

## Eucharistic Allusions in the Epistle to the Hebrews

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Over the past several years, there have been several proposals suggesting the presence of Eucharistic allusions in the Epistle to the Hebrews;<sup>1</sup> however, they have typically met with criticism. This has given rise to a major debate as a result of the epistle's unique nature. Not only is it probably the only writing by its author that has survived to the present, but in itself it is without equal with regards to its vision and theological approach. Almost nothing is known about either the author or the community to which this letter had been addressed. Because even a very elementary understanding of the epistle immediately requires a significant reconstruction of the background of its writing, it becomes fertile soil for diverse interpretations. This becomes increasingly the case when the presence of any allusions or references is stipulated to be in the contents of the epistle. In this case, we enter into the sphere of the author's intentional ambiguity. Thus, it will always be difficult to present a strong argument in favor of Eucharistic allusions in the Epistle to the Hebrews and their comprehensive explanation.

In this article, I would like to add two qualifications to the discussion on this topic and propose an analysis of two fragments of the epistle, having these qualifications in mind. The first topic is the idea of “protection of the sacred formula” expressed by Joachim Jeremias, while the second is interpreting Christ's sacrifice in the Epistle to the Hebrews essentially not in categories of death on the Cross but sacrificing the resurrected Christ in heaven according to David Moffitt's explanation. The texts that will be subject to analysis in the article are Hebrews 9:19–22 and 13:9–13.

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1 P. Andriessen, *L'Eucharistie dans l'Épître aux Hébreux*, „Nouvelle Revue Théologique” 94 (1972) no. 3, p. 269–277; C. Spicq, *L'Épître aux Hébreux*, Paris 1957; J. Swetnam, *Christology and the Eucharist in the Epistle to the Hebrews*, „Biblica” 70 (1989) no. 1, p. 74–95. See also a critical discussion of various proposals in: R. Williamson, *The Eucharist and the Epistle to the Hebrews*, „New Testament Studies” 21 (1975), p. 300–312, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0028688500011048>.

## Protection of the Sacred Formula

Joachim Jeremias notes that means of protecting the sacred ritual of the Last Supper appeared at a very early stage of the development of the early Church.<sup>2</sup> He gives the following examples:

- using pseudonymous expressions for the mentioned ritual;
- limiting access to teaching about it to those who have been initiated;
- hiding the details of the ritual;
- only partly referencing the Eucharistic formula.<sup>3</sup>

For him, the first incentive to study this dimension of the substance of the Eucharistic tradition was the seeming silence of the Gospel of St. John on the ritual of the Last Supper. In the case of Hebrews, he suggests that the absence of the Eucharist from the list of fundamental teachings for neophytes in Hebrews 6: 1–3 is evidence that this ritual was limited solely to the “perfect” (τέλειοι). I believe that Jeremias’ general conclusions<sup>4</sup> regarding the protection of the sacred formula can also be applied to other fragments of the epistle, which I will try to present below.

When we discuss the problem of the “sacred formula,” we inevitably deal with the problem of the reception of the tradition of the Last Supper (the reception of the ritual) by the author and the intended audience of Hebrews. Commenting on Hebrews 9:20, Williamson presents this problem in the following way:

Is it not possible that he was aware of a tradition of Jesus’ words connected with the Last Supper but that he belonged to an early Christian community which, prompted perhaps by his own exposition of the nature of the redemptive work of Christ, did not share in what appears to have been the common eucharistic faith and practice in the Early Church?<sup>5</sup>

The situation presented in this quote appears to be improbable, as it would require the author of Hebrews to be clearly inconsequential. Despite making use of a message that is fundamental to Eucharistic practice,<sup>6</sup> he would have to reject the practice itself and preserve tradition. However, tradition itself

2 J. Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, S. C. M. Press, London 1966, p. 125–137.

3 *Ibidem*, 136.

4 *Ibidem*, 137.

5 R. Williamson, *The Eucharist and the Epistle to the Hebrews*, op. cit., s. 306.

6 That is on the account of the establishment of the Last Supper (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:23–25).

does not appear to be central to understanding Christ's sacrifice<sup>7</sup> and thus separating it from practice does not seem to be worthy of the author's efforts. A more satisfying explanation could be that the author uses the Eucharistic tradition only occasionally in order to support his argumentation concentrated around other matters. However, as I will demonstrate below, the role of Eucharistic tradition and practice in Hebrews could also be seen in the light of the sacred formula, which can explain why Eucharistic practice appears to be absent from the theological framework of the epistle.

Commentators have noted that the author of Hebrews could have had many occasions to make clear references to the Eucharist but does not do so.<sup>8</sup> Intentionally avoiding such references can not only be a sign of rejecting the Eucharist, but, on the contrary, a sign of homage that inclines the author to be silent on the sacred ritual or make allusions that are clear solely for the community. Why would the author protect the Eucharist against openly referencing it? If Hebrews is a sermon presented in the form of a letter (that is, it was not preached by the author himself but brought by someone to the community in order to read it), there was a risk that the document could be seized by third parties. In this case, the Eucharistic practice of the community would be hidden to those who have not been initiated as a result of allusions and insinuations. Below, I will discuss two specific examples of possible Eucharistic allusions and I will try to evaluate them in light of the thesis of the sacred formula.

## The Blood of the Covenant

The first text I would like to analyze is a description of the inauguration of the Sinaitic covenant that is found in Hebrews 9:19–22:

λαληθείσης γὰρ πάσης ἐντολῆς κατὰ τὸν νόμον ὑπὸ Μωϋσέως παντὶ τῷ λαῷ, λαβὼν τὸ αἷμα τῶν μόσχων [καὶ τῶν τράγων] μετὰ ὕδατος καὶ ἐρίου κοκκίνου καὶ ὑσώπου αὐτὸ τε τὸ βιβλίον καὶ πάντα τὸν λαὸν ἐρράντισεν λέγων· τοῦτο τὸ αἷμα τῆς διαθήκης ἧς ἐνετείλατο πρὸς ὑμᾶς ὁ θεός, καὶ τὴν σκηνὴν δὲ καὶ πάντα τὰ σκεύη τῆς λειτουργίας τῷ αἵματι ὁμοίως ἐρράντισεν. καὶ σχεδὸν ἐν αἵματι πάντα καθαρίζεται κατὰ τὸν νόμον καὶ χωρὶς αἱματεκχυσίας οὐ γίνεται ἄφεσις.

7 Cf. D. M. Moffitt, *Atonement and the Logic of Resurrection in the Epistle to the Hebrews*, Brill, Leiden 2011, <https://doi.org/10.1163/ej.9789004206519.i-338>.

8 Ex. 6:4–5; 7:1–8; 9:19–22; 10:19–20; 13:9–11.

When every commandment had been proclaimed by Moses to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves [and goats], together with water and crimson wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, ‘This is the blood of the covenant which God has enjoined upon you.’ In the same way, he sprinkled also the tabernacle and all the vessels of worship with blood. According to the law almost everything is purified by blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

This story is told by the author in several steps, whose sequence is as follows:

1. Moses teaches the people all the commandments;
2. he takes the blood and water and sprinkles them on the book of the Truth and the people;
3. next, he proclaims: “This is the blood of the covenant which God has enjoined upon you;”
4. finally, the sanctuary and its vessels are also sprinkled.

Everything ends with two comments by the author: according to the Law, everything is cleansed with blood, while forgiveness takes place only through the shedding of blood. The next verses describe how Christ purified the heavenly tabernacle with His blood and made a sacrifice for the people’s sins (Hebrews 9:23–26). This corresponds to point 4 in the sequence described above: the purification of the heavenly sanctuary is parallel to the sprinkling of the earthly sanctuary. What can we say of the remaining three points? As has been often noted, proclaiming the covenant in point 3 can be considered as an allusion to the formula from the Last Supper: τοῦτο γάρ ἐστιν τὸ αἷμά μου τῆς διαθήκης τὸ περὶ πολλῶν ἐκχυννόμενον εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν – “for this is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins” (Matthew 26:28).<sup>9</sup> If this is acceptable, one can ask if there are further equivalents in this sequence. The proclaiming of the blood of the covenant during the Last Supper is preceded by the giving of “blood” to the disciples in the form of a chalice: λαβὼν ποτήριον καὶ εὐχαριστήσας ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς λέγων· Πίετε ἐξ αὐτοῦ πάντες – “Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you’” (Matthew 26:27). Only after this does Jesus explain the meaning of the chalice, just as Moses did with sprinkling the people in point 2. This connection is strengthened by further lexical similarities (which reveal its ossified nature that is typical of a ritual

9 P. Andriessen, *L'Eucharistie dans l'Épître aux Hébreux*, op. cit., p. 274.

formula): Hebrews 9:19 λαβὼν τὸ αἶμα... λέγων corresponds to Matthew 26:27 λαβὼν ποτήριον... λέγων. With regards to why Hebrews claims that the book of the Law was sprinkled along with the people, this will soon be discussed below. Finally, it seems appropriate to say that just as Moses inaugurated the covenant after proclaiming all the commandments of the Law in point 1, Jesus has similarly proclaimed the new covenant after finishing His service as a teacher. One final detail should be noted. Apart from the parallels in this “procedural” pattern, one can also notice idiomatic similarities between χωρὶς αἱματεκχυσίας οὐ γίνεται ἄφεσις (Hebrews 9:22) and τὸ αἶμά μου [...] ἐκχυννόμενον εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν (Matthew 26:28).

Although one could argue that these parallelisms are incidental and they result from use of the same sources (for example, Exodus 24), one should notice that Hebrews does not faithfully reflect the story from Exodus 24, in which Moses reads the Law to the people, who then agree to follow it and proceeds to sprinkle blood on it, thus proclaiming the establishment of the covenant (there is no reference to sprinkling the book of the Law). Another modification is adding water to the image of sprinkling in Hebrews, which is absent from Exodus. This brings to mind John 19:34, where blood and water flow from Jesus’ pierced side as well as the early Christian practice of mixing wine and water in the Eucharistic ritual.<sup>10</sup> After the ritual of the blood of the covenant, Moses along with the elders of Israel immediately ascend the mountain in order to see God. The blessing of the tabernacle takes place many chapters later (in Exodus 40) and does not contain any sprinkling with blood. On the other hand, Hebrews suggests that the tabernacle was sprinkled by the same blood that had been used to sprinkle the book and the people. In this way, the author of the epistle tries to maintain continuity between places on which the same blood had been sprinkled. Because the aim of this entire text is a Biblical commentary on Christ’s sacrifice and His blood in particular, we should probably understand that in this way the author constructs an analogy that should be interpreted in light of Christ. The reference to the tradition of the Last Supper or even to this tradition in such a form as had been immortalized in the broader Gospel narrative<sup>11</sup> significantly helps to

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Justin Martyr, *The First Apology*, 1.65.

<sup>11</sup> It is possible that the author of Hebrews knew some form of a narrative on suffering similar to those that had been immortalized in the canonical Gospels. This could be suggested by: (1) Hebrews 5:7–8 as a reference to the prayer in Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36–46; Mark 14:32–42; Luke 22:39–46); (2) Hebrews 13:12–14 as a reference to Jesus’ suffering outside the city (Matthew

explain the details of the modified image of the inauguration of the covenant at Sinai presented in Hebrews.

However, in order to explain the topic of the reference to the sprinkling of the book of the Law in Hebrews 9:19, one must return to the quote on Jeremiah's prophesy concerning the new covenant in the previous chapter. There, in Hebrews 8:10, the new covenant is marked by depositing the laws of the Lord inside the people:

ὅτι αὕτη ἡ διαθήκη, ἣν διαθήσομαι τῷ οἴκῳ Ἰσραὴλ μετὰ τὰς ἡμέρας ἐκεῖνας, λέγει κύριος· διδοὺς νόμους μου εἰς τὴν διάνοιαν αὐτῶν καὶ ἐπὶ καρδίας αὐτῶν ἐπιγράψω αὐτοὺς, καὶ ἔσομαι αὐτοῖς εἰς θεόν, καὶ αὐτοὶ ἔσονται μοι εἰς λαόν·

But this is the covenant I will establish with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws in their minds, and I will write them upon their hearts. I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

If these divine laws are now inscribed in the people's hearts and the author of Hebrews references the inauguration of the Mosaic covenant as an analogy for the new covenant, the connection of the Law and the people in one act of sprinkling becomes comprehensible: in the new covenant, God's laws are deposited in the hearts of people. On the other hand, if we invert this understanding, we can ask: if the Law now is found in the hearts of the people, how can these new "books" of the Law be sprinkled with the blood of the new covenant? In essence, Hebrews 10:21 speaks of the hearts of Christians as having been sprinkled, but it does not provide us with information that they are sprinkled with blood. This can be inferred from other texts that speak of sprinkling and always tie it to the use of blood (9:13; 19:21; 12:24). In that case, the hearts of the faithful would have then been sprinkled with Christ's blood through participation in the ritual of the Eucharist. All the above observations point towards a Eucharistic understanding of the text under discussion; however, it would be helpful to evaluate this proposal also in light of the practice of the "protection of the sacred formula."

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28:32–37; Mark 15:21–26; Luke 23:26–34; John 19:17–27). A legitimate question is if the author was also familiar with such a form of a narrative on suffering that begins with the establishment of the Last Supper.

If the Eucharistic ritual is at the foundations of this text, we can better understand why the author references the inauguration of the Mosaic covenant without providing a complete parallel in reference to Christ, in light of which it could be clearly interpreted. Instead, it changes the narrative from Exodus so that this parallel could be recognized by presenting this story within the framework of a sequence of elements of the ritual of the Eucharist that would be familiar to the audience as well as through partial echoes of the traditional formula. For someone unfamiliar with the ritual and its source narrative, this altered history can sound somewhat odd, but for those who are used to taking part in the Eucharist these allusions are clear. The conclusion that logically flows from this is that according to the thinking of the author of Hebrews drinking from the Eucharistic chalice corresponds to Moses' sprinkling of blood.

### Sacrificing the Incarnate Christ

Before we move on to the next fragment, it is worth emphasizing some of the consequences of David Moffitt's thesis that has been discussed above; that is, that in Hebrews Christ's sacrifice is not death on the Cross but the presentation of the resurrected Christ God in heaven. One of the accusations directed against a Eucharistic reading of Hebrews results from the fact that Hebrews' discussion of Jesus' blood is understood as a metonymy of His death on the Cross. This is tied to the broader assumption that, generally speaking, Christ's sacrifice would come down to Jesus' death in the conception in Hebrews. This thesis has been refuted in David Moffitt's study,<sup>12</sup> in which the author convincingly demonstrates that the essence of Christ's sacrifice in the understanding of the Epistle to the Hebrews is sacrificing the resurrected Jesus to God in the heavenly sanctuary. Partial basis for this conclusion is the fact that in the Jewish cultic context blood is by no means another way of talking about death; on the contrary, it symbolizes life.

Moffitt's work provides many valuable comments on the questions posed in this article. First, it shows how the defined conception (in Moffitt's case, the bodily resurrection) can function as a fundamental component in the theological plan of the text under discussion (Hebrews), while at the same time it could be not recognized by scholars because of its theological assumptions (on the

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12 D. M. Moffitt, *Atonement and the Logic of Resurrection in the Epistle to the Hebrews*, op. cit.

nature of sacrifice) or because of the unusual way of speaking about it by the author (instead of discussing the resurrection, Hebrews prefers to speak of life and Jesus' ascent into heaven). Second, just as with the dichotomy of faith and works in the Pauline corpus, similarly there are specified assumptions related to such dichotomies in Hebrews that we find in the epistle as earthly–heavenly, old–new, this creation–not this creation, type–archetype, etc. These dichotomies traditionally led researchers to interpret the worldview of Hebrews in more or less Platonic categories. One of the elements of this tradition was the supposedly negative approach of the author to matter; the material aspect was understood as one of the defects of the old devotion that is criticized in Hebrews. However, in the thought of the exegesis of Moffitt<sup>13</sup> the sacrifice of Christ's body and blood, His corporeality, is the substance of this sacrifice and this is not because of death, which could be understood as the destruction of Jesus' body, but through bodily resurrection and exaltation. Hence, the physical nature of Christ takes on eternal significance, while heaven, where Jesus serves as a priest and offers up His sacrifice, is not solely a sphere of disembodied spirits, but the place of the resurrected, incarnate Archpriest. Such an interpretation is contrary to interpreting the epistle with the assumption of the dualism of corporeality and non-corporeality with which we approach the text.

### Consuming the Body of the Sacrifice of Reconciliation

Along with the conclusions from Moffitt's study,<sup>14</sup> some contentious fragments of Hebrews can be interpreted in another light. In particular, one of the many interpretations of Hebrews 13:9–13 was seen as expressing an anti-materialistic sentiment that perhaps was directed against the Eucharistic practice itself.<sup>15</sup>

Διδαχαῖς ποικίλαις καὶ ξέναις μὴ παραφέρεσθε· καλὸν γὰρ χάριτι βεβαιουῦσθαι τὴν καρδίαν, οὐ βρώμασιν ἐν οἷς οὐκ ὠφελήθησαν οἱ περιπατοῦντες. ἔχομεν θυσιαστήριον ἐξ οὗ φαγεῖν οὐκ ἔχουσιν ἐξουσίαν οἱ τῇ σκηνῇ λατρεύοντες. ὣν γὰρ εἰσφέρεται ζῶων τὸ αἷμα περὶ ἁμαρτίας εἰς τὰ ἅγια διὰ τοῦ ἀρχιερέως, τούτων τὰ σώματα κατακαίεται ἕξω τῆς παρεμβολῆς. Διὸ καὶ Ἰησοῦς,

<sup>13</sup> Ibidem, p. 229–285.

<sup>14</sup> In particular, one of the last conclusions is significant to the general interpretation of the epistle: “The dualism of Hebrews is not a dualism of flesh-and-blood body vs. spirit” (ibidem, 301).

<sup>15</sup> J. Moffatt, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh 1924.



ἵνα ἀγίαση διὰ τοῦ ἰδίου αἵματος τὸν λαόν, ἕξω τῆς πύλης ἔπαθεν. τοίνυν ἐξερχώμεθα πρὸς αὐτὸν ἕξω τῆς παρεμβολῆς τὸν ὀνειδισμόν αὐτοῦ φέροντες·

Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teaching. It is good to have our hearts strengthened by grace and not by foods, which do not benefit those who live by them. We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat. The bodies of the animals whose blood the high priest brings into the sanctuary as a sin offering are burned outside the camp. Therefore, Jesus also suffered outside the gate, to consecrate the people by his own blood. Let us then go to him outside the camp, bearing the reproach that he bore.

Attridge comments this fragment as follows: “There may be some hint that the body of Christ is similarly destroyed in his sacrifice and hence unavailable for consumption.”<sup>16</sup> However, the meaning of this text is probably the opposite. It is often assumed that there is a conflict here between the materiality of “food” and the supposed non-materiality of “grace.” It seems more appropriate to take the entire phrase “foods, which do not benefit those who live by them” (Hebrews 13:9) as characteristic of the practice that is under criticism. It is not food as such that is rejected, but specific foods eaten by specific persons for some benefit. Thus, the author immediately returns to contrasting the two cultic systems. Those who “follow” dietary restrictions should be considered “those who serve the tabernacle.” On the one hand, it is said that they eat foods that do not bring any benefits. However, they cannot do so if the bodies of animals were offered up during the annual feast of Yom Kippur, because (γὰρ) their bodies are prone to destruction and are thrown out. By contrast, Christians are not concerned about foods that do not bring benefit, but they have access to the altar from which they can consume the body that is sacrificed. If one accepts the complete conclusions from this comparison, we can accept that a body that was sacrificed once forever during the last Yom Kippur, which Hebrews speaks of, could be consumed by Christians. Jesus’ body was neither destroyed nor burned; it suffered outside the city, just like the bodies of sacrificed animals are taken out of the camp. Unlike them, however, Jesus’ body was awakened from the dead and led before the face of God.

Thus, the author contrasts the two sacrificial systems and two sacrifices of reconciliation in particular. In the Levitical system, priests cannot eat from the

<sup>16</sup> H. W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia 1989, p. 397.

sacrifice of reconciliation; only their blood is used in relation to the tabernacle. Meanwhile, for Christians a ritual that makes use of blood took place not only in the prototypical tabernacle in heaven, but they themselves were sanctified by blood and can eat of the sacrifice of reconciliation that takes place at the altar, which perhaps could be situated in the heavens. One should once more ask how this practice is performed. The language used in this place is very allusive, but it is difficult to believe that the author contrasted the specific practices of priests on earth with the unclear “spiritual” experiences of the faithful. Throughout the entire epistle, he puts great effort into emphasizing the importance of Jesus’ corporeality for the last, real sacrifice of reconciliation with His blood and body. After situating Jesus’ corporeal nature within the context of the logic of tabernacle devotion, it would seem strange if at the moment of referencing this sacrifice in relation to the faithful He said that they could consume some undetermined divine blessing. It is more reasonable to assume that this emphasis placed on Christ’s corporeal properties works both ways, with respect to God and to the faithful. This does not negate the spiritual properties of the entire process<sup>17</sup> or the fact that He remains mysterious.<sup>18</sup>

If Jesus’ sacrifice does not mean His death, but the bringing of His blood and the body of God during the resurrection; as Moffitt argues,<sup>19</sup> this influences what we could expect of the community of the Epistle to the Hebrews with regards to the topic of Eucharistic faith. The shift here would take place after Christ’s death towards His corporeal presence in front of the face of God, and if the Eucharist means Jesus’ sacrifice, it should be properly understood as referring to His body and blood in heaven.

In the context of guarding the sacred formula, we notice that this fragment uses indirect ways of speaking about the ritual. We find discussion of “eating from the altar” and the “bodies” of animals offered up in a sacrifice of reconciliation, but no Christian equivalent is directly indicated. Christians could gain benefits from bolstering their hearts with grace, but it is not explained what this refers to. This comment can be interpreted in light of Psalm 104 [103]:15 in the Septuagint as: *καὶ οἶνος εὐφραίνει καρδίαν ἀνθρώπου τοῦ ἰλαρῦναι πρόσωπον ἐν ἐλαίῳ, καὶ ἄρτος καρδίαν ἀνθρώπου στηρίζει* – “wine to gladden their hearts, oil to make their faces shine, and

<sup>17</sup> Christ’s self-sacrifice continues to take place “through the eternal spirit” (Hebrews 9:14).

<sup>18</sup> Ultimately, one can ask what it means that someone is both a priest and a sacrifice.

<sup>19</sup> D. M. Moffitt, *Atonement and the Logic of Resurrection in the Epistle to the Hebrews*, op. cit., p. 283–285.

bread to sustain the human heart.” This, meanwhile, would be another disguised reference to the Eucharistic meal. The fragment under discussion is also characterized by tension concerning access to sacred objects: the altar and the sacrifice. The priests of the earthly temple cannot enter into it, while during initiation Christians have the privilege (ἐξουσία) of taking part in real devotion. The emphasis on the dialectic of access and exclusion as well as the vagueness of the reality to which the author refers fit alongside the practices used during the defense of sacred formulas and rituals.

## Conclusion

The Epistle to the Hebrews certainly was not written in order to define or discuss in detail the sacramental practice of the community. Even if the epistle presupposes Eucharistic tradition or practice or makes allusions to them, they are not the main subject of its message. It may be unclear how exactly the author of Hebrews understood the way in which the Last Supper acted in mediating Christ’s body and blood, but it is equally possible that he himself did not pose such a question. Even the entirety of the letters of Ignatius of Antioch and its strong emphasis on the Eucharist provides no explanation of how the sacrament sacrifices that which it symbolizes. Such theological explorations would appear later, in the second century, in the writings of Irenaeus or Justin, for example.

If the allusions to the Last Supper could be found only in Hebrews 9:19–22, where strong parallels to the story of the establishment of the ritual were noted, Williamson’s question<sup>20</sup> could lead to a convincing opinion on the relationship of the Epistle to the Hebrews to the Eucharistic ritual. In that case, we could see the Last Supper as a unique inauguration of the covenant like the ritual performed by Moses at Sinai. However, the number of possible allusions to the Eucharistic ritual is greater and it gains meaning if we look at it not as an intentional, masked reference to this meal. Not only is it in essence difficult to imagine the early Christian community rejecting Eucharistic practice but accepting Moffitt’s conclusions regarding the importance of Christ’s incarnation to Hebrews, it is inconceivable why the community of the Epistle to the Hebrews in particular should avoid this ritual. A certain

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20 Por. R. Williamson, *The Eucharist and the Epistle to the Hebrews*, op. cit., s. 306.

series of expectations with which one approaches this epistle must be revised, especially in interpreting the dichotomy and contradictions the author uses.

The conclusions of this article force us to believe that the Eucharistic ritual is close to the thinking of the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews; it is one of the main points of interest not only in Hebrews 9:19–22, but it also reappears in Hebrews 13:9–13 at the end of the work. The Eucharistic interpretation suggested here allows us to not only understand these two fragments more fully, but also to integrate them with the dominant message of the epistle on Christ's sacrifice. Finally, apart from its uniqueness in light of the canon of the New Testament, the epistle itself turns out to grow out of Eucharistic tradition and practice known from the canonical Gospels, the Pauline corpus, or testimonies from the first Churches, despite the possible Platonizing and anti-materialistic interpretations.

## Abstract

### Eucharistic Allusions in the Epistle to the Hebrews

The aim of this article is to add two qualifications to the discussion on the topic of Eucharistic allusions in the Epistle to the Hebrews as well as to provide an analysis of two fragments of the epistle that take these qualifications into account. The first is the proposal of the “defense of a holy formula” expressed by Joachim Jeremias; the second is understanding Christ's sacrifice in Hebrews essentially not in categories of death on the Cross but of offering up the resurrected Christ in heaven according to David Moffitt's explanation. The fragments of the epistle under discussion are Hebrews 9:19–22 and 13:9–13.

**Keywords:** Epistle to the Hebrews, Eucharist, sacrifice

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