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Thomas Lane

Jewish Christians of the first century recognized Jesus as the fulfillment of Judaism and all its hopes. The writings of the New Testament reproduce these fulfilled hopes in various ways. The Letter to the Hebrews presents Jesus' death, resurrection and session at the right hand of the Father as the fulfillment of the liturgy of Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement (Heb 9:11–12 RSV). The Gospel of Matthew makes use of formula quotations to present Jesus as the fulfillment of Judaism (1:22–23; 2:5; 2:15; 2:17–18; 2:23; 4:14–16; 8:17; 12:17–21; 21:4–5; 27:9–10). Promise and fulfillment is a theme discussed under Lukan theology,¹ and among the many themes that present themselves in the first half of the Gospel of John is Jesus as the fulfillment of Judaism and its feasts.² Not only is there continuity between the Old and New Testament but there is also discontinuity. There is merit to Prosperi's suggestion that "transfiguration" is an appropriate term to describe both the continuity and discontinuity between the Old and New Testament:

The biblical idea of fulfillment thus implies an interplay between continuity and rupture, such that the words we use to refer to the Old Testament figures and to the mystery of Christ who fulfills them can be the same, while at the same time their meaning is transformed. Perhaps the least inappropriate theological term we can use to indicate this complex phenomenon of transsignification is transfiguration, if by this we mean a change

1 Michael Patrick Barber, "The New Temple, the New Priesthood, and the New Cult in Luke-Acts," in *Letter & Spirit* 8 (2013) 101–124, at 101.

2 Gale A. Yee, *Jewish Feasts and the Gospel of John*, Zacchaeus studies, New Testament (Wilmington, DE: Glazier, 1989).

of aspect that does not damage the exterior form of the reality illuminated, but rather exalts it, conferring on it a splendor that radiates from within and that had remained hidden within its depths before rising to the surface.³

Thus we could say that the Temple is transfigured in Christ and the Temple liturgies are transfigured in the sacraments.

JESUS IS THE TRANSFIGURATION OF THE JEWISH TEMPLE

We will look briefly at three passages in the Gospel of John that show us Jesus is the transfiguration of the Temple: the prologue to the Gospel, the cleansing of the Temple at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, and Jesus' visit to the Temple during the Feast of Dedication.⁴

God Set Up Tent among Us (Jn 1:14)

We are familiar with the translation of Jn 1:14, "the word became flesh and dwelt among us..." The Greek word *eskēnōsen* (ἐσκήνωσεν) translated as "dwelt" is literally "pitched tent" or "set up tent" or "tented", so more literally Jn 1:14 is "The Word became flesh and set up tent among us." While the Hebrews wandered in the desert after the exodus, God's special place of dwelling was in the Holy of Holies inside the tent called the Tent of Meeting or Tabernacle. Later in Jerusalem that Tabernacle was replaced by the Temple built by Solomon. In Jn 1:14—"The Word became flesh and set up tent among us"—John deliberately sets up a parallel. In the Old Covenant God dwelt in a tent, now in the New Covenant God set up tent among us in Jesus, God became incarnate in Jesus. God's special place of presence was in the tent in the desert, and then in the Temple in Jerusalem, but now in the New Covenant, Jesus is God incarnate.

3 Paolo Prosperi, "Novum in Vetere Latet. Vetus in Novo Patet: Towards a Renewal of Typological Exegesis," in *Communio: International Catholic Review* 37 (2010) 389–424, at 396.

4 For more on the relation between Jesus and the Temple see: Mary L. Coloe, *God Dwells with Us: Temple Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel* (Collegeville, MN: Michael Glazier, 2001); Paul M. Hoskins, *Jesus as the Fulfillment of the Temple in the Gospel of John* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2007); Alan Kerr, *The Temple of Jesus' Body: The Temple Theme in the Gospel of John*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series, vol. 220 (New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002).

*JESUS' RESURRECTED BODY IS THE TEMPLE TRANSFIGURED
(Jn 2:19)*

In all four Gospels Jesus cleanses the Temple, overturning the money changers' tables, but only in John's account, which occurs as Jesus' ministry commences, does Jesus intimate that the Temple will be transfigured by his resurrected body: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will *raise* it up" (Jn 2:19). John refers to raising the temple again rather than rebuilding the temple as in the Synoptics. To be certain that there is no confusion, the evangelist adds, "He spoke of the temple of his body" (2:21). At the resurrection, the raised body of Jesus will be the transfiguration of the Temple. The listeners mistakenly thought Jesus was referring to rebuilding the Herodian Temple and could not at that time have known Jesus was talking of his future resurrection. This misunderstanding was used as a false charge against Jesus during his trial before the Sanhedrin in Mt 26:61 and Mk 14:58. Jesus' cleansing the Temple, together with his teaching about raising it again, is a sign of the coming destruction of the Temple, and anticipates the transfiguration of the Herodian Temple built with stones by the resurrected body of Jesus. To use the thought of Mt 12:6, Jesus is greater than the Temple.

FEAST OF DEDICATION—JESUS IS THE ONE CONSECRATED BY THE FATHER

In 167 BC Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the Seleucid king, desecrated the Temple in Jerusalem and set up worship of Zeus in it. A pig was slaughtered on the altar of burnt sacrifice and its broth poured over the sacred vessels desecrating them. For three years sacrifice to YHWH ceased in the Temple (167–164 BC). A resistance movement under the Maccabees succeeded in retaking the Temple (2 Mac 10:1–8) and rededicated it (1 Mac 4:52–59) in 164 BC. The eight-day celebration of Dedication or Hanukkah commemorated that re-dedication/re-consecration of the Temple. Jesus attended the Feast of Dedication in Jn 10:22–39, and declared that he had been consecrated by the Father (Jn 10:36). During that feast the Jews celebrated the re-dedication or re-consecration of the Temple but Jesus says he is the Consecrated One; consequently, he must be seen as transfiguring the Temple and its liturgies. This explains why Christ earlier declared to the Samaritan woman, that the hour was coming when worship would be offered to the Father neither on Mount Gerizim of the Samaritans

nor in Jerusalem of the Jews, but would be offered to the Father in spirit and truth (Jn 4:21–23). That is because Christ transfigured/fulfilled the Temple.

JEWISH LITURGIES IN THE TEMPLE TRANSFIGURED IN THE SACRAMENTS

Since Jesus transfigured the Temple, this has consequences for the liturgies celebrated in it and the Levitical priests who celebrated them. Everything that happens in the Temple must undergo a radical transformation in Christ. This applies to both the Levitical priests who served in the Temple as well as to the liturgies and sacrifices that took place in it. Tabernacles is transfigured in baptism, the daily whole offering and thanksgiving sacrifice (*tôdâ*) are transfigured in the Eucharist, and Christ's self-sacrifice on Calvary is the fulfillment of Yom Kippur and now Christians can approach God's throne through the Body and Blood of Jesus in the Eucharist.

WATER OF THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES TRANSFIGURED IN BAPTISM

The Feast of Tabernacles, Sukkoth, also called the Feast of Booths or Shelters, thanked God for the harvest and celebrated God caring for the Hebrews during their time in the wilderness before entering Canaan. During the feast there was a water liturgy every morning commemorating the gift of water from the rock to the Hebrews in the desert and a light liturgy every evening commemorating the evening pillar of fire that preceded the Hebrews in the desert. The Mishnah (m. Suk. 4:9)⁵ gives the details of the morning water liturgy. The procession of priests and people would go to the Pool of Siloam and fill a flask with water, and upon returning to the Temple the priests would fill a silver bowl with the water to be used as a water libation around the altar. The Mishnah also describes the evening light liturgy (m. Suk. 5:2–4). It involved priests lighting four giant candelabras in the Court of Women whose light was said to enlighten

5 The Mishnah is a collection of Jewish oral tradition and written documents, foundational for Jewish belief, mostly on Jewish law, compiled c. AD 200 by Rabbi Judah. It contains 62 tractates, one of which is titled *Sukkah* on the Feast of Tabernacles. Just as the Bible is divided into books, chapters and verses, the Mishnah is indicated mishnah.tractate.chapter:verse so in the example here m.Suk. 4:9.

every courtyard in Jerusalem. Christ entered the Temple during the Feast of Tabernacles (Jn 7:14). On the last day of the feast he proclaimed, "If anyone thirst let him come to me and drink" (Jn 7:37) indicating that he is the transfiguration of Tabernacles' daily morning water liturgy. Jn 7:39 specifies that this will occur when those who believe in Jesus will receive the Spirit. Jesus also indicated during Tabernacles that he is the transfiguration of the evening light liturgy: "I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (Jn 8:12). As if to confirm this, Jesus' miraculous healing of the blind man during Tabernacles (Jn 9:1-7) also shows that he is the fulfillment of Tabernacles' evening light liturgy. At the healing of the blind man Jesus proclaimed, "As long as I am in the world I am the light of the world" (Jn 9:5). Tabernacles' morning water liturgy and evening light liturgy are fulfilled in Christ. The healing of the blind man in Jn 9, is one of three Gospel passages utilized by the Church during Lent to prepare catechumens for baptism. (The living water offered by Christ to the Samaritan woman in Jn 4 symbolizes the eternal life catechumens would receive in baptism, the healing of the blind man in Jn 9 reminds us of the spiritual enlightenment received in baptism, and the raising of Lazarus in Jn 11 symbolizes the eternal life offered through baptism.) The water liturgy of Tabernacles is fulfilled when the believer in Christ receives the Spirit and the light liturgy is fulfilled when the believer is enlightened by Christ. The enlightenment of Christ is received in baptism, and the Spirit fulfilling the water liturgy is likewise received by the believer in baptism.

After Jesus died his side was pierced, and blood and water flowed out (Jn 19:34). In the following verse its significance is emphasized as John adds a personal comment testifying to the blood and water so that the reader may believe. This is the only personal comment of the author in the entire Gospel and obviously means the water and blood from Jesus' side has great significance for him and the Church. Tradition sees the issuing of the blood and water as signifying the sacraments being born from the side of Christ on the cross, the water signifying Baptism and the blood signifying the Eucharist. The morning water liturgy and evening light liturgy of Tabernacles are fulfilled in Christ, and that grace of baptism flows from Christ on the cross. The water from Christ's side also fulfills the vision of Ezek 47 where the prophet sees an ever-increasing river of water flowing from

the Temple. Christ is that Temple now and waters of grace flow from him to us from the moment we are baptized.

*RENEWED PRIESTHOOD OFFERING A PURE SACRIFICE,
THE EUCHARIST*

The Old Testament itself looked forward to something better than the liturgies of the Old Covenant. The prophet Malachi, after condemning the Levitical priests for their lack of fidelity (Mal 1:6–2:9), foresaw a new priesthood in the future even if, presumably, he did not fully appreciate what he foresaw: “I send my messenger to prepare the way before me, and suddenly there will come to the temple, the Lord whom you seek...” (Mal 3:1). The messenger coming before the Lord is understood by Mk 1:2 and by Jesus himself in Mt 11:10 and Lk 7:27 as John the Baptist. This means Jesus himself is the Lord coming to his Temple after that messenger, John the Baptist, in Mal 3:1. Malachi tells us that when the Lord comes to his Temple he will purify and refine the Levites so that they will offer a pure sacrifice pleasing to the Lord (Mal 3:3–4). Based on this, Malachi—even if unknown to himself—foresees Christ and his priests of the New Covenant offering the Eucharist as the one and only pure sacrifice pleasing to God. Earlier, Malachi offered another fascinating prophecy that everywhere from east to west a sacrifice and pure offering would be offered to God (Mal 1:11). Based on this understanding of Mal 3:1–4, it makes perfect sense that the early Christians, the *Didache* (14:1–3) tells us, saw Malachi’s prophecy of a pure sacrifice and offering from east to west as a prophecy of the sacrifice of the Eucharist.⁶ So Malachi prophecies that the Lord will

6 That interpretation found its way into the Magisterium when the Council of Trent also interpreted Malachi as prophesying the Eucharist; Session XXII (17 September 1562), *Doctrine and Canons on the Sacrifice of the Mass*, ch. 1, in *Enchiridion Symbolorum: Compendium of Creeds, Definitions, and Declarations of the Catholic Church*, ed. Heinrich Denzinger and Peter Hünermann (43rd edn, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012) 1742. See also Dieter Böhler, “The Church’s Eucharist, the Lord’s Supper, Israel’s Sacrifice: Reflections on Pope Benedict’s Axiom ‘Without its coherence with its Old Testament heritage, Christian liturgy simply cannot be understood’,” in *Benedict XVI and the Roman Missal: Proceedings of the Fourth Fota International Liturgical Conference*, 2011, ed. Janet E. Rutherford and James O’Brien, Fota Liturgy Series (Dublin – New York: Four Courts Press – Scepter Publishers, 2013) 107–123.

enter his Temple, there will be a renewed priesthood, and there will be a pure sacrifice—the Eucharist—offered worldwide pleasing to God.

Third Isaiah, as we commonly call the later part of Isaiah, foresaw major changes in the Temple liturgy in the future, so much so that Levitical priests would not be the only ones offering sacrifices. In Isa 56:6–7 God announces through the prophet that foreigners will offer burnt offerings and sacrifices on his holy mountain and God will accept their offerings on his altar. This is looking beyond priesthood confined to the tribe of Levi. It is looking forward to something major happening in the future that will involve a massive change in the Temple liturgy and the Levitical priesthood. The shock in Isa 56:6–7 is its prediction that foreigners will come to minister in the Temple because the word used for minister/serve in 56:6, *šārat* (שָׂרַת), typically refers to liturgical service.⁷ The prophet sees Gentiles offering sacrifices in Jerusalem. Perhaps this is why it is omitted from Isa 56 in the Dead Sea Scrolls because this idea was so repugnant.⁸ This prophecy of Third Isaiah, like that of Malachi, is fulfilled in Catholic priests offering the sacrifice of the Eucharist.

DAILY WHOLE OFFERING TRANSFIGURED IN THE EUCHARIST

The daily sacrifice offered on the Temple altar consisted in offering a lamb morning and evening on the altar together with a cereal and drink offering (Ex 29:38–42). It was a sacrifice to please God and to make atonement. It is given various names, the burnt offering (Ex 29:18), or the burnt sacrifice (Ps 20:3). It is also called the whole burnt offering (Deut 33:10; Ps 51:19) because it was the only sacrifice wholly or completely burnt on the altar. In Ex 29:42 and Num 28:6 it is called the continual burnt offering. Because it was to be offered “continually”—in Hebrew, *tāmīd* (תָּמִיד)—this sacrifice is called Tamid in rabbinic documents.

The money changers were the collectors of the half-shekel Temple tax paid by all Israelites during the month Adar to pay for the Tamid or daily whole offerings during the year ahead. The

7 Francis Brown, Samuel Rolles Driver, and Charles Augustus Briggs, *Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 2000) 1058.

8 John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40–66*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998) 460.

Tosefta, which is a little later than the Mishnah, regards the half-shekel Temple tax as atonement for sin and the Jewish scholar Jacob Neusner believes that must have also been the case at the time of Christ based on Ex 30:16, "And you shall take the atonement money from the people of Israel, and shall appoint it for the service of the tent of meeting; that it may bring the people of Israel to remembrance before the LORD, so as to make atonement for yourselves." Consequently according to Neusner, payment of the half-shekel Temple tax allowed people to participate in the daily whole offering in atonement for sin. Neusner agrees with the common interpretation that Jesus' overturning the tables signifies the destruction of the Temple but he also offers an additional interpretation:⁹

For the overturning of the moneychangers' tables represents an act of the rejection of the most important rite of the Israelite cult, the daily whole offering, and, therefore, a statement that there is a means of atonement other than the daily whole-offering, which now is null. Then what was to take the place of the daily whole-offering? It was to be the rite of the Eucharist: table for table, whole offering for whole offering. It therefore seems to me that the correct context in which to read the overturning of the moneychangers' tables is not the destruction of the Temple in general, but the institution of the sacrifice of the Eucharist, in particular. It further follows that the counterpart of Jesus' negative action in overturning one table must be his affirmative action in establishing or setting up another table, that is to say, I turn to the passion narratives centred upon the Last Supper. That, at any rate, is how, as an outsider to scholarship in this field, I should suggest we read the statement. The negative is that the atonement for sin achieved by the daily whole offering is null, and the positive, that atonement for sin is achieved by the Eucharist: one table overturned, another table set up in place, and both for the same purpose of atonement and expiation of sin.¹⁰

Based on Neusner's understanding, the overturning of the money changers' tables indicates that priestly sacrifices of the Old Covenant would be transfigured by Jesus' one time sacrifice of

9 Jacob Neusner, "Money-Changers in the Temple: the Mishnah's Explanation," in *New Testament Studies* 35 (1989) 287–290.

10 Ibid., 290.

himself in the New Covenant, and the faithful of the New Covenant would participate in the salvific effects of Jesus' priestly self-sacrifice every time they participate in the Eucharist. Jesus overturns the money changers' tables in Mt 21:12, Mk 11:15 and Jn 2:15. It is easier to apply Neusner's argument to Matthew and Mark because in Mt 26:26–29 and Mk 14:22–25 Jesus institutes the Eucharist. It is more difficult to apply Neusner's argument to the Gospel of John because the footwashing in Jn 13 substitutes for the institution of the Eucharist in John, although in Jn 6:51c "the bread that I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh" parallels "This is my Body" in the institution narratives in the Synoptics.

The language Jesus uses at the institution of the Eucharist during the Last Supper also indicates a new sacrifice. Jeremias points out that the sacrificial tone in the words "body" and "blood" used by Christ during the Last Supper would have been easily recognizable by any Jew.¹¹ In the Fourth Song of the Suffering Servant in Isa 52:13–53:12 we read that the Servant's sufferings are in atonement *for others*. During the Last Supper in Lk 22:19 Jesus says over the bread "This is my body which is *given for you*" and in Mk 14:24 and Mt 26:28 Jesus says over the chalice of wine that it is his blood "*poured out for many*." The very words used by Christ as he instituted the Eucharist showed his intention that the Eucharist is a sacrifice in atonement commemorating the giving of his body and blood in fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy of a servant offering his sufferings in atonement for others.

TÔDÂ TRANSFIGURED IN THE EUCHARIST

Unlike the whole burnt offering sacrificed on the altar every morning and evening, the *tôdâ* (תודה) or "thanksgiving" sacrifice was one of the peace offerings on feast days and is described in Lev 7:11–15. Sometimes the *tôdâ* is called a communion sacrifice. It involved offering both unleavened and leavened bread (7:12). These offerings were made in thanksgiving after salvation from death, illness, or threats to one's life. One's family and friends would have been present at the sacrifice in a spirit of unity to consume the sacrificed animal and bread not retained by the priest, and to give thanks to God for deliverance. Leviticus Rabbah, a homiletic midrashic explanation of the Book of Leviticus,

11 Joachim Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, trans. John Bowden (London: SCM, 1966) 222.

passed down by Jewish exegetes for a thousand years before its final fixing by rabbis about AD 400–425, foresaw a time when all sacrifices would cease except this thanksgiving sacrifice. Neusner, in a text critical study of *Leviticus Rabbah* 9:7, translates the relevant text: “In time to come all offerings will come to an end, but the thanksgiving offering will not come to an end. All forms of prayer will come to an end, but the thanksgiving prayer will not come to an end.”¹²

For a Jew, the *tôdâ* would have been the appropriate Jewish way to give thanks to God for Jesus’ resurrection. Ratzinger accepts that the Eucharist is the Christian transposition of the *tôdâ*; in the *tôdâ* the one who had been saved sacrificed an animal and gave thanks, and in the Eucharist the Christian community gives thanks that Christ who sacrificed himself is risen, and the food represented by bread is the body of Jesus.¹³ Furthermore, the word “Eucharist” is the Greek translation of the Hebrew word *tôdâ*. During the *tôdâ* the one giving thanks to God raised the cup praising God for his salvation, and in the Eucharist drinking from the cup is sharing in the New Covenant.¹⁴ The Eucharist is the *tôdâ* in which Christians celebrate the death and resurrection of Jesus. The *tôdâ* that continued after all other sacrifices ceased is the Eucharist.

YOM KIPPUR—APPROACHING GOD’S THRONE THROUGH THE BODY AND BLOOD OF JESUS

Jn 17 allows us to listen in on Jesus praying to his Father during the Last Supper. The prayer is known as the High Priestly Prayer, a title first given it by David Chyträus, a Lutheran theologian of the sixteenth century, and it has been so called since then by both Protestant and Catholic theologians.¹⁵ Even before then,

12 Jacob Neusner, *Judaism and Scripture: The Evidence of Leviticus Rabbah* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1986) 240–241.

13 Joseph Ratzinger, *The Feast of Faith: Approaches to a Theology of the Liturgy*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1986) 51–60. Ratzinger is building on the research of Hartmut Gese, *Essays on Biblical Theology*, trans. Keith Crim (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1981) 117–140.

14 Gese, *Essays on Biblical Theology*, 135.

15 Oscar Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament*, trans. Shirley C. Guthrie and Charles A.M. Hall (Philadelphia: Westminster Press 1963) 105.

its priestly character had long been highlighted.¹⁶ Many structures for the prayer in Jn 17 have been proposed. In *The Priesthood of Christ and His Ministers* André Feuillet proposes that Jn 17 has the same structure as the high priest's prayers on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement.¹⁷

On Yom Kippur, in Lev 16:6–11, 15–16, the high priest offered the sacrifices in atonement for:

1. himself (Lev 16:6);
2. his "house" i.e. fellow priests (Lev 16:6);
3. all people (Lev 16:15–16).

In Jn 17 Jesus prays:

1. for himself (17:1–5), asking the Father to enable him to continue glorifying the Father;
2. for his disciples (17:6–19);
3. for those who will believe through his disciples that they may be united (17:20–26).

Feuillet deduces that the "threefold prayer of Christ in Jn 17 shows that Christ is the high priest of the New Covenant."¹⁸

Apart from similarity in structure, there are other resemblances between Christ's prayer in Jn 17 and the Day of Atonement liturgy. The Day of Atonement was the only day in the year during which the high priest could utter the divine name YHWH, and then only inside the Holy of Holies. Accordingly Feuillet finds Jesus' declaration that he has manifested the Father's name to the disciples (Jn 17:6, 26) amplifying the connection between Jn 17 and the Day of Atonement liturgy.¹⁹ Two other mentions of the Father's name also amplify the parallel; Jesus kept the disciples in the Father's name (17:12), and prays that Father keep them safe in his name (17:11). Ratzinger believes Feuillet has given us the key to a correct understanding of Jn 17.²⁰

16 Joseph Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: Part Two: Holy Week: From the Entrance into Jerusalem to the Resurrection*, trans. Philip J. Whitmore (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011) 76.

17 André Feuillet, *The Priesthood of Christ and His Ministers*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975) 207–208.

18 Ibid., 208.

19 Ibid., 62–69.

20 Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: Part Two*, 77.

While Jn 17 has long been called the High Priestly Prayer of Christ, the Letter to the Hebrews is the only New Testament document to explicitly refer to Christ as “high priest.” Hebrews satisfies a most important need not addressed by any other New Testament document, showing that Christ was a high priest and his death was his priestly self-sacrifice. Although we now regard Jesus’ death as a priestly self-sacrifice, initially Jesus’ death would not have originally been seen as a priestly act. A Jewish priest sacrificed a life other than his own, but Jesus’ death was a punishment and unaccompanied by a solemn priestly liturgy. Hebrews has a unique way of describing Christ’s death on Calvary. It sees Christ’s death as the fulfillment of the Old Testament Day of Atonement/Yom Kippur liturgy. That was the only day of the year when the Levitical high priest entered the Holy of Holies to sprinkle blood to atone for sins (Lev 16:11–14). According to Hebrews, when Christ offered himself to the Father on the cross, he took his blood not into the Holy of Holies in the Temple in Jerusalem like the high priest once a year, but into the heavenly sanctuary to gain salvation for us (9:11–14). When Christ began his priestly self-sacrifice on the cross he was on earth but by the time he died he had, so to speak, passed through the Holy of Holies into the heavenly sanctuary.²¹ Ratzinger describes Christ’s passage from the cross to the heavenly temple in this way:

Jesus stepped, not in the limited arena of the liturgical performance, the Temple, but publicly, before the eyes of the world, through the curtain of death into the real temple, that is, before the face of God himself, in order to offer, not things, the blood of animals, or anything like that, but himself.²²

Because Jesus our priest, in his once for all time act of expiation, has opened access for us to the throne of God, Hebrews encourages to approach the throne of grace (4:16). Christ has already entered the heavenly sanctuary as a forerunner on our behalf (6:19–20). Previously only the high priest could approach God’s throne inside the Holy of Holies once a year. God’s throne now welcomes all because through Christ’s priestly sacrifice the

21 Albert Vanhoye, *Old Testament Priests and the New Priest*, trans. Bernard Orchard (Petersham, MA: St. Bede’s, 1986) 180.

22 Joseph Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity (Revised Edition)*, trans. Joseph R. Foster (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004) 286.

veil guarding the way into the Holy of Holies has been torn down (Mt 27:51; Mk 15:38; Lk 23:45) and we have access to the Father in heaven. The exhortation of 4:16 is obviously not to encourage listeners to enter the Holy of Holies in the Temple, but to commune spiritually with the Father in heaven through Christ since Christ is now the way to the Father. The sense of the exhortation in 4:16 is that there is now complete freedom to approach the Father through Christ. The Greek word *parrēsia* (παρρησία) in 4:16, often translated as “confidence”, is a composite word formed by joining two words, *pas* and *rhēsis*, meaning “all” and “speech”, i.e. freedom to speak, and so in this context meaning complete freedom to draw near to God’s throne. It is noteworthy that the author of Hebrews uses this word encouraging the letter’s recipients to draw near to God because in Judaism no one was allowed to pronounce the divine name YHWH and the only exception was the high priest who could do so only once a year inside the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur. Now by contrast there is freedom of speech to approach the Father through Jesus.

Heb 10:19–25 also contains an invitation to enter God’s sanctuary. However, here the reader is told specifically how to enter into God’s sanctuary. Now Christ is a great priest over God’s house (10:21), i.e., he has opened the way to God’s sanctuary by his death on Calvary, and we can enter “by the blood of Jesus” (10:19) and through the curtain that is “through his flesh” (10:20). Obviously we see these two specific references to entering the heavenly Holy of Holies through Jesus’ blood and flesh as an allusion to the Eucharist, teaching that the celebration of the Eucharist is now the way to enter God’s sanctuary. Unlike Yom Kippur where only the high priest could enter the Holy of Holies, now all Christians are invited into God’s sanctuary through the flesh and blood of Jesus. However, before approaching God’s heavenly throne in the celebration of the Eucharist, Hebrews asks Christians to be prepared in three ways: to have full faith, no evil in our conscience, and bodies washed with pure water which we take to mean to be baptized (10:22). We can enter the sanctuary through Christ, through his flesh and blood, every day as we join in the daily celebration of Mass.

According to Jewish tradition, on the day of Yom Kippur, “There was a crimson thread tied to the door of the sanctuary. When the goat had reached the wilderness, the thread would

turn white” (m. Yoma 6:8 E).²³ According to the Babylonian Talmud (b. Yoma 4:1, II.5.B–C),²⁴ this phenomenon ceased forty years before the destruction of the Temple, and also the menorah lamps went out each night which were supposed to be constantly lighting reminding them of the pillar of fire at night in the desert (symbolizing God’s presence), and the doors of the Temple opened mysteriously every night.²⁵ The Jerusalem Talmud also reports the same phenomena (y. Yoma 6:3, I.4). The Jewish traditions do not connect these phenomena with the death of Christ—both Talmuds see them presaging the destruction of the Temple—but it is remarkable that Jewish tradition reports these phenomena occurring during the timespan between the death of Christ and the destruction of the Temple. Yom Kippur and all Jewish sacrifices were transfigured/fulfilled in Christ’s death, and amazingly Jewish tradition reports events following Christ’s death seen auguring the end of the Temple.

Christ is referred to as High Priest both in Pope Paul VI’s Apostolic Constitution *Missale Romanum*²⁶ and in the *General Instruc-*

23 Jacob Neusner, *The Mishnah: A New Translation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988) 276. This refers to the tractate in the Mishnah on Yom Kippur, therefore also sometimes titled m.Kippurim.

24 The Talmud, put simply, is a commentary on the Mishnah and a collection of the oral tradition of the early rabbis. It comes in two versions; the Palestinian (Jerusalem) Talmud probably compiled AD 400–450 and the Babylonian Talmud compiled AD 500–600. The Babylonian Talmud, the most complete of the two, is among the most important texts in rabbinic Judaism. Just as the Mishnah is indicated m.tractate.chapter:verse, likewise the Babylonian Talmud is indicated b.tractate.chapter:verse and the Palestinian/Jerusalem Talmud is indicated y.tractate.chapter:verse. The reference above is to the tractate in the Talmud on Yom Kippur.

25 Jacob Neusner, *The Babylonian Talmud: A Translation and Commentary*, vol. 5a (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2011) 142.

26 Paul VI, Apostolic Constitution *Missale Romanum* (3 April 1969), in *The Roman Missal: Renewed by Decree of the Most Holy Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican, Promulgated by Authority of Pope Paul VI and Revised at the Direction of Pope John Paul II*, Third Typical Edition (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2011) 15.

tion of the *Roman Missal*.²⁷ The texts of the prayers in the *Roman Missal* refer to Christ as High Priest a number of times. In the *Roman Missal* there are twenty-four references to high priest, all but five of them to Jesus as our high priest. For example, in the Chrism Mass after the priests have renewed their promises, the bishop asks the people to pray for their priests that the Lord may “keep them faithful as ministers of Christ, the High Priest”²⁸ and the preface of the Chrism Mass addressing the Father says, “you made your Only Begotten Son High Priest of the new and eternal covenant.”²⁹ The Collect on Thursday of the Second Week of Easter refers to “Christ our High Priest, interceding on our behalf.”³⁰ Part of the Prayer over the Offerings at the Vigil Mass for the Ascension of the Lord states, “O God, whose Only Begotten Son, our High Priest, is seated ever-living at your right hand to intercede for us”³¹ The Missal contains the Votive Mass of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Eternal High Priest.³² The Fifth Preface of Easter mirrors the theology of Hebrews:

By the oblation of his Body,
he [Christ] brought the sacrifices of old to fulfillment
in the reality of the Cross
and, by commending himself to you for our salvation,
showed himself the Priest, the Altar, and the Lamb of sacrifice.³³

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27 *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, nos. 4 and 387, in *The Roman Missal*, 20 and 84.

28 *The Roman Missal*, 291.

29 *Ibid.*, 295.

30 *Ibid.*, 400.

31 *Ibid.*, 431.

32 *Ibid.*, 1330.

33 *Ibid.*, 566.