sayings will be examined separately to identify the sacrificial features embodied in them.

7.1.4.1 Sacrificial features in the bread saying

For both the bread and the cup there is the prayer of thanksgiving as a way of acknowledging God's goodness in the provision of food. What was unique however, were Jesus' words of interpretation. Taking Luke's version of the narrative, 'Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me" (Lk 22:19)'.⁵⁷ There are two possible ways of understanding 'body' in the phrase 'this is my

⁵⁷ Matthew and Mark have the additional phrase, 'Take and eat' (Mt 26:26; Mk 14:22) that precede the words of interpretation which Marshall has explained to mean that Jesus' action is a gift to his disciples, adding that 'the significance of the gift is then that it is said to be the body of Jesus' – See Marshall, *Last Supper*, p. 85. There have been differing theological interpretations of the word 'is' in the phrase 'This is my body'. Is it to be understood symbolically and therefore to mean, 'signify' as Marshall states ... or really and therefore to carry the force of 'be identical with'? Kodell, *The Eucharist*, p. 63 quoting N.A. Beck has sought to clarify this by comparing the use of the word 'symbolic' with 'real'. He explains: 'For us, the word "symbolic" is often used in contradiction to "real", and a symbol is an action or object that

body' (the Greek Τοῦτο ἐστὶν τὸ σῶμά μου). First, the word σῶμα translated body could be used to refer to the person as whole. According to Marshall, this interpretation requires a 'sacrificial sense', since as he puts it, 'Jesus would then be speaking of giving himself or his person as a whole'.⁵⁸ Second, it could be used to refer to 'flesh' as opposed to 'bones' or 'blood'. This second meaning would implicitly be referring to the 'two parts of the body, which are separated in sacrifice – the body and the blood'. This is the view held by Jeremias who states, 'Therefore when Jesus speaks of "His flesh" and "His blood" He is applying to Himself terms from the language of sacrifice'. Here *bisri* (Aramaic for flesh) and *idhmi* (Aramaic for blood) as Jeremias puts it, presuppose each in itself a slaying that has separated flesh and blood. This leads him to conclude 'Jesus speaks of Himself as a sacrifice'.⁵⁹ Marshall has warned against interpreting the breaking of bread to symbolize the breaking of the body of Christ in death.⁶⁰ Whereas I note Marshall's concern, it is impossible to completely rid the expression of the understanding

stands metaphorically for something else. To the Hebrew mind, symbols were realities in their own right, the prophetic word made visible. The symbolic action in some sense brought the event into existence'.

⁵⁸ Marshall, *Last Supper*, p 86.

⁵⁹ Jeremias, *Eucharistic Words*, p. 144. This is the view held by Joseph M. Powers, *Eucharistic Theology* (NY, Herder and Herder, 1967), p. 61 who argues, 'body and blood are sacrificial realities. Bruce Chilton is more explicit: '... wine was his blood of sacrifice and bread was his flesh of sacrifice'. According to Chilton, 'in Aramaic, "blood" (*ḥma*) and "flesh" (*bisra*, which may also be rendered as "body") can carry such sacrificial meaning, and in Jesus' context, that is the most natural meaning' – see Bruce Chilton, *Jesus' Prayer and Jesus' Eucharist. His Personal Practice of Spirituality* (Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, Trinity Press International, 1997), p. 73. While this is the likely interpretation here, it is evident that σῶμα and σὰρξ can convey different meanings in different contexts. S. Wibbing, 'σῶμα' in Colin Brown (ed) *Dictionary of New Testament Theology* Vol. 1 A – F (Exeter, The Paternoster Press, 1975), p. 233 has pointed out that in the 'LXX σῶμα is used to denote the range of ideas conveyed by the Heb. *Basar*, meaning flesh, signifying man in his individual corporeality'. He argues that this is 'distinct from σὰρξ, flesh, denoting man or even humanity in their creatureliness'. This is not the likely meaning of σῶμα in Luke 22:19. But John seems to use σὰρξ to refer to the 'creatureliness of humanity or the earthly sphere in general' – See further Edward Schweizer, 'σὰρξ' in Gerhard Friedrich (ed) *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* Volume VII (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971), p. 138.

⁶⁰ Marshall, *Last Supper*, p 86.

that Jesus is speaking of sacrificially giving up his life in death and 'breaking' probably refers to the violent nature of his death. In Mark, the bread-saying and the cup-saying are put in parallel and there is no reason to doubt that Mark has in mind the giving of the flesh and blood of Jesus in sacrifice.⁶¹

Finally, considering the long form of Luke's bread saying, the phrase 'given for you' is reminiscent of 'Old Testament and Jewish language used of making a sacrifice or the self-giving of a martyr on behalf of others'.⁶² Jesus is here prophetically speaking of his forthcoming death – a substitutionary sacrificial death whose benefits would wholly be credited to the disciples.

7.1.4.2 Sacrificial features in the cup saying

As mentioned before, in Mark, the bread and cup sayings are set in parallel to emphasize the sacrificial death of Jesus. Blood in biblical usage, as argued before, refers to life offered in death (and almost exclusively refers to sacrificial death). There is no other meaning that can be ascribed to 'blood' other than it refers to death (especially violent death) and sacrifice.⁶³ Both Luke and Mark have the phrase speak of his blood 'that is poured out for you / many' (Lk 22:20; Mk 14:24). There is a new element introduced by Mark and Luke – that of referring to the blood and the blood of the covenant: Luke has added 'new' to the covenant phrase.⁶⁴ I will explain all these elements together. First, I wish to reiterate that 'blood' in the OT refers to life given up in death. In these texts 'blood' refers to Jesus' violent death. Second, 'covenant blood is always sacrificial blood'.⁶⁵ It is most probable that here the comparison is with the Sinai covenant, which we know, was inaugurated with a sacrifice: For we read, 'Moses took the blood and dashed it on the people, and said, "See the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made

⁶¹ Marshall, *Last Supper*, p 86.

⁶² Marshall, *Last Supper*, p. 87.

⁶³ Marshall, *Last Supper*, p. 91.

⁶⁴ Kodell, *The Eucharist*, pp. 66-67; Marshall, *Last Supper*, pp. 91-92.

⁶⁵ Kodell, *The Eucharist*, p. 66.

with you in accordance with all these words” (Ex 24:8).⁶⁶ Third, Luke in referring to this covenant as ‘new covenant’ sees in Jesus’ sacrificial death the fulfillment of the prophecy of Jeremiah (Jer 31:31-34). In this text, Jeremiah speaks of the new covenant that God was going to make with his people Israel and Judah – a covenant that would supersede and render obsolete the previous covenants with Israel. Fourth, the element of substitutionary sacrifice is even clear in Mark’s phrase: ‘which is poured out for many’. This, coupled with the Mark’s ransom saying (Mk 10:45) completes the picture of the suffering Servant of Isaiah 53. Mark here brings out Jesus’ ‘self-understanding as the Servant of God – foreseeing his death as bringing atonement and inaugurating the new covenant foretold by Jeremiah’.⁶⁷ I need to sum up the discussion on the sacrificial features of the Last Supper by bringing together the various aspects of the nature of the sacrifice of the Last Supper in the section below.

7.1.4.3 The nature of the sacrifice of the Last Supper

The discussion of the bread and cup sayings in the New Testament narratives has given us helpful insights regarding the nature of the sacrifice in the Last Supper. Again I must point out that these are implied / inferred rather than being explicitly stated. First, Jesus in Matthew / Mark invites and commands the disciples to ‘take, eat’ (Mark has only ‘take’). This coupled with the subsequent distribution of the bread and cup by Jesus

⁶⁶ Marshall, *Last Supper*, p. 92 commenting on this (and quoting R. Pesch) affirms that ‘The sacrifice which inaugurated the covenant in the wilderness was intended to atone for the sins of the people so that they might then belong to God in a covenant relationship. The blood thrown on the altar by Moses had atoning effects. The sacrifice was in effect the means authorized by God for cleansing the people from their sins. By analogy therefore, Jesus here interprets his own death as a substitutionary sacrifice for the sins of the people that they may become partakers in the new covenant’.

⁶⁷ Kodell, *The Eucharist*, p. 66. Also Higgins, *The Lord’s Supper*, p. 50 sees Jesus attaching a sacrificial and redemptive significance to his death in Mark 10:45. For a summary of possible reasons that allow for a sacrificial interpretation of the Last Supper / Eucharistic celebration of the early church, see further Daly, *Christian Sacrifice*, pp. 499-501; Daly, *Origins*, pp. 56-58. For a detailed ecumenical discussion of arguments in favour of sacrifice as an Interpretive category, criticism of the sacrificial interpretation and convergences on the concept of Sacrifice in the Eucharist – see Horton Davies, *Bread of Life and Cup of Joy: Newer Ecumenical Perspectives on the Eucharist* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993), pp. 49-79.

points to the fact that what He is offering to them is a gift. Here we see in Jesus' action and the response of the disciples the giving and receiving of a gift. It must be sustained in all interpretations of the Last Supper that the sacrifice is a gift symbolizing Jesus' offer of salvation. According to Marshall, the fact that the disciples actually receive the bread and wine that Jesus offers them is particularly to be noted. It is one thing for one to offer a gift but yet another for that gift to be accepted and received. By accepting the gift that Jesus gives, Marshall argues, 'the disciples accepted the symbolical significance of the gift and thus gave their assent to that offer'⁶⁸. The food (*bread* and *wine*) that Jesus gives to the disciples is a symbol of salvation. In receiving the bread and cup, the disciples accept the gift of salvation that Jesus offers them.⁶⁹ Second, Luke's version of the words of institution, 'This is my body which is given for you' ... 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood' (Lk 19-20) point to the sacrifice of the Last Supper as representative or vicarious. Matthew is more forthright when he writes, 'for this is the blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins' (Mt 26:28). Jesus' sacrifice here is presented as vicarious being on behalf of others – and this fits very well the suffering Servant imagery of Isaiah 53. Jeremias has convincingly argued that implied in the phrase 'for many' is the idea that Jesus' vicarious death is for both Jews and Gentiles. Jesus had not only come to restore the Jews but had been given by God 'as a light to the nations that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth' (Isa 49:6). According to Jeremias, Jesus understood his mission as being for both Jews and Gentiles and not simply for the preservation of the Jewish nation only.⁷⁰ Matthew by plainly stating, 'the blood of the covenant poured out for many is for the forgiveness of sins' probably wants us to understand the sacrifice of the Last Supper as an atoning sacrifice.

Third, following directly from the above discussion is the dominant theme of 'covenant'. Matthew and Mark refer to the cup as 'blood of the covenant' (Mt 26:28; Mk 14:24) while in Luke and Paul it is 'the new covenant in my blood' (Lk 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25). I have stated before that covenant blood was always understood as sacrificial blood. The

⁶⁸ Marshall, *Last Supper*, p. 85.

⁶⁹ Marshall, *Last Supper*, pp. 84-85.

⁷⁰ See Jeremias, *Eucharistic Words*, pp. 148-152 for a detailed explanation.

sacrifice of the Last Supper therefore is to be understood as Covenant sacrifice. It is a 'new covenant sacrifice' in as far as it inaugurates the 'new covenant in the blood of Christ' that replaces 'the old covenant' of Sinai. This way it is also seen as a fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy (Jer 31:31-34).

Fourth, in the words of institution at the Last Supper, Kodell has understood Jesus as saying 'This is myself: by sharing this meal with you I am bringing you into an intimate relationship with myself'. This leads him to the following conclusion: 'Sharing the bread and wine unites us to Jesus as he is now, the risen Lord in glory'.⁷¹ This strengthens the understanding of the Last Supper then as a communion sacrifice. This communion aspect is also brought out in Paul's rhetorical question in his first letter to the Corinthian church:

The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of one bread (1 Cor 10:16-17).

Clearly then when we share in the Lord's Supper we get intimately united to Jesus Christ and his life bonds us into one.⁷²

In summary, the nature of the sacrifice of the Last Supper can variously be referred to as gift, substitutionary / representation / vicarious, atoning, covenant and communion sacrifice. The point needs to be stressed that in all these various understandings of the nature of sacrifice of the Last Supper, Christ is the only mediator and agent of sacrifice.

I need to mention here that my underlying aim in all my analysis above has been to examine the basis for understanding the eucharistic sacrifice as fundamentally based on the Passover sacrifice, taking full account of other points of view. The Protestant missions / missionaries (particularly the Church Missionary Society – CMS of London)

⁷¹ Kodell, *The Eucharist*, p. 63.

⁷² See further Kodell, *The Eucharist*, p. 64. Note the warning that Paul gives: Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in unworthy manner will be answerable for the body and blood of the Lord (1 Cor 11:27). Also consider Jesus' words in the bread life discourse in John's Gospel: 'The bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh' (Jn 6:51).

that brought the Gospel of Christ to the Ganda came determined to prevent such an understanding among the Ganda. I will later argue in the latter part of this chapter and chapter eight of this study that this was unwarranted and destructive to the Christian faith among the Ganda. But these Protestant missions / missionaries were too influenced by the Reformation theology that argued against a sacrificial eucharistic theology. The Reformation stand against a sacrificial understanding of the eucharist was largely a response to the medieval eucharistic theology.

We shall now in the sections that follow examine how the understanding of sacrificial theology of the eucharist was sustained or interpreted otherwise as the church developed in the Medieval and Reformation periods.⁷³ But first, I need to consider the elements of eucharistic interpretations in the *Didache*.

7.2 Eucharistic interpretations in the *Didache*

The *Didache* (also called 'Teaching of the Twelve Apostles' or more specifically 'The Lord's teaching to the heathen by the Twelve Apostles')⁷⁴ has generated a lot of research interest in the recent past. The volume *The Didache in Modern Research: 1996* edited by Jonathan A Draper is the most comprehensive and latest in the queue. Discovered in 1873 and dated around 50-70 CE (or more generally at the turn of the first century)⁷⁵, the

⁷³ I am aware of the developments of eucharistic theology in the Patristic period but the material is not directly relevant to this study and have not found reason to justify its inclusion. According to Alister McGrath, *Historical Theology* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1998), p. 24, the Patristic period is estimated to stretch from the closing of the New Testament writings (c.100) to the Council of Chalcedon (451). The following are good references on the Church Fathers: Daniel J. Sheerin, *The Eucharist: Message of the Fathers of the Church* (Wilmington, Michael Glazier, 1986); Henry Bettenson, (Editor and Translator), *The Early Christian Fathers* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1956); Henry Bettenson, (editor and translator), *The Later Christian Fathers* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1970); Henry Bettenson & C. Maunder, C (eds), *Documents of the Christian Church*, New Edition (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999).

⁷⁴ G. P. Goold, (ed) *Apostolic Fathers Volume 1* (translated by Kirsopp Lake, London, William-Heinemann Ltd, 1912), p. 309.

⁷⁵ Johannes Betz, 'The Eucharist in the *Didache*' in Draper (ed), *The Didache in Modern Research* (Leiden, NY, E. J. Brill, 1996), pp. 244-245. Also in the same volume see Enrico Mazza, 'Didache 9-10: Elements of a Eucharistic Interpretation' (1996), pp. 279-283; Jonathan A. Draper, 'The *Didache* in Modern

Didache is now considered by an increasing number of scholars to contain in its thanksgiving prayers an earlier example of what is today celebrated in the church as the eucharist.

Our particular concern is with the thanksgiving prayers in Chapter 9 and 10 of the *Didache*.⁷⁶ I will set out the immediately relevant parts of the *Didache* 9-10 below using the text set out by Enrico Mazza.⁷⁷

Didache 9.1-3

1. Concerning the Eucharist⁷⁸ give thanks as follows
2. First concerning the cup:
We give thanks to you, our Father, concerning the holy Vine of David your servant, which you have revealed to us through Jesus your servant.
To you be glory forever.
3. And concerning the broken (bread):
We give thanks to you our Father for the life and knowledge which you have revealed to us through Jesus your servant. To you be glory forever.
5. Let no one eat or drink from your eucharist⁷⁹ except those baptized in the name of the Lord; for indeed concerning this the Lord said:
'Do not give what is holy to the dogs'.

Didache 10.1-2

1. After you have eaten your fill, give thanks thus:
 2. We give thanks to you holy Father for your holy name which you have made to dwell in our hearts and for the knowledge, faith and immortality

Research: An Overview' (1996), pp. 1, 6-10. See further Jonathan A. Draper, 'Ritual Process and Ritual Symbol in *Didache* 7-10 in *Vigiliae Christianae*, 54 (2000), p. 122 and Enrico Mazza, *The Origins of the Eucharistic Prayer* (Collegeville, The Liturgical Press, 1995), pp. 12-13.

⁷⁶ See Goold (ed), *Apostolic Fathers*, pp. 323-325 for a complete text of *Didache* 9-10. Mazza, 'Didache 9-10', p. 276 has a modern version of the text.

⁷⁷ Mazza, 'Didache 9-10', p. 276.

⁷⁸ *Didache* 9.1 could also be translated as 'As for thanksgiving, give thanks this way'.

⁷⁹ *Didache* 9.6 could also be rendered as 'Let no one eat or drink of your thanksgiving [meal] ...

which you have revealed to us through Jesus your servant; To you be glory forever.

6. Let grace come and let this world pass. Hosanna to the God of David.
If one is holy let him come, if not let him be converted. *Maranatha*.
Amen.

Maaza has suggested an earlier date of 48/49 C.E. for the composition of *Didache* 9-10.⁸⁰ Mazza states that there is a close relationship between *Didache* 10 and the *birkat ha-mazon* which was a thanksgiving prayer at the end of the Jewish evening meal (supper).⁸¹ If *Didache* 10 is a *birkat ha-mazon*, the implications are that what we have described in *Didache* 9 are Jewish rites that open the festive meal (the *Kiddush*). This leads Mazza to draw the conclusion that 'both of the rites described by *Didache* 9-10 have their parallel in the Jewish rites that open the festive meal (the *Kiddush*) and conclude it (*birkat ha-mazon*)'.⁸² Betz on the other hand sees in *Didache* 9-10 a fragmented combination of an *Agape* or fellowship meal (9.1-10.5) with the sacramental Lord's Supper (10.6).⁸³

While Mazza may be right in taking Deuteronomy 8:10 and the *Didache* 'as the first seed of the institution narrative of the Christian Eucharist',⁸⁴ he acknowledges there are real problems in determining the nature of the eucharistic (thanksgiving) prayers in the *Didache*.⁸⁵ First, 'the texts of the *Didache* cannot be considered as anaphoric texts. Second, there is no mention of the death and resurrection of Christ – no cross. Third, the *Didache* lacks the account of the institution'.⁸⁶ For purposes of this study, there is even a more central question. Given that the texts of *Didache* 9-10 are eucharistic, as Mazza has

⁸⁰ Mazza, *The Origins of*, p. 40; Mazza, 'Didache 9-10', pp. 282, 283.

⁸¹ Mazza, *The Origins of*, p. 9.

⁸² Mazza, *The Origins of*, p. 9.

⁸³ Betz, 'Eucharist in Didache', pp. 247-249.

⁸⁴ Mazza *The Origins of*, p. 9.

⁸⁵ Mazza, *The Origins of*, pp. 13-16.

⁸⁶ Mazza, *The Origins of*, pp. 13-15.

argued⁸⁷, what would one point to in *Didache* 9-10 as bearing the elements of the eucharistic sacrifice as we have them in the synoptic gospels?⁸⁸ My submission is that while one can not deny that in *Didache* 9-10 we have thanksgiving prayers in the context of a Jewish ritual meal, one can not say with absolute certainty that *Didache* 9-10 have features similar in nature to the sacramental Lord's Supper.

7.3 Eucharistic sacrifice in the medieval period

Eucharistic sacrifice in the medieval period is best understood against the background of a host of other issues that dominated the eucharistic theology and practice at the time. It is important that I first sketch some of these issues before the discussion on the medieval eucharistic sacrifice or sacrifice of the mass as it was commonly called.

As if to undo what the church fathers had established, during the medieval period the eucharist had ceased to be celebrated as an action of the community but rather became a preserve of the priests – the clerics.⁸⁹ The community no longer actively participated both in the celebration and sharing of the eucharist. Powers has given reasons that led to this state of affairs and I will mention some of them.⁹⁰ Language was one main factor that contributed to this. Increasingly the masses came to be celebrated in Latin basically out of respect for Roman culture. Only the clerics and the educated people could understand what was said in the eucharistic prayers leaving the majority of the Christians in the dark! Translation of the mass and the scriptures in any of the dominant Roman dialects was prohibited (i.e. major vernacular languages of Europe). In addition, the

⁸⁷ Mazza, *The Origins of*, pp. 12-41; Mazza, 'Didache 9-10', pp. 276-299 not especially his conclusion on page 299 where he says, '... we believe our argument for the full sacramentality of the eucharistic liturgy of Didache 9-10 to be well grounded'.

⁸⁸ A sacrificial Eucharistic understanding is possible in *Didache* 14 and Betz, 'Eucharist in Didache', pp. 245-246 is right in his assertion that here 'it is beyond doubt a matter of the sacramental Lord's Supper on the Lord's day, which is introduced by a confession of sins'. The word 'sacrifice' also occurs in *Didache* 14 three times. But according to Betz, *Didache* 14 is much later than *Didache* 9-10 – Betz, 'Eucharist in Didache', p. 245.

⁸⁹ See Powers, *Eucharistic Theology*, p. 24.

⁹⁰ See Powers, *Eucharistic Theology*, pp. 22-31.

sacrament of the eucharist came to be considered as a 'sacred secret': only the priests could participate in and receive it. So it was the case that laity would not draw close to the 'sacred and secret' eucharist. The eucharist was considered to be 'holy' and only for "the 'holy'".⁹¹ What this meant in practice was that

the Christian community (*now comprised of laity only*) was itself unworthy of its Eucharist and that the community's place is at a distance from the Eucharistic action. ... The altar was taken from the midst of the community, placed against the rear wall of the apse, separated from the congregation first by the choir of the clergy and eventually by the rood screen. Thus the piety of the laity at a Mass necessarily became one of worshipping from afar, adoring the distant Eucharist rather than actively participating in and receiving the Eucharist as their 'daily bread'. ... 'Take and eat ...' and 'Take and drink ...' had become 'Gaze on the Host and find your salvation in the gazing'.⁹²

This separation together with what came to be known as 'silent consecrations' (where the presiding priest would say the words of consecration silently) out of reverence and mystery of the eucharist compounded the already deplorable situation of the worshippers. They moved from a status of being participants in the eucharistic celebration to merely being spectators (though it is likely they were never completely prohibited from receiving the eucharist).

⁹¹ The formula that refers to the eucharist as being 'holy' and only for 'the holy' goes back to the tradition of the thanksgiving [Eucharistic] meals in the *Didache*. *Didache* 9.5 states, 'Let no one eat or drink of your thanksgiving [meal; i.e. the eucharistic meal] save those who have been baptized in the name of the Lord, since the Lord has said, "Do not give to the dogs what is holy"'. It is likely that this refers back to the Jewish understanding of food set apart for priests. In the case of *Didache* 9.5 (also *Didache* 14.1-3) the 'holiness' of the thanksgiving meal / sacrifice seems to derive from the 'holiness' of the assembled community. In other words, when the community is 'holy' its meal is also 'holy'. This explains why Jesus' commensality / open table fellowship drew a lot of criticism from the association of the Pharisees (Pharasaic *haburim*). They considered themselves as a 'holy' community and their 'table' was 'holy' and could not be shared with 'impure and dirty' people – the tax collectors, sinners. See further Borg, *Meeting Jesus Again*, p. 56 and Crossan, *Historical Jesus*, p. 261. A similar situation seems to obtain for the Qumran Community as revealed in the Dead Sea Scrolls.

⁹² Powers, *Eucharistic Theology*, pp. 24-25, 31.

Alongside all these practices was the popularisation of the 'fruits' of the Mass. These were the benefits that the worshippers received out of the action of 'gazing and adoring' the elevated Host. These fruits included such ideas as: 'one does not grow older while one attends mass; the souls in purgatory do not suffer while one offers mass for them; a woman who gives birth on the day she attends mass will have a son'.⁹³ The more masses one attended, the more the 'fruits' of the mass one received. No wonder then that many of the believers moved from altar to altar of the great churches to see the elevation of the Host.

There was also an affirmation on a number of inter-related issues namely: the nature and number of sacraments, Transubstantiation and the Real Presence. Medieval theology (which came to be the official position of the Roman Catholic Church) held that there were seven sacraments (baptism, confirmation, eucharist, penance, extreme unction, orders and marriage). Furthermore, there was a principal emphasis of 'the true presence of Christ in the eucharist and on the transubstantiation, which the true presence demands'.⁹⁴ It is against this background that I now examine the more specific question of eucharistic sacrifice in the medieval period.

Heron has made a helpful distinction between the eucharist as a sacrament and the eucharist as a sacrifice: 'as a sacrament, it was to be *received*, but as sacrifice, it was to

⁹³ Powers, *Eucharistic Theology*, p. 26. For additional information on the fruits of the Mass see David N. Power, *The Sacrifice we Offer: The Tridentine Dogma and Its Reinterpretations* (Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark Limited, 1987), pp. 80-82, 91-93.

⁹⁴ Powers, *Eucharistic Theology*, p. 31. See further Heron, *Table and Tradition*, pp. 87-102 for a detailed discussion of the nature and number of sacraments, Transubstantiation and the Real Presence. McGrath, *Historical Theology*, p. 196 has given a working definition of Transubstantiation based on Aristotle's distinction between 'substance' and 'accident'. 'The *substance* of something is its essential nature, whereas its *accidents* are its outward appearances (e.g. its colour, shape, smell and so forth). The theory of Transubstantiation affirms that the *accidents* of the bread and wine remain unchanged at the moment of consecration, while their *substance* changes from that of bread and wine to that of the body and blood of Christ'.

be *offered*'.⁹⁵ The discussion in the preceding paragraphs of this section concerned the eucharist as sacrament, a means of grace, a form of Christ's presence. But now we have to focus on the eucharist as something that was offered (i.e. a sacrifice).

It has been observed that eucharistic sacrifice in the medieval period was not a dominant theme. It did not receive the prominent attention that was accorded issues like 'the real presence of Christ in the eucharist' and 'transubstantiation'. The reason given is that by the fourth century, eucharist as sacrifice was already an established and fairly resolved matter. There were no new major developments to add as was in the case of 'real presence' and 'transubstantiation'.⁹⁶ Any further developments seemed to be those that were raised in the context of 'real presence' and 'transubstantiation'. One such development had two features. First, that Christ was both priest and sacrifice. This was not an entirely new concept. The church fathers had already raised the issue. But as a second feature, the doctrine of substantiation came to bear on the interpretation of the eucharistic sacrifice to give it a slightly new interpretation. The eucharist came to be understood as 'the offering to God of the Christ who is present under the *species* of the consecrated bread and wine'.⁹⁷

Heron quotes Peter Lombard's reinterpretation of Chrysostom's *Homily 17 on Hebrews* to make a point regarding the shape of the medieval sacrificial interpretation of the eucharist. The main features of Lombard's position are that:

The Eucharistic sacrifice is not an addition to the sacrifice of Christ, nor is it a repetition of it; for the sacrifice has been completed once for all upon the cross. The Eucharist is, rather, a sacramental sharing in that sacrifice. In the sacrament, the sacrifice itself is present – the same that was offered to God on Calvary – for Christ himself is present, both as victim and as priest; and the priest on earth acts

⁹⁵ Heron, *Table and Tradition*, p. 102.

⁹⁶ Heron, *Table and Tradition*, pp. 102-103.

⁹⁷ Heron, *Table and Tradition*, pp. 102-103.

in persona Christi, as Christ's representative, through whom Christ himself works.⁹⁸

Though the statement that, 'the celebration of the Mass and the offering of the sacrifice was itself a meritorious and beneficial action' is often attributed to Aquinas, it is fair to say that it was already an established belief of the medieval church. It was this belief that led to unprecedented frequency of Mass in order to maximize benefits for both the living and the dead (who were undergoing purification in purgatory). Masses came to be commercialized and there developed the perception that God could be manipulated or bought through mass.

I have explained above that eucharistic sacrifice came to be understood as something that the priest, and the Church offered to God (though this sacrifice was entirely dependent on the sacrifice of Christ) as distinct from the sacrament understood as what the believers received from God. But with the increased emphasis upon the offering made by the priest coupled with the doctrine of transubstantiation, 'the offering of the priest came to bear its own distinctive role and was interpreted as sacrificial in its own right'.⁹⁹

Satisfaction was also introduced as a concept in the theory of atonement in relation to the eucharistic sacrifice. Depending on the faith and spiritual disposition of the person who makes the sacrifice or the people for whom it is made, the eucharistic sacrifice was considered to be 'effective to make "satisfaction" to God and so obtain forgiveness for the offerer or the people for whom it was offered'.¹⁰⁰ As Heron further explains, 'What is significant is that the language of sacrifice and satisfaction is being used in direct connection with the actions and attitudes of those who celebrate the Eucharist. It is not

⁹⁸ Heron, *Table and Tradition*, pp. 203-204.

⁹⁹ Heron, *Table and Tradition*, p. 104. The argument for this was as follows: The priest is the one who makes the offering. The priest by speaking the words of Jesus, the bread and wine miraculously turns into the body and blood of Christ. This way the eucharist came to be understood 'as a sacrificial offering in its own right, over and above the sacramental sharing in Christ's own sacrifice'.

¹⁰⁰ Heron, *Table and Tradition*, p. 105.

only or solely Christ's sacrifice; it is also the sacrifice of those who offer it, and is effective in proportion to their devotion'.¹⁰¹

The belief that eucharistic sacrifice was propitiatory for the living and the dead, coupled with the doctrine of transubstantiation and conduct considered improper to the celebration of the Mass, were later to be at the centre of the Reformers protest against the Roman Church. Sensing that there was increased dissatisfaction among the faithful regarding the propitiatory nature of the eucharistic sacrifice and its foundational doctrine of transubstantiation the Church took steps to counter such dissatisfaction. The relevant section of the Council of Trent on this matter states:

I confess equally that in the Mass there is offered to God a true, proper and propitiatory sacrifice for the living and the dead; and that in the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist there is truly, really and substantially the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, together with his soul and divinity; and that a conversion takes place of the whole substance of the bread into the body, and of the whole substance of the wine into the blood, which conversion the catholic Church calls transubstantiation. I also avow that even under a single species the whole and complete Christ and the true sacrament is eaten.¹⁰²

In the section that follows we examine the Reformers opposition to this and explore Eucharistic sacrifice in the Reformation period.

¹⁰¹ Heron, *Table and Tradition*, p. 105. See further Power, *The Sacrifice we Offer*, pp. 42-43 who sees Christ's sacrifice on the cross as making 'satisfaction for the offence rendered to God by sin' as a model for eucharistic sacrifice. He also relates the understanding of the Mass as making satisfaction to the practice of exchanging acts of penance – with each type and length of penance having a designated equivalent number of Masses. As an example, Power states that twenty Masses could compensate for seven months of penance.

¹⁰² Heron, *Table and Tradition*, p. 107: Part of document DS 1864; 1866 quoted by Heron from the *Tridentine Confession of Faith*, published by Pope Pius IV in his Bull, *Iniunctum nobis*, of 13th November 1564.

7.4 The Eucharist in the Reformation

Alister McGrath has clarified the term 'Reformation' and distinguished the four ways in which it is understood and applied. The four elements involved in the definition are: Lutheranism, Reformed church (also called Calvinism), Radical Reformation (Anabaptism), and the Counter Reformation (also called Catholic Reformation).¹⁰³ In all its diverse forms, the Reformation movement, which began in the sixteen century, sought among other things to 'return the western church to more biblical foundations in relation to its belief system, morality and structures'.¹⁰⁴ The debates on eucharistic theology during the Reformation period centred on two main issues namely: 'the argument over the real presence and the rejection of the sacrificial character of the Mass'.¹⁰⁵ We shall mainly concern ourselves with the latter. In discussions about the Reformation, it is always helpful to start with the great protestant reformer – Martin Luther.

Martin Luther's protest against the improper conduct of the Mass in general¹⁰⁶ and its sacrificial understanding in particular were unambiguous. Luther (particularly famous

¹⁰³ See McGrath, *Historical Theology*, pp. 156-163 for descriptions and details of the Lutheran Reformation, the Calvinist Reformation, the Radical Reformation and the Catholic Reformation.

¹⁰⁴ McGrath, *Historical Theology*, p. 156.

¹⁰⁵ Powers, *Eucharistic Theology*, p. 31.

¹⁰⁶ Powers, *Eucharistic Theology*, p. 32 has listed some of the cases of improper conduct of the Mass that Luther protested against. The list is long and as Powers acknowledges is not exhaustive but I will just mention a few: 'priests celebrating mass too close together that their voices conflicted with one another; the celebration of other masses during Solemn Mass; too many masses being celebrated; Masses celebrated with no assistants whatever; no one, not even the minister's receiving communion at mass; rivalry processions of the Blessed Sacrament from different churches which break out into brawls; priests puffing and waving signs of the cross furiously over the Host and Chalice as if these signs contained the power of consecration; the elevation of the chalice by placing it on top of the head; the congregation assisting with their dogs, falcons and hawks; visitors wandering through the choir during the choral offices chatting with monks and nuns'. For another good summary of the problems raised by the reformers, see further John H. McKenna, 'Eucharist and Sacrifice: An Overview' in *Worship* Volume 76, Number 5 (September 2002), p. 395. For an outline of the doctrine of the eucharistic sacrifice at the time of the reformation see further Francis S. J. Clark, *Eucharistic Sacrifice and the Reformation* (London, Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd, 1960), pp. 93-95. Also see further C. W. Dugmore, 'The Eucharist in the Reformation Era' in *Eucharistic Theology Then and Now: SPCK Theological Collections 9* (London, SPCK, 1968), pp. 59-75.

for the ninety-nine theses against indulgences), together with other reformers held in principle that one is saved by 'Faith alone, Grace alone and Scripture alone' hence ruling out absolutely any form of mediation on the part of human beings in God's economy of salvation of the sinner.¹⁰⁷ Luther was opposed to any interpretations and practices that tended to ascribe 'objective mediating function to the sacraments' insisting that it was the 'faith of the believer that gave any power to the sacraments'.¹⁰⁸ From this stand, he drew the conclusion that the purpose of the eucharist was therefore to arouse the faith of the believer in the forgiveness of sins.¹⁰⁹ This then became the theological basis for Luther's rejection of the sacrificial character of the mass: 'the fact that this would place human mediation between God and the sinner'.¹¹⁰ But Luther allowed the 'real presence of Christ' in the eucharist as 'consubstantiation'.

¹⁰⁷ Powers, *Eucharistic Theology*, 32. Also cf. Rom 1:17; Hab 2:4 where the emphasis is 'the one who is righteous will live by faith'.

¹⁰⁸ Powers, *Eucharistic Theology*, 32.

¹⁰⁹ Powers, *Eucharistic Theology*, 32.

¹¹⁰ Powers, *Eucharistic Theology*, 33-34. Luther was highly critical of those who earned their living by celebrating mass in the chantries often referring to them in a derogatory manner as 'fat bellies'. Furthermore, Luther was opposed to the special position of the priest in the celebration and sharing of the eucharist. He taught that since all believers are priests (1 Pet 2:9), all should communicate from the chalice, not merely the presiding minister of the eucharist. By virtue of baptism, all believers are priests and this kind of teaching denied the priest of his distinctively sacrificial role. On the other important issues of 'presence' and 'transubstantiation', Powers further states, 'For Luther, Christ is present only at the moment of the consecration, when the passion is preached and commemorated, and at the moment of communion, when the death of the Lord is proclaimed and commemorated. The presence of Christ in the eucharist does not endure beyond these moments'. Luther regarded transubstantiation as an invention of Aquinas and without foundation in scripture and tradition. But McGrath, *Historical Theology*, p. 197 has further elucidated Luther's position transubstantiation and presence. Luther believed in the simultaneous presence of bread and the body of Christ at one and the same time (Consubstantiation). 'There is no change in substance; the substance of both bread and the body of Christ are present together. ... the crucial point was that Christ was really present at the eucharist – not some particular theory as to how he was present' as this would be an attempt to rationalize a mystery.

On his part, Zwingli was unequivocal: 'the eucharist is a memorial of the suffering of Christ and not a sacrifice'.¹¹¹ He rejected the literal understanding of the words of institution: 'this is my body' to explain the 'real presence of Christ' at the celebration of the eucharist. Zwingli strongly argued that Christ was present at the eucharist only symbolically or figuratively and the words of institution of the Last Supper are to be interpreted symbolically or figuratively.¹¹²

John Calvin sought to tread a middle way between the positions of Martin Luther and Zwingli. He argued that there was a close link between a symbol and the gift, which it symbolized, making it very possible and easy indeed to move backwards and forwards from one to the other.¹¹³ Calvin's position as quoted by McGrath is as follows:

Believers ought always to live by this rule: whenever they see symbols appointed by the Lord, to think and be convinced that the truth of the thing signified is surely present there. For why should the Lord put in your hands the symbol of his body, unless it was to assure you that you really participate in it? And if it is true that a visible sign is given to us to seal the gift of an invisible thing, when we have received the symbol of the body, let us rest assured that the body itself is also given to us. I therefore say ... that the sacred mystery of the Lord's Supper consists in two things: physical signs, which, when placed in front of our eyes, represent to us (according to our feeble capacity) invisible things; and spiritual truth, which is at the same time represented and displayed through the symbols themselves.¹¹⁴

It seems fair to say that in spite of their varied theological emphases, all reformers are agreed on the non-sacrificial character of the eucharist and again for all of them, the eucharist is categorically not a propitiatory sacrifice.

¹¹¹ McGrath, *Historical Theology*, p. 198.

¹¹² McGrath, *Historical Theology*, p. 198-199; Powers, *Eucharistic Theology*, p. 35.

¹¹³ McGrath, *Historical Theology*, p. 199.

¹¹⁴ McGrath, *Historical Theology*, p. 199.

The Council of Trent's response sought to address the *trio* of issues regarding the eucharist (real presence, communion and the sacrifice) in one balanced statement.

Powers has summarized the response and it is worth quoting it in full:

The description of the Last Supper places the sacrificial character of the Eucharist in the fact that Jesus gave His body and blood to His disciples to eat and drink under the appearances of bread and wine. His command "Do this in commemoration of me" is the gift of the Eucharist and, at the same time, the constitution of a new priesthood and of an eternal sacrifice. The celebration of the old Passover leads to the gift of a new Passover, which is the commemoration of man's redemption in Jesus' return to the Father. Here is an integrated statement of the fact that it is in eating and drinking that Christ's sacrifice is renewed and commemorated sacramentally and the fruits of that sacrifice are granted to the believer.¹¹⁵

This far, I have explored the way in which eucharistic sacrifice was understood and applied by the Church Fathers, in the medieval period and by the reformers. One can only speak of a variety of understandings and not a uniform way in which eucharistic sacrifice was understood. I now turn to the Ganda translated eucharistic liturgies and examine how the sacrificial language has been employed.

7.5 Eucharistic sacrifice in Ganda liturgies

This section focuses on how the Ganda translated¹¹⁶ Eucharistic liturgies have incorporated and interpreted the language of sacrifice. I will focus primarily on the eucharistic liturgies for the Roman Catholic Church in Uganda and Church of Uganda (Anglican) in that order.

¹¹⁵ Powers, *Eucharistic Theology*, pp. 41-42. For a more comprehensive answer by the Council of Trent to the accusations of the Reformers regarding the celebration of Mass, see further Power, *The Sacrifice we Offer*, pp. 50-93. Essentially, Trent reaffirmed that the mass was a propitiatory sacrifice. Their argument being that since the mass was a representation of the sacrifice of the cross, it should itself be termed a sacrifice of propitiation.

¹¹⁶ The use of the word 'translated' here is deliberate. I hesitate to use the word 'formulated' alongside it because as I will later explain, the available Ganda liturgies are translations of the English version (in the case of the Anglican Church) and Latin version (in the case of the Roman Catholic Church).

7.5.1 Roman Catholic Church in Uganda: Catechism of the Catholic Church

The eucharistic sacrificial language in the Ganda liturgy derives from the teaching of the Catechism of the Catholic Church on the eucharist (hereafter to be referred to as *Catechism or simply as C in the text*).¹¹⁷ An understanding of the key emphases of the current Catechism regarding the eucharistic sacrifice will elucidate the use and interpretation of sacrificial language in the Ganda liturgy.

The Catechism stipulates that ‘the eucharist is the memorial of Christ’s Passover’ and because it is the memorial of Christ’s Passover, the eucharist is also a sacrifice. The sacrificial character of the eucharist is manifested in the very words of institution: ‘This is my body which is given for you’, and ‘This cup which is poured out for you is the New Covenant in my blood’. In the eucharist, Christ gives us the very body, which he gave up for us on the cross, the very blood, which he ‘poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins’. (C1362 and C1365). It is clear that the reference here is to the Last Supper – the last meal that Jesus had with his disciples. It is here affirmed that the Last Supper was a Passover meal. It is further explained ‘in the sense of Sacred Scripture, *anamnesis* or memorial is not merely the recollection of past events but the proclamation of mighty works wrought by God for men. In the liturgical celebration of these events, they become in a certain way present and real’ (C1363). What this means in practice is that ‘As often as the sacrifice of the cross by which “Christ our Pasch has been sacrificed” is celebrated on the altar, the work of redemption is carried out’ (C1364).

The sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the eucharist are not two but one single sacrifice: ‘The victim is one and the same: ... only the manner of offering is different’ (C1367). The eucharist is also the sacrifice of the Church. The Church, which is the Body of Christ, participates in the offering of the Head. The whole Church is united with the offering and intercession of Christ. To the offering of Christ are united not only the

¹¹⁷ The text I am working with is: *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Nairobi, Pauline Publications – Africa, 1994). Mambo Press jointly publishes this Catechism in Gweru, Zimbabwe. The relevant section dealing with sacramental sacrifice is on pages 343-345.

members still here on earth, but also those already in the glory of heaven' (C1367 - C1370).

Lastly but not least, according to the Catechism, 'The eucharistic sacrifice is also offered for the faithful departed who have died in Christ but are not yet wholly purified, so that they may be able to enter into the light and peace of Christ' (C1371). I must admit that there are many other issues related to the eucharist in general that I have not mentioned. I have only summarized teachings relating to the eucharist as sacrifice: albeit not exhaustively.¹¹⁸

7.5.2 Sacrificial features in the Roman Catholic liturgy

This analysis follows the Ganda Eucharistic liturgies laid out in the *Ekitabo Ky'omukristu* and the *Enneegayirira ezimu Ez'abakristu*.¹¹⁹ Both the language (i.e. words, phrases and so forth) and structure of the Ganda eucharistic liturgy contain ideas of sacrifice and it will be helpful to handle them together.

Structurally, three major divisions / sections can be discerned in the Ganda eucharistic liturgy namely: *Okutegeka ebirabo* (Preparation of the gifts), *Okwebaza okukulu – Okwa Ukaristia* (Eucharistic prayer), *Okusembera* (the Communion rite).

7.5.2.1 *Okutegeka ebirabo* (Preparation of the gifts)

The preface to the preparation of the gifts bears the heading *EKITAMBIRO EKY'OKWEBAZA* (literally 'The sacrifice of Thanksgiving').¹²⁰ The word *Ekitambiro*

¹¹⁸ For a whole range of issues related to the Eucharist: See *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Nairobi, Pauline Publications – Africa, 1994), pp. 335-355.

¹¹⁹ *Ekitabo Ky'omukristu* (Kisubi, Marianum Press Kisubi, 1975) is a big volume (847 pages), which essentially contains all the various services and readings for the entire year (the whole Church Calendar). The section that deals with the Eucharist, *Ebijja Bulijjo mu Missa* can be found on pages 644-692. *Enneegayirira ezimu Ez'abakristu*, 9th ed. (Kisubi, Marianum Press Kisubi, 1990) is a more handy booklet of only 94 pages. It contains the central elements of the Mass and is the version that most Christians would have. The relevant section on the Eucharist is on pages 17-48.

¹²⁰ *Enneegayirira*, pp. 28.

used in this liturgy to refer to the eucharist is the *Luganda* word for ‘ritual sacrifice’ that involves the shedding of blood. Having acknowledged what the Lord has spoken to them in his word (i.e. ministry of the word) demonstrating God’s love for his people the preface further states, *tugenda okukwanukula nga tuweereza ekitambiro eky’okwebaza, Mukama wafe kye yawa Eklezia we*: meaning, ‘we are going to respond by offering the sacrifice of thanksgiving which the Lord gave to his Church’. From the onset, it is made clear that the eucharist is a sacrifice of thanksgiving and the use of the word *ekitambiro* means that sacrifice here is used in a ritual sense.¹²¹

The preparation of the gifts proper then takes place. While the offertory song is being sung, the faithful take the bread and wine to the altar together with the other offertory gifts. Significant is the fact that the believers¹²² have the responsibility of carrying the bread and wine to the altar and I will explain the symbolism of this in a moment. At the altar, they are received by the presiding Priest or Bishop (if present) who then says:

Baganda bange mwegayirire, Katonda Patri omuyinza wa buli kantu, asiime *ekitambiro* nze nammwe kye tumuweereza.¹²³

Brethren, pray God the Father Almighty to accept the sacrifice you and I give to him.

The people then respond:

Omukama *ekitambiro* ekyo akisiime, akiggye mu mikono gyo, akitwale, kiviiremu erinya lye ettendo n’ekitibwa naffe kitugase, wamu n’Eklezia yenna omutukuvu.¹²⁴

Let the Lord accept that sacrifice, receive it from your hands, take it, to the honour and glory of his name, and unite us together the whole holy Church.

¹²¹ For the use of the word *Ekitambiro* to refer to the Eucharist see *Enneegayirira*, pp. 28, 31; *Ekitabo Ky’omukristu*, pp. 644, 657, 658, 673, 688.

¹²² See *Ekitabo Ky’omukristu*, pp. 657.

¹²³ *Enneegayirira*, p. 31. Also see *Ekitabo Ky’omukristu*, p. 658.

¹²⁴ *Enneegayirira*, p. 31. Also see *Ekitabo Ky’omukristu*, p. 658.

Here lies the sacrificial significance in this symbolism. In taking the bread and wine to the altar, the faithful identify with the sacrifice they are offering to God: the bread and wine which represents them is the fruit of their labour and means of their livelihood. By so doing the faithful demonstrate their desire to offer themselves to God. The sacrifice being offered is for the people and the priest. It is evident from the people's response that their aspirations in offering the sacrifice are that God's name may be honoured and glorified and that through the sacrifice they may be united to the body of Christ – the entire Christian community called the church.

7.5.2.2 *Okwebaza okukulu – Okwa Ukaristia* (Eucharistic prayer)

A characteristic pattern is observable in the eucharistic prayer. First, is the preface, which acknowledges God's sovereign power. It is dominated by praise and thanksgiving to God for his saving works in Jesus Christ. The preface takes on various forms depending on the occasion of the Church calendar.¹²⁵ The following is an excerpt from one of them:

Ggwe wamma kisaanye n'okutekwa tuteekwa, kituufu ddala era mwe mutuviira n'okulokola; ggwe omukama, Patri omutuukirivu, Katonda omuyinza wabuli kantu, Ssewannaku, ffe okukwebaza bulijjo nabuli wantu, nga tuyita mu Kristu Mukama waffe. Ggwe wamma naffe kye tuva twegatta ne Bamalayika boona okukutenda nga tujjudde essanyu nga bwe tusaakaanya nti: Mutuukirivu...

The Roman Missal sums up the elements in the preface as follows:

Father, it is our duty and our salvation always and everywhere to give you thanks through Jesus Christ our Lord.

He is the Word through whom you made the universe, the Saviour you sent to redeem us. By the power of the Holy Spirit he took flesh and was born of the Virgin Mary.

For our sake he opened his arms on the cross; he put an end to death and revealed the resurrection. In this he fulfilled your will and won for you a holy people.

¹²⁵ See *Ekitabo Ky'omukristu*, pp. 659-673 for the various forms of the preface according to the seasons in the Church calendar.

And so we join the angels and the saints in proclaiming your glory: Holy, holy, holy...¹²⁶

The second element in the eucharistic prayer is the invocation of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit serves to unite the self-offering of the faithful represented by their gifts of bread and wine to Christ's self-offering to God as sacrifice. The Church through the Holy Spirit is brought into a mystical (i.e. spiritual) union with the sacrifice of Christ through the offering of bread and wine. Following, is the third element of the words of institution which when pronounced over the bread and wine, make the sacrifice of Christ present. Fourthly, we have the intercessory prayers for the various aspects of the life of the Church concluding with the doxology that gives God all the glory.¹²⁷

7.5.2.3 *Okusembera* (the Communion rite)

This is the last part of the eucharistic liturgy and it starts with the Lord's Prayer, prayer for peace followed by the sharing of the peace of Christ among the faithful. Then the consecrated bread is broken and an invitation is extended to the faithful to come and receive the body of Christ.¹²⁸

7.5.3 *The Ganda (Anglican Church of Uganda) Eucharistic liturgy*

The eucharistic liturgy is contained in the Luganda Prayer and Hymn Book (from now on referred to as LPHB).¹²⁹ The LPHB has preserved over the ages the pattern / structure of the 1662 Book of Common Prayer (BCP). The revisions mainly focused on the

¹²⁶ See Roman Missal Preface, pp. 42.

¹²⁷ See *Ekitabo Ky'omukristu*, pp. 673-689 for details.

¹²⁸ See *Ekitabo Ky'omukristu*, pp. 690-692.

¹²⁹ *Luganda Prayer and Hymn Book* (Kampala, Uganda Bookshop, 1977), pp. 74-95. The Preface of the LPHB indicates that it has its roots in the 1662 Anglican Book of Common Prayer (BCP). Pilkington helped by Henry Wright Luttaguza Kitaakule made the first Luganda translation from the BCP in 1898. The Luganda translation was first published in 1928 and revised in 1932 by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK, London). To mark the centenary celebrations of the Church of Uganda (1877-1977), the 1932 version (together with a shortened Prayer Book produced in 1964) was further revised to produce the current LPHB published by Uganda Bookshop in 1977.

clarification of Luganda terms or using simpler synonyms while retaining the eucharistic theology of the 1662 BCP.

7.5.3.1 Sacrificial features in the Ganda (Church of Uganda) liturgy

In contrast to the Roman Catholic Ganda liturgy, the Eucharistic liturgy in the LPHB does not contain key sacrificial features both in the way it is structured and worded. As will be noted below, even where sacrificial symbolism is provided for in the liturgical structure, in all the services I attended it was never practiced or explained.

It is possible to identify the three parts of the eucharistic liturgy as contained in the Roman Missal: Preparation of gifts, Eucharistic Prayer and Communion rite. But these are without the explicit sacrificial significance that we observed in the Roman Catholic Ganda liturgy.

First we consider the Preparation of the gifts. Whereas the rubric clearly states that the bread and wine be brought to the Holy Table by the faithful, I have never witnessed this being done.

Omugati n’Enviinyo (oba ekimu ku byo) kiyinzika okuleterwa wano ng’Abakebezi baleta ebirabo. Omukadde n’alyoka abitegeka. ...¹³⁰

The bread and wine (or one of them) should be brought while the wardens bring the offerings. Then the priest will prepare them.

There is no mention of a link between the bread and wine with the Christian community. Throughout the liturgy, the word *Kabona* which is the Luganda word for ‘priest’ is avoided because of its links with the priests who presided over the ritual sacrifices in the Ganda traditional religion. Instead the word *Omukadde* literally meaning ‘Old person’ or ‘elder’ is used.

The second part is the Eucharistic prayer. Here Christ’s sacrificial death on the cross is not called *ekitamero* but *ssaddaaka*.¹³¹ In the Ganda Catholic Eucharistic liturgy, the

¹³⁰ See LPHB, p. 82.

¹³¹ See LPHB, p. 89.

word '*ekitambiro*' used of sacrifice in a ritual sense is used to refer to the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. This word is avoided in the LPHB. Instead the word '*ssaddaaka*' often used for offering or sacrifices that do not involve the shedding of blood is used.¹³² *Ekitambiro* is the word used to describe the ritual sacrifices offered in the Ganda traditional religion.

The invocation of the Holy Spirit over the Christian community gathered, the bread and wine is significant but lacks the necessary link with the rest of the liturgy.¹³³ This is then followed by the third part of the Eucharistic liturgy – *Okusembera* (the communion rite), which follows the same pattern as that of the Ganda Catholic liturgy.

As I will demonstrate in the next chapter, the avoidance of explicit sacrificial language in the LPHB has not helped explain the meaning of the eucharist to the faithful and its relationship to the Christian community (body of Christ) and the risen Lord. Increasingly people (especially the young) are beginning to question the relevance of the eucharist in Christian life and worship. This is not to say that the mere use of sacrificial language would reverse this situation or that the Roman Catholic Church is faring better because it uses sacrificial language. Other interrelated issues that need to be addressed by the Christian churches have been examined in chapter eight of this study.

7.5.4 Critique

As observed from the above liturgical discussions, no significant Ganda theological reflection has been put into the development of the eucharistic liturgies. As missionary churches, they all maintain and propagate the status quo of their 'parent' churches in the West (Rome and Canterbury in this case). Liturgical reforms have to adhere (and be approved at least in the case of the Roman Catholic Church) by the 'parent' churches. I submit in the next chapter that there is need for a contextual theology of the eucharist that

¹³² See LPHB, pp. 79, 81 where the same word *ssaddaaka* has been used (and rightly so) to translate sacrifice of a non-ritual sense (Ps 50:14; Ps 96:8; Rom 12:1).

¹³³ See LPHB, p. 90.

is relevant to the Ganda: one that takes into consideration the Ganda religious experience (particularly their sacrificial religious experience).

7.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have made a modest consideration of both the history and theology of the eucharist. On balance, the available evidence seems to support the proposition that the Last Supper (the last meal that Jesus had with his disciples) was a Passover meal. The study has further demonstrated that the Passover as it was celebrated by the Jews of Jesus' time was in all probability a sacrifice albeit not a sacrifice for sin.

Whereas for the church fathers the emphasis was on the community celebration of the eucharist, this understanding was lost in the medieval period where the eucharist came to be considered as a clerical preserve. The community of the faithful was forced to withdraw to the periphery and was reduced almost to spectators instead of participants in the celebration of the eucharistic sacrifice. It was the abuses of the eucharist (mainly during this period) coupled with theological extremity of the doctrine of Transubstantiation and understanding of the eucharist as a propitiatory sacrifice for both the living and the dead that among other things sparked off the Reformation.

The Reformers while each expressing their distinctive theologies regarding the eucharist were all agreed on the non-sacrificial nature of the eucharist. The major theological and institutional divide that took place at the time of the reformation resulting into the Roman Catholics and Protestants has since remained with each espousing its eucharistic theology in a rather uncompromising manner. It is worth noting that the missionary churches (as exemplified by the Ganda of Uganda) have continued to reflect this division in both their understanding and celebration of the eucharist. It seems right to say that though Vatican II changed some of this in the rest of the world, it had little impact in Africa not least in present day Uganda.

In the next chapter, as a continuation of our appropriation pole, I present a dialogue between the sacrifice of Christ in Hebrews 9:1 – 10:18, Ganda sacrifice and the Eucharist as one way of resolving this impasse.

CHAPTER 8

DIALOGUE OF TRADITIONS OF SACRIFICE IN HEBREWS 9:1 – 10:18, GANDA AND EUCHARIST

8.0 Introduction

We have come a long way in addressing the major issues I set myself to handle at the beginning of this study. In chapter five I explored the ways in which Hebrews 9:1 – 10:18 presents the death of Jesus Christ as sacrifice and the significance of this for the person who has faith in Him. The traditional understanding and practice of sacrifice among the Ganda was the primary focus of chapter six. Specific Ganda sacrifices were identified and their meaning explained. The modern trends and developments in Ganda sacrifice were also examined. As a necessary part of this study, chapter seven underscored the sacrificial language in the liturgy of the Christian sacrament of the eucharist. This discussion centred on the Ganda translated or formulated liturgies.

This chapter seeks to bring out the points of connection between the Ganda traditional sacrifice (sacrifice in the daily life of the Ganda) and the sacrifice of Christ in Hebrews 9:1 – 10:18. My motif will be that of comparison of these two traditions (pointing out similarities and differences in a detailed systematic manner). Later in the discussion, I will state the contributions of these two to the understanding of the Christian sacrament of the eucharist. My ultimate aim is to put forth an inculturated understanding of the eucharist among the Ganda that is based on both the understanding of the sacrificial death of Christ in Heb 9:1 – 10:18 and a strong contextual theology of the eucharist – i.e a theology that is both biblical and contextual.

8.1 Similarities between sacrifice in Heb 9:1 – 10:18 and Ganda sacrifice

In considering the way the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews presents the death of Christ as sacrifice in Heb 9:1 – 10:18 and the concept and practice of sacrifice among the Ganda, one is immediately struck by the similarities between these two. However, I must hasten to add that these similarities are mainly of a conceptual nature. The similarities

are noticeable in the way in which sacrifice is understood, its meaning and purpose. We shall now turn to the strands that bring these two traditions together.

8.1.1 The understanding of blood as the seat (symbol of life)

The author of Hebrews constantly uses the phrase 'Christ's blood' in referring to the sacrificial death of Christ (Heb 9:14; 10:19, 29; 12:24; 13:12, 20). My argument throughout the study of Hebrews is that the author is using 'blood' to refer to the life of Christ given up in death as sacrifice. From beginning to end, the author of Hebrews uses the Levitical framework of the Day of Atonement ritual (Leviticus 16) to explain the death of Christ as sacrifice. As I have stated before, in the Old Testament blood is identified with life (cf. Deut 12:23), and in Lev 17:11 life is located in blood so that blood is equal to life. I have argued further, that it is on the basis of this that blood is able to atone for sins. Now it is common knowledge that the death of Christ was not particularly 'bloody'. People who died by hanging (crucifixion to be exact) died of exhaustion rather than through loss of blood or wounds.¹ It seems right to conclude that the reference to the 'blood of Christ' in the Epistle to the Hebrews should be understood in the Old Testament cultic sense to mean life given up in death – affirming the statement we made earlier on that 'life is located in blood so that blood is equal to life'.

Similarly, the Ganda understand blood to be the locus of all forms of life and not just red liquid or substance. Writing generally about the sanctity of life in the blood, M. Y. Nabofa in his article 'Blood Symbolism in African religion', states

The majority of Africans believe that the human soul has its seat in the heart and the blood, which is also believed to be the vehicle through which the manifestations of the essence of being are transmitted to every part of the human body. In most African concepts of being or existence, it is held that when the vital life force ceases to vibrate in man or animal the functioning of the heart, and consequently, the circulation of the blood will come to a standstill and the life of

¹ The piercing of Jesus' side with a spear by one of the soldiers (only recorded in John 19:34) leading to the flow of blood and water from the pierced side is done when Jesus has already been pronounced dead (Jn 19:33). Jesus did not die as a result of this flow of blood.

such a creature will terminate. ... It is this close relationship between the human soul, which is believed to have originated from God, and blood that has strengthened the African's belief that blood is life. This has also ascribed sanctity to human life. The various African concepts of human existence are unequivocally in harmony with the levitical idea that blood is life (Deuteronomy 12:23), and this is one of the major reasons why it occupies a very significant place in African beliefs and thought forms, especially in sacrificial rites.²

Laurent Magesa can likewise affirm that '... blood has a very high concentration of the power of life, so much so that it is often identified with life itself'.³ H. Wheeler Robinson echoes this too in his elaborate article on 'Blood' in the *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics Volume II*. Emphasizing the centrality of blood in ritual sacrifice, Robinson states, 'no theory of sacrifice can be regarded as satisfactory which places blood at the circumference rather than at the centre'.⁴ Mbiti on his part writes, 'The King's blood which is the very essence of his life and therefore that of his nation must not be shed at all, and many societies all over Africa observe this taboo'.⁵

Among the Ganda, the expression, *okuyiwa omusayi* (literally: 'spilling, pouring or shedding of blood') is not used in the sense of merely loss of blood or bleeding but is used to refer to the total loss of life – death.⁶ They treat blood reverently. Human or

² M. Y. Nabofa, 'Blood Symbolism in African Religion' in *Religious Studies* 21 (1985), p. 390.

³ Laurent Magesa, *African Religion: The Moral Traditions of Abundant life* (Mary Knoll, New York, Orbis Books: 1997), p. 162.

⁴ H. Wheeler Robinson, "Blood", in James Hastings, John A. Selbie and other scholars (eds), *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, Volume II*, (Edinburgh, T & T Clark, 1909), pp. 714 – 715, 719.

⁵ Mbiti, *African Religions*, p. 180. Elsewhere, Mbiti, *African Religions*, p. 138 writing about the 'blood of virginity', states 'The blood of virginity is the symbol that life has been preserved, that the spring of life has not already been flowing wastefully, and that both the girl and her relatives have preserved the sanctity of human reproduction. Only marriage may shed this sacred blood, for in doing so it unlocks the door for members of the family in the loins to come forward and join both the living and living dead'.

⁶ Among my own people, the *Bakozzo* of Uganda, the same idea is present. The expression, *eriutha omusasi* is used to refer to death and not merely bleeding. To say, *Yesu mutha omusasi wiwe busana nethu* (literally: 'Jesus shed or spilled his blood for us') is understood to mean that 'Jesus died for us'.

animal blood when spilled (save when it is done ritually in sacrificial rites), is quickly covered with earth, dust or even grass. As Nabofa has rightly put it, 'Blood is not conceived as a natural symbol of life, but it is life itself. ... It is believed that there is a mysterious power in every blood because of its close connection with the vital life force which permeates all things, both animate and inanimate'.⁷ Blood if carelessly shed or handled can be very dangerous to an individual or even the community as a whole. In the same vein, if blood is reverently handled (as is the case of ritual sacrifice) it is very efficacious and has positive benefits for the people.⁸ It is taboo and considered dangerous among the Ganda to shed especially human blood (i.e. to kill) and blood revenge was a normal response in situations where the soul / life of a relative had been brutally terminated either accidentally or by design by members of other families or clans. The blood of the relative had to be avenged at all costs otherwise the soul of the deceased would return to haunt the living.⁹

Later in our discussion, we shall examine various areas in which this principle of 'blood as life' is applied.

8.1.2 The principle of substitutionary death

In Hebrews as well as in the Ganda understanding of sacrifice there is the belief in the substitutionary death – the belief that one has died instead and for others. Christ is described in Hebrews as bearing the sins of many: '... so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin, but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him' (Heb 9:28). The point is implicit in Hebrews' presentation of Jesus' death as sacrifice. He is not 'dying his own death' so to say. He

⁷ Nabofa, 'Blood Symbolism', p. 390.

⁸ Nabofa, 'Blood Symbolism', p. 390.

⁹ Nabofa, 'Blood Symbolism', p. 391 makes reference to the Wanika and Damaras, who are said to be unwilling to shed any blood – even of an animal. So according to Nabofa 'they stone to death or suffocate cattle or any animal they may wish to slaughter for any purpose'.

did not deserve to die. He came to help the descendants of Abraham – making a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people (Heb 2:16 - 17).¹⁰

The idea of substitutionary death is a familiar one in the Ganda practice and understanding of ritual sacrifice. We have already examined the clear cases of the Scapegoat offering (*kyonziira*) for the nation and the King and the Scapegoat offering (*kyonziira*) for an individual.¹¹ In both of these cases, the Scapegoat offering (*kyonziira*) is understood to be given up instead of the nation, King or individual. It bears the full brunt of what the nation, King or individual would have suffered. This way the *kyonziira* is clearly a substitutionary sacrifice for the nation, King and the individual.

The same was observed in the case of the ritual sacrifice that Justine went through to deal with the impending death that was threatening her life and that of her family.¹² Justine was asked to lay her hands on each sacrificial victim before it was ritually killed. This way, Justine was told, the impending calamity to her and her family was being transferred to the sacrificial animals and in dying they (sacrificial victims) would completely deal with this calamity. In a sense, the sacrificial victims were dying a substitutionary death. J. O. Ubruhe has researched the *concept of carrier* within the traditional African society in view of the significance that Africans attach to sacrifices. He has demonstrated that substitutionary sacrifice-carrier or ‘scapegoatism’ as he chooses to call it can be the basis for the inculturation of the Christian message in Africa. The African concept of carrier

¹⁰ This is not the place to re-open theological debate of whether Jesus Christ dies as our ‘representative’ or ‘substitute’. I contend that in as far as Christ identifies with us – being one of us (Heb 2:14 – 18) he is truly our representative. Equally true is the fact that in as far as Christ does for us what we could never do for ourselves (Heb 9:11 – 14, 15, 24 – 28; 10:10, 12, 19-22) he is by God’s grace our substitute. I understand ‘representation’ and ‘substitution’ to be correlative terms and not opposed to each other. See further C. E. Gunton, *The Actuality of Atonement. A Study of Metaphor, Rationality and the Christian Tradition* (T & T Clark, Edinburgh, 1988), pp. 161 – 167 for an illuminating discussion of the distinction between representation and substitution.

¹¹ See sections 6.5.1.3 & 6.5.2.2.

¹² Refer to section 6.6.3.

could become a means of incarnating Christ's self-sacrifice to atone for the sins of humanity.¹³

8.1.3 Human beings as sacrificial victims

The faith in Jesus Christ being God notwithstanding, the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews is candid about the full humanity of Christ:

Since, therefore, the children share flesh and blood, he himself likewise shared the same things¹⁴, so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death. For it is clear that he did not come to help angels, but the descendants of Abraham. Therefore he had to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect, so that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make a sacrifice of atonement for sins of the people (Heb 2:14-17).

That human beings can be sacrificial victims to make atonement for sins of others is a well known idea among the Ganda. Human blood is highly valued among the Ganda and the most valued sacrifice is that of a human being. Human sacrificial victims were involved in sacrifices to the national deities: *lubaale* Mukasa (particularly at his annual festival) and *lubaale* Kibuuka. All Scapegoat offerings (*byonziira* – plural for *kyonziira*) for the nation and the King included among other items human victims. Sacrifices to the dead *Kabaka* (King) invariably included human sacrificial victims. It was widely

¹³ J. O. Ubruhe, 'The African Concept of Sacrifice: A starting Point for Inculturation' in *AFER*, 40 (1998), pp. 203, 214.

¹⁴ This refers to the incarnation of Christ that John calls 'the Word became flesh and lived among us' (John 1:14). Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 78 note 55 commenting on this Hebrew passage states: 'our author insists that Christ partook of flesh and blood in the same way as the *children*, so that his humanity is as genuine as theirs (Heb 2:17). ... the "children are sharers in (ἡμετέροις) the flesh and blood" in the sense that that is their original and natural state; human beings are per se creatures of flesh and blood. Our Lord, however, existed before his incarnation; "flesh and blood" form no essential part of his eternal being; but at a fixed point in time, by his own choice, "he also himself in like manner partook (μετέσχευεν, aorist) of the same" and so began to share fully the nature of those whom he chose thus to redeem'.

believed that the spirits of these victims were required to minister to the spirit of the dead king.

As we observed earlier on, recent developments in Ganda sacrifice have seen an escalation of human sacrifice.¹⁵ Human ritual sacrifice is prominent among offerers seeking wealth. To amass wealth quickly, one must offer the highest valued sacrifice – which according to the Ganda is human life. This is in addition to the other animal sacrificial victims. The trouble is that once wealth is assumed to have been acquired through human sacrifice, it is maintained by offering more sacrifices most often of more human beings.

The point is that to say Jesus Christ died as sacrifice to atone for the sins of the people does not sound strange to the ears of the Ganda.

8.1.4 The choice of sacrificial victim by the deity

It is clearly stated in both sacrificial traditions that the choice of the sacrificial victim is the prerogative of the deity. Christ's appointment as a Son, high priest and as sacrifice was a divine appointment and not a self appointment or human appointment. The author of Hebrews is explicit about this, '... but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds' (Heb 1:2). On Jesus' priesthood, the author writes, 'And one does not presume to take this honour, but takes it only when called by God, just as Aaron was. So also Christ did not glorify himself in becoming a high priest, but was appointed by the one who said to him, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you"' (Heb 5:4-5). For a sacrifice that could take away sins, the author of Hebrews appropriates the prophetic words of Psalm 40:6-8 as being fulfilled at the time of Christ's incarnation – '... Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me ...' (Heb 10:5). The ramifications of the various interpretations of this text notwithstanding, Bruce rightly argues, 'The

¹⁵ Refer to section 6.6.

body which was “fashioned” for the speaker by God is given back to God as a “living sacrifice”, to be employed in obedient service to him’.¹⁶

Likewise, our study of the understanding and practice of sacrifice in the daily life of the Ganda revealed that each *lubaale* (deity) through the *mmandwa* (medium / mouth piece of the deity) prescribed the type of sacrifice that was to be offered and when (appropriate time for making the sacrifice). No sacrifice would be made to any deity without an oracle from the *mmandwa* about particularities of the required sacrifice. In the event of doubt about what was to be offered as sacrifice in any situation, it was incumbent upon the sacrificer or offerer to make inquiries from the *mmandwa* (spokesperson) of that particular deity regarding the nature of sacrifice that was to be made. It is also important to note that all material blessings came from the deity and in a sense they were sacrificing to the deity what the deity had given them in the first place.

8.1.5 Similarities related to intention or purpose of sacrifice

The world view of the Jews in the Old Testament and that of the Ganda are similar.¹⁷ There is a sense in which the socio-cultural environment of the Jews in the Old Testament is similar to that of many African societies. The world view of both consists of a visible material realm and an invisible spiritual realm. The author of Hebrews (as mentioned earlier on) draws on the Old Testament (particularly Leviticus 16) to explain the significance of Jesus Christ’s death on the cross. One of the functions of the sacrifice of Christ that he shares with the Ganda sacrifice is that through his sacrificial death, Christ has made possible communication between the people and God (Heb 10:19 – 20). Sacrifice in both Hebrews and among the Ganda is what establishes the communication channel between the deity (in the spiritual realm) and the people (in the material realm). Sacrifice becomes the means of approaching the deity. Related to this, are such other shared functions of sacrifice like communion and fellowship all of which are made possible by sacrifice.

¹⁶ Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 240.

¹⁷ Refer to chapters three and six of this study respectively.

Another similarity related to intention or purpose of sacrifice is that of expiation. Sacrifice for both becomes the means of expiating sin. I acknowledge that between Hebrews and the Ganda there are differences in the understanding of sin and how this concept of expiation is practically applied. But what I want to emphasise here is the principle and idea of sacrifice having the power to expiate sin and not the mechanics of how this happens in practice.

8.2 Differences between sacrifice in Heb 9:1 – 10:18 and Ganda sacrifice

In the preceding section we have considered the similarities between sacrifice in the Epistle to the Hebrews and Ganda sacrifice. Together with these similarities are distinct differences between these traditions that we now consider below. Some of these differences are the ground for the superiority of the sacrifice of Christ in Hebrews over the numerous Ganda sacrifices. In our discussion I will point out the areas in which the sacrifice of Christ in Hebrews supersedes Ganda sacrifice – issues that need to be well explained to the Ganda and taken care of in any inculturation process.

8.2.1 The object / recipient of the sacrifice

When it comes to the object or recipient of sacrifice, we encounter a considerable difference between the sacrifice of Christ in the Epistle to the Hebrews and Ganda sacrifice. True, both in Hebrews and among the Ganda, one can reasonably say that the goal is to worship God. One may even go a step further and say that ‘both communities worship the same God’. But one incontrovertible fact is that their conception and experience of him is significantly different in many respects. Because of this, the way these two communities approach God is significantly different. While in the Epistle to Hebrews sacrificial worship is an exclusive preserve of one God (*Yahweh*), the Ganda take liberty to sacrifice to a pantheon of deities.

The tradition in the Epistle to the Hebrews is in line with the overall belief enshrined in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. Sacrificial worship (and indeed any form of worship) is exclusively for *Yahweh*. The Old Testament is very explicit about

this. The principle is enshrined in the very first commandment given to Moses to pass on to the Israelites:

I am the Lord God your God, who brought you out of the Land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourselves an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God ... (Exodus 20:2 -5).

The *shema* conveys the same belief: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone' (Deuteronomy 6:4). The children of Israel were sternly warned against the worship of other gods, being constantly reminded that their God 'was a jealous God' who would unleash his anger upon them (Exodus 34 especially verses 13-15; Deut 6:15). They were to refrain from the worship of gods that belonged to their neighbours and as a precautionary measure they were not to intermarry lest foreign women sway their hearts from the sole worship of *Yahweh* to the worship of the pagan deities. In fact as they entered the Promised Land, they were instructed to dismantle / annihilate the religious structure and systems of their pagan neighbours (Exodus 34:13-15). Now it is to this God alone, one called *Yahweh*, that the Israelites offered sacrifices.¹⁸

In Hebrews, God who appoints Jesus Christ as both high priest and sacrifice, is the sole recipient of the sacrifice that Christ offers of himself (Heb 10:5 – 10). The author of Hebrews emphasises that the place of Christ's sacrifice – the Holy place that Christ entered with his own blood (Heb 9:12) – is heaven itself, the very presence of God who is the recipient of the sacrifice (Heb 9:24).

¹⁸ It appears that this concept of 'belief in *Yahweh* alone' i.e. absolute monotheism was not carried on in its original and conservative form throughout the life of the Israelites and indeed in the Christian era. N.T. Wright has suggested and detailed the various modifications in monotheism that were tolerated along the way. He states, 'There is a noticeable increase in speculation about heavenly beings other than the one god'. For details see N.T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1992), pp. 256-257.

Now the Ganda did not conceive of *Katonda* (Supreme Being) in the same way Israelites conceived of God (Yahweh). *Katonda* had no claims of exclusiveness and certainly did not appear to them as being 'jealous'! It is not recorded anywhere that *Katonda* ever decreed that sacrifices should not be offered to the numerous Ganda deities. Very rarely did the Ganda sacrifice to *Katonda* (Supreme Being). Most of the Ganda sacrifices (if not all) were offered to the different deities (*balubaale*) and ancestral spirits (*mizimu*).

While I acknowledge that this is a significant difference, I do not at all think that the two traditions are therefore irreconcilable on the basis of this. First, the Ganda like many other African societies recognise the existence of a Supreme Being – whom they called *Katonda*. This Supreme Being was not thought of or understood to be involved in the daily life of the ordinary *Muganda* (singular for *Baganda*). The deities (*balubaale*) were the ones who had a bearing on the daily affairs of the Ganda and it was on this basis that they were greatly revered, cherished and sacrificed to. I argued earlier on, that in the religious life of the Ganda, the fact that no sacrifices were made to the Supreme Being (or that *Katonda* was not sacrificed to regularly) was not seen as a contradiction nor did it undermine the existence and authority of *Katonda* in any way. Drawing from the institution of their cherished monarchy, no ordinary *Muganda* is expected to put himself or herself in a position of familiarity with the *kabaka* (king) or offer gifts to him regularly. To do that is a sign of disrespect and is neither expected nor acceptable. Likewise to offer sacrifices to *Katonda* or approach him regularly was not expected.

The onus is on the Church of Christ militant, to explain the story of the incarnation of Jesus Christ so that the people come to understand that in Christ is a concerned and caring God – one who is concerned about their gardens and crops, the rains, their fertility, their cars, cattle, HIV/AIDS and other diseases, poverty, jobs (getting jobs, retaining them, promotions), educational success etc. Such an understanding would make it unnecessary for people to turn to the traditional deities (*balubaale*) in times of crisis such as these.

8.2.2 Differences in the materials offered as sacrifice

The author of Hebrews discredits the levitical sacrifices pointing to the all sufficiency of the sacrifice of Christ (Heb 9:9 – 15; 10:5 – 14). Jesus Christ in the Epistle to the Hebrews is the sacrifice *per se*. This is in great contrast to the numerous materials used in Ganda sacrifice. Besides human sacrifice, there were other materials offered in sacrifice and these included among others: cattle, goats, fowl, barkcloth, libations of beer, harvests from the gardens, and unusually Scapegoat sacrifices included a dog. After a successful fishing expedition it was customary to give an offering of fish to *lubaale* Mukasa who was believed to have granted the big fish catch.

8.2.3 Christ as both high priest and sacrifice

Among the Ganda, the sacrifices were presided over by a priest (*kabona*). *Kabona* was the person in charge of the estates (*ekiggwa*) of the deity (*lubaale*) and his / her temple (*ssabo*). In Hebrews, Christ is not only the sacrifice he is also the high priest who offers himself as sacrifice to obtain eternal redemption for the people (Heb 9:11 – 12). This is part of the unique nature of Christ's priesthood and sacrifice which in turn makes him superior to the Levitical priests and sacrifices and by inference Ganda priests and sacrifices.

8.2.4 Frequency of sacrifice

Ganda sacrifices are by nature repetitive. So there were annual sacrificial festivals for *lubaale* Mukasa for example. This was in addition to many other sacrifices that were offered to him at his various temples in the countryside. Ordinarily, the need to sacrifice would be made through an oracle by the mouth piece of the deity (*mmandwa*). The *mmandwa* would make clear the type of sacrifice that was required and when it was required. Sometimes the people went to inquire of the *mmandwa* about a particular sacrificial ritual. But there were also thanksgiving and communion sacrifices. But for these as for many other sacrifices, the deity would have to first give a word of consent through the *mmandwa* (medium). This process would be repeated for as many times as it was demanded or deemed necessary by the deity.

In great contrast, the author of Hebrews speaks of the sacrifice of Christ as being 'once for all'. The sacrifice of Christ is an unrepeatable event offered once for all time for the salvation of humankind. It is an eternal sacrifice with eternal efficacy (Heb 7:27; 9:11-14; 10:12). The writer of Hebrews labours to contrast the sacrifice with the levitical sacrifices which were by nature repetitive (Heb 7:27a; 9:6-10). He draws the conclusion that the repetitive nature of the levitical sacrifices was testimony to their impotence (Heb 10:1 – 4). Likewise one could argue that the repetitive nature of the Ganda sacrifices is not a sign of strength but rather a weakness in their efficacy. This distinguishes the sacrifice of Christ in Hebrews as unique and superior to Ganda sacrifices.

8.2.5 Voluntary nature of the sacrifice of Christ

Elsewhere in this study I have argued that the sacrifice of Christ is voluntary, springing from whole-hearted obedience to the will of His Father – making it a sacrifice of 'willing obedience' (Heb 10:5-9). Christ offered himself as sacrifice voluntarily and not under compulsion. One can not speak of the Ganda sacrificial victims in the same way. They did not voluntarily offer themselves and certainly did not make conscious decisions to be sacrificed.¹⁹ When the sacrifice of Christ is by nature understood as one of divine obedience, then the understanding of the sacrifice of Christ in a ritual sense becomes secondary (and almost of no significance at all). I have maintained that the body of Christ was not offered on any physical altar and his blood was not smeared on any sacred object.

In contrast, Ganda ritual sacrifice was elaborate involving a number of rituals as was discussed in Chapter six of this study. Ganda sacrifice was very ritualistic as opposed to the sacrifice of Christ in Hebrews. Together with this is the point that while the place of the sacrifice of Christ is heaven itself (Heb 9:24), Ganda sacrifices were offered on

¹⁹ I must clarify here that what lacked on the part of the Ganda sacrificial victims was a conscious, active and deliberate acceptance to be sacrificed. But once their fate was decreed, as I have argued before in this study, "the sacrificial victims demonstrated passive acceptance" of their fate as "on behalf of the community".

earthly altars in earthly temples. This is one more aspect of Christ's sacrifice that makes it superior to the Ganda sacrifice.

Having compared the sacrificial tradition in the Epistle to the Hebrews with Ganda sacrifice, we need to go full circle by comparing Eucharistic sacrificial tradition with Ganda sacrifice. This will enable us to establish points of connection (and differences) between these traditions that are going to be key in our attempt towards an inculturated understanding of the eucharist.

8.3 Eucharistic Sacrifice and Ganda sacrifice compared

In this section we examine the similarities and differences between eucharistic sacrifice and Ganda sacrifice. Similarities between these two traditions will help us grasp the contribution(s) sacrifices in the daily life of the Ganda have for the understanding of the Christian sacrament of the eucharist. Differences may point to the strengths and weaknesses of each tradition, all of which are going to be essential in our search for a Ganda contextual theology of the eucharist.

8.3.1 Similarities between Eucharistic sacrifice and Ganda sacrifice

In chapter seven of this study, eucharistic theology was explored. The aim was not to attempt to harmonise or find solutions to the hotly debated historical and theological issues that have characterised theological debate on the issue over the ages. Besides, to try to do that would be to deviate from the central focus of this study. Where historical issues relating to the eucharist and theological issues were considered, the aim was to demonstrate whether this theology has changed over the years and how it has changed.²⁰ There was a particular emphasis on the theme of eucharistic sacrifice – its roots and development in the history of the Christian church in what has now come to be called the Christian sacrament of the eucharist. For purposes of our comparison with the Ganda sacrifice, I will recap the key issues in our consideration of eucharistic sacrifice.

²⁰ For example, this was the case when we considered sacrificial theology in the medieval and reformation periods.

For an understanding of the Christian Sacrament of the eucharist, the New Testament remains the appropriate starting point. The synoptic gospels and Paul's first letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor 10:14-22; 11:17-34) contain the roots of what we have come to call the Lord's Supper. In spite of theological differences and disagreements in interpretation, it seems reasonable to state that there is a link between the Lord's Supper and the last meal that Jesus had with the twelve before his death – the Last Supper. I also concluded that there was reasonable evidence to suggest that the Last Supper (without reproducing the arguments here) was a Passover meal. Whereas one may not speak of the Passover meal as a sacrifice for sin, we noted that its celebration both in the Old Testament and in Judaism of Jesus' time contained elements that would qualify it to be a sacrifice. First, the Passover lambs were slaughtered in the temple. Second, the blood of the sacrifice was poured at the altar and thus 'given to God'. The meat from the slaughtered lambs was then taken and eaten in homes by various families. So as Heron sums it up, in the Passover meal one part is given to God (i.e. blood) and another part (the meat from the slaughtered lambs) is shared by the worshippers fulfilling two key elements of a sacrifice.²¹ One can then conclude that the Passover sacrifice was a 'means of communion with God' as Marshall rightly suggests.²²

It was also demonstrated in this study that the meal that Jesus had with the twelve before his death (i.e. Last Supper) can be understood as a sacrifice. Inherently the words of institution of the Last Supper (both in the bread and cup sayings) are key features that bring out the sacrificial nature of the Last Supper (and therefore of the Lord's Supper or eucharist as we commonly refer to it). The eucharist as sacrifice comes to us as a gift, communion sacrifice, sacrifice of thanksgiving, atoning sacrifice, and substitutionary sacrifice. It is these sacrificial features of the eucharist that I will now compare with Ganda sacrifice below.

²¹ Heron, *Table and Tradition*, p. 33.

²² Marshall, *Last Supper*, p. 77.

8.3.1.1 The Eucharist as thanksgiving sacrifice

We have pointed out the close link between the Last supper and the Jewish Passover. Now the Jewish Passover with which the Last Supper is identified was in a sense celebrated to thank God for the liberation of the children of Israel from bondage in Egypt and for bringing them to the Promised Land. It could be inferred from this that the Passover meal was in one way a thanksgiving sacrifice for the great mercies of Yahweh to his people. The eucharist comes from the Greek word εὐχαριστία for thanksgiving. The Last Supper was in one sense a thanksgiving sacrifice in anticipation of what Jesus was about to do on the next day.

Among the Ganda sacrifices of thanksgiving were offered for favours and good fortunes received from the deity. It could be for a blessing of children (especially twins so cherished among the Ganda), good harvest, successful fishing expedition, safe return from a retaliatory war expedition. Giving thanks is part of the Ganda culture and very early in life young people are trained within the family setting to be grateful for any form of blessings or gifts received. Even in the modern society, most people will still visit diviners to give thanks to the deities (*balubaale*) for blessings of cars, houses, success in business, safe return from trading expeditions among others. Most people are involved in a number of risky ventures and will consult with the diviners before they set off on such risky ventures. Once they succeed they feel obliged to come and offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving.

8.3.1.2 The Eucharistic sacrifice as a gift

Implied in the words and actions of Jesus at the Last Supper is that what he is giving them is a gift. In Matthew and Mark's version of the institution of the Lord's Supper, Jesus invites and commands the disciples to 'take and eat' (though Mark has only 'take' cf. Mk 14:22; Mt 26:26). The distribution of the bread and the cup by Jesus that follows clearly indicates that what He is offering to them is a gift.²³ Jesus in his action gives his

²³ K. R. Seasoltz 'Another look at Sacrifice' in *Worship* volume 74, Number 5 (September 2000), p. 408 has put it this way: 'The celebration of the eucharist is first of all an expression of the sacrificial gift-giving on the part of God in Christ and through the power of the Spirit, but it is also constitutive of that divine gift'.

disciples a gift and the disciples respond by receiving the gift thus committing themselves to a relationship with Jesus Christ. As explained before, in receiving the bread and cup, the disciples accept the sacrificial gift of salvation that Jesus offers them.

In our discussion of the significance of Ganda sacrifice, we noted that gift giving and taking is part of Ganda culture. We further observed that one is expected to give even a bigger gift in return for any gift received. Among the Ganda it is very offensive for one to refuse a gift. One way of maintaining relationship among the Ganda is through gift exchange. We observed that sacrifice among the Ganda opens and establishes communication between the human beings and the invisible spirits. One of the instruments of this communication we argued is through the offering of sacrifices as gifts to the deities (*balubaale*). So it was usual for gifts of barkcloths and libations of beers to be placed in the shrine for use by the deity. Fire wood was another such gift to help keep the temple fire burning. Other gifts sent by the *Kabaka* (King) included slaves to be offered as sacrificial victims, goats, women, men, barkcloths and beer. The King often sent these gifts to the national deities (*balubaale*).

8.3.1.3 The Eucharist as a representative or vicarious sacrifice

Luke's version of the words of institution point to the sacrifice of the Last Supper as representative or vicarious. Luke states, 'This is my body which is given for you' ... 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood' (Lk 19-20). Matthew writes explicitly, 'for this is the blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins' (Mt 26:28). Jesus' sacrifice here is presented as vicarious - being on behalf of others - and this fits very well the suffering Servant imagery of Isaiah 53. I have argued before that the phrase 'for many' may be a reference to both Jews and Gentiles. Together with the element of representative or vicarious sacrifice of Christ is the understanding of the sacrifice of Christ as substitutionary sacrifice. This is evident from the words of institution 'my body given for you'. Mark brings this out clearly in the phrase: 'which is poured out for many'. This, coupled with Mark's ransom saying (Mk 10:45) completes the picture of the suffering Servant of Isaiah 53. Mark here brings out Jesus'

‘self-understanding as the Servant of God - foreseeing his death as bringing atonement and inaugurating the new covenant foretold by Jeremiah’ (Jer 31:31-34).

In the comparison section of Ganda sacrifice and the sacrifice of Christ in Hebrews, we observed that the idea of representative / substitutionary death is a familiar one in the Ganda practice and understanding of ritual sacrifice. The idea is present in the Scapegoat offering (*kyonziira*) for the nation and the King and the Scapegoat offering (*kyonziira*) for an individual. The Scapegoat offering (*kyonziira*) is understood to be given up instead of the nation, King or individual. The Scapegoat offering (*kyonziira*) suffered what would have befallen the nation, King or individual making it a substitutionary sacrifice for the nation, King and the individual.

8.3.1.4 The Eucharist as a communion sacrifice

In our discussion of the nature of the sacrifice of the Last Supper, we concluded that there was a sense in which the Last Supper was a communion sacrifice. In the sharing of the bread and wine is a special bonding of Jesus and his disciples. In the celebration of the eucharist, there is a sense in which we get united with the risen and glorified Lord Jesus Christ. For Paul, the sharing in of one cup and one loaf binds us together as participants in Christ and with one another (1 Cor 10:16-17).

Similarly, sacrifice among the Ganda fostered and enhanced fellowship / communion with the deities (*balubaale*) and all the good spirits. Moments of fellowship with the deity and benevolent ancestral spirits were moments of great celebration for the individual, family or clan. The blood from the sacrificial victims was made to flow at the shrine of the deity or ancestral spirit. All the members of the family shared in the fellowship / communion sacrifice. As we observed in chapter six, gift and communication sacrifices often ended up being fellowship / communion sacrifices as well.

8.3.1.5 Eucharistic sacrifice as a way of atoning

Matthew in his version of the institution of the Lord's Supper states, 'for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins' (Mt 26:28). Clearly Matthew wants us to understand the sacrifice of the Last Supper as an atoning sacrifice. This seems to correlate well with the original Passover (Exodus 12). The blood of the Passover lamb smeared on the doorposts and lintels of the houses of Jews made the angel of death to *pass over* them (Ex 12:13, 23). The blood of the Passover lamb saved the firstborns of the Jews. It is clear that in the Last Supper, Jesus is presented as the new Passover lamb. He is to deliver the people from the wrath of God due to the sins of humanity. John goes even a step further by presenting Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of world (John 1:29). So Jesus as the Passover lamb atones for the sins of the people. I should possibly say something about the lamb imagery at this point. Nothing is said among the Ganda sacrificial system about lambs as sacrificial victims. The closest I came across was a prohibition to kill sheep during a time of war. Those who remained at home were never to slaughter a sheep while the war was still on.²⁴ But also implied in the Lamb of God imagery (at least in John 1:29) is the theme of expiation of sins. This was more explicit in our consideration of the significance of the sacrifice of Jesus in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Evil (*ekibi*) among the Ganda is thought to threaten the very existence of the community.²⁵ It is detrimental to both the communication and communion with the invisible / spiritual realm and an atoning sacrifice was offered to restore the broken communication, communion / friendship / fellowship with the spiritual realm.

8.3.1.6 The significance of blood in both traditions

It is noticeable that 'blood' is an essential element of sacrifice in the words of institution of the Last Supper. Through the blood as we have already noted, there is atonement and expiation of sins. As elsewhere, I submit that 'blood' here refers to the life of Christ given up in death as sacrifice.

²⁴ See Roscoe, *The Baganda*, p. 363.

²⁵ See Section 6.7.5 of this study for a concise discussion of the concept of sin among the Ganda.

Likewise, as already noted, 'blood' is an essential element in Ganda sacrifice. Its importance is seen in many of the cleansing sacrificial rituals – rituals of expiation, propitiatory sacrifices, and atonement sacrifices. In the next section I examine the role played by blood especially in non-sacrificial rituals of blood-pact covenants.

8.3.2 Differences between Eucharistic sacrifice and Ganda sacrifice

While there are similarities between the eucharistic sacrifice and Ganda sacrifice as examined above, the two traditions should not be thought of as being harmonious. Significant differences between the two traditions exist and I will briefly consider them below.

First of all, the object of sacrifice is different. In line with the Biblical tradition of sacrifice, the sacrifice of the Last Supper is exclusively to the Most High God. We clearly pointed out this in our comparison of sacrifice in Hebrews and Ganda sacrifice. On the other hand, the recipients of Ganda sacrifice are the various deities (*balubaale*) and ancestral spirits (*mizimu*). I have not found evidence to substantiate the claim that Ganda sacrifices were ultimately to the Supreme Being (*Katonda*). Direct sacrifices to *Katonda* are equally hard to come by and I have explained this scenario in preceding sections.

Second, while in the Last Supper, Christ is the sole sacrificial victim, in Ganda sacrificial tradition there are a host of sacrificial victims ranging from human beings to dogs (as in the case of Scapegoat sacrifices - *kyonziira*). In this bracket as we have already mentioned are oxen, goats, fowl, fish, barkcloths, firewood, libations of beer and an assortment of farm produce.

Third, Jesus in the Last Supper willingly offers himself as sacrifice. This is evident in the dominant personal pronouns in the words of institution. Jesus is the one who gives up his 'body' and 'blood': his very life – a clear reference to his sacrificial death as we have already observed. Jesus does this of his own free will in obedience to the will of his Father. As was the case in Hebrews, Jesus in the Last Supper is both priest and sacrifice.

He offers himself as sacrifice. True, among the Ganda, there was a sense in which the sacrifice offered symbolically represented the offerer but we cannot speak of Ganda sacrifice in categories of literal self-giving as was the case of Christ nor can we say of the Ganda sacrificial victims that they willingly offered themselves.

Fourth, while Jesus shared the Last Supper with the twelve, it is probable that the implications of what Jesus did at the Last Supper went beyond the twelve. The phrase 'for many' in Matthew 'for this is the blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins' (Mt 26:28) and in Mark's ransom saying 'For the Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many' (Mk 10:45) may be a reference to both Jews and Gentiles.²⁶ Participation in the Lord's Supper is open to all who believe in him.

Among the Ganda, apart from the sacrifices to the national deities (*balubaale*) in which all participated, most of the sacrifices revolve around family and clan lineages. There are no recorded cases of neighbouring tribes being invited to participate in the national sacrificial festivities.

8.4 Sacrifice in Heb 9:1 – 10:18 and Eucharistic sacrifice

While the purpose of this section is not to resolve whether there are eucharistic allusions in the Epistle to the Hebrews or still whether the eucharist occupies a central place in the thought of Hebrews; the matter nevertheless requires examination here. R. Williamson has ably articulated the arguments for and against eucharistic allusions in Hebrews in his article 'The Eucharist and the Epistle to the Hebrews'.²⁷ Williamson in the opening sentence of his article states, 'No generally accepted conclusion has yet been reached on the subject of the eucharist and Hebrews'²⁸. Bruce is forthright in his comments on the probable eucharistic passage of Heb 13:10-11. On the question of whether there might be

²⁶ This may appear too big a claim for the evidence adduced here but this matter is clarified especially in Paul's letters (e.g. Gal 2:6-8; 3:26-29; Eph 2:11-22).

²⁷ R. Williamson, 'The Eucharist and the Epistle to the Hebrews', *NTS*, 21 (1974-5), pp. 300-12.

²⁸ Williamson, 'The Eucharist', p. 300.

a connection between this passage and the eucharist – Bruce’s answer is that there is ‘no direct connection at all’²⁹. He only says, ‘It is remarkable how our author avoids mentioning the Eucharist when he has every opportunity to do so’³⁰. The Greek word θυσιαστήριον translated *altar* has been understood by others to refer to an altar within the community – i.e. the table at the Lord’s Supper. But as Williamson has argued, given Hebrews’ line of a heavenly sanctuary (Heb 9:23-24), it is better to think of this altar as a heavenly altar in the heavenly sanctuary.³¹ In addition to this passage, Williamson has examined Heb 2:14; 6:4-5; 9:1-14, 20; 10:19-20 which are the other passages with probable eucharistic allusions.³² His conclusion is that on the basis of these passages, ‘it is impossible to deduce with any absolute certainty the views of the author of Hebrews on the eucharist’³³.

It is noticeable that Williamson’s conclusions are based on the epistle’s silence, a fact he seems to acknowledge when he writes, ‘it is a fact that Hebrews is silent at points where an explicit and unambiguous reference to the eucharist might have been expected’³⁴. That the author of Hebrews does not use explicit eucharistic language is fact. But Williamson’s further conclusions based on the absence of explicit and unambiguous eucharistic language are untenable. Basing his argument on Hebrews 11, Williamson draws the conclusion that ‘the epistle seems to be directed against a view of the Christian religion which regards the eucharist as a means by which the benefits of Christ’s sacrifice are mediated or communicated sacramentally to the worshipper’.³⁵ He further interprets

²⁹ Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 379.

³⁰ Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 379. But it is not reasonable for Bruce to draw such dogmatic conclusions from an argument based on silence. It is also reasonable to argue that Bruce, a Protestant and strong adherent of the Protestant Reformation cannot allow notions of sacrifice to be connected to the eucharist.

³¹ Williamson, ‘The Eucharist’, p. 308.

³² Williamson, ‘The Eucharist’, pp. 301-307.

³³ Williamson, ‘The Eucharist’, p. 307.

³⁴ Williamson, ‘The Eucharist’, p. 309. Williamson here (as was the case with Bruce above) seems to take liberty to draw conclusions from an argument based on silence. Arguments from silence are always problematic and care must be taken not to draw more than is necessary from them.

³⁵ Williamson, ‘The Eucharist’, pp. 309-310.

the absence of reference to the eucharist in the exhortation for the believers not to neglect meeting together (Heb 10:24-25) to mean that 'the eucharist as an element in Christian worship or an influence in the Christian community's life' did not exist.³⁶ Taking the 'outward ordinances' of Heb 9:9-10 to include the eucharist, Williamson seems to imply that the author of Hebrews seems to have put an end to any and every form of sacramental worship. He states, 'One of the distinctive emphases of Hebrews may well be a view ... that the sacrifice of Christ was of a kind that rendered obsolete every form of cultus that placed a material means of sacramental communion between God and the worshipper'³⁷. Williamson seems to turn the silence in Hebrews into (in part) a polemic against the Eucharist. There is a limit to the amount of information one can glean out of silence.

While I acknowledge the absence of explicit eucharistic language in Hebrews, there is equally no explicit condemnation or prohibition of the eucharist. If the argument that the people addressed in Hebrews belonged to 'a *house church* within the wider fellowship of a city church'³⁸ is anything to go by, then we know from Acts 2:46 that 'the breaking of bread' (used here to refer to the celebration of the eucharist) characterised early Christian gatherings in homes and it may not have been necessary for the author of Hebrews to emphasize it when he exhorts them not to neglect the regular Christian gatherings (Heb 10:24-25). Williamson's assertion that the eucharist is part of the 'outward ordinances' of Heb 9:9-10 that have to end with the advent of the 'time of reformation', is not convincing.

In the comparison of sacrifice in Heb 9:1 – 10:18 and eucharistic sacrifice, I will focus mainly on the use and meaning of sacrificial language as it relates to the death of Christ in Heb 9:1 – 10:18 and eucharistic sacrifice as it has been traditionally understood. I will mention the key aspects without going into details as most of them have been discussed in preceding sections.

³⁶ Williamson, 'The Eucharist', p. 310.

³⁷ Williamson, 'The Eucharist', p. 310.

³⁸ Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 9.

First, there is agreement on the nature of victim and object of sacrifice. In both Hebrews and eucharistic sacrifice, Christ is the sacrificial victim and God (*Yahweh*) is the exclusive recipient of the sacrifice. It is theologically arguable that in both Hebrews and eucharistic sacrifice, Christ offers himself – he voluntarily offers himself in willing obedience to the will of the Father. Second, in both, blood is central as the agent through which cleansing / expiation of sins is realised. The blood of Christ is in Hebrews and eucharistic sacrifice the blood of the New Covenant and the blood of atonement – reconciling God’s people to himself. Third, through Christ’s sacrifice in Hebrews and in the eucharistic sacrifice, is formed a community of faithful worshippers who are in communion and fellowship with God and with one another. Fourth, the benefits of the sacrifice of Christ in Hebrews and in the eucharistic sacrifice are appropriated by the worshippers through faith and by faith alone. True, there has to be the right inner disposition on the part of the worshippers but it is to be sustained that even such inner disposition is all by the grace of God – for ultimately God through His Holy Spirit works in the lives of His people.

I must now turn to seeming differences between sacrifice in Hebrews and eucharistic sacrifice. These are not to be understood as fundamental differences. They do not significantly affect the nature of Christ’s sacrifice and purpose.

First, as we have argued before, in Hebrews, the sacrifice of Christ is a *once-for-all* event. Christ offers himself once for all as an eternal sacrifice for the eternal redemption of God’s people. In the eucharistic sacrifice we have a *anamnesis* of the work of Christ (or of his sacrifice) completed once-for-all. Christ is not being in essence sacrificed again in the eucharistic sacrifice. While there is agreement across different denominations that there is a sense in which Christ is present in the eucharistic celebration, there is disagreement about the nature of Christ’s presence in the eucharist as was discussed in chapter seven.

The second ostensible difference is that while in Hebrews, Christ is presented as the real sacrifice, in the eucharistic sacrifice Christ’s body and blood are represented by symbols

of bread and blood. But as we have already observed, there is a sense in which Christ is present in the eucharistic sacrifice / celebration. Additionally, the use of 'bread' and 'wine' in the eucharistic sacrifice points to the eucharist as a ritualistic celebration while as we argued, one can not speak of the sacrifice of Christ in Hebrews in a strictly ritual sense. But then one has to acknowledge the fact that in the eucharistic celebration, all we have are symbols to explain the nature and significance of Christ's death and resurrection in a ritual of the eucharist.

Having discussed the points of connection between the three sacrificial traditions: the sacrifice in Hebrews, Ganda sacrifice and eucharistic sacrifice – the task at hand is to articulate how all this relates to the Ganda in their daily / ordinary lives. In specific terms what contribution(s) does thought about the sacrifice of Christ in the Epistle to the Hebrews and sacrifice in the daily life of the Ganda have for the understanding of the Christian sacrament of the eucharist? And if I am saying that the eucharistic sacrifice is vital for the life of the ordinary Ganda (it is not just like the traditional sacrifice but has superseded it), how can it address the daily concerns of the Ganda?

8.5 Towards an Inculturated Understanding of the Eucharist among the Ganda

It is granted that the eucharist is one of the central sacraments of the Christian Church and that in its celebration the passion and resurrection of Jesus Christ is made meaningful to the worshippers. The question that needs to be addressed is: given the Ganda traditional understanding of the centrality of sacrifice, how can one re-interpret the central symbols of the Christian faith meaningfully? How can the celebration of the eucharist address the daily concerns of the Ganda? My thesis is that an understanding of sacrifice in Heb 9:1 – 10:18 and Ganda sacrifice are key to the appreciation and meaningful celebration of the Christian sacrament of the eucharist by the Ganda. The Ganda have a strong cultural fabric and that is why I argue that if anything is to be relevant and meaningful to them, it has to be woven into their culture. The theological term that I will use for this is 'inculturation' and I will be explaining it in the pages that follow. Specifically the sacrificial nature of the eucharist needs to be inculturated in Ganda culture.

First of all, by way of introduction, I need to explain briefly (for purposes of this study) what I mean by culture and inculturation. This is not meant to be comprehensive but I believe it will help us understand the confines of our approach.

8.5.1 Culture and the Christian tradition

I take Waliggo's all encompassing definition of culture to mean

the sum total of all people's traditional religions, customs, traditions, rites, ceremonies, symbols, art, wisdom and institutions ... It is based on a people's world view, the way they relate to the Supreme Being, to the supernatural powers and phenomena, to their fellow men and women, to the world of other living being and inanimate beings, and to the world underground.³⁹

If we are to understand culture to embrace all these (and the list is by no means exhaustive), what are we to make of the relationship between God and culture? This question becomes even more pertinent when the list above includes aspects of African culture that were considered by missionaries as superstitious. What is God's attitude to them? This question and many others related questions need to be honestly addressed if Christianity is to be fully inculturated among the Ganda as we shall be exploring shortly. Charles H. Kraft in his distinguished work, *Christianity in Culture* has pointed out four positions that people have held to define the relationship between God and culture and these are: 'God-against-culture, God-in-culture, God-above-culture and God-above-but-through culture'.⁴⁰ I strongly feel that for one to understand inculturation, knowledge of God's relationship with culture is imperative and so I will summarize Kraft's description of each of these positions below.

According to Kraft, those who espouse the God-against-culture position argue that 'God is opposed to culture; the choice for commitment to God is by definition a decision to oppose culture'.⁴¹ Here culture is equated to the world which is in the power of the evil

³⁹ John Mary Waliggo, Arij A. Roest, et al, *Inculturation: Its meaning and Urgency* (Nairobi, St. Paul Publications, 1986), p. 27.

⁴⁰ Charles H. Kraft, *Christianity in Culture* (Maryknoll, New York, Orbis Books, 1979), pp. 104-115.

⁴¹ Kraft, *Christianity in*, p. 104.

one / Satan. Culture is therefore relegated to evil that surrounds the believers who ought to be careful not to be identified with culture but rather to separate themselves from it. The way to holiness as Kraft puts it, 'is to escape from and to condemn the world'.⁴² Since God, according to this view, is against human culture, the faithful are exhorted to 'withdraw, reject, escape, isolate, and insulate themselves from the world in order to develop and maintain holiness'.⁴³ But as Kraft rightly observes, this is a real fallacy. For culture is both internal and external. It is there within us and we can never separate ourselves from it or escape from it. Wherever we go, we carry it with ourselves.⁴⁴

On the other side of this extreme view of God-against-culture, is an equally distorted and extreme position on God's attitude to culture: the God-in-culture position. Proponents of this view, 'believe that, one way or another, God is contained either within culture in general or within one specific culture. ... Thus they see God as contained within, or endorsing, one particular culture. God is seen as either creating, gradually developing, or endorsing a given culture or subculture, and ordaining that all people everywhere if they are to be Christian be converted thereto'.⁴⁵

It is surprising how both the protestant and Roman Catholic missionaries who evangelized the Ganda beginning 1877 and 1879 respectively gave in to the temptation of both these two extreme positions. To them Ganda culture was evil – incompatible with their newly found faith in Christ (Christianity). Everything ranging from the Ganda language (*Luganda*) and Ganda names were to be given up in return for English and Latin that were the languages of the new religion.⁴⁶ Baptism became synonymous with

⁴² Kraft, *Christianity in*, p. 104. Proponents of this position find support in passages like I John 2:15-16 and 5:19 that warn believers against loving the world.

⁴³ Kraft, *Christianity in*, pp. 105-106.

⁴⁴ Kraft, *Christianity in*, pp. 105-106. To put it differently, James Chukwuma Okoye, 'Eucharist in African Perspective' in *Mission studies* Volume 19-2, 38 (2002), p. 160 states, 'Culture is not a reality on the ground: it is in the mind'.

⁴⁵ Kraft, *Christianity in*, pp. 106-7.

⁴⁶ It is astonishing to find that the current translated Roman Missal still has traces of Latin after over a century of Christianity among the Ganda. The word '*Patri*' which is the latin for 'Father' still dominates

acquiring English or Italian names that came to be known as Christian names – some of them so long and complicated to pronounce.⁴⁷

The third view that seeks to define God's attitude to culture is what Kraft has called 'God-above-culture' that seeks to understand 'God as above culture and unconcerned with the human beings in culture. ...holds that God is above and outside culture and no longer really concerned with the affairs of people'.⁴⁸ As Kraft has said of many African communities (and the Ganda are no exception), in the face of catastrophe, there is a tendency to think of God as far removed from the people and unable to control the evil powers that torment the people.⁴⁹

The fourth and last view is 'The God-above-but-through-culture position' which acknowledges 'God as above culture but as using culture as the vehicle for interaction with humans'.⁵⁰ Of culture, Kraft further writes,

Culture is not in and of itself either an enemy or friend to God or humans. It is, rather, something that is there to be used by personal beings such as humans, God, and Satan. Culture is the milieu in which all encounters with or between human beings take place and in terms of which all human understanding and maturation.⁵¹

The remaining part of this chapter will focus on inculturation as way in which God has interacted and continues to interact, with culture to create among his people an understanding of who He is and what He has done for them in Christ Jesus. This is at the

Ekitabo Ky'omukristu (Kisubi, Marianum Press Kisubi, 1975) and *Enneegayirira ezimu Ez'abakristu* (9th Edition, Kisubi, Marianum Press Kisubi, 1990) – both *Luganda* prayer books for the Roman Catholic Church used by the Ganda.

⁴⁷ Recently I had to sit up my three children to explain to them that they had been duly baptized though they did not have English names. This was after their Baptism had been doubted at their schools because they did not have English names. Baptism cards convinced them further.

⁴⁸ Kraft, *Christianity in*, p. 108.

⁴⁹ Kraft, *Christianity in*, p. 108.

⁵⁰ Kraft, *Christianity in*, p. 113.

⁵¹ Kraft, *Christianity in*, p. 113.

heart of our analysis of how the understanding of Sacrifice in Heb 9:1 – 10:18 and Ganda sacrifice helps the Ganda to understand the identity and work of Christ as celebrated in the Christian sacrament of the eucharist. In our discussion, we shall mainly focus on the sacrificial aspect in the three traditions – sacrifice in Hebrews, Ganda and Christian sacrament of the eucharist. But first we consider and clarify what is meant by the word inculturation.

8.5.2 Inculturation: Adaptation and Incarnation as models of Inculturation

It is important to note that there are other terminologies that have been used in conjunction with inculturation and are often confused with it (viz: enculturation, acculturation, and interculturalization). Sometimes some of these terms have been used interchangeably with inculturation. A. Shorter has most ably distinguished them in his book, *Toward a Theology of Inculturation*.⁵² The clarification that follows heavily depends on his work. First is the term, 'enculturation', which conceptually is the same as socialization. It refers 'to the cultural learning process of the individual, the process by which a person is inserted into his or her culture'.⁵³ Second, the term 'acculturation' often used interchangeably with inculturation. According to Shorter, 'By acculturation is meant the encounter between one culture and another or the encounter between cultures. This is perhaps the principal cause of cultural change'.⁵⁴ Lastly but not least, is the term 'interculturalization'. Interculturalization stands against the proposition that the process of mission or evangelism is a one-way process. Rather, in mission or evangelism, a partnership is established that mutually benefits both the recipient culture and the Gospel being preached. This way interculturalization comes to be closely related to inculturation. According to Shorter, 'Inculturation implies that the Christian message transforms culture. It is also the case that Christianity is transformed by culture, not in a way that falsifies the message, but in the way in which the message is formulated and interpreted anew'.⁵⁵ We shall explore the theological and practical aspects of inculturation in detail

⁵² A. Shorter, *Toward a Theology of Inculturation* (London, Geoffrey Chapman, 1988).

⁵³ Shorter, *Toward a Theology*, p. 5.

⁵⁴ Shorter, *Toward a Theology*, p. 7.

⁵⁵ Shorter, *Toward a Theology*, pp. 13-14.

later in our discussion. It will be noted that inculturation is more radical than interculturalism – it is not merely a question of mutual enrichment.

We now turn to inculturation – our suggested way in which God uses culture as a vehicle to interact with His people. Besides Shorter, a number of other theologians have extensively debated inculturation as a theological concept. Notable are the works of: Waliggo⁵⁶ and Peter S. J. Schineller⁵⁷. More recently, P. Tovey⁵⁸ and L. Magesa⁵⁹ have added their names to the list (and this list is by no means exhaustive as will shortly be noted). In theological debates about inculturation, two theological models have been suggested as explaining the concept of inculturation. These are adaptation and incarnation. Below we explore the theological significance of adaptation and incarnation in clarifying theological issues that inculturation seeks to address. To put it differently, we want to explore ‘adaptation’ and ‘incarnation’ as theological models for understanding inculturation.

8.5.2.1 Inculturation as Adaptation

Adaptation as a paradigm for inculturation has been extensively debated by theologians and practiced in many communities of faith. For Schineller, ‘To adapt means to ‘make fit’ ... Adaptation comes to refer to a more creative method of pastoral activity, by which we try to adopt the message we share and the liturgy we celebrate to the customs of those we work among’.⁶⁰ Schineller further points out that adaptation assumes that ‘there is a definite kernel or center of the Gospel that is clearly known. This center

⁵⁶ John Mary Waliggo, Arij A. Roest, et al, *Inculturation: Its meaning and Urgency* (Nairobi, St. Paul Publications, 1986).

⁵⁷ Peter S. J. Schineller, *A Handbook on Inculturation* (New York, Paulist Press, 1990).

⁵⁸ Phillip Tovey, *Inculturation of Christian Worship: Exploring the Eucharist* (Hants, England, Ashgate, 2004).

⁵⁹ L. Magesa, *Anatomy of Inculturation: Transforming the Church in Africa* (Maryknoll, New York, 2004).

⁶⁰ Schineller, *A Handbook on*, p. 16.

remains the same, untouched, while peripheral expressions can change or be adapted'.⁶¹ Identifying and isolating unchangeable aspects of the Gospel has proved a near impossible task in the history and life of the Church of Christ.

But adaptation has been strongly criticized as being inappropriate and inadequate as a theological model for inculturation. Waliggo says 'adaptation did not go far enough to express the reality of an indissoluble marriage between Christianity and each local culture. It implied a selection of certain rites and customs, purifying them and inserting them within Christian rituals where there was any apparent similarity'.⁶² Schineller quotes Aylward Shorter as saying 'that adaptation has come to convey an activity that is peripheral, non-essential, and even superficial. It was realized that the concept of "adaptation" contained within itself the seeds of perpetual Western superiority and domination'.⁶³ Adaptation according to its critics has concerned itself with 'extrinsic, accidental and superficial changes in ways of being a Christian'.⁶⁴ E. Uzukwu has relegated adaptation to a process that merely addresses 'translation of the Latin texts into various African languages, use of African names for God without grappling with traditional religious ideas; accommodating the externals of African life (colour, music, musical instruments) without coming to terms with the fundamental spirit generative of these externals, etc'.⁶⁵ Adaptation then does not seem to satisfactorily address the pertinent issues of African religious experience and practice.

The fallacy of adaptation as a paradigm for inculturation had earlier on been discerned by Roman Catholic Bishops of Africa and Madagascar. In 1974 at the International Conference on Evangelisation in Rome, the Bishops from Africa and Madagascar made their stand clear about adaptation:

⁶¹ Schineller, *A Handbook on*, p. 17. For a History of Liturgical Adaptation and The Magna Carta of Liturgical Adaptation see Anscar J. Chupungco, *Cultural Adaptation of the Liturgy* (New York, Paulist Press, 1982), pp. 3-57.

⁶² Waliggo, et al, *Inculturation*, p. 11.

⁶³ Schineller, *A Handbook on*, p. 17.

⁶⁴ Schineller, *A Handbook on*, p. 17.

⁶⁵ E. Uzukwu, *Liturgy Truly Christian Truly African* (Eldoret, Gaba Publications, 1982), p. 30.

Our theological thinking must remain faithful to the authentic tradition of the Church and, at the same time, be attentive to the life of our communities and respectful of our traditions and languages, that is of our philosophy of life ... The Bishops of Africa and Madagascar consider as being completely out-of-date, the so called theology of adaptation. In its stead, they adopt the theology of incarnation. The young Churches of Africa cannot refuse to face up to this basic demand.⁶⁶

The section that follows explores incarnation as a theological paradigm for inculturation.

8.5.2.2 Inculturation as Incarnation

A comprehensive definition of incarnation as it relates to inculturation is hard to come by. But it is clear that the imagery is taken from the Christian historical event of the incarnation of the one and only Son of God (cf. Jn 1:14; Heb 2:14-18). This according to Brian Hearne makes Jesus a ‘completely “inculturated” human being, a Jew, a Galilean, brought up in the religious and cultural traditions of his people’.⁶⁷ According to the incarnation story, Jesus was born of a woman (i.e. human being – cf. birth narratives in Mt 2; Lk 2; also Gal 4:4). The Galatian passage adds that Jesus was born under the Law – i.e. he was a Jew nurtured under both the Jewish religious life and culture. As a Jew, Palestine became his land, and he was initiated into the Jewish religious and cultural life – both of which he internalized (they came to determine and define his identity) as a member of the Jewish Palestine community.

But does the incarnate Jesus of Galilee remain bound in his Palestian Jewish community? To this question, Hearne answers no. Hearne sees in the resurrection of Jesus a ‘freeing of the human life of Jesus from all bounds of space and time, so that Jesus the Jew is now the universal man, the “transcultural person”, the one who is the everlasting home for all peoples of all cultures. He has “passed over” to a completely new form of life, the life of God, of the Spirit, which transforms his human reality into the “new creation”. The risen

⁶⁶ Uzukwu, *Liturgy Truly*, pp. 27-28.

⁶⁷ Brian Hearne, ‘Christology and Inculturation’, *AFER*: 22: (1980), p. 338.

Lord is thus the meeting-place of all peoples'.⁶⁸ This way the risen Lord is able to incarnate in other peoples' cultures and become one of them. In the proclamation of the gospel to every nation, Jesus Christ identifies with cultures of every time and every place. This view is echoed and held by Shorter in his discourse of Christology and inculturation.⁶⁹ The risen Lord does to other cultures continuously what he did to the Jewish culture at the time of his historical incarnation. Because the risen Lord identifies or rather incarnates in each and every culture, he is able to effectively communicate with people of all nations and effect the eternal salvation for which he came in the first place.

Basing his argument on this imagery, Waliggo makes profound statements about incarnation as the suitable theological model for understanding inculturation. Waliggo's conclusions have a bearing on what I am going to say in the section on 'Inculturating Eucharistic sacrifice among the Ganda' and I will quote them in full here:

It means that as Christ himself chose to become man in order to save humanity, Christianity has no alternative but to do the same in every culture and time in order to continue the salvation. ... Inculturation means the honest and serious attempt to make Christ and his message of salvation evermore understood by peoples of every culture, locality and time. It means the reformulation of Christian life and doctrine into the very thought patterns of each people. ... The permanence of Christianity will stand and fall on the question whether it has become truly African: whether Africans have made Christian ideas part of their own thinking, whether Africans feel that the Christian vision of life fulfills their own needs, whether the Christian world view has become part of truly African aspirations. ... Inculturation, therefore, is that movement which aims at making Christianity permanent in Africa by making it a people's religion and a way of life which no enemy or hostility can ever succeed in supplanting or weakening.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Hearne, 'Christology and', p. 339.

⁶⁹ See further Shorter, *Towards a Theology*, pp. 75-88: In this section, Shorter extensively explores how the Christology of Jesus (particularly the incarnate Jesus) relates to the inculturated Jesus both before and after his death and resurrection.

⁷⁰ Waliggo, et al, *Inculturation*, pp. 11-13.

But incarnation as a theological model for understanding inculturation has been branded as a movement that is diverting Christians from their long standing faith in Christ and directing them to paths of paganism (e.g. superstition), syncretistic Christianity long condemned by the church.⁷¹ These criticisms notwithstanding, my discussion in the section that follows seeks to demonstrate that there seems to be no alternative. Either we incarnate the Gospel among the Ganda or we continue with the *status quo* – having church goers with what Waliggo has called ‘a split personality: one African and one Christian’. Such Christians as Waliggo has rightly observed, during times of joy and peace will live as Christians but in times of dire need (e.g. disease, suffering, death, barrenness), they will revert to rituals and ceremonies of their African world view – long condemned by the Church.⁷² I hasten to add that this is the situation that obtains at the moment. Many of our Christians that come to church on Sunday are the same that will go to the shrines in the course of the week. It is not uncommon to find diviners with their shrines in the neighborhood of churches. I believe that one of the ways that would reverse this trend is to incarnate the sacrificial death of Christ in the Christian sacrament of the Eucharist. R. Kevin Seasoltz has rightly observed that ‘in the gift of the eucharist we are meant to find ourselves in the narrative of Jesus’ death and resurrection and to see that his story continues in our lives’.⁷³ But how can Jesus’ story continue in our own lives unless he is incarnated in us?

8.5.3 *Inculturating Eucharistic sacrifice among the Ganda*

In a study like this, the temptation to try to say something about everything is often very great. But I will try to limit myself to the element of the death of Christ as sacrifice in Hebrews 9:1 – 10:18, Ganda sacrifice and eucharistic sacrifice. The common strand or denominator in our discussion will be sacrifice. Where other aspects of the eucharist or Ganda culture will be discussed, the purpose will be to explain or clarify the central issue of sacrifice. The focus of this section is not to find comparative elements between

⁷¹ Waliggo, et al, *Inculturation*, p.13

⁷² Waliggo, et al, *Inculturation*, p. 22.

⁷³ R. K. Seasoltz, ‘Human Victimization and Christ as Victim in the Eucharist’ in *Worship* Volume 76, number 2 (March 2002), p. 121.

eucharistic sacrifice and Ganda sacrifice. That has been done in preceding sections. The overriding aim is to make the eucharist meaningful to the Ganda. I am not claiming to be exhaustive in this discussion. I will discuss key areas related to our subject matter with the hope that this will help illuminate the understanding of the sacrificial death of Christ in Heb 9:1 – 10:18 and as celebrated in the eucharist.

8.5.3.1 Use of sacrificial language in the eucharistic celebration

I have already written generally about the use of *Luganda* (Ganda language) in the eucharistic liturgy.⁷⁴ There is no justification whatsoever for a *Luganda* eucharistic liturgy to still have vestiges of Latin as a language. I find it hard to imagine Jesus Christ walking the villages of Buganda speaking Latin to the Ganda! The faithful in Kenya have also called for the discouragement of what they have termed ‘the unnecessary use of Latin’.⁷⁵

The language of sacrifice is dominant in expressing and explaining the death of Christ in Heb 9:1 – 10:18.⁷⁶ Jesus’ words at the Last supper are laden with sacrificial imagery.⁷⁷ My particular focus is on the use of sacrificial language in the celebration of the eucharist. The Roman Catholic Church is to be commended for this. The Ganda word for sacrifice is *ekitambiro*. The place of sacrifice is *itambiro*. The verb from which these words are derived is *kutamba* which can variously be translated as ‘to protect’, ‘to

⁷⁴ Refer back to pp. 245-250.

⁷⁵ Magesa, *Anatomy of Inculturation*, p. 19. Writing about language in general and our language of sacrifice in particular, Nathan D. Mitchell has underscored the role language plays in defining who we are as a people and how sacrificial language helps us understand what Christ achieved for us on the cross. He writes, ‘Language is not merely a tool or instrument we humans use to express ourselves; language *defines* us. ... we use language – the sacrificial language of surrender, prayer and praise – to go beyond language. And where do we go? To the cross. On the cross, Jesus’ own body became the final word of self-surrender, the *conclusive* word that brought sacrifice to an end by fulfilling it’ – see Nathan D. Mitchell, ‘The Amen Corner’ in *Worship* Volume 76, Number 5 (September 2002), pp. 463, 465 – full article on pages 456-466.

⁷⁶ Refer back to pp. 99-101 especially note 45 on p. 101 with reference to the use and meanings of the various sacrificial terms in Hebrews.

⁷⁷ Refer back to pp. 225-228.

heal', or 'to cure'. Among the Ganda, the place of sacrifice was understood as a place of protection, cure and healing and the sacrifice offered (*ekitambiro*) was understood to bestow these specific benefits among other benefits as was seen in chapter six of this study. Healing among the Ganda is also broadly understood as wholesome to / for life. The Roman Catholic eucharistic liturgy calls the eucharistic celebration *Ekitambiro eky'Okwebaza* – literally 'sacrifice of thanksgiving'. Elsewhere, in the Ganda translated eucharistic liturgy, the sacrifice of Christ is referred to as *ekyonziira* which as we saw in our earlier sections was the word that translates 'the scapegoat sacrifice'. The substitutionary / vicarious / atoning death of Jesus is evident when he is referred to as *ekyonziira*. *Luganda* (Ganda language) is a very rich language and unambiguous in conveying meaning. The eucharistic sacrifice comes to be for the faithful a sacrifice for: healing, protection, cure, and atoning among other benefits. There are other sacrificial words like *Kabona* for Priest that need to be reclaimed. The situation in the Anglican Church has not been helped at all by completely avoiding sacrificial language in the translated Ganda eucharistic liturgy.

But it is to be emphasized that using the sacrificial language without the implicit religious ideas can be empty. The inculturated Christ communicates a specific message to the various people of various cultures. This message must not be clouded in foreign often unintelligible language. Likewise, when the language of the people in a particular locality is used, the underlying religious ideas must not be made obscure.

8.5.3.2 The place of the ancestors in the eucharistic celebration

One regrettable blunder of the early missionaries to the Ganda was the futile plan and attempts to sever the bond between the living Ganda and the ancestors. This is not intended to be a protracted discourse about ancestors among the Ganda but as history has proven, the Ganda are so inextricably linked with the ancestors that any attempt to deny them a relationship with the ancestors is tantamount to denying them life itself. The individual, family, clan can not exist apart from the good will and continual support from the ancestors. Magesa is not exaggerating when he states, 'Ancestors in Africa are the

“principle” or “source” of personal, family and community life’.⁷⁸ John Lukwata writing about ancestors in the African worldview states

Ancestors are believed to have continuous influence over the living members of their immediate kinship unit. Their influence can be positive or negative depending on the conduct of the living. They are believed to be the proprietors of the land, and are responsible for promoting the fertility of human beings and that of the earth and the growth of crops.⁷⁹

According to Francis Xavier Mulambuzi,

Many Baganda continue to believe in their ancestors even when they convert to a new religion like Christianity. ... It is their ancestors (benevolent) who keep them from death, diseases, accidents and show interest in what they do and even make them succeed in their endeavours. God may be there, but He is not as close to them as the ancestors, whom they can turn to whenever there is a crisis.⁸⁰

In interacting with the Ganda, one is immediately struck by the high level of consciousness and awareness of the ancestors. Every Ganda is believed to live under the watchful eye of the ancestor (s). At church festivals when food is being served, if by accident some of it drops on the floor, it is not uncommon to hear one remark, ‘that is for the ancestors’ or ‘the ancestors are hungry’.

It was the responsibility of the Ganda in ordinary life, to keep the ancestors most favourable to the living through the offering of sacrifices. Now one can not ignore this whole realm of ancestral spirituality that so dominates the Ganda worldview. But where does one begin? I do not here want to enter the discussion that seeks to compare the

⁷⁸ Magesa, *Anatomy of Inculturation*, p. 112.

⁷⁹ John Lukwata, *Integrated African Liturgy* (Eldoret, AMECEA Gaba Publications, 2003), pp. 8-9.

⁸⁰ Francis Xavier Mulambuzi, ‘Beliefs in Ancestral Spirits: Interpreting Contemporary attitudes of the Baganda to the Ancestors’, unpublished Master of Arts dissertation, Department of Religious Studies, University of Natal, 1997, pp. 75-76.

ancestors with the saints because I do not think that such a comparison is helpful.⁸¹ My submission is that the place to begin is with the incarnate Christ. We have already discussed how the risen Lord incarnates in all cultures to identify with them. Among the Ganda it is hard to conceive of fullness of life without the ancestors given their role and influence in the life of the living.⁸² Magesa has rightly stated that, 'Jesus Christ is not contradicted by this principle of ancestorship in Christian theology, but is rather vividly expressed in and by the category. As an ancestor, the Christian vocation toward life in God cannot be conceived apart from Jesus'.⁸³ Jesus the Ancestor is the source of the unique and fullness of life (Jn 3:16; 10:10)).⁸⁴ This fullness (wholesome) life he confers to all who put their trust in him.

Kwame Bediako has suggested ways in which Jesus Christ can be appropriated as Ancestor in African Christology. He states, 'Christ, by virtue of his Incarnation, death, resurrection and ascension into the realm of spirit-power, can rightly be designated, in

⁸¹ A lot has been written in the past to draw a parallel between African ancestors and Christian saints with an aim to harmonize their role as mediators particularly in Roman Catholic Theology. Most recently Magesa, *Anatomy of Inculturation*, pp. 240-241 has with renewed vigor espoused this view. But as Magesa, *Anatomy of Inculturation*, p. 241 admits, 'African ancestors are indigenously perceived to have more power and more direct influence on the living than are the saints in Catholicism'. Besides, I have argued in this study (chapter six) that the Ganda pantheon of deities (*balubaale* and all ancestral spirits) were never thought of as mediators acting on behalf of the Supreme Being. Like Xhosa ancestors, Ganda ancestors were not intermediaries. Sacrifices made to the ancestors were offered to them in their own right as deities capable of responding independently to the prayers / petitions of the living. This is why Lukwata is right in describing the ancestors as 'proprieters' though he still maintains they have an intermediary role as well - See Lukwata, *Integrated African*, pp. 8-9. While this may be true in other African societies, my argument is that this is not the case with the Ganda.

⁸² The role and influence of the ancestors in the life of the living among the Ganda was discussed at length in chapter six of this study including sacrifices meant to keep them in a favourable position toward the living and sacrifices to thank them for favors received. Also see further Kyewalyanga, *Traditional Religion*, pp. 122-123, 275-276, 280, 281, 283, 285, 288 for information on pilgrimages to tombs of ancestors, prayers, invocations, appeals to ancestors, sacrifices, offerings, libations to ancestors, veneration of ancestors.

⁸³ Magesa, *Anatomy of Inculturation*, p. 112.

⁸⁴ Magesa, *Anatomy of Inculturation*, p. 112.

African terms, as Ancestor, indeed Supreme Ancestor'.⁸⁵ Magesa quoting the work of Francois Kabasele Lumbala gives functional reasons for considering Jesus as an Ancestor in African Christology as follows:

First, Jesus Christ is the ancestor because he mediates life. Second, Jesus Christ is the ancestor because he is present among the living. Third, Jesus Christ, the ancestor, is at the same time the eldest. Fourth, Jesus Christ is the ancestor because he is the mediator between God and human beings and within human community.⁸⁶

Magesa sounds a legitimate note of caution here against making a simplistic comparison between Jesus and the ancestors. Fundamental is the fact that the ancestral aspect and activity of African ancestors fall below that of Jesus because the former are essentially human while Jesus is divine. But he suggests that the significance of this is to be seen in, 'the dynamic interaction between them where the activity of the one (Jesus) is realized in conceptual and practical idiom of the other (African ancestral spirituality and religiosity)'.⁸⁷ To me this is the essence of incarnational inculturation. The Ganda do not need 'new eyes' and a 'new mind' in order for them to see and understand the sacrificial work of Christ. Christ is incarnate in them and they are able to see him, understand him, relate with him from the point of view of their culture (in this case their traditional religious experience). To ask them to denounce this is to ask them to do the impossible – how on earth can one denounce or abandon himself or herself?

⁸⁵ Kwame Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1995), p. 217. But Bediako, *Christianity in Africa*, pp. 217-218 has clarified the place and significance of the 'natural' ancestors as follows: 'Because ancestors, even in their realm of spirit existence, remain in African understanding essentially human just like ourselves, they cannot therefore ultimately be rivals of Christ in Christian consciousness. Just as there exists a clear distinction between God and divinities, so also there exists a qualitative distinction between Christ as Ancestor and natural ancestors'.

⁸⁶ Magesa, *Anatomy of Inculturation*, p. 112. For a detailed discussion see further Francois Kabasele Lumbala, *Celebrating Jesus in Africa: Liturgy and Inculturation* (Maryknoll New York, Orbis Books, 1998), pp. 44-50.

⁸⁷ Magesa, *Anatomy of Inculturation*, p. 112.

So if the idea of ancestral spirituality is not repugnant and does not in any way substantially contradict Jesus Christ, how is ancestral spirituality to be reflected in the Eucharistic celebration to make it meaningful to the Ganda? There are a number of options that could be considered. These options should not be thought of as being mutually exclusive.

First, the ancestors' presence at the Eucharistic celebration need to be acknowledged at various stages as demonstrated in the following extracts. Tovey makes reference to the Experimental Liturgy for Archbishop Janani Luwum Theological College (1985). This liturgy was authorized for use in the College in Northern Uganda.⁸⁸

Brothers and sisters, we who are living on earth are not the only followers of Christ; many have already left this world and are now with God. Together we make up one great family. Let us join ourselves with them ...

Apostles and evangelists (N), witnesses of the resurrection, you are with us as we celebrate this Holy Communion.

You're with us. You're with us. Praise the Lord.

With saints and martyrs the following is said:

And you, our ancestors in the faith (N), who have served God with a good conscience, you are with us as we celebrate this Holy Communion.

You're with us. You're with us. Praise the Lord.

The Holy Communion liturgy for the Church of the Province of Kenya has also acknowledged and made provision for the ancestors.⁸⁹ The introduction of the creed has the words, 'We stand together with Christians throughout the centuries, and throughout the world today ...' The fourth intercessory prayer states in part, '... we heartily thank you for our faithful ancestors and all who have passed through death to new life of joy in our heavenly home'. The Sanctus reads:

⁸⁸ Tovey, *Inculturation of*, p. 146. The same material is also recorded almost word for word in his other work, Phillip Tovey, 'The Symbol of the Eucharist in the African Context' unpublished M Phil thesis, University of Nottingham, 1988.

⁸⁹ See *A Modern Service of Holy Communion* (Nairobi, Uzima Press, 1989), pp. 18, 23, 28, 33.

Therefore with angels, and archangels, faithful ancestors and all in heaven, we proclaim your great and glorious name, forever praising you and saying:

The third post-communion prayer acknowledges that the same God is God of the ancestors: 'O God of our ancestors, God of our people, before whose face the human generations pass away'.

The African Eucharistic Prayer (for the Roman Catholic Church) drawn to address African categories of thought and forms of expression goes beyond asserting the presence of the ancestors to their invocation.⁹⁰ Three years later, three more African Eucharistic prayers were drawn up using traditional prayers from Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania.⁹¹ Again in these prayers, the ancestors are given prominence as part of the community of the living and in position to help them. An extract based on a Kikuyu prayer reads in part:

We beseech you,
And in this we are in harmony
With the spirits of our ancestors;
We ask you to send the Spirit of life
To bless and sanctify our offerings,
That they may become for us the Body and Blood
Of Jesus, our Brother and your Son.⁹²

The section in the Tanzanian Eucharistic prayer based on a Luguru prayer invokes the ancestors and petitions them to come to the aid of the living. After entreating God the Father for mercy, the prayer continues thus:

Also you, our Grandparents
Who sleep in the place of light,
All ancestors, men and women, great and small,

⁹⁰ A. Shorter, 'An African Eucharistic Prayer' in *AFER*, 12 (1970), pp. 143-148. For a critique of this prayer see, Uzukwu Eugene, 'The All-Africa Eucharistic Prayer – a critique' in *AFER*, 21 (1979), pp. 338-347.

⁹¹ A. Shorter, 'Three more African Eucharistic Prayers' in *AFER*, 15 (1973), pp. 152-160.

⁹² Shorter, 'Three more African', p. 155.

Help us, have compassion on us,
So that we can also sleep peacefully.⁹³

At the meeting of the Association of Episcopal Conferences of East Africa (AMECEA) in 1969 a special liturgy for celebrating the Eucharist was drawn. The liturgy began as follows:

Here is your food [*they are addressing God*]

Here is your drink

All of this is yours, before it is ours ...

We celebrate a feast,

But it is a feast of thanksgiving,

We thank God.

O God, we and our ancestors

The fathers of our people [*I would suggest fathers and mothers*]

We thank you and we rejoice.

This food, we will eat in your honor.

This drink we will drink in your honor.⁹⁴

Lumbala has pointed out that the structure of the text introducing the communion is similar to words that would have been said by an elder in his offering to the ancestors according to the ancient traditions.⁹⁵

Earlier I mentioned that whenever food accidentally drops on the floor, it is often understood to have gone to the ancestors who are thought to be present at the meal. N. C. Egbulem has developed this idea further in his book, *The Power of Africentric Celebrations*. Egbulem has suggested that one way of including the ancestors in the Eucharistic sacrifice would be to 'offer a piece of the consecrated bread and some of the consecrated wine to the ancestors as a libation'⁹⁶. This way the ancestors would share in the eucharistic sacrifice to demonstrate the communion between the ancestors with the

⁹³ Shorter, 'Three more African', p. 157.

⁹⁴ Lumbala, *Celebrating Jesus in Africa*, p. 33.

⁹⁵ Lumbala, *Celebrating Jesus in Africa*, p. 33.

⁹⁶ N. C. Egbulem, *The Power of Africentric Celebrations: Inspirations from the Zairean Liturgy* (New York, The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1996) 122.

living. There is no doubt that many would consider this as an abomination and disrespect for the consecrated elements – but Egbulen has clarified that ‘libation is not just pouring or throwing away consecrated elements. In this unique ritual, the heavens and the earth come into mutual embrace; the pilgrim church and the triumphant church together celebrate and share the ultimate meal of salvation’.⁹⁷

The place of the ancestors in eucharistic sacrifice and celebration may take different forms, but the undisputable reality is that it is no longer possible to ignore the ancestral spirituality that visibly dominates the Ganda religious experience. Sharing in the eucharist brings together the living and the departed. The Faith chapter in Hebrews (Heb 11) speaks of departed faithful ancestors. In Heb 12:1 the living are said to be ‘surrounded by so great cloud of witnesses’ i.e. the departed faithful ancestors spoken of in Hebrews 11. The departed faithful ancestors as it were are still in a way in fellowship

⁹⁷ Egbulem, *The Power of Africentric*, p. 122. A further point that has not been developed as part of this study (because of its lack of direct connection with our biblical text) is the use of locally available food and drink as elements for the eucharist. One way of inculturating the eucharistic sacrifice among the Ganda is through the use of locally available food and drink. In this study I am suggesting that banana bread and banana beer or wine from the staple diet of the Ganda (the plantain) be considered as symbols of the eucharistic sacrifice among the people. This would be a true offering of the Ganda, ‘fruit of the earth and work of human hands’ for the Ganda assembled (together with all faithful ancestors) celebrating the eucharistic sacrifice. For arguments in support of use of locally available food and drink as elements for the eucharist see Eugene Uzukwu, ‘Food and Drink in Africa, and the Christian Eucharist’ in *AFER*, 72 (1980), pp. 370-385; James Chukwuma Okoye, ‘Eucharist in African Perspective’ in *Mission studies* Volume 19-2, 38 (2002), pp 159-173; Paul Gibson, ‘Forum: Eucharistic Food – May We Substitute?’ in *Worship* Volume 76, Number 5 (September 2002), pp. 445-455; Elisha G. Mbonigaba, ‘The Indigenization of Liturgy’ in David Gitari (ed), *Anglican Liturgical Inculturation in Africa: The Kanamai Statement ‘African Culture and Anglican Liturgy’* (Bramcote, Nottingham, Grove Books Ltd, 1994), pp. 29-30; Lumbala, *Celebrating Jesus in Africa*, p. 56.

with the living providing inspiration and encouragement (to the church militant).⁹⁸ The ancestors are made alive in the Ganda naming system and other cultural rites of passage and ceremonies. We now turn to another important aspect of the eucharist sacrifice – the symbols of the body and blood of risen Lord Jesus Christ.

8.5.3.3 Eucharistic sacrifice for healing, protection, and blessing

In chapter four, I did suggest that one of the possible difficulties the recipients of the Epistle to the Hebrews had was the question of whether the sacrifice of Christ could still deal with their current sins – post-baptismal sins.⁹⁹ The author is keen to emphasize the ‘once for all’ aspect of the sacrificial death of Christ (Heb 7:27; 9:26, 28; 10:10) – the sacrificial death of Christ that had taken care of their past concerns was efficacious for their present and future concerns.

If the inculturated eucharistic sacrifice celebration is going to be meaningful to the Ganda, it will have to take into consideration the daily concerns of the people. There is a whole range of issues that still compel some among the Ganda to turn to traditional sacrificial rituals. Some of these were mentioned in chapter six – the discussion on the concept and practice of sacrifice among the Ganda. The issues that concern the Ganda in their daily lives are issues that are linked with wholesomeness of life. Wholesomeness of life for the Ganda not only concerns itself with matters of physical health but will include among others: increased wealth (crops, animals, money, buildings, and houses, success in business, at job, education and even in politics), bearing of children and their physical and spiritual welfare, protection against evil spirits, witchcraft, peace and freedom. Barrenness among the Ganda (as is in many African societies) is such a serious issue. Not to bear children for the family or the clan is considered as enmity to the family: you

⁹⁸ I have spoken of faithful ancestors but there is a particular unresolved ambiguity about ancestors in the Christian tradition. In one sense there is the celebration of ‘All Saints Day’ evidently for the faithful ones but the Christian church also celebrates ‘All Souls Day’ which seem to commemorate all the departed regardless. In Ganda tradition too there are benevolent and malevolent ancestors and while the benevolent ancestors are the ones often invoked one wonders whether the services of a malevolent ancestor could not be sought especially against enemies and in cursing.

⁹⁹ Refer back to p. 65.

are in a way killing the family or clan. So people especially will go to great length in search for children. Fecundity and life are very important values in the Ganda community as is the case in many other African societies.

What people are looking for are healing, protection and blessings in their daily lives. Unfortunately, the translated current Eucharistic liturgies do not directly address these issues. In my field research, I asked my respondents whether they would invite a Priest to celebrate Holy Communion for situations that tempt them or take them to the diviner for traditional sacrifice. None of my respondents said yes! I found this to be shocking! They did not believe that celebration of the eucharist would take care of such needs. It is possible for the church to be so immersed in tradition and dogma as to be irrelevant to the people.

Attempts have been made in other communities to address this. In the Kenyan Eucharistic prayer: the section based on the traditional prayers of the Meru people reads in part:

Owner of all things
We offer you this cup in memory of your Son.
We beg you for life,
For healthy people with no disease,
May they bear healthy children,
And also women who suffer because they are barren,
Open the way by which they may see children.
Give the good life to our parents and kinsmen
Who are with you¹⁰⁰

In the proposed Igbo Eucharistic prayer, God is acknowledged creator and source of all blessings in life at the beginning. The prayer reads in part:

Our Father, Father of our ancestors,
We gather together to praise and thank you with our sacrifice.
Your children stand before you, thanking, praising and rejoicing in you:

¹⁰⁰ Shorter, ‘Three more African’, p. 156.

Because you are life,
Because you lead and protect us one by one.
Because you give us life and cause us to increase in the world.
Your power and glory is manifest in the heaven and the earth.
The sun, the moon, and the stars, which fill the heavens proclaim Your glory.
This goodly land in which we live, is the work of your hands.
The food which gives us life, produce of the land, is your blessing.¹⁰¹

It is constantly to be appreciated that life in its wholeness and progeny are overriding motives for prayers of petition and thanksgiving among the Igbo as is the case with other many African societies.¹⁰²

One characteristic of African prayers noticeable in these prayers is that they are concrete and devoid of all the abstractness that characterizes most of the written prayers in the current Ganda translated liturgies. This is one reason I suppose why people even chose to go to African Instituted Churches where prayer and petitions are made more concretely and spontaneously.¹⁰³ Part of my field research involved attending services and observing what was happening during the eucharistic services. Whenever it came to intercessions,

¹⁰¹ Eugene Uzukwu, 'Blessing and Thanksgiving among the Igbo (Nigeria) Towards an African Eucharistic Prayer' in *AFER*, 72 (1980), p. 19.

¹⁰² Uzukwu, 'Food and Drink' p. 18.

¹⁰³ While this study may not be the place to make an adequate reponse to Samuel Olarewaju's criticism of those who pray and seek protection, healing etc in the blood of Christ, I find Olarewaju's conclusion to be most unfortunate. Samuel Olarewaju 'The Efficacy of Prayer in the blood of Christ in Contemporary African Christianity. in *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology*, Volume 22.1 (2003), p. 45 has concluded thus: 'To pray and cover various objects with the blood of Christ as protection against demonic attacks, epidemics, natural disasters, accidents, and other such experiences is, in my opinion, without scriptural warrant. The practice is paralled in various traditional religions where ... there is strong belief in the magical use of sacrificial to avert evil. Therefore, we should consider it syncretistic for Christians to ascribe the same efficacy to the blood of Christ'. Olarewaju, rounds it up as 'a dangerously syncretistic theology of the blood of Christ'. What Olarewaju has failed to appreciate is that "the blood of Christ" as "his incarnate and risen life" offers protection, healing etc. He makes a rather unhelpful academic distinction between the legitimate use of the "authority of the name of Christ" to avert demonic powers and the use of "the blood of Christ" that he calls syncretistic! A careful study of the biblical texts and religious experience of the African community he studied would have helped him arrive at a different conclusion.

it was painful sitting listening to abstract and ambiguous written prayers often divorced from the person who was reciting them. Sometimes there would be no time given for individual worshippers to offer their own prayers. Where such time was given, the service leader would either keep talking or quickly say 'Oh Lord hear our prayers'. I would almost want to tell the service leader, 'but I had not prayed yet'!

Why should these concerns be the subject of a Eucharistic prayer one may ask? Why not take care of these concerns in the slot for intercessions during the worship? True, these concerns could and are being addressed in the intercessory prayers of the faithful. But the point here is that including them in the Eucharistic prayer assures the faithful that the Eucharistic sacrifice is being offered for those needs as well. Fernando Domingues who has researched and written about healing in the African traditional societies and the healing in the ministry has concluded that the Eucharist is the focus of Christian healing in the Community of Faith. God's salvation in Christ aims at the wholesome healing of humanity and the world. Domingues' argument is that life in African is 'eminently communitarian'. This being true,

Christ's healing process in Africa today must be eminently a communitarian reality which reaches the person in one's individual, social and cosmological levels of life experience. Consequently, the concrete local Christian community must be the regular place where Christ is experienced as the Divine Healer. If the community is the place of healing, then the Eucharist, from which the life of such community flows and in which it finds its apex, will be the centre of the whole process of encounter between the Diviner Healer and the human being. ¹⁰⁴

8.5.3.4 Eucharistic sacrifice as a communion sacrifice

One of the great benefits of the sacrificial death of Christ in the Epistle to the Hebrews is fellowship and communion with God for all who have put their faith in Christ (note

¹⁰⁴ Fernando Domingues, *Christ our Healer: A Theological Dialogue with Aylward Shorter* (Nairobi, Pauline Publications Africa, 2000), pp. 100-101.

open invitation and exhortation in Heb 10:19-22). The believers are further exhorted to fellowship with one another (Heb 10:23-25).¹⁰⁵

As re-affirmed by Lumbala 'The eucharist is the place of communion between God and human beings, a place of communion among human beings, a place of intercession for the world'¹⁰⁶. The eucharist too is a place of communion with the faithful ancestors. Communion with the deity, ancestors and among human beings was a central function of sacrifice among the Ganda. No one was excluded.

If the eucharist is all that we have ascribed to it (and no one doubts that this is so), then it must not be seen as being exclusive. All members of the community of faith must share in all the benefits it bestows. This is how it was (and the situation still obtains) with sacrifice in the Ganda traditional society. The sacrifices of thanksgiving, communion (which as we have pointed out the eucharistic sacrifice is) were for all family members – every family or clan member participated: young and old. Likewise the benefits that accrued from such sacrifices flowed to all. Because they all participated in the sacrifice, all shared in the benefits.

8.5.3.5 Hospitality in the eucharistic sacrifice / celebration

The Ganda family and especially their clan system is a good example of the African extended family. Kyewalyanga has clarified that among the Ganda,

A clan is a social group of fundamental importance in their social structure. The 'clan' is based, in the first instance, on a clearly defined concept of blood relationship: one belongs to a clan generally, by right of birth. People of each clan call each other brothers and sisters. It is, however, possible under certain circumstances for an outsider to become a member of a clan.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ This understanding is the basis for the need for hospitality in the eucharistic sacrifice / celebration to be discussed in 8.5.3.5 below.

¹⁰⁶ Lumbala, *Celebrating Jesus in Africa*, p. 26.

¹⁰⁷ Kyewalyanga, *Traditional Religion*, pp. 18-19. See further section 6.1.3.2 of this study.

Through the clan system (of about fifty-two clans) the Ganda are knit together into one extended family with the *Kabaka* (King) at the top of the social pyramid. The Ganda are a very hospitable people and this hospitality is extended to all. Some of us who come from other cultures feel very much at home in Buganda.

Theologically, the family of God is an extended family – reflecting the nature of the African family. But in practice this is not so. The Christian missionaries who brought the Christian gospel to the Ganda taught that it was doctrinally wrong for a Roman Catholic Muganda to share the same loaf and cup with the Anglican Muganda even if they came from the same clan or family! Among the Ganda it is considered unthinkable that anyone should be excluded from a meal. Only one who has killed a person in the family or clan (or committed any other outrageous / heinous act) may be excluded if the necessary reconciliation rituals have not been performed or the blood of the deceased has not been avenged!

But it is common knowledge that intercommunion has remained a forbidden matter among the Ganda of different denominations. Magesa is right to call this a scandal of the African Christian Church since the advent of Christianity in the nineteenth century. He adds, ‘From the African viewpoint ... to deliberately exclude anyone from festivity – be it a worship event, a meal, or any other community activity – implies far more than the fact of exclusion itself. It implies that the excluded person is tainted, evil or an enemy’.¹⁰⁸ Magesa is right in pointing out that some of religious conflict and rivalries that have plagued Uganda since the nineteenth century have their roots in this kind of inter-Christian rivalry.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ Magesa, *Anatomy of Inculturation*, p. 242.

¹⁰⁹ Magesa, *Anatomy of Inculturation*, p. 242. It is sad to know that in Uganda since Independence in 1962 we have had political parties based on religious affiliations. The Democratic Party is largely for Roman Catholics while the Uganda People’s Congress is largely for Protestants. The current government has for the last 19 years been trying to reverse this line of thinking among our people.

Sometimes I wonder whether those who wield the power to make such decisions that basically divide communities under the guise of safeguarding doctrine and tradition, have a sense of the pain they cause in the various communities.

I strongly believe that one way in which the eucharistic sacrifice can truly be meaningful to the Ganda is by the promotion of intercommunion. Otherwise at the moment it remains scandalous that members of the same family, clan can not share in the same Eucharistic sacrifice if they belong to different denominations. In great contrast, at the traditional shrine both Roman Catholics and Protestants pay their homage together to the traditional deities (*balubaale* and ancestral spirits).

CHAPTER 9

GENERAL CONCLUSION

This thesis has focused on clarifying the meaning of the sacrifice of Christ (as presented in Heb 9:1 – 10:18) for the Ganda for whom sacrifice lay at the heart of their traditional religion. The realization that traditional forms of sacrifice were still practiced among the Ganda after over a century of uninterrupted spread and establishment of the Christian faith led me to the inevitable conclusion that pulpit condemnation of the practice was self-defeating and a futile endeavor. As I have demonstrated in this study, the Ganda are deeply rooted in their cultural practices and no amount of condemnation and legislation is going to end the practice of sacrifice. This approach has not succeeded anywhere – for cultural practices are part of people’s identity and to bid any group of people to abandon their culture is tantamount to asking the society in question to do the impossible – basically to deny and renounce their identity.

This study has advocated and recommends a different approach from the above - an approach that takes the culture and religious experience of the Ganda seriously. I speak of the ‘transformed transforming’ message of the Gospel. By this I have explained in this thesis that the Gospel of Christ – specifically his sacrificial death must be incarnated in the sacrificial religious experience of the Ganda if it is to be meaningful to them.

To help me achieve this, I have employed the *tripolar interpretive process* as developed by Christina Grenholm and Daniel Patte.¹ As the first pole of this process, I have made a critical analysis of Hebrews 9:1 – 10:18 – putting forth what I consider to be its proper understanding.

I extensively explored three sacrificial traditions: the sacrifice of Christ as presented to us in Heb 9:1 – 10:18. Taking the Day of Atonement sacrificial ritual in Leviticus 16 as his framework, the author of Hebrews clearly presents the death of Christ in Heb 9:1 – 10:18

¹ Grenholm C. and Patte D (eds), *Reading Israel in Romans*, pp. 1-54 – quoted already in chapter one.

as sacrifice. Christ who is both high priest and sacrifice has in willing obedience to God (Heb 10:5-9) offered himself – his very life as sacrifice for sins (Heb 9:12). The place of Christ's sacrifice is heaven itself (Heb 9:24). The author of Hebrews is not ignorant of the central role played by blood in an atoning sacrifice (Heb 9:7, 18-25; 13:11). The blood of Christ (which in this study we have explained to refer to the very life of Christ given up in death as sacrifice) becomes the vital agent in this atonement sacrifice of Christ (Heb 9:25; 10:19; also see further Heb 13:12). We noted in this study that the uniqueness of the blood of Christ lies in its ability to cleanse the conscience of the worshipper (*καθαριεῖ τὴν συνείδησιν*). This is the heart of the argument in Heb 9:13-14. It is clear from the writer's argument that he takes the purification of the conscience as the equivalent of the eternal redemption of 9:12. Hebrews presents a unique dualistic understanding of humankind. The author takes *σὰρξ* and *συνείδησις* as constituting the two sides of human existence i.e. earthly and heavenly respectively and only the blood of Christ can cleanse the conscience that belongs to the heavenly realm.

Furthermore, we noted that the sacrifice of Christ has been offered once-for-all time and that its efficacy is eternal (Heb 7:27; 9:11-14; 10:12). The sacrifice of Christ is an unrepeatable event that has made possible unlimited access to God (Heb 10:19-20).

The significance of the sacrifice of Christ for the worshipper is forgiveness of all sins, cleansing of the conscience, achieving eternal redemption, restored and unlimited communication and communion with God. Where therefore these have been achieved once-and-for-all time, it is no longer necessary for one to offer material levitical sacrifices that were material / earthly, repetitive and unable to cleanse the conscience. But what is an ordinary Muganda (Ganda) to make of all this?

As the second pole of the tripolar interpretive process, I examined the context of the Ganda by analyzing their identity, 'traditional' religious experience in general and the concept and practice of sacrifice in particular.

We noted that knowledge of Ganda cosmology is key to an understanding of Ganda sacrifice. Two complementary realms of existence are identifiable in Ganda cosmology and these are the realm of the physical and the realm of the spiritual. In traditional Ganda world-view, what is physical is visible and accessible in ordinary life. The physical realm as we observed includes human beings, animals and all other objects of nature. There is unhindered interaction among all that inhabit the physical realm. The second component of Ganda world-view is the domain of the spiritual beings. In this domain, we noted *balubaale* (various deities – over seventy in number), *mizimu* (ancestral spirits), *misambwa* (tutelary deities), and the whole host of invisible spirits and spiritual powers behind physical objects like *mayembe* (fetiches), *nsiriba* (amulets). All these constitute the Ganda spirit world.

On the relationship between these two domains (the physical and the spiritual realm), we observed that while the elements in the physical realm can freely interact with each other, this interaction is not ordinarily possible between the physical and the spirit world (i.e. the physical world can not ordinarily access the spirit world). On the contrary, the elements of the spirit world have unlimited access to the inhabitants of the physical world. In addition to this unlimited access, the elements of the spirit world are the custodians of all the good fortunes and misfortunes that impact in various ways on elements of the visible world. But the door is not permanently closed to the elements of the physical world. A way to connect with the spirit world exists – and this way we noted is the way of sacrifice.

Furthermore, we have noted in this study that in Ganda cosmology the *balubaale* (deities) and not *Katonda* (Supreme Being) are the object of the various Ganda sacrifices. In the past it had been argued that the *balubaale* were mediators and that *Katonda* (Supreme God) was the ultimate recipient of each and every Ganda sacrifice. This was an attempt to resolve the apparent reality that no specific sacrifices were offered to *Katonda* (Supreme Being). But this argument is untenable. There is always an inclination and temptation to harmonize Western conceptions of God with those of the Ganda. I submit that any attempt to impose Western conceptions of God unknown to the Ganda does not

do the Ganda any justice. I hope that this clarification has helped dispel the notion that the Ganda offered sacrifices to *Katonda* (Supreme Being) and that the *balubaale* were intermediaries between *Katonda* and the Ganda. As I have sustained in this thesis, there is no evidence to support this assertion.

We observed that sacrifice among the Ganda establishes and enhances communication with the spirit world. Through sacrifice humankind is able to establish contact with the invisible world. Besides opening up communication with the spirit world, sacrifice among the Ganda fosters and enhances communion with the good spirits. We also saw that through sacrifice; the malevolent spirits are propitiated or appeased – hence keeping these evil spirits at bay and away from harming living relatives. Sacrifices are also offered as a way of atoning for evil (*ekibi*). Evil (*ekibi*) among the Ganda is considered to be very detrimental to the well being of the individual, family and society.

Gift exchange among the Ganda is part of Ganda culture and a way of maintaining relationship. We observed the way in which some of the sacrifices were offered to the deity as gifts and that it was perfectly normal for one to expect some kind of reward for the sacrificial gifts given to the deity. This among the Ganda is not to be understood as a way of bribing the deity. One is not transgressing by expecting favours and blessings for gifts given to the deity. This is just how things are done among the Ganda. How are the Ganda to reconcile their belief in traditional sacrifice with their new found faith in the sacrificial death of Christ? Are they to be considered as parallel and incompatible traditions and if not, what is their intersection or meeting point?

This was a decisive point in our study – i.e. a demonstration of how the sacrificial death of Christ in Heb 9:1 – 10:18 speaks into the situation of the Ganda. This was the third pole of our tripolar interpretive process. How is the sacrifice of Christ in Heb 9:1 – 10:18 to be appropriated by the Ganda given their current traditional and Christian experiences? I have demonstrated in this study that the place where the sacrifice of Christ in Heb 9:1 – 10:18 and Ganda sacrifice meet is in the Christian tradition of the eucharistic celebration

which I have explained as a participatory celebration of the sacrificial death of Christ on the part of the Ganda.

I have examined the Christian sacrament of the eucharist which by far is the most visible act of worship in which the Christians celebrate the sacrificial death of Christ. The focus was on the eucharistic sacrifice and not the entire theology of the eucharist. Our discussion traced the eucharistic sacrifice as it has traditionally been passed to the community of believers – the church. While it is not possible for one to speak with absolute certainty, it has been argued in this thesis that the tradition of the eucharist (and particularly eucharistic sacrifice) as celebrated by the Christian church today is drawn from the New Testament specifically the synoptic narratives of the Last Supper.

Against the above background, the key elements of the eucharistic sacrifice include first of all the understanding of the Eucharistic sacrifice as a gift. In receiving the symbols of the Eucharistic sacrifice (*bread* and *wine*) the worshippers accept Christ's offer of salvation as a gift. Second, Christ's offer in the eucharistic sacrifice is in the place of the worshippers and this way it becomes representative or vicarious sacrifice. Thirdly, in as far as the wine as symbol of eucharistic sacrifice is spoken of as 'the blood of the covenant poured out for many ... for the forgiveness of sins' (Mt 26:28) – points to the Eucharistic sacrifice as an atoning sacrifice. Fourthly, we noted in this study that inherent in Jesus' words of institution of the Last Supper is the understanding of eucharist as a communion sacrifice. The sharing in the eucharistic sacrifice brings the worshippers into an intimate relationship with Christ and bonds the worshippers together into one body.

In chapter eight of this study, points of connection between the three sacrificial traditions: Hebrews: 9:1 – 10:18, Ganda and eucharist have been identified and discussed. There exist within these three sacrificial traditions strands that do not only hold the three together but enrich each other - an interrelation emphasized by our tripolar interpretive process.² We have established that an understanding of the Sacrifice of Christ in

² Grenholm C. and Patte D (eds), *Reading Israel in Romans*, p. 14.

Hebrews: 9:1 – 10:18 and Ganda sacrifice significantly contributes to the understanding of the eucharist in general and eucharistic sacrifice in particular. The way this is achieved is through incarnation as a model of inculturation and not adaptation as a paradigm of inculturation.

The Ganda need to realize that the risen Lord is in and among them. He understands their language and is author of their culture. True, like any other part of God's creation, Ganda culture is not immune and exempt from the corruption that resulted from the fall of all humanity. But that should not be license for anyone to demonize the Ganda identity. To deny our culture is to deny ourselves. The eucharistic sacrifice needs to take account of the faithful ancestors who are central to Ganda spirituality. What nourishes our physical bodies is part of our identity and heritage and the risen Lord who is among us expects us to celebrate the eternal life He has given us using those very items: items that those who have gone before us (the faithful ancestors) will be able to identify with. So the use of the staple food of the Ganda – banana bread and fermented banana beer or banana wine are herein suggested. It seems to me that it is we the Africans who are undermining ourselves and alienating ourselves and our people more and more by the attitudes we hold about what it means to be African: our cultural identity. We should take advantage of current technological advances to strengthen and advance ourselves and not to alienate our people.

I have also argued that if the eucharist is to be meaningful to the Ganda, it has got to meet the daily concerns of the Ganda. Further more, the eucharist as a communion sacrifice ought to be inclusive rather than exclusive by admitting all members of God's family (all baptized members) to participate in the eucharist and share in the blessings this participation bestows on the faithful. Together with this is the longstanding issue of intercommunion. Exclusion of members of God's family from participation in the eucharistic sacrifice on the ground of denominational affiliation is according to this study a scandal of the Christian Church among the Ganda and in Africa as a whole.

Changing the *status quo* by implementing the above ideas will require deliberate cooperate effort particularly on the part of the church leadership – an important task that will ultimately involve all members of the body of Christ (the church) at all levels. This task though likely to be protracted in its implementation is not impossible to carry out. It can be done and should be done as a matter of urgency.

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APPENDIX I

RESEARCH ON "THE UNDERSTANDING AND PRACTICE OF SACRIFICE AMONG THE GANDA"

RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

Introduction

I am undertaking Research on "The understanding and practice of sacrifice among the Ganda people". Additionally, the research will explore the contribution(s) that sacrifice in the daily life of the Ganda has for the understanding of the Christian sacrament of the Eucharist / Holy Communion. The overall aim is to construct an authentic African theology of the Eucharist based on the research findings. Please assist me by filling in this questionnaire or by answering the questions as put to you by the Research Assistant. Thank you. **Edison Muhindo Kalengyo**

Name (optional) ----- Age -----

Location / Diocese / Church -----

Christian commitment (optional) -----

Occupation / Profession -----

Section A

1. The Baganda were a worshipping community even before the coming of the Missionaries. What name did the Baganda give to the God they worshipped? -----

2. What did this name mean to the Baganda? -----

3. What shows that they knew God? -----

4. How did the Baganda get to know this God? -----

5. Besides this God, did the Baganda worship other spirits? Yes or No? -----
If yes, how did the spirits differ from this God? -----

6. What was the role of the spirits? Please be specific? -----
7. Was God often confused with the spirits? Yes or No? ----- If yes, how did this happen? -----
8. What were the names of the Ganda places of worship? -----
9. Which of the above still exist today and where are they located? -----
10. How do the Baganda explain creation? -----
11. What does the verb "Kutonda" mean? -----

Section B

The Baganda offered sacrifices as an act of their traditional worship.

1. List the various sacrifices and the reasons for which each one of them was offered.
NB. Use additional paper if necessary.
2. To whom were these sacrifices offered? Please explain clearly.
3. How did the sacrifices to God differ in name from those offered to the spirits?
4. What does the verb "Kutambira" mean?
5. And what about "Kabona"?
6. Do you think the word "Kitambiro" (Sacrifice) is good to be used to refer to the Eucharist or Holy Communion? Explain briefly.

7. What were the special requirements of any sacrifices that were offered (were there any conditions they had to fulfill)? -----

8. Are there situations when human sacrifice was required? Yes or No? -----
If yes, what were these situations? -----

9. How did human sacrifices differ from other sacrifices? -----

10. What were the words used when offering sacrifices? -----

11. Who would utter them? -----

12. Did these sacrifices change people's thinking in any way? Yes or No? -----
If yes, explain briefly. -----

13. What role did the blood of the sacrificial victim play in the sacrificial ritual? Please explain in detail how the blood of the sacrificial victim was treated or handled and its significance. Use separate paper if necessary. -----

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14. What did the people who offered the sacrifices expect to benefit? -----

[illegible]

15. Those who officiated at the sacrifices: were they given anything or they did it free of charge? -----

Section C – mainly for Christians

Christianity has been in Uganda for over 100 years.

1. Are there people around you who still offer sacrifices? Yes or No? -----
If Yes, explain briefly -----
2. List the type of sacrifices still offered and reasons for which they are offered (Use additional paper to describe them). -----
3. Do you think some of our Christians are involved in these sacrifices? Yes or No? -----
----- If yes, what do you think prompts them to do this? -----
4. As an African Christian, how do you understand Holy Communion as sacrifice
(i.e. in what sense is Holy Communion a sacrifice)? -----
5. Do you think there is anything good that we can learn from sacrifices in the daily
life of the Ganda, especially when we explain the Eucharist or Holy Communion?
Explain briefly? -----

6. Can the same people (i.e. the Christians involved in the Ganda traditional sacrifices) ask a priest to celebrate the Eucharist or Holy Communion for the same reasons they offer these sacrifices? Yes or No? ----- If no, why not? -----

7. Are there ways in which the Christian Holy Communion is confused with the Ganda traditional sacrificial practices? Yes or No? If Yes, in what ways? -----

8. What should the church do to clear this confusion and help such people? -----

Section D

The first missionaries and the Eucharist. NB. People conversant with the historical facts should answer questions 1-3. Question 4 may require people who have been involved in Liturgical formulations and revisions.

1. What thoughts and attitudes did the first missionaries have about the people of Buganda and their way of life in general? -----

2. What was the missionaries' attitude towards the Ganda sacrificial system and how did they (missionaries) preach about it? -----

3. How were the Ganda who received the sacrament of the Eucharist prepared? What were the points of emphasis in the preparation? -----

4. How has the sacrificial language been employed in the liturgy for the Eucharist? [i.e. what words have been used that have a bearing on sacrificial language in the Ganda sacrificial system? Have others been altered (which ones and how)]? -----

5. Are there ways in which traditional sacrifice among the Ganda could help us understand the sacrifice of Christ and the Eucharist? List and explain briefly? ----

6. When you take Holy Communion (**if communicant**), what is your understanding of it and what does it benefit you? -----

7. What do you think you miss by not taking Holy Communion (**for non-communicants**)? -----

END.

