

The Early Church Fathers on Sacrifices and Temple: Rejection, Substitution, or Metaphor?

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Many New Testament writings, including Paul's cultic metaphors, Mark's description of the Last Supper, and the heavenly Temple in Hebrews and Revelation, relate to the Temple and sacrifices. The destruction of the Jerusalem Temple and the end of the Jewish sacrificial cult did not diminish the interest of early Christian writers in the cult. Several decades later, the Apostolic fathers and Church fathers continue to engage with the concept of sacrifice and related subjects.

In his study on spiritual sacrifices in early Christianity (second–fourth centuries), Everett Ferguson discusses the subject from a functional perspective. He shows that sacrificial language is utilized for a wide range of applications: prayer, praise, the Eucharist, fasting, celibacy, martyrdom, etc.¹ It is customary to classify this sacrificial discourse into segments of Christian doctrine, following Paul, such as the sacrifice of Christ, the Church as the new Temple, and images of sacrificial activity.²

Recently there has been renewed interest in the question of why and how second- and third-century Christians rejected animal sacrifices. Guy Stroumsa relates the cessation of sacrifices to a broader shift in the very concept of identity, from a more communal model of identity to a more individualistic model.³ Maria-Zoe Petropoulou suggests that the Christian rejection resulted from a different

¹ E. Ferguson, "Spiritual Sacrifice in Early Christianity and Its Environment," *ANRW* 23.2 (1980): 1151–1189.

² R. J. Daly, *Sacrifice Unveiled. The True Meaning of Christian Sacrifice* (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2009), 75–98.

³ G. G. Stroumsa, *The End of Sacrifice: Religious Transformations in Late Antiquity* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2009). On the Church fathers, see *ibid.*, 72–75, 78–83.

understanding of God.⁴ Daniel Ullucci concludes that there was no single pattern of opposition to animal sacrifices, but a variety of approaches, with no established position or logical chronological progression of stemma of arguments. He regards the debate over the proper religious practice of sacrifice as a vehicle of religious competition between different Christian circles, as well as with Judaism and Greco-Roman cults, in order to defend specific positions.⁵

Yet, as we shall see below, the attitude of the Apostolic and Church fathers was much more complex than a simple rejection of the sacrificial cult. In fact, many of them regarded sacrifices as a concept that illuminates their non-sacrificial practices. In what follows I will point to certain traditional Jewish cultic ideas that remained appealing to the Church fathers, while the related practices and rites were totally rejected.

To date, there is no systematic discussion of the levels of interest and rejection of the Church Fathers in Jewish cultic tradition. Some scholars stressed specific approaches while neglecting others. We need a clearer general mapping of what the Church fathers thought about the meaning of the Temple cult and its relevance to their beliefs and practices: does the cult, which no longer exists after 70 CE, provide useful theological concepts? And how does the approach to Temple and sacrifice advance new Christian messages?

Whereas Ullucci concludes that “it is not possible to give a synthesis of Christian positions on sacrifice in the time period in question,”⁶ this article attempts a typological synthesis of the second- and third-century evidence: A basic classification of *types of approaches* to cultic ideas, and suggestions what were the motivations behind these approaches.

Unlike Ferguson, I will not classify the sacrificial and cultic discourse according to the manner in which the cultic symbol was *applied* or used to fit the Christian theological concern (namely, why the Eucharist was regarded as a sacrifice). I will point to three different attitudes towards *the very idea and value* of the sacrificial cult, which show diversity and complexity in the Apostolic and Church fathers’ engagement with Jewish Temple themes: 1. Attacking the very

⁴ M.-Z. Petropoulou, *Animal Sacrifice in Ancient Greek Religion, Judaism and Christianity, 100 BC–AD 200* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), esp. 285–295. For Heyman’s explanation of martyrdom as a challenge to animal sacrifice, see below. For later evidence, see, for example, E. Kovaltchuk, “The Encaenia of St. Sophia: Animal Sacrifice in Christian Context,” *Scrinium* 4 (2008): 161–203.

⁵ D. C. Ullucci, *The Christian Rejection of Animal Sacrifice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), esp. 117, 125–126.

⁶ Ullucci, *Christian Rejection*, 126.

legitimacy and necessity of Jewish sacrifice. 2. Replacing sacrifice with Christian rites and perceptions, thus admitting that the cultic *idea* or function is valuable, and that the vacuum left by the absence of the Jerusalem Temple should be filled with new Christian substitutes. 3. Using cultic associations and metaphors — without disqualifying the cultic practice — to make sense of Christian ideas, thus accepting cultic rites as constructive models that should be followed or developed.

In what follows I will observe which authors follow each of these three approaches. My aim is a typological classification, a general mapping of early Christian views. The scope of this article does not permit discussion of each of the specific passages, its context, and interpretation. Certainly, there are more nuanced variations in the meaning and aim of certain passages from the same type that deserve further elaboration.

The analysis of these three approaches will lead to the question of how they fit together. Why are different approaches to sacrifices sometimes used by the same author? The threefold classification will point to different aims or motivations of the Apostolic and early Church fathers in using cultic themes.

My perspective here is ideological-conceptual without attempting to reconstruct the historical process of these approaches. As Ullucci maintains, there is no straightforward linear development of early Christian thinking on sacrifices and the Temple cult. Each of the passages cited below may deserve deeper analysis and discussion in light of its place in early Christian history and theology.⁷ My purpose here is restricted to exposing the variety and complexity of the approaches towards the Jewish Temple cult during the period from the end of the first century to the third century, showing how (mainly Jewish) sacrifices shaped the religious imagination of early Christian writers.

This article continues my research on NT approaches to the Temple and sacrifice. I have tried to show that NT authors did not reject the Temple cult as a core concept for relationship with God and expression of piety. Rather, they used Jewish traditional concepts to develop their own new ideas, building on and interacting with Jewish cultic traditions. In the NT texts, religious authority, authenticity, and identity were constructed through Temple themes such as relating Jesus or the apostles to the Temple as well as cultic symbolism and metaphors. Even when the practice of animal sacrifices and priestly service is boldly rejected as impractical or irrelevant (such as in Hebrews), its principles are

⁷ The functions and purposes of several passages in internal and external Christian debates is discussed by Ullucci, *Christian Rejection*, 125–126.

sustained and revitalized through a new concept of heavenly cult.⁸ Without necessarily building on these conclusions, here I intend to discuss the attitude of apostolic and Church fathers to the Temple cult in the following two centuries.

Against Sacrifices

Many texts from the second to the fourth century reject or resist sacrifice, thus denying the validity of the Jewish sacrificial cult. The author of the Epistle of Barnabas (2.4–7) utterly rejects the practice of animal sacrifice, arguing that God “has made plain to us through all the prophets that he needs neither sacrifices nor burnt-offerings nor oblations.”⁹ Barnabas argues that the relevant biblical commandments related to sacrifices should be read allegorically, since God annulled sacrifices in favor of the new law of Jesus Christ (2.6).

In chapter 16, Barnabas also introduces a harsh polemic against the Jerusalem Temple, calling the very notion that God would dwell in a building made by human hands absurd (“the wretched men erred by putting their hope on the building, and not on the God who made them, and is the true house of God,” 16.1). He even equates the Jewish Temple with pagan temples (16.2), and argues that the true Temple is not the building, which was rightly destroyed, but the body of the Christian believer.¹⁰

Most interesting is Barnabas’s mockery (16.3–5) of the attempt to rebuild the Temple out of a mistaken belief that God seeks animal sacrifices: “That is happening now. For owing to the war it was destroyed by the enemy; at present even the servants of the enemy will build it up again” (16.4). The author’s goal is to show that a transposition has taken place, from a literal Temple that was (in his opinion, rightfully) destroyed to a spiritual Temple that should be understood in Christian terms. The ideas of the remission of sin, of hope in the Name, and of the new creation in which God dwells (16.8–9) all demonstrate that Barnabas is in fact describing a Christian replacement for the destroyed Temple.¹¹

⁸ E. Regev, *The Temple in Early Christianity: Experiencing the Sacred* (Anchor Yale Bible Reference Library; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019); idem., “Community as Temple: Revisiting Cultic Metaphors in Qumran and the New Testament,” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 28.4 (2018): 604–631.

⁹ Barn. 2.4, later quoting Isa 1:11–13. See Ullucci, *Christian Rejection*, 97–98. Translations of the Epistle of Barnabas follow K. Lake in the LCL edition. Its date is discussed below.

¹⁰ Barn. 16.6–10. He also declares, “God dwells in us” (16.8–9), and “a spiritual temple being built for the Lord” (16.10).

¹¹ P. Richardson and M. B. Shukster, “Barnabas, Nerva, and The Yavnean Rabbis,” *JTS* 34 (1983): 31–55, here 34.

Barnabas is reacting to both Jewish *and* Roman plans to rebuild the Jerusalem Temple. His quotation of Isa 49:17 LXX (Barn. 16.5), for example, addresses the rebuilding of the Temple by those who demolished it, i.e., the Romans. Peter Richardson and Martin Shukster argue that it relates to the reign of the Roman emperor Nerva (96–98 CE), known for having made life easier for the Jews by modifying the *fiscus Iudaicus*, or Jewish tax.¹²

Justin Martyr (mid-second century) refutes the Jewish Temple cult on several grounds. First, he declares that God neither needs nor wants sacrifices.¹³ Curiously, he offers an explanation for why sacrifices are commanded in the Torah to begin with: God, he says, commanded them on account of the sins of the Israelites, particularly the sin of idolatry. Since they made for themselves a golden calf in the wilderness and worshipped other idols, God instructed them to offer sacrifices in His name, in order that they not serve idols.¹⁴ This radical argument can also be found in later rabbinic sources, attributed to R. Ishmael (early second century) and R. Levi (early third century, cited by the fourth-century R. Pinhas). Is it possible that this view was accepted among some of the rabbinic establishment as well, perhaps, as a response to the destruction of the Temple?¹⁵

Second, Justin stresses that God did not need the Temple in Jerusalem as His house or court; on the contrary, the purpose of the Temple is to ensure that the Jews refrain from worshipping idols. Justin goes so far as to argue that the angels defied God when they taught the Israelites to offer sacrifices, incense, and

¹² Richardson and Shukster, “Barnabas, Nerva, and The Yavnean Rabbis,” with a summary of previous dating of the Epistle. On dating it to Nerva’s reign, see *ibid.*, 41–44.

¹³ *First Apology* 10.1; 13.1; *Dial.* 10.3; 22. See also The Epistle to Diognetus 3.2.

¹⁴ *Dial* 19.6; 22.1, 11; Cf. also *Dial.* 43.1; 67.8; 92.4.

¹⁵ R. Levi: Leviticus Rabbah 22:8; R. Ishmael: Tanhuma, *akhrei mot* 17 (ed. Buber, 69–70). See also R. Levi’s view that most sacrifices would be unnecessary in the future (Lev. Rabbah 9:7); A. J. Heshel, *Theology of Ancient Judaism*, Vol.1 (London: Soncino Press, 1962), 1.42–43 [in Hebrew]. Note, however, that these rabbinic texts are much later than Justin. J. Klawans, *Purity, Sacrifice and the Temple: Symbolism and Supersessionism in the Study of Ancient Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 29–30, maintains that the scriptural context and the citation of Lev 17:7 in this passage in Leviticus Rabbah 22:8 proves that there is no critique of sacrifices but merely justification of limiting slaughter to the sanctuary. Only the abolition of slaughtering outside the sanctuary, and not the very concept of sacrifice, is meant to prevent idolatry. Klawans also stresses rabbinic hopes for restoration of sacrifice (*ibid.*, 199–201). M. Balberg, “The Animalistic Gullet and the Godlike Soul: Reframing Sacrifice in Midrash Leviticus Rabbah,” *AJS Review* 38.2 (2014): 221–247, suggested that elsewhere in Leviticus Rabbah, the midrash positively constructs the act of sacrifice as diametrically opposed to the act of eating.

libations.¹⁶ Another reason for the rejection of sacrifices in the Temple is that the Jews desecrate God's name.¹⁷ For Justin, the destruction of the Temple is a divine punishment meted out to the Jews.¹⁸ The rejection of the act of sacrifice and of the earthly Temple set the stage for Justin's creed: With the birth of Christ, God nullified the commandments—including sacrifices (*Dial.* 43.1).

Other authors also claim that sacrifices were superfluous to begin with. Irenaeus of Lyons (late second century) argues that God does not need the material offerings of men, but rather temperance, righteousness, and the love of man for his fellow human beings.¹⁹ Clement of Alexandria (early third century) takes a similar approach, maintaining that animal sacrifices are merely meant to serve as an allegory, and that God never intended for them to be carried out. Rather, it is Christian prayers that are the best "sacrifices" of all.²⁰ Clement also boasts that Christianity effectively put an end to animal sacrifice.²¹ Tertullian (early third century) mentions that sacrifice has become obsolete now that prayer—the "true" sacrifice—has taken its place. Like Justin, he contends that God never wanted sacrifices in the first place; it was only when the Israelites were prone to idolatry and transgression that God used sacrifices as a ritual means of re-establishing their connection.²² (Note that while Clement and Tertullian reject the very legitimacy of sacrifice, they nonetheless refer to prayer as sacrifice, implying that sacrifice should be replaced, and not totally abolished; see below.)

The Pseudo-Clementine collections of the *Homilies* and *Recognitions* (fourth century, based on earlier sources) adopt an extremely hostile approach to

¹⁶ Temple: *Dial.* 22.11; Angels: *Apol* II 5.3–4. He also brings scriptural quotations against sacrifice in *Dial.* 22.3 (Amos 5:21–25); 28.5 (Mal 1:11–12).

¹⁷ *Dial.* 41.2; 117.2 (following Mal. 1:10–12).

¹⁸ *Dial.* 16.2; 40.2. Y. Z. Eliav, *God's Mountain: The Temple Mount in Time, Place, and Memory* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 158–160, concludes that Barnabas and Justin discuss the desolation of the Temple Mount and regard it as a punishment for the rejection of Christ. See Barn. 11; Justin, *Dial.* 25.1–26.1.

¹⁹ Irenaeus of Lyon, *Haer.* 4.18.1–2; Ferguson, "Spiritual Sacrifice," 1177. Ullucci, *Christian Rejection*, 105, defines his approach as based on the logic of reciprocity, claiming a new form of sacrifice.

²⁰ *Stromateis* 7.6; see also *Stromateis* 7.3; Ferguson, "Spiritual Sacrifice," 1881–1882; Ullucci, *Christian Rejection*, 108–110.

²¹ Clement, *Protrepticus* (also known as *Exhortation to the Greeks*) 3.42.

²² On prayer instead of sacrifice: Tertullian *De Oratione* 28; Ferguson, "Spiritual Sacrifice," 1184. On sacrifices as commanded only as a means to prevent idolatry: see Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 2.18.

the Temple cult,²³ declaring the end of the Temple and sacrifices, and insisting that God is not at all pleased by sacrifice.²⁴ The author/collector of *Recognitions* points to Moses' prophecy in the wilderness to argue that sacrifices were necessary only in order to prevent the Israelites from worshipping idols; that is to say, there was no longer any need of sacrifices once the Law was given to Israel.²⁵ In fact, Moses told the Israelites that a prophet will arise who will notify them that God desires kindness, not sacrifices (*Recog.* 37.1). Moses explained that in the future, the Israelites will cease to sacrifice, and baptism will take its place as a means of securing atonement (1.39.1–2). Despite Moses' warning, the author adds, the Israelite tyrants abolished the very place that had been predestined as a house of prayer in preference for a Temple (*Recog.* 1.38.5). The author also claims that the tearing of the Temple veil was a sign of the coming destruction (*Recog.* 1.41.3).

In *Recognitions*, the debate on the Temple and its cult is dramatized through a clash between Peter and James and the Temple's Jewish high priests. While the high priest praises sacrifices and objects to baptism (1.55), Peter argues that the time for sacrifices has already expired; since the Jews do not recognize this truth, the Temple will be destroyed (1.64.1–2; 1.65.1). There follows a public debate in the Temple, attended by James and others who have come to visit.²⁶ All this may owe its origins to a Jewish-Christian source from circa 200 CE.²⁷

²³ On the Pseudo-Clementines and their place within so-called Jewish-Christianity, associating themselves with Peter and James (*Recog.* 1.43.2; 44.1), and against Paul, see A. Yoshiko Reed, "'Jewish Christianity' after the 'Parting of the Ways': Approaches to Historiography and Self-Definition in the Pseudo-Clementine Literature," in *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, ed. A. H. Becker and A. Yoshiko Reed, (TSAJ 95; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 289–232.

²⁴ *Recog.* 1.27 and 1.64; *Homilies* 111.45, respectively. Citations of *Recognitions* follow the edition of F. S. Jones, *An Ancient Jewish Christian Source, Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions 1.27–71* (Atlanta: SBL, 1995).

²⁵ *Recog.* 1.35; 1.36.1; 37.4.

²⁶ *Recog.* 1.66.2–4 ff. It is interesting that the author located James' teaching in the Temple in spite of the fact that the high priests and the lay priests had often beaten the Christians for teaching or learning about Jesus (*Recog.* 1.55.1–2). On the Temple as the background, and possibly the reason, for James' execution, see E. Regev, "Temple Concerns and High Priestly Persecutions from Peter to James: Narrative and History," *NTS* 56.1 (2010): 64–89.

²⁷ Jones, *Ancient Jewish Christian Source*, 163. J. Bourgel, "Reconnaissances 1.27–71, ou la réponse d'un groupe judéo-chrétien de Judée au désastre du soulèvement de Bar-Kokhba," *NTS* 61.1 (2015): 30–49, suggests that *Recog.* 1.27–71 was written as a response to the Jews' failure to rebuild the Temple during the Bar-Kokhba revolt (132–135 CE).

Strikingly, despite his anti-Temple stance, the author is extremely familiar with priestly matters, including the laws of purity and anointing oil. (*Recog.* 1.46–48; 1.51.1). In fact, the Pseudo-Clementines were probably law-abiding Jewish-Christians, whose polemic against sacrifices is pursued apart from any broader denigration of Jewish Torah observance.²⁸

Epiphanius mentions that in the Gospel of the Ebionites Christ said, “I came to do away with sacrifices, and if you cease not sacrificing, the wrath of God will not cease from you.”²⁹ Here too, the rejection of sacrifices does *not* stem from a rejection of the Law.³⁰ In addition, some so-called Gnostic texts from Nag Hammadi express a critical stance towards sacrifices and relate to Jesus’s death as a sacrifice as well. For example, in *The Second Treatise of the Great Seth*, Jesus is described as ripping the Temple veil with his own hands.³¹

²⁸ Yoshiko Reed, “Jewish Christianity,” 197–198, 204–213, esp. 209.

²⁹ Epiphanius, *Against Heresies* (or the *Panarion*) 30.16.4–5. Translation follows E. Hennecke, *New Testament Apocrypha*, ed./trans. W. Schneemelcher, *Volume 1: Gospels and Related Writings*, trans. R. M. Wilson (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1991), 158. Hennecke dates this gospel to the first half of the second century (*ibid.*, 156). S. J. Joseph, “‘I Have Come to Abolish Sacrifices’ (Epiphanius, *Pan.* 30.16.5): Re-examining a Jewish Christian Text and Tradition,” *NTS* 63 (2017): 92–110, here 104, 108 suggests that the Ebionites represent a pre-synoptic tradition. He also notes that the Gospel of the Ebionites and the Pseudo-Clementines combine the rejection of animal sacrifice with the rejection of meat-eating. *Pan.* 30.16.7, also contains injunctions against the Temple and sacrifices, and the fire on the altar are attributed to the “Ascents of James.”

³⁰ According to Epiphanius, *Pan.* 30.1–2, Ebion, the founder of the Ebionites, emerged from the Nazarenes and adhered to Judaism’s Law of the Sabbath, circumcision, and all other Jewish observances. The Nazarenes also observe that Law (*ibid.*, 5.4; 7.5; 8.1).

³¹ See the survey of the so-called Gnostic texts in R. Roukema, “Sacrifice in ‘Gnostic’ Testimonies of the Second and Third Centuries CE,” in *The Actuality of Sacrifice: Past and Present*, ed. A. Houtman et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 153–169. For *The Second Treatise of the Great Seth*, see Nag Hammadi Codex VII 2. 58.26–29, *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, 4th revised edition, ed. J. M. Robinson (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 366; Roukema, “Sacrifice in ‘Gnostic’ Testimonies,” 159. See also the rejection of sacrifice as idolatrous in the Gospel of Judas, as well as the sacrificial understanding of the death of Jesus in K. L. King, “Christians Who Sacrifice and Those Who Do Not? Discursive Practices, Polemics, and Ritualizing,” in *The One Who Sows Bountifully: Essays in Honor of Stanley K. Stowers*, ed. C. E. Johnson Hodge, S. M. Olyan, D. Ullucci, and E. Wasserman (Providence, RI: Brown Judaic Studies, 2013), 307–318, here 309–312.

Replacing Sacrifice

When something is introduced as a replacement of sacrifice it means that the positive values of sacrifices — such as giving God something precious or pleasing God — are achieved by new or alternative human measures. Replacing means that the original aim/end is still relevant, but other means can or should be taken to accomplish it. Already in Ps 69:30–31 it is stated: “I will praise the name of God with a song; I will magnify him with thanksgiving. This will please the Lord *more than* an ox or a bull with horns and hoofs.” While there is a preference for praise and thanksgiving over animal sacrifice, it also conceals a comparison in which prayer serves the same function of sacrifice, and in this respect prayer is modeled after sacrifice! Furthermore, the act of substitution implies that there is a need for a sacrifice, which is executed through praise and thanksgiving. If prayer would not be compared to sacrifice, its function and value would be less clear. Arguing that prayer is better than sacrifice marks its position in the eyes of God. Thus, sacrifice actually appropriates prayer before it is replaced.

An example for a conceptual replacement of sacrifice is put forward in the Community Rule of the *Yahad* sect found in Qumran (ca. 100 BCE). The flesh of the burnt offering and the fats of the sacrifice are replaced with an “offering of the lips,” i.e. prayer.³² In addition, the “freewill (cereal?) offering” is replaced by the law with the pleasant aroma of justice, or righteousness and perfect behavior (1QS 9:3–5). Prayer and righteous behavior are portrayed as sacrifice, acknowledging that the function of sacrifice (the passage refers to guilt, sin, pleasing and aroma) is accomplished by new practice or rite.³³ The point is that prayer and moral conduct, quite basic and mundane aspects of religious life, can or should fulfill the function of sacrifice which is usually the climax of religious ritual.

In a similar vein, although under different historical circumstances, after the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE, the early rabbis declared that prayer and giving charity, which were always required, replace the sacrifices that are no

³² On prayer as an “offering of the lips,” see also 1QS 9:26; 10:6, 14. In CD 11:20–21, the sacrifice of the wicked is inferior to the prayer of the just, which is like an agreeable offering. See Regev, “Community as Temple: Revisiting Cultic Metaphors,” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* (in press). On the institutionalization of prayer in Qumran and beyond, see J. Penner, *Patterns of Daily Prayer in Second Temple Period Judaism* (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

³³ Nonetheless, on the basis of other texts from Qumran, such as the return to the Temple and the restoration of the sacrificial cult in column 2 of the War Scroll (1QM), it is likely that the *Yahad* regarded this replacement as temporary.

longer offered due to the destruction of the Temple by the Romans.³⁴ This means that sentiments that were associated with offering animal sacrifices are now transferred to non-sacrificial activities, thus imparting a *sense* of ritual and enhancing their religious significance of approaching/pleasing God.³⁵ In introducing these practices as functioning like a sacrifice, both the *Yahad* and the Rabbis sensed the absence of sacrifice as a medium of worship, actually acknowledging that sacrifices were, in principle, necessary.³⁶ I suggest that some early Christians felt the same way.

Several early-Christian authors present rites and doctrines as direct substitutions for the sacrificial cult. Barnabas stresses that Jesus offered himself as a sacrifice for our sins (7:3c), and implies that Jesus served as such a sacrifice when he referred to the sprinkling of his blood for purification (“The Lord endured to deliver up his flesh to corruption, that we should be sanctified by the remission of sin, that is, by his sprinkled blood” 5:1).

Barnabas 7 creates a link between Jesus’s death and the Day of Atonement. The priests’ eating of the flesh of the goat (Num 29:11) parallels the Eucharist, which itself equates Jesus’s death with a sin offering, like that made on the Day of Atonement. Eating the Eucharist also distinguishes Christians, who do not fast, from Jews. Later in the same chapter, the author identifies Jesus with the scapegoat and the goat of the sin offering. He contends that Jesus suffered like the

³⁴ Prayer: Sifre *‘Ekev* 41 (ed. Finkelstein, 87–88); T. Berakhot 3:1. See also the manner in which the synagogue take the place of the Temple: S. Fine, *This Holy Place: On the Sanctity of the Synagogue During the Greco-Roman Period* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997). Charity: Sifre *Re’eh* 143 (ed. Finkelstein, 196); charity atones for sins in b. Bava Batra 10b (cf. already Dan 4:24; Tobit 12:9). For general discussion, see Stroumsa, *End of Sacrifice*, 66–69. Nonetheless, most of rabbinic sacrificial discourse, which is admittedly vast, discusses sacrifices in a practical and realistic manner, and as a meaningful ritual. See Mira Balberg, *Blood for Thought: The Reinvention of Sacrifice in Early Rabbinic Literature* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017).

³⁵ Klawans, *Purity, Sacrifice, and the Temple*, 198, 201–209, calls this “templizing” or sacrificialization of rituals and prayers which do not reject the past but represent a certain nostalgia towards the Temple cult. That the rabbis did not seek to replace sacrifices with prayer is argued *ibid.*, 208–209.

³⁶ In other texts from Qumran and rabbinic literature (the Temple Scroll, tractates Zevahim and Menahot, etc.) there is of course an intense discussion of sacrificial laws and their significance. Unlike the Church Fathers, in the texts just cited, the replacement is conditional or temporary.

scapegoat, and was similarly cursed (on the cross).³⁷ Jesus is identified not only with the scapegoat of the Day of Atonement, but also with the red heifer that purifies the people “from the sins” (8:1–5).³⁸ Undoubtedly, Barnabas is striving to show that everything in the Jewish Scriptures, if read properly, points to Jesus.

Justin Martyr introduces several replacements for the rite of sacrifice. He stresses that God does not seek blood and libations and incense; instead, prayer, thanksgiving, and hymns are more appropriate substitutions.³⁹ The biblical prophets speak of blood sacrifices or libations presented at the altar at the End of Days. For Justin Martyr, however, they are actually referring to authentic spiritual praise and the End of Days is to be fulfilled by Christ’s Second Advent (*Dial.* 118.2).

Christ’s blood, Justin writes, replaces the purification previously achieved by sacrifices (either by the blood of goats and sheep, the ashes of the heifer, or the offerings of fine flour),⁴⁰ since Christ was the eternal priest. He adds that the twelve bells attached to the robe of the high priest symbolize the twelve apostles, who depend on the power of Christ, and that the Christians are the true high-priestly race of God.⁴¹ This proves that Justin finds the Torah commands regarding the priestly service meaningful. Justin Martyr goes even further,

³⁷ D. Stökl Ben Ezra, *The Impact of Yom Kippur on Early Christianity* (WUNT 163; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 152–154 on Barn. 7:1–5 and 7:6–11.

³⁸ On Christ as the red heifer, see R. J. Daly, *Christian Sacrifice: The Judaeo-Christian Background before Origen* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1978), 432 (note that the law of the rite of the red heifer in Num 19 does not mention sin, but merely ritual bodily purity). Despite the harsh polemic, the author is very much aware of Jewish and even rabbinic law, and appropriates the halakhic details for his Christological doctrine. G. Alon, “The Halakhah in the Epistle of Barnabas,” in *Studies in Jewish History in the Times of the Second Temple, the Mishna, and the Talmud*, vol. 1. (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1957), 295–312 [Hebrew], here 297, points to knowledge of rabbinic halakhah in the involvement of undefiled children in making the ashes (m. Parah 3:2–3). He also compares the ritual symbolism of the epistle with rabbinic halakhah, including the idea that the ashes enable atonement, and finds echoes of rabbinic tradition in people’s treatment of the scapegoat (*ibid.*, 299–305).

³⁹ *1 Apol* 13; See also *1 Apol.* 10; *Dial.* 117.2; Daly, *Christian Sacrifice*, 331–333; Ferguson, “Spiritual Sacrifice,” 1172–1173. In *Dial.* 117.2, Justin maintains that prayers and thanksgiving (by the appropriate people) are the only perfect sacrifices.

⁴⁰ *Dial.* 13.1; Daly, *Christian Sacrifice*, 325, 328–330, concludes that Christ’s sacrifice fulfills the OT sacrificial rites.

⁴¹ Twelve bells: *Dial.* 42.1; 116.1; 118.2; Ferguson, “Spiritual Sacrifice,” 1173. True high-priestly race: *Dial.* 116.3, quoting Mal 1:11.

suggesting that the Passover lamb symbolizes Christ, while the two he-goats of the Day of Atonement symbolize his two appearances, since Christ was the offering for all sinners willing to repent.⁴²

Irenaeus of Lyons argues that God does not want sacrifices, but rather faith, obedience, and righteousness. He insists that prayer is equivalent to the offering of incense,⁴³ and that the true sacrifice is observance of church ritual.⁴⁴ Irenaeus also declares that the Eucharist is acceptable to God as a pure sacrifice and fulfils God's instructions on how to offer for him.⁴⁵ Clement of Alexandria similarly rejects sacrifice, arguing that true sacrifice is prayer, and that the practice of sacrifice should be "spiritualized" following Ps 51:19. According to Clement, just as Jesus sacrificed himself for his believers, the believers must also sacrifice themselves: "We glorify Him who gave Himself in sacrifice for us, we are also sacrificing ourselves."⁴⁶ While the idea that Christ is a sacrifice offered each day anew prevails in later Christianity,⁴⁷ rarely do we find the notion that baptism may replace sacrifices, as in the Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions*.⁴⁸

We have already seen that the post-70 rabbis developed temporary substitutes for the Temple cult as well. Yet, the Church fathers' substitutions have an additional role—they show that the sacrificial system is no longer necessary. Nonetheless, they still need to stress that their own ways of worship correspond with the previous functions of sacrifice. They wish to find legitimization for prayer, the Eucharist, and Jesus in Scripture. And in doing so, they actually acknowledge the *theoretical* potential of the cult to begin with. Stroumsa concludes from this phenomenon that early Christianity is undeniably a sacrifice-centered religion, even if the idea of sacrifice is being reinterpreted. The Christian Anamnesis, he argues, is the reactivation of the sacrifice of the Son of God, performed by the priests. The priests (and not the sages) lead the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Sacrifice is thus re-offered perpetually.⁴⁹

⁴² *Dial.* 40.1–4; Daly, *Christian Sacrifice*, 328–329.

⁴³ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 4.17.

⁴⁴ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 4.18.

⁴⁵ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 4.17.5; 4.18.1 (ANF 1:484).

⁴⁶ Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 7.6–8; *Paedagogus* 3.12 (quoting Isa. 1:11–14); *Strom.* 7.3, respectively. For one's body and self as a living sacrifice, see Ferguson, "Spiritual Sacrifice," 1179–1180.

⁴⁷ E.g., John Chrysostom, *Hom. Heb.* 17.3 (on Heb 9:24–26).

⁴⁸ *Recog.* 1.48.6; 1.54.1. On the Pseudo-Clementines, see below.

⁴⁹ Stroumsa, *End of Sacrifice*, 72–73. The patristic liturgical language developed a sacrificial vocabulary that continues in the vein of the ancient tradition. See "Sacrifice," in

Cultic Associations and Metaphors

In the Hebrew Bible, Second Temple period sources, and also in the NT, there are many allusions to sacrifices and related cultic issues, in which something outside the cult is imagined as or alluded to as if it was sacrificial. For example, prayer is associated with the offering of incense: “Let my prayer be counted as incense (*ktoret*) before you, and the lifting up of my hands as an evening sacrifice” (Ps 141:2). The Psalmist wishes his prayer to be accepted by God, and for this reason he uses the metaphors of incense and sacrifices. The intent of such a metaphor, or even more direct cultic analogies and associations, is to appropriate the “target domain” of the metaphor (prayer) and to make it more sensible and meaningful.⁵⁰ The metaphor aims to imbue prayer with a new symbolic meaning.

Similarly, when Paul wants to show appreciation for the Philippians and to enhance his authority he says: “But even if I am being poured out as a libation (*spendomai*) over the sacrifice and the offering (*thusia kai leitourgia*) of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you” (Phil 2:17). The faith of the Philippians is described using the metaphor of sacrifice/offering, and Paul's gospel as a libation on the altar, presenting both as sacred and pleasing God.⁵¹ This use of sacrificial symbolism reflects the idea that sacrifices have a substantial positive value that should also be transmitted to the Christian faith and gospel, but without arguing that the original meaning or practice of sacrifice is no longer relevant.

Despite the common claims that sacrifices were the result of the Israelites' sins, that they were unnecessary and should be replaced by prayer and other substitutes, there are many cases in which Christian authors show greater respect for the *concept* of sacrifice. Cultic metaphors and associations are prevalent throughout Christian writings of the late first century to the third century, and relate to various themes.

In the Didache, one of the earliest early Christian writings outside the New Testament, the Eucharist is associated with sacrifice:

Encyclopedia of Early Christianity, ed. E. Ferguson et al. (New York: Garland, 1990), 816–818.

⁵⁰ On metaphor, target domain and source domain (here, incense), and the relationship between them, see G. Lakoff, and M. Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1980). On sacrifice as metaphor, see also D. Ullucci, “Sacrifice in the Ancient Mediterranean: Recent and Current Research,” *Currents in Biblical Research* 13.3 (2015): 412–414. For cultic metaphors in the Hebrew Bible, see L. G. Perdue, *Wisdom and Cult* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 1977).

⁵¹ Paul may be referring to his own suffering as well as that of the Philippians, in cultic terms. See N. K. Gupta, *Worship that Makes Sense to Paul: A New Approach to the Theology and Ethics of Paul's Cultic Metaphors* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010), 138–139.

On the Lord's Day come together, break bread and hold Eucharist, after confessing your transgressions that your *offering* may be pure; But let none who has a quarrel with his fellow join in your meeting until they be reconciled, that your *sacrifice* be not defiled; For this is that which was spoken by the Lord, "In every place and time offer me a pure sacrifice, for I am a great king," saith the Lord, "and my name is wonderful among the heathen."⁵²

Here the connection between the Eucharist and sacrifice is not entirely clear.⁵³ A ritual which is not related to Temple cult, the Eucharist—or certain components thereof—is nonetheless designated as a sacrifice. It also seems as though the preliminary confessional prayer is described metaphorically as a sacrifice.⁵⁴

This equation of the Eucharist, including the Eucharistic prayer, with sacrifice resembles the pattern of prayer as incense in Ps 141:2 mentioned above: Didache does not imply that prayer is better than sacrifice; rather, it simply uses sacrifice as a conceptual model for the Christian rite.

Assuming that the Didache was composed no earlier than the end of the first century or the beginning of the second, when the Temple cult no longer

⁵² Didache 14:1–3. Translations of the Didache follow K. Lake, *The Apostolic Fathers*, LCL edition.

⁵³ Daly, *Christian Sacrifice*, 312–313. Ullucci, *Christian Rejection*, 96–97, simply states that the Lord's Day is a sacrifice. He also notes the departure from other understandings of Christian sacrifice discussed above: First, there is no comparison of Jesus, and certainly not of his death, to a sacrifice, as the sacrifice is made by the community. Second, sins must be dealt with before the rite; hence, the sacrifice itself does not release one from sin. The practical restrictions regarding the Eucharist also imply its relation to sacrifice. See H. van de Sandt, "Do Not Give What Is Holy to the Dogs (Did 9:5D and Matt 7:6A): The Eucharistic Food of the Didache in Its Jewish Purity Setting," *VC* 56.3 (2002): 223–246.

⁵⁴ On prayer (praise and thanksgiving) as sacrifice here, see Daly, *Christian Sacrifice*, 503; K. Niederwimmer, *The Didache* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 196–197, with bibliographic survey. Niederwimmer prefers a very general definition of sacrifice, but also considers the possibilities of the Eucharist itself (as in later Christian sources) and Eucharistic prayers. See also C. Claussen, "The Eucharist in the Gospel of John and the Didache," in *Trajectories through the New Testament and the Apostolic Fathers*, ed. A. Gregory and C. Tuckett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 135–163, here 155–158. On the Eucharistic prayer, see Did. 9:1–7; 10:5–6. Compare the attitude towards fixed prayer in rabbinic circles, e.g., E. Fleischer, "On the Beginnings of Obligatory Jewish Prayer" *Tarbiz* 59 (1990): 397–441 (Hebrew); E. Regev, "Prayer Within and Without the Temple from Ancient Judaism to Early Christianity," *Henoch: Historical and Textual Studies in Ancient and Medieval Judaism and Christianity* 36 (2014): 118–138.

existed, its equation of community rites with sacrifice should not necessarily be seen as “anti-sacrificial.” Indeed, it may be hardly different from the rabbinical substitution of prayer for sacrifice.⁵⁵

Didache 13:3 also alludes to the priestly system, instructing readers to give “the first fruit,” including the produce of the winepress, the floor, and the oxen and sheep, to “the prophets, for they are your high priests.” Here one finds an appropriation of the biblical priestly dues, and even an appropriation of the traditional Temple priesthood, in the service of establishing a new type of priesthood for the Christian community. A central component of Jewish traditional life is followed, but at the same time transformed: By receiving the first fruits, the community’s religious leaders are acknowledged, implicitly, as serving God like the Temple priests.⁵⁶ All this is said without any direct approach to the Temple cult in Jerusalem or a claim that sacrifices no longer prevail.

First Clement, the letter of Clement of Rome to Corinth (usually dated circa 100 CE), contains interesting allusions to the Temple cult. Clement declares that Jesus Christ is “the high priest of our offerings” (1 Clem 36.1, following Hebrews). Yet despite this high-priestly Christology, the author expresses deep respect and appreciation for the Temple cult. He says that the priests and the Levites, who serve at God’s altar, are the greatest gifts of God—along with Jesus and the kings of Judah. Clement acknowledges their roles and service, including that of the high priest (32; 40.5). He mentions the commandment to celebrate sacrifices at their fixed times and hours, lists the different types of sacrifices, and emphasizes that they may be offered only in Jerusalem and inspected only by the high priest and the ministers (40.1; 41.2). Significantly, all of this is stated in the present tense, as if Clement were writing in pre-70 Jerusalem.⁵⁷

Why are these details relevant to a Christian leader writing in Rome one generation after the destruction of the Temple, as if nothing had changed? Clement draws an analogy from the priestly offerings and their rules to the church order in relation to offerings and ministrations (41.1). The cult serves him as an excellent ready-made model of rules and ordinances granted by God. First

⁵⁵ On the problem of dating the Didache, see, e.g., J. Betz, “The Eucharist in the Didache,” in *The Didache in Modern Research*, ed. J. A. Draper (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 244–275, here 244–245. On rabbinic views of prayer as taking the place of sacrifice, see above.

⁵⁶ Compare Paul’s appropriation of the Jewish Law: B. S. Rosner, *Paul and the Law: Keeping the Commandments* (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity, 2013), 121–197, 204.

⁵⁷ On the dependence of 1 Clement on Hebrews, as well as on Jewish traditions, see P. Lampe, *Christians at Rome in the First Two Centuries: From Paul to Valentinus* (London: Continuum, 2003), 75–77 with bibliographic survey.

Clement therefore offers an extremely important example for early-Christian legitimation of the sacrificial cult even after 70 CE. Significantly, for Clement, the belief that Christ is the high priest of the Christians' offerings need not contradict the traditional role of the sacrificial system. Clement manages to have it both ways.

Ignatius of Antioch (writing at the beginning of the second century), also uses sacrifice imagery when he refers to the Eucharist as an "altar."⁵⁸ More straightforward identifications of the Eucharist with sacrifice are found in later sources. Justin Martyr designated the Eucharistic prayers and thanksgivings as sacrifices,⁵⁹ while Cyprian of Carthage (mid-second century) further develops the understanding of the Eucharist as a continuation of that concept. For Cyprian, the Eucharist is not the sacrifice of the priest or of the congregation, but rather "the sacrifice(s) of God." He understands "sacrifice" as consecrated elements that are themselves bound to Jesus's passion, as opposed to the action performed by a pastor in the rite. Hence, the sacrificed body and blood of Jesus are sacramentally united with the consecrated bread and wine.⁶⁰ Cyprian is usually considered to be the first to explicitly equate the Eucharist with animal sacrifice,⁶¹ and the equation of the Eucharist rite with sacrifice is further developed in the fourth century.⁶²

⁵⁸ Ignatius, *To the Philadelphians* 4; Ferguson, "Spiritual Sacrifice," 1169.

⁵⁹ Justin, *Dial.* 43.3; 117.1. The cereal offering of the skin diseased person (Lev 14:10) is a symbol for the Eucharist bread in *Dial.* 41.1. See Ferguson, "Spiritual Sacrifice," 1173–1174.

⁶⁰ Cyprian, *Epistles* 62.1, 9, 12 (ANF 5:361); 63.2 (ANF 5:364); 75.6 (ANF 5:398); R. J. H. Mayes, "The Lord's Supper in the Theology of Cyprian of Carthage," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 74 (2010): 307–324, here 313–315. Note also the altar and the sacrifices of the bishop in *Epistles* 15.1; 16.3. Ullucci, *Christian Rejection*, 114–117, comments that Cyprian uses this argument for the sake of taking a position in relation to the correct practice of the Eucharist, and not as a set doctrine of Christian sacrifice. For Cyprian's further sacrificial imagery, drawing on concepts of Roman religion, see A.B. McGowan, "Rehashing the Leftovers of Idols: Cyprian and Early Christian Constructions of Sacrifice," in *Religious Competition in the Third Century CE: Jews, Christians, and the Greco-Roman World*, ed. J. L. Rosenblum, L. C. Vuong, and N. DesRosiers (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014), 69–77.

⁶¹ Ullucci, *Christian Rejection*, 114, also noting that "the eucharist is not equated with animal sacrifice directly; rather, it is Jesus's death that is connected with animal sacrifice, and the eucharist is an animal sacrifice because it mimics this event" (*ibid.*, 116).

⁶² E.g., Eusebius, *Demonstratio evangelica* 5.3. Cf. A. B. McGowan, "Eucharist and Sacrifice: Cultic Tradition and Transformation in Early Christian Ritual Meals" in *Mahl und religiöse Identität im frühen Christentum: Meals and Religious Identity in Early Christianity*, ed. M. Klinghardt and H. Taussig (TANZ 56; Tübingen: Francke, 2012), 191–206.

In the writings of Ignatius of Antioch, the entirety of Christian worship is designated as the Temple cult. The Christians, he declares, should come together “as to one temple of God, as to one altar, as to one Jesus Christ.” For Ignatius, the altar symbolizes unity in the service of God (compare 1 Cor 10:18). Yet, it is not clear whether his Temple metaphors pertain to Christ himself, to the assembly, or to the activity of the assembly.⁶³ He also portrays the faith in Jesus as the building of a temple.⁶⁴ Irenaeus of Lyons states that the Christians offer a sacrifice of their own—the “real” one—without defining what exactly this sacrifice is. He also defines the Church order as a sacrifice.⁶⁵ For him, the body is the temple in which the spirit dwells.⁶⁶ Later on, for Origen, the Temple of Christ’s body (John 2:21) refers to the Church.⁶⁷

Indeed, sacrifice, altar, and Temple become the model of some early Christian authors’ conception of piety. Barnabas writes, “Let us be spiritual, let us be a temple consecrated to God,” while maintaining that “the habitation of our hearts is a shrine holy to the Lord.”⁶⁸ Such a “spiritualization” of sacrifice can also be found in later texts. Clement of Alexandria, for example, stresses that the righteous soul is the truly sacred altar, and the incense rising from it a holy prayer.⁶⁹ Clement even goes so far as to explain the meaning of sacrifice in a symbolic manner: “The sacrifice of the Law expressed figuratively the piety we practice, and the turtle-dove and the pigeon offered for sins point out that the cleansing of the irrational part of the soul is acceptable to God.”⁷⁰ Irenaeus of Lyons conceptualizes the oblations of the Church as pure sacrifices.⁷¹ More specific allusions to Christian worship as sacrifice, such as prayer (following Hos

⁶³ Ignatius, *To the Magnesians* 7.2. See Ferguson, “Spiritual Sacrifices,” 1168, who also notes that the emphasis here is on the meeting under the ministers’ leadership. On the use of Temple imagery in describing the communal order in the second century, see Eliav, *God’s Mountain*, 155.

⁶⁴ Ignatius, *To the Ephesians* 9.

⁶⁵ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 4.17–18; Ullucci, *Christian Rejection*, 104–107.

⁶⁶ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 5.6.2, following 1 Cor 3:16–17.

⁶⁷ Origen, *Commentary on John* X, 20, 23.

⁶⁸ Barnabas 4.11 and 6.15, respectively.

⁶⁹ Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 7.6.

⁷⁰ Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 7.6. See also *Strom.* 5.11 on the spiritual meaning of sacrifice. Translations of Clement of Alexandria follow Roberts and Donaldson, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 2.

⁷¹ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 4.18.1.

14:3 and Ps 69:30–21), appear in the early third century. For instance, according to Origen, one offers unbloody sacrifices by means of his prayers to God.⁷²

Interestingly, early-Christian writers consider martyrdom a sacrifice, most likely because Christ's own death was understood as such. Ignatius of Antioch describes the martyr's execution as a libation to God poured out on the altar.⁷³ Polycarp of Smyrna (mid-second century) also uses a sacrificial metaphor for describing his own wishful execution "like a noble ram out of a great flock for an offering, a burnt sacrifice made ready and acceptable to God."⁷⁴ George Heyman suggests that the sacrificial imagery comes in opposition to the pagan animal sacrifice of the Imperial cult and the Roman religious and political hegemony which the Christians resisted.⁷⁵ Less bluntly, Origen in his *Exhortations to Martyrdom* 30 defines martyrdom as a means of achieving forgiveness. Notably, the idea of death — but not martyrdom, and at times only capital punishment — is found in rabbinic Judaism from the mid-second century.⁷⁶

Christian writers also use architectural Temple imagery as a means of creating a distinctive theology. The Gospel of Philip (third century), to give one outstanding example, provides a spiritual explanation of the Temple's chambers: The three buildings/chambers in the Jerusalem Temple stand for three concepts in Christianity: baptism, redemption, and the sacrament of the bridal chamber.⁷⁷

⁷² Origen, *Contra Celsum* 8.21. For similar arguments by Clement of Alexandria, see Ferguson, "Spiritual Sacrifice," 1181–1182. See also above on prayer as a substitute for sacrifice.

⁷³ Ignatius, *To the Romans* 2.2. On martyrdom as a sacrifice, see also *ibid.*, 4.2. For the cosmic and powerful meaning of his use of sacrificial language, see E. Casteli, *Martyrdom and Memory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 84–86.

⁷⁴ Martyrdom of Polycarp 14.1, trans. Lightfoot in the LCL edition. See Ullucci, *Christian Rejection*, 100–101.

⁷⁵ G. Heyman, *The Power of Sacrifice: Roman and Christian Discourses in Conflict* (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2007).

⁷⁶ Following capital punishment: m. Sanhedrin 6:2. General atonement without qualifications: T. Yom Kippurim 4:6–10 (ed. Lieberman, 251); Mekilta of Rabbi Ishmael, Bahodesh 6. On comparing Jewish and Christian martyrdom, see D. Boyarin, *Dying for God. Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 93–126.

⁷⁷ Gospel of Philip 69.14–26; Robinson, *Nag Hammadi Library in English*, 151. On the Gnostic concept of the bridal chamber as a conjugal union on high, see Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1.21.3. Note that the next paragraph in the Gospel of Philip relates to the tearing of the veil of the most inner chamber (cf. Mark 15:37–38). On sacrificial and Temple

Certain apocryphal legends about Jesus and his relatives also feature a Temple setting, like those of the Lucan Infancy Narrative. In the Acts of Thomas 79 (early third century), the child Jesus spends time at the Temple and even participates in the offering of sacrifices. In the Protoevangelium of James (late second or early third century), the author refers repeatedly to the Temple and to Jewish ritual practice (especially that of purity; hence, the special chamber that Anna prepares for her infant daughter to protect the young Mary from the taint of impurity). Here, Mary and her parents are undeniably observant Jews.⁷⁸ The book begins with Joachim, Mary's father, offering sacrifices meant to atone for his own sins as well as for the sins of Israel (Prot. Jas. 1:1-3). Later, Mary is granted permission to live in the Temple and play at the altar (Prot. Jas. 7:9). Having conceived Jesus, she herself becomes a kind of Temple. She is, we might say, a symbolic sacrifice — not because she replaces the ritual, but on the contrary because the authors value the goal and function of the concept of sacrifice.⁷⁹ For our purposes, it is important to note that ritual purity and Temple piety are used to underscore Mary's holiness and her worthiness as the mother of the Messiah.⁸⁰

In all these examples sacrificial or Temple imagery is reflected positively and linked to Christian ideas and practices. Although the general trend of Barnabas, Irenaeus, and others is critical of Jewish animal sacrifices, these particular passages do not argue for replacing the Jewish cult. They simply adopt its symbolism, making it their own. Such a move used to be termed “spiritualization.”⁸¹ Yet, the term is problematic since it implies that the original

imagery in the Gospel of Philip, see King, “Christians Who Sacrifice and Those Who Do Not?,” 313–316.

⁷⁸ L. Vuong, “The Temple Persists Collective Memories of the Jewish Temple in Christian Narrative Imagination,” in *Religious Competition in the Third Century CE: Jews, Christians, and the Greco-Roman World*, ed. J. D. Rosenblum, L. Vuong, and N. DesRosiers (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014), 114–125. See also L. Vuong, “Purity, Piety, and the Purposes of the Protevangelium of James,” in *Non-Canonical Religious Texts in Early Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. L. M. McDonald and J. H. Charlesworth (London: T&T Clark, 2012), 205–221.

⁷⁹ Vuong, “Purity, Piety,” 121–122. Note, however, that while the text approves of the efficacy of the Temple, it also depicts conflicts with the Temple priests.

⁸⁰ Vuong, “Purity, Piety,” 219–221.

⁸¹ H. Wenschkewitz, “Die Spiritualisierung der Kultusbegriffe: Tempel, Priester und Opfer im Neuen Testament,” *Angelos* 4 (1932): 116–132. S. Finlan, *The Background and Content of Paul's Cultic Atonement Metaphors* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004), 47–60, develops the concept into four types of spiritualization — supportive, reforming,

cultic ritual act or object itself (the “source domain” of the metaphor) has no spiritual value! As such, “spiritualization” masks evolutionary and supersessionist views of religion, especially as regards Christian views in relation to Jewish (or Greco-Roman) views.⁸² Furthermore, the very structure of a metaphor (or more simple forms of analogy) builds on transference of meaning from the “source domain” to the “target domain.” Once a non-cultic idea or practice is conceptualized in such a sacrificial manner, the implication is that the cultic sphere is highly appreciated and certain aspects of its sense are adopted.⁸³

One may argue that the turn to cultic imagery does not necessarily relate to the Jewish sacrificial system, but to the Greco-Roman, which was still practiced in the social sphere of the early Christians and was familiar to new converts. While this may be the case in very specific texts (perhaps Polycarp), this reasoning runs against the Church fathers’ rejection of pagan cults. Christian writers opposed to idolatry (e.g., Tertullian’s *De Idolatria*), warn against eating food offered to idols, and some even observe certain biblical laws of purity.⁸⁴ The use of imagery related to idols would go against their core beliefs.

I have tried to show that these somewhat neutral or positive uses of sacrificial and Temple imagery, metaphors, and symbolism are different from the many statements about Christian substitutions for sacrifices and the overall rejection of the very legitimacy of the Jewish cult. The question remains: why do all these early Christian authors still allude to the cult without condemning it or stressing that it is irrelevant? What is the role of the sacrificial metaphors and allusions if the Christians have already developed entirely new modes of worship?

metaphoric, and rejection — which makes it much more useful and appropriate. Distinguishing between these types, however, is not an easy task.

⁸² E. Schüssler Fiorenza, “Cultic Language in Qumran and in the NT,” *CBQ* 38 (1976): 159–177; Klawans, *Purity, Sacrifice and the Temple*, 8–9, 33, 105–108, 250–251; Ullucci, “Sacrifice in the Ancient Mediterranean,” 410–412.

⁸³ Compare J. Klawans, “Interpreting the Last Supper: Sacrifice, Anti-Spiritualization and Anti-Sacrifice,” *NTS* 48 (2002): 1–17.

⁸⁴ On abstaining from eating food offered to idols, see e.g., Justin, *Dial.* 34.7; 35.5; M. Blidstein, *Purity, Community and Ritual in Early Christian Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 72–77. See also Pseudo-Clementine observance of purity laws, *ibid.*, 188–193.

Jewish Heritage and Christian Identity

Whether they reject it or apply its imagery to Christian ideas, the Church fathers contemplate the Temple cult, and do so extensively and in various ways.⁸⁵ Despite the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple and the polemic against idol worship,⁸⁶ sacrifice remains a very attractive model of devotion and closeness to God. It shapes their religious thinking, and as much as they stress that it is transformed, changed, or even abandoned, they still relate to the ritual of killing and offering animals on the altar, and the services of priests in the Temple.⁸⁷

While the above mapping is far from being a conclusive survey of the evidence, I have pointed to a substantial number of cultic metaphors, analogies, and associations, which did not receive sufficient attention in previous scholarship. Why do the Apostolic fathers and the other Church fathers use these fragments of imagery to portray their rituals and modes of worship? What do these expressions teach about their views concerning the Jewish Temple cult?⁸⁸

The power of sacrificial and other cultic metaphors and imagery is surprising, given that those who apply it also condemn or deny the validity and legitimacy of Jewish sacrifices. Barnabas, Justin, Irenaeus, and Clement of Alexandria all use various creative arguments to explain why God never really needed the Jews to sacrifice animals, and by that time the Jews could no longer continue the sacrificial cult anyway. But despite their negative approach, they turn

⁸⁵ To demonstrate this variety, Ullucci, *Christian Rejection*, 99–100, points out that Ignatius' idea of his own martyrdom as a sacrifice clashes with the doctrine of Jesus offering himself as a single sacrifice once for all in Hebrews 7:27–28; 9:12–14.

⁸⁶ Petropoulou, *Animal Sacrifice*, 246–256, discusses the rejection of the sacrificial practice of pagan cults in second century sources.

⁸⁷ Cf. Eliav, *God's Mountain*, 153. Petropoulou, *Animal Sacrifice*, 272, is aware that “the image of the Temple service is vivid in the minds of Christians,” and sees “an inconsistency between the realization of the loss of the Temple and the strong feeling that it is still there.” See her survey of metaphorical interpretations, *ibid.*, 250–281.

⁸⁸ Petropoulou, *Animal Sacrifice*, 277–278, 294–295, suggests that the sacrificial imagery resulted from surrender to the Greco-Roman and Jewish traditional norms: “the concept... was so strongly etched onto the collective unconscious that Christians did not dare to obliterate it.” Petropoulou attempts to devalue the debt of the early Church fathers to their Jewish cultic heritage when she claims that “by sacrificial metaphors, audiences were led to see a *completely different sacrificial reality* from the one they had known, and the new reality had nothing to do with animals” (*Animal Sacrifice*, 283, my italics). Metaphors are not about reality but a transformation of concepts from one reality to another. The intriguing fact is that early Church fathers still used sacrificial *imagery* despite the radical change in the cultic practice.

to sacrificial imagery to explain the sacredness of Christian worship and practices. As we have already seen, Barnabas calls for being spiritual like “a temple consecrated to God” and equates the heart to a shrine; Justin designates the Eucharistic prayers and thanksgiving as sacrifices; Irenaeus argues that the Christians offer real sacrifice of their own, and also refers to the Church order as a sacrifice and the body as a temple; for Irenaeus the oblations of the Church are sacrifices; and Clement of Alexandria equates the soul with a truly sacred altar, the incense with prayer, and he regards sacrifice as a symbol of piety toward God. They all acknowledge that sacrifice and temple rites (with certain specific allusions to Jewish practices) are symbols of piety and devotion, and associate these with their own ideas about Jesus and the Church. Their rejection of these practices notwithstanding, they do hold positive conceptual thoughts about such sacrifices.

The discourse of replacing the Temple cult also shows certain appreciation of the cult as a concept of worship. Sacrifice, the altar, and the Temple are presented as models of religious piety (as already attested to in Paul’s letters), in the writings of Barnabas, Clement of Alexandria, Irenaeus, and Origen.⁸⁹ Many of these writers also use sacrificial metaphors and imagery without relating to them as being replaced by the Eucharist, Church ordinances, etc.

Why do the Church fathers need to declare these substitutions to begin with? They seek to fill the void left by the absence of Temple cult, and need to argue that the Christians have their own equivalent concepts and rites. They still need the religious concept of sacrifice.

It should therefore be concluded that in the second and third centuries the Christians are still attracted to the *idea* of sacrifice and its ritual world. They continue to regard them as the ultimate expression of devotion to God. Christ, prayer, the Eucharist, and communal togetherness should, they insist, be modeled after sacrificial concepts and practices, even when the Christian rites replace animal sacrifices and make them unnecessary. Sacrifice remains a paradigm for attachment to the divine. Turning to the metaphor of sacrifice while rejecting the real practice, the early Church fathers find it hard to conceive of a better concept for serving God, one on which they can build their own ideas of devotion and sacredness.

⁸⁹ On the symbol of the Temple as model for second century ecclesiology, see G. Fassbeck, *Der Tempel der Christen: Traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zur Aufnahme des Tempelkonzepts im frühen Christentum* (Tübingen and Basel: Francke, 2001).

One reason may simply be the centrality of sacrifice in the ancient world, in both Greco-Roman and Near Eastern (including Jewish) civilizations.⁹⁰ Yet, there are more concrete historical dynamics that fueled the centrality of sacrifice and the Temple cult in early Christian writings.

I suggest two explanations for the Church fathers' attraction-rejection of the validity and necessity of sacrifices, namely, their rejection of Jewish sacrifices as legitimate while nonetheless using the concept as a key model for religiosity. First, Gentile Christians who are writing for non-Jewish readers feel it necessary to address the *general* concept of sacrifice. They cannot neglect it because it is still "in the air." And they need to deal with the Gentile converts' inclination toward idolatrous cults. Gentile Christians, especially the newly baptized novices, are likely to miss the (pagan) sacrificial milieu. Their leaders, anxious to dispel the pagan ghosts, provide an alternative: concepts and rites (modeled following the Jewish cult) that would themselves be treated as sacrifices, in place of their progenitors.⁹¹

Second, and probably more important factor, is that for those who write in a Jewish setting, such as Barnabas, Justin, and the Pseudo-Clementines, there is a very real sense of the *Jewish* idea of sacrifice — which Jews still regard as the ultimate conceptual means of serving God. The Jewish concepts of sacrifice and Temple occupy their mind because these Christian writers are still attached to their Jewish roots, whether or not they admit it. Jewish Scriptures, as well as certain practices and historical traditions, are part of their belief system, as they are also found in the NT writings. Christian authors need to deal with these cultic ideas, mainly through reinterpretation and appropriation, to adhere to the general concept while removing some Jewish practical aspects in order to develop Christian uniqueness. They are required to refer to sacrifice but not incorporate it, and thus make the (revised) original concept their own.⁹²

⁹⁰ Ullucci, "Sacrifice in the Ancient Mediterranean," 388–439, designates sacrifices as "ritualized reciprocity and communication." Cf. the survey of various anthropological understandings of the social value of sacrifice in Klawans, *Purity, Sacrifice and the Temple*, 48–49.

⁹¹ On Christian refutation of pagan cults, see S. Binder, *Tertullian, On Idolatry and Mishna Avodah Zara: Questioning the Parting of the Ways between Christian and Jews* (Jewish and Christian Perspectives 22; Leiden: Brill, 2012).

⁹² A similar phenomenon can be found in the second and third centuries idea of purity and impurity. Christian authors construct a "true" purity practice (interior and intentional, involving the essence of the person) as opposed to a "false" Jewish one. Despite the continuity in relation to Jewish concepts of purity, they shape their purity conceptions

The Apostolic and Church fathers needed to refute sacrifices in order to show that Christianity has indeed superseded Judaism. For this purpose, sacrifices have to be discredited and alternative rites preferred. In the theological struggle between Christianity and Judaism, sacrifices were a veritable battlefield, demonstrated by the fact that even Christian Jews who observed the Law (e.g., Ebionites and Pseudo-Clementines) felt it necessary to reject the Temple cult, and to insist that their own concept of sacrifice reigns supreme. The post-70 CE reality of Judaism-sans-Temple gave them an advantage; for them, a religion/cult that rejects animal sacrifices as a principle is not, as is the case for the Jews after 70 CE, the result of political restraints.⁹³ Rather, it is a matter of principle and of choice.

Nonetheless, it is doubtful whether a theology based on the rejection of sacrifice could truly have come into being had the Temple not been razed by Titus.⁹⁴ This leads to a crucial question: Was the rejection of the sacrificial cult not really the “natural” and inherent result of the belief in Christ's sacrifice on the cross? Two arguments lead me to answer this in the negative. First, two of the earliest non-canonical Christian writings, *Didache* and *1 Clement*, do not reject the Temple and its sacrificial cult. *Didache* introduces sacrificial analogies as relating to the Eucharist prayer and the giving of the first fruits to the priest, while *1 Clement* expresses admiration for the sacrificial system, albeit with Jesus in the role of high priest. Perhaps the reason for their lack of censure of the Temple cult lies in their not yet having adjusted to Judaism without a Temple.

Second, the multiple metaphors and analogies to sacrifices found in later sources demonstrate a rather positive view of sacrifices which still holds sway in Christians' minds during the second and third centuries. After all, if the Temple and the sacrificial cult are superfluous and inherently idolatrous, why use them as a foundation on which to build the doctrines of Christology, the Eucharist, and prayer?⁹⁵

along the polemic with Jews in order to differentiate themselves. See Blidstein, *Purity, Community and Ritual*, esp. 232, 235.

⁹³ For other possible reasons for rabbinic refrainment from sacrificing after 70 CE, see A. Guttman, “The End of the Jewish Sacrificial Cult,” *Hebrew Union College Annual* 38 (1967): 137–148.

⁹⁴ According to Ullucci, *Christian Rejection*, 134–135, the rejection of sacrifice began due to the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple and the fact that it was impossible to continue sacrificing there.

⁹⁵ Cf. Ullucci *Christian Rejection*, 135, “Christians did not create a rational rejection of sacrifice that they then lived out. Historical circumstances ended animal sacrifice for Christians first. It was left to later Christian cultural producers to make sense of this situation and rationalize and defend the fact that Christians did not sacrifice.”

In rejecting the very validity and legitimacy of sacrifices Barnabas, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus of Lyons, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, and others use them as a kind of boundary that separates Christians from both pagans and Jews. Their rejection of the Jewish sacrificial cult is primarily the result of (among other things) social and “political” factors.⁹⁶ As 1 Clement proves, it is not essential to set the belief in Christ in opposition to devotion to the Jerusalem Temple. Yet the Temple’s destruction provides second- and third-century Christians with an unprecedented opportunity: They can rid themselves of reliance on the Temple and the sacrificial cult in favor of advancing *religious independence*. In the same vein, recent studies by Judith Lieu and Daniel Boyarin conclude that second-century Christian texts portray “the Jews” as the Other, or the counter-image of the Christians, in order to affirm Christians’ own identity and to legitimize their separate existence.⁹⁷

Conclusion

Despite their rejection of the Jewish sacrifices and the claim that sacrifice were unnecessary to begin with, Barnabas, Justin, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and many others were extremely concerned with the question of what aspects of the cult are relevant to the Christians’ life and for what purpose. They were trying to make the best of the concept of sacrifice without giving credibility to the Jerusalem Temple and the Jewish Law. In the second and third centuries, the Church fathers were still trying to figure out how their worship and beliefs replace the Temple sacrifices, a concept they continue to find appealing or at the very least inevitable.

⁹⁶ To illustrate this boundary, suffice it to mention that Ignatius of Antioch urges his audience to abandon ancient customs and to celebrate the Lord’s Day rather than the Sabbath (Ign. *Magn.* 9.1). He also says that the disciples of Jesus should be called Christians (literally, those who live in accordance with *Christianismos*); whoever is called by another name is not “of God” (Ign. *Magn.* 10.1). Ignatius may be objecting to the fact that some disciples were claiming the name “Jew” for themselves.

⁹⁷ J. M. Lieu. *Image and Reality: The Jews in the World of the Christians in the Second Century* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996). D. Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 37–73, esp. 43–44, argues that Christian texts from the second and third centuries, such as Justin’s *Dialogue with Trypho*, are trying to differentiate between Christianity and Judaism. Rabbinic texts from the same period are engaged in a parallel endeavor. This quest for Christianity’s distinctiveness is probably a response to the existence of traits common to Christians and Jews, particularly Jewish rabbis, as well as the fact that the boundaries between Judaism and Christianity in the second and third centuries were blurred. See Boyarin, *Dying for God*.