THE SCAPEGOAT SACRIFICE IN LEVITICUS 16 AND THE NEFO'O RITUAL OF THE BAFUT OF CAMEROON

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this dissertation is my original work and has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted at any University for a degree.

Signature   Date

ABSTRACT

The dissertation aims to establish to what extent the Old Testament could be interpreted from an African perspective, using the scapegoat sacrifice in Leviticus 16 and the Nefo'o ritual of the Bafut of Cameroon as relevant examples. Because sacrificial practice was a normal occurrence in the religions of the Israelites (Old Testament) and those of other nations – and African society in particular – questions are raised that require urgent answers, namely: Is it possible to identify any elements of sacrifice from the African background, and specifically the Nefo'o ritual of the Bafut of Cameroon, which may facilitate the theological interpretation and understanding of the Old Testament.

The approach employed is a qualitative methodology with the sub-category of participant observation. We also used a socio-rhetorical interpretation approach to the Old Testament text of Leviticus 16. When the above-mentioned two rituals are compared, they portray aspects of both similarities and dissimilarities. The work has been divided into the following seven chapters:

Chapter one introduces the topic through the identification and the development of the problem. Some concepts and keywords from the title are discussed in the contexts of the Bafut of Cameroon and ancient Israel.

Chapter two provides the background to the Nefo'o ritual of the Bafut of Cameroon, tracing both the origins of the Bafut people and the Nefo'o ritual. The Bukari people, the aborigines of the tribe and the seat of the Nefo'o shrine are highlighted.

Chapter three presents a survey of sacrifices in West Africa, the ancient Near East and Israel. Special attention is reserved to the sacrificial systems of the ancient Israelites.

Chapter four gives a brief introduction to the Pentateuch with special treatment of the modern trends in the study of the pentateuchal sources and the theologies of the authors. This is to situate the book of Leviticus in the Pentateuch with which we are concerned.

Chapter five presents an introduction to the book of Leviticus and examines its significance among the other pentateuchal books. Attention is given to certain recurrent theological themes in the book and its implication for Leviticus chapter 16.

Chapter six provides a socio-rhetorical interpretation of the text of Leviticus 16, with special attention to the establishment of the Day of Atonement and the scapegoat sacrifice. Specific attention was paid to the significance of atonement in Lev. 16.

Chapter seven compares the scapegoat sacrifice of Leviticus 16 and the Nefo'o ritual of the Bafut of Cameroon. This is followed by a theological interpretation of the Nefo'o ritual and a summary of the results and conclusions.

African theologians – whose own cultures possess a great deal of ritual practices – have not given enough attention to a contextual interpretation of the Scriptures of the Old Testament. The biblical faith has to exist among African Traditional Religions and other cultural practices. Some contextual interpretation of the Scriptures of the Old Testament is being suggested. Such aspects as the Nefo'o shrine, which is situated in the midst of the Bafut community, could be seen to explain the Tent of Meeting among the Israelites. Other aspects include the priest, the community, the ancestors and the release of the live goat into the woods, bearing the sins of the people. Thus the Nefo'o ritual can be used as an analogy to explain the biblical understanding of atonement in an African context.

Leviticus 16 is not only the centre of the book of Leviticus but also the centre of the Pentateuch (Torah). Atonement can also be seen to be the theological heart of the Old Testament and of the whole Bible. Thus it is crucial to communicate this in an African environment using all the hermenuetical tools available.

OPSOMMING

Hierdie dissertasie is daarop gemik om te bepaal tot watter mate die Ou Testament vanuit 'n Afrika-perspektief geïnterpreteer kan word met gebruikmaking van die sondebokofferande, soos beskryf in Levitikus 16 en die Nefo'o ritueel van die Bafut bevolking van Kameroen as betrokke voorbeelde. Omdat die bring van offerandes normale praktyk in die godsdienste van die Israeliete (soos beskryf in die Ou Testament) en van ander nasies – en spesifiek van Afrika-gemeenskappe – is, ontlok dit vrae wat dringend beantwoord behoort te word. Is dit moontlik om daardie elemente van offerande vanuit 'n Afrika-perspektief – en spesifiek vanuit die oogpunt van die Nefo'o ritueel van die Bafut van Kameroen – te identifiseer wat kan bydra tot die teologiese interpretasie en begrip van die Ou Testament?

Die benadering wat gevolg word, is 'n kwalitatiewe metodologie, met die sub-kategorie van deelnemende waarneming. Ons het ook 'n sosio-retoriese interpretasie benadering tot die Ou Testamentiese teks van Levitikus 16 gevolg. Wanneer die bovermelde twee rituele met mekaar vergelyk word, openbaar hulle aspekte van sowel ooreenkomste as van verskille. Die werk is die volgende sewe hoofstukke verdeel:

Hoofstuk een lei die onderwerp in deur die identifisering en die ontwikkeling van die probleem. Sekere begrippe vervat in die sleutelwoorde van die titel word bespreek in die kontekste van die Bafut van Kameroen en van antieke Israel.

Hoofstuk twee bied 'n agtergrond aan tot die Nefo'o ritueel van die Bafut bevolking van Kameroen, waarin die oorsprong van sowel die Bafut bevolking as van die Nefo'o ritueel nagegaan word. Die Bukari bevolking, wat die oorspronklike inwoners was en die setel van die Nefo'o altaar word beskrywe.

Hoofstuk drie bevat 'n oorsig van offerandes in Wes-Afrika, die antieke Nabye Ooste en Israel. Spesiale aandag word geskenk aan die offerande stelsels van die antieke Israeliete.

Hoofstuk vier is 'n kort inleiding tot die Pentateug, met spesiale verwysing na die moderne tendense in die studie van Pentateugverwante bronne en die teologiese uitgangspunte van die skrywers. Dit word gedoen om die posisie van die boek van Levitikus, waarmee ons bowenal gemoeid is, in die Pentateug te bepaal.

Hoofstuk vyf bied 'n kort inleiding tot die boek van Levitikus en gaan sy betekenis na teen die agtergrond van die ander boeke van die Pentateug. Aandag word geskenk aan sekere herhalende teologiese temas in die boek en die implikasies daarvan vir Levitikus 16.

Hoofstuk ses bevat 'n sosio-retoriese interpretasie van die inhoud van Levitikus 16, met spesiale verwysing na die instelling van die Versoendag en die offerande van die sondebok. Spesifieke aandag word geskenk aan die rol van boetedoening in Levitikus 16.

Hoofstuk sewe vergelyk die sondebok offerande van Levitikus 16 en die Nefo'o ritueel van die Bafut van Kameroen. Dit word gevolg deur 'n teologiese interpretasie van die Nefo'o ritueel, 'n 'n opsomming van die praktyke en ook gevolgtrekkings.

Afrika-teoloë, wie se eie kulture oor 'n ryke mate van rituele praktyke beskik, het tot dusver nie voldoende aandag aan 'n kontekstuele interpretasie van die Ou Testament geskenk nie. Die Bybelse geloof moet steeds in naasbestaan met die tradisionele Afrika-gelowe en ander kulturele praktyke staan. 'n Sekere kontekstuele interpretasie van die Ou Testamentiese geskrifte word aan die hand gedoen. Seker aspekte, soos die Nefo'o altaar, wat midde in die Bafut gemeenskap geleë is, kan met die ontmoetingstent van die Israeliete vergelyk word. Ander punte van ooreenkomste en verskille tussen die Bafut en die antieke Israeliete, sluit in priesters, die gemeenskap, voorouers, en die vrylating in die woud van die lewendige bok wat die sondes van die bevolking dra. Dus kan die Nefo'o ritueel as 'n analogie vir die verduideliking van die Bybelse begrip van versoening in 'n Afrika-konteks aangewend word.

Levitikus 16 is nie slegs die kern van die hele boek van Levitikus nie, maar inderdaad ook van die hele Pentateug (Torah). Versoening kan ook as die teologiese kern van die Ou Testament van die hele Bybel gereken word. Daarom is dit noodsaaklik om hierdie begrip in 'n Afrika-konteks te kan kommunikeer met die aanwending van alle beskikbare hermeneutiese hulpmiddele.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to our two children Jude and Josephine Muyo who had to bear the pains of being separated from the rest of the family during the time of research. I have not forgotten my beloved wife Nchang Juliana and the rest of the children.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER THREE

CHAPTER SEVEN

A COMPARISON OF THE SCAPEGOAT SACRIFICE OF LEVITICUS 16 AND THE NEFO'O RITUAL OF THE BAFUT OF CAMEROON: ITS THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATION

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Above all to my dear wife Juliana Nchang for her love and unreserved support.

ABBREVIATIONS

1 Chr	1 Chronicles
1 Kgs	1 Kings
1 Sam	1 Samuel
2 Chr	2 Chronicles
2 Kgs	2 Kings
2 Sam	2 Samuel
ABD	Anchor Bible Dictionary
AD	Anno Domini
ANE	Ancient Near East
ATR	African Traditional Religions
BC	Before Christ
BCE	Before the Common Era
CB	The Century Bible
CE	The Common Era
cf	Compare
Ch.	Chapter
Chs	Chapters
D	Deuteronomist
DBI	Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation
Deut	Deuteronomy
E	Elohist
EB	The Encyclopaedia Britannica
EDR	Encyclopedic Dictionary of Religion
Eph	Ephesians
ER	The Encyclopedia of Religion
ERE	Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics
Et al.	And others
Ex.	Exercise
Exod	Exodus
Ezek	Ezekiel
Gen	Genesis
Hag.	Haggai

HBD	Hebrew Bible Dictionary
Hebr	Hebrew
I.e.	That is
Is	Isaiah
J	Jahwist
Jer.	Jeremiah
Jn	John
Josh	Joshua
JPS	The Jewish Publication Society
JSOT	Journal for the study of the Old Testament.
Lev	Leviticus
Mal	Malachi
Mk	Mark
NBC	The New Bible Commentary
NBD	New Bible Dictionary
NEB	The New Encyclopaedia Britanica
NIDOTTE	The New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis
NIV	New International Version
NOED	The New Oxford English Dictionary
Num	Numbers
OT	Old Testament
P	Priestly Source
PCC	Presbyterian Church in Cameroon
Rom	Romans
VIP	Very Important Personalities
VT	Vetus Testamentum
WNIDE	Webster's New International Dictionary of the English language

CHAPTER ONE

IDENTIFICATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROBLEM

1.1   RESEARCH PROBLEM

The objective, which the researcher has set himself in this dissertation, is to investigate and to provide some new insight in the question: what impact could African culture and religious traditions have on the theological interpretation of the Old Testament? This research is aiming to establish to what extent the Old Testament could be interpreted from an African perspective, using the scapegoat sacrifice of Leviticus 16 and the Nefo'o ritual of the Bafut people of Cameroon as relevant examples. Sacrificial practice was a normal occurrence in both the religions of the Israelites (as contained in the Old Testament) and those of other nations – and African society in particular. Questions arise that require answers, namely:

1.   What constitutes sacrifice?

2.   What role does sacrifice play in the lives of the communities still performing this practice?

3.   Is it possible to identify some elements of sacrifice from the African background, (specifically the Nefo'o ritual of the Bafut of Cameroon) which may facilitate the theological interpretation and understanding of the Old Testament?

4.   What strategies could be put in place to enhance such a theological interpretation and what dividends could be envisaged for Old Testament scholarship and believing communities from such an approach?

5.   Are sacrifices (especially animal sacrifices) still relevant for the present time, although neither the Jewish nor Christian religions any longer practice them?

6.   Where is the point of contact between the Old Testament and the African culture?

The process to provide answers to these questions leads us to the concept of atonement and reconciliation, which is at the basis of the sacrificial systems of the Africans and the ancient Israelites, and thus one of the main concerns of this dissertation. Associated with the

foregoing is the sense of the community and concern for human salvation being crucial to both these communities.

1.2   AIM OF THE RESEARCH

As regards the present research, the author would like to encourage emerging African Old Testament scholars to interpret the Bible in the contextual background of their various environments, taking into consideration such symbolism from the African contexts as may be meaningful to the relevant populations. These scholars are cautioned to be aware of the efforts by some misguided Western scholars and missionaries who have traditionally seen and presented African cultural values as being barbaric which could offer little or nothing to the interpretation of the Bible. It is the author's aim to integrate some meaningful African cultural values, to explore and project the relationship between the Old Testament and African culture.

This dissertation aims at encouraging a re-reading of the Old Testament – and in particular the book of Leviticus – to discover how African culture and the Old Testament are related. According to this perspective the African Old Testament scholar stands a better chance of understanding and interpreting the Old Testament to his/her people than Western counterparts. The Bible has been present in the African continent for a long time, but certain African cultures predate the advent of the Bible to this continent. The function of the Bible is not to eradicate African cultures and religious traditions of the people, no matter how deep-rooted the Christian religion has become in the minds of the Africans.

Old Testament scholarship should help to establish a means of existence of the biblical faith and African religious traditions with each tradition rediscovering itself. In the process of such existence it stands to reason that the African theologian should guard against syncretistic tendencies. Just as the revelation of God took place in the other cultures of the world, the African culture is also capable of accommodating that revelation and using some of the meaningful and relevant African religious elements in the interpretation of the Bible.

It is, therefore, the aim of the research to describe, compare and interpret theologically the Nefo'o ritual of the Bafut people of Cameroon and the scapegoat sacrifice in Leviticus 16.

1.3   RELEVANCE OF THE RESEARCH

Meyers (Klingbeil 1995:42) convincingly pointed out: "It is the fate of the OT's legislation on sacrifices and rituals to be quietly and piously consigned to oblivion." This statement indicates how the subject of sacrifice and in particular the scapegoat sacrifice, has not received the same serious attention as the other priestly texts in the Old Testament. Ritual study has been sorely neglected and whatever work has been done is often within the context of exegesis of a given passage incorporating this in the general commentaries on a book such as Leviticus. We sincerely appreciate and commend the efforts of scholars like Gorman (1990), Milgrom (1991), Grabbe (1993), Rogerson (1996) etc. who have made great strides during the last decade or so in the study of the priestly sacrifices and rituals of the Old Testament.

This research wishes to stimulate African Old Testament scholars to pay closer attention to the treatment of these priestly ritual texts in reflecting the African cultural worldview. The bulk of the material on biblical sacrifices is to be found in the first five books of the Bible, the Pentateuch. This dissertation would encourage a continuous survey of similar related themes in this important section of the Bible, which – if well understood – would provide a better interpretation of the Old Testament and even the rest of the Bible.

Leviticus, as the third book in the Pentateuch, has a unique place in the Pentateuch and the rest of the Old Testament. In this section of the Bible Leviticus offered a practical and spiritual link between God and the Israelites. For example, after God had delivered Israel from Egypt and brought them to Mount Sinai in preparation for their final settlement in the Promised Land, the Israelites knew God had freely chosen them to be His people. Hence the Israelites were required to respond accordingly by promising to abide by whatever God wanted of them (Gen. 12:2, 15:7-21; Exod. 2:24, 4:22, 6:6-8, 19:4-9, 20:2). Against this background the book of Leviticus provides an anchor to both an important section of the Old Testament, and to the whole of the Old Testament. When a comparative study of Leviticus and the religious background of the Africans is undertaken, then this could provide some useful tools for a relevant interpretation of the Bible.

1.4   HYPOTHESIS

In the course of conceptualising the dissertation, it was not easy for the researcher to establish a research hypothesis. He found it difficult to reduce people to statistical aggregates, because when that happens, it would be unavoidable to conduct a quantitative, and not a qualitative research, which is the methodology we aim to apply. The former approach could result in the oversight of the subjective nature of human understanding and interpretation. (Bogdan & Taylor 1975:27).

Despite the problems associated with the formulation of the hypothesis, one could nevertheless describe the hypothesis underlying the present dissertation as a search into the question what the role of the African culture could be in the interpretation of the Old Testament. It is my contention that an understanding of the Nefo'o ritual of the Bafut people of Cameroon could be useful in interpreting the theological features of atonement in the scapegoat sacrifice of Leviticus 16. This presupposes a contextual study using African concepts that can best relate the idea of atonement to the Bafut of Cameroon. When compared, the two rituals appear similar in that they are both eliminatory rites intended to rid the human environment of sin and evil. Elements such as the priests, the relevant animals, the time frame, the ancestors etc., become crucial to the contextual study being proposed which lead to the interpretation of the concept of atonement, being one of the main concerns of this dissertation.

1.5   METHODOLOGY

1.5.1   Qualitative methodology

As mentioned above, the method of approach to the present dissertation will be the qualitative methodology, which incorporates the participant observation method of investigation. The socio-rhetorical method of interpretation was also applied in chapter six. However, a project such as the present one that touches on the social, economic, political, historical, religious and ethnic institutions of a people – coupled with the comparative study of two cultures – calls for an interdisciplinary approach as its methodology. Consequently some aspects of narration, description, historical-critical as well as anthropological approaches will be employed. Specific emphasis will be placed on the social sciences perspectives when it comes to key definitions.

As stated above, the qualitative methodology appears to be more applicable than the quantitative method. The reason is that this mirrors the way the research problem of this research project was formulated. According to Bogdan and Taylor (1975:4) "qualitative methodologies refer to a research procedure, which produces descriptive data: peoples' own written or spoken words and observable behaviour." The qualitative method thus enables us to come to know people first hand and to experience the process as they develop their own definition of the world. In other words, we will experience what they experience in their daily struggles within their society. The above method offers us the opportunity to explore concepts, the essence of which is to be aware of and, if applicable, to employ other research approaches. In addition the qualitative research methods permits the researcher to benefit from personal documents, by which are meant those materials in which people can reveal in their own words their view on any specific subject or experience. Such materials may include diaries, letters, autobiographies and also transcripts of interviews.

It is my conviction that the qualitative method is best suited to my particular needs in this study, despite the criticism that this approach may rest on some subjective foundation. This method provides the point of departure specifically of chapter 2 which addresses the Nefo'o ritual of the Bafut people. The information on which this is based was obtained by way of direct contact, interviews – otherwise referred to as participant observation – and research into some works by ethnologists.

1.5.2   Participant observation

Participant observation refers to that category of research characterised by a period of close social interaction between the researcher and the subjects, in the milieu of the latter. During the period of investigation data are systematically collected (Bogdan & Taylor 1975:5). In the course of investigation in this section of the dissertation, the researcher would immerse himself into the life situation of the people, especially in situations, which he needs to understand. Where possible, he would share with them and joke with them. In sharing in their concerns and experiences, the researcher hopes and believes that prolonged contact in the various settings would help him to observe all the dynamics of conflict and change and thereby appreciate their organisations, relationships, groups and individual definitions in the process. The researcher would thus not be reduced to be a mere observer, but would in fact be a participant in the venture to be described.

In the course of our field work we would pose questions to our informants while recording their responses verbatim. Whenever the informants are unable to express themselves in English, the responses would be recorded in Bafut and translation would subsequently be provided. No time frame can be foreseen for the completion of the interviews, since we need to meet the people either when they are at ease or during their routine duties, which could be important, especially in the case of the priests. One of the problems that may arise is that of the oral nature of the tradition, but we very much hope to be able to rely on the testimonies of the various informants of all age groups. We would also consult earlier works on these traditions, church archives, other missionary sources, works of other ethnologists and anthropologists. A thorough and critical study of these earlier sources would be employed to compare and contrast them with what has been obtained in the field. Such information would serve as a control mechanism and as a possible guide to future researchers.

1.5.3   Socio-rhetorical interpretation of scripture

A socio-rhetorical interpretation is an approach to literature that focuses on values, convictions and beliefs both in the texts we read and in the world we live. This approach invites detailed attention to the text itself and also moves interactively into the world of the people who wrote the text and into our present world (Robbins 1996:1). Thus the hyphenated prefix "socio" refers to the rich resources of modern anthropology and sociology that socio-rhetorical criticism brings to the interpretation of a text. Socio-rhetorical interpretation makes use of textures and within one text one could employ several textures. As regards the text of Leviticus 16, this has been analysed under the following textures:

1) Inner texture: It resides in the features in the language of the text itself, such as a repetition of words, and the use of dialogue between two persons to communicate the information. Thus inner textual analysis depends on words as tools for communication, the purpose of which is to gain an intimate knowledge of the words, word patterns, voices, structures, devices, and modes in the text, which in turn provide the contexts for meaning and meaning effects (Robbins 1996:7). From the inner texture it will be seen that the text of Leviticus 16 is a composite text built up from various materials.

2) The intertexture: This is the text's representation of, references to, and use of phenomena in the world outside the text being interpreted. Sometimes the text imitates another text, but different people are placed in this context (Robbins 1996:40). The text of Leviticus 16

has been significantly influenced by outside material and specifically by ancient Near East parallels. From this one is able to compare and understand the ritual of the Day of Atonement and how it relates to the Nefo'o ritual, because both perform the same function of eliminatory rites. (Details will be provided in due course).

3) The social and cultural texture treats common social and cultural topics in the text that exhibit the overall perception in the text or the context in which people live in the world. It could sometimes take the interpreter beyond his or her own presuppositions into the foreign social and cultural world of the text in question. (Robbins 1996:71). From the priestly point of view, the created world has a relationship with God. We will elaborate on this point under the sacred texture of the text. Priesthood is crucial to both the biblical text and the Nefo'o ritual of the Bafut of Cameroon.

4) The ideological texture: Attention is directed to people and the texts are of secondary concern. This texture is concerned with the biases, opinions, preferences and the stereotypes of a particular writer and a particular reader (1996:95). Its main focus is the relationship between individuals and groups. In Leviticus 16 commitment and a good relationship between the congregation of Israel and Yahweh is what is required.

5) The sacred texture: This concerns aspects in the text that relate to the deity, holy persons, spiritual beings, divine history, human redemption, human commitment, the religious community and ethics. All these aspects are embedded in the previously mentioned textures (Robbins 1996:130). Forgiveness, reconciliation and harmony between God and people and between people and people are salient features in Leviticus. In this context atonement is the ultimate goal of the text.

Resulting from the analysis of the text of Leviticus 16 under the aforementioned textures we hope to arrive at an understanding of the text, which would eventually facilitate a responsible and accountable comparison between the biblical text and the Nefo'o ritual of the Bafut of Cameroon. We believe this will lead to a relevant theological understanding of atonement.

1.6   CONCEPTUALISATION AND OPERATIONALISATION

1.6.1   Introduction

In the paragraphs that follow we will establish the concepts that are held by the communities on whom the present dissertation is focusing, namely the Bafut of Cameroon and ancient Israel, in relation to the key terms to be used in the topic of the research. We may also consider other related useful terminology to explain the research problem. Such terms will include *scapegoat, ritual, sacrifice* etc. Since the subject of sacrifice is directly linked to religion and culture, we would need to consider the latter too.

The reference in the paragraph above to the term "concept" leads one to ask what this term entails. Mouton and Marais (1988:58) stated that a concept is the most basic linguistic construction through which people could order and categorise some reality. Concepts are like pigeonholes into which we sort our experiences, the primary instruments that we can employ to come to grips with both our experiences and those of other people. Experience has shown that an appropriate approach to conceptualisation is to define the meaning of the term in question. This is by way of referring to its basic connotation or sense of the word. With the above in mind, let us examine the various concepts attached to the above mentioned terms by the various traditions concerned, namely the Bafut and ancient Israel.

1.6.2   The Bafut concept of the scapegoat

Simpson and Weiner (1958:2) defined the term "*scapegoat*" as one who is blamed or punished for the sins of others. In this way the immediate and desired objective is to relieve the feeling of frustration and fear, in the process of which the victim may often suffer innocently. In mentioning sin and fear, the term scapegoat becomes directly linked to religious purposes, because the greatest fear that may induce sacrifice is often that emanating from a deity and directed to an individual or a group.

As regards the Bafut people of Cameroon, the word scapegoat is primarily used idiomatically. It is an expression that highlights the plight of a victim who suffers innocently. For example: Two people are fighting and a third person who intervenes to separate them is either injured or killed. The latter person is consequently regarded as a scapegoat who has become an innocent victim while trying to bring peace or restore order between the two contestants.

The term scapegoat in a Bafut context is usually seen as an expression, and not as a single word, namely *a kwo'a ni ne nwie*. It is difficult to attempt to translate this term literally into English, but it suffices to say that the expression carries the notion of one, who suffers innocently. In its religious connotation the term scapegoat is only applicable during times of tribal crisis. This occurs when the need arises to offer a sacrifice to the gods or the ancestors. Examples would relate to times when the clan is about to face an enemy or another tribe at war, and also during the annual pilgrimage to Nefo'o or other shrines in Bafut. As regards the Nefo'o ritual, the animal victim is selected arbitrarily, either killed or the sins of the entire community would be symbolically laid upon it, upon which the priests would release the animal into the woods where it would eventually perish. The aim of this ritual is to emphasise that the animal victim has been destined to carry the sins of the community and to perish with them. In the words of incantations, which the priests use before releasing the victim, the phrase is to perish" *ghe ncho!* "go *and perish.*" The underlying idea is that sin has been eliminated and never to be experienced again.

1.6.3   The Bafut concept of a ritual

In broad terms, a ritual can be said to be a category of behaviour usually performed at religious and other social ceremonies. Social anthropologists have defined it as that form of behaviour characterised by its religious nature or purpose (Seymour-Smith 1986:248). Gorman (1990:18) broadened this definition by stating that ritual is a general class of social action, covering a wide range of behaviour. The emphasis here is on social action, which does not only limit it to religious performance or activities. Such behaviour thus does not necessarily need to be carried out in a sacred context. Any action that is undertaken and has all the characteristics of a ritual as manifested by the interpreter may, therefore, be regarded as ritual action. When such action is performed as part of a specific process, then this is described as a rite.

Rituals, therefore, have their distinct and definite purposes and one could refer to a ritual, which is due to take place at a specific situation and time. Rituals may also be classed under systems and a ritual system consists of a number of distinct rituals. In terms of the present dissertation, the focus will be directed to priestly ritual systems, which are directed to priestly actions.

The subject of rituals may of course be regarded from a wide variety of conceptual approaches. These may vary from psychoanalytical, sociological, functional or ecological

approaches. These are also relevant to the present study as we will also discuss the theme of rituals from the vantage point of these approaches. A recurrent and almost dominant aspect found in the different definitions is the aspect of "his/her environment" or "his/her own mind" Zuesse (ER 1987:412). It is also the view of Turner (1968:5) that any type of ritual forms a system of great complexity and must have a role structure; a symbolic structure and a value structure.

Relating the above to the Bafut of Cameroon, a more appropriate description would be "ritual action." Actions appear to play a more important role than words. It is almost a "culture of silence" in the sense that all actions are acted or dramatised and only rarely accompanied by words of incantation, which would in any event have some meaning for the priests rather than for the ordinary individual. Incantations use symbolic language and only when understood, could convey any significant meaning. For the Bafut, symbols constitute the basic building blocks for ritual performance; and symbols could denote objects, activities, movements and gestures that serve as vehicles for the relevant actions. As Gorman (1990:22) rightly stated, such enactments are capable of conveying a socially meaningful message. Ritual action does not only take place in the religious sphere of the people; it is part and parcel of the culture of the people. It is present in everyday activity, in the various modes of communication – song, dance, dress, farming, harvest, hunting, fishing and all religious manifestations. It could thus be stated that this particular culture contains a system of meaningful symbols, which could provide a framework within which people can perceive and understand themselves, others and the world at large.

Thus the term "ritual" in the Bafut context entails actions. These actions are performed, and performance in this sense denotes manifestation and bringing to completion. Turner is, therefore, correct in analysing ritual as social drama, characterising it as "conscious acting," "stylised performance," "evocative," "a presentational style of staging" and other similar theoretical terms (cf. Gorman 1990:20). Having completed some extensive field research on the Nefo'o ritual of the Bafut of Cameroon, the researcher is convinced that most of the characteristics advanced by social anthropology are quite similar to the concept held by the Bafut people regarding ritual and ritual process.

1.6.4 The Bafut concept of sacrifice

Sacrifice is almost invariably associated with the context of worship and religion. Only in a limited sense is it used in non-religious concepts to illustrate some sheds of meaning, which

may include the foregoing of a particular course, which may be quite precious to an individual or a group, denying oneself certain benefits and advantages in preference to a particular purpose. In the strict sense of the word this term does not exist in the Bafut vocabulary when used in a non-religious sense. Instead they may use terms such as honouring someone, or actually suffering for the education of their children.

Awolalu (1979:135) observed that the general meaning of the word "sacrifice" is equally an extension of the metaphorical meaning of the word which entails the giving up of one thing for the sake of another that is higher in value. This is where the Yoruba of Nigeria differ from their concept of sacrifice from that of the neighbouring Bafut of Cameroon. For the Bafut sacrifice always carries a religious connotation and is never seen in a metaphorical sense.

To the Bafut of Cameroon – just as Hubert and Marcel Mauss (1964:9) described it – the word "sacrifice" immediately suggests the notion of consecration. Sacrifice is a religious act, carried out in a religious atmosphere by means of religious agents. From the Bafut people's perspective the religious concept of sacrifice is expressed descriptively as: *Mma'a bunwi,* or "concerning the gods or the ancestors." This could be interpreted or translated literally as "throwing to the gods." The phrase, "to throw to the gods," is in itself loaded with meaning, because in the traditional way, the occasion to offer a sacrifice was often connected with fear. That is the fear to approach the unseen, the unknown and to suffer a possible rejection of the sacrificial elements.

As regards the Christian God, He is usually honoured or presented with offerings or sacrifices, and the terms used in this connection are *ghasu Nwi* or *tunghe Nwi*. These two concepts of sacrifice held by the Bafut people contain both the concepts of the Supreme God and those of the gods of their ancestors before the advent of Christianity.

The concept of sacrifice among the Bafut people of Cameroon can be described as having both a positive and a negative side. Life is to be lived to the full and it has to be preserved and continued. This depends entirely upon the favour of the beings that have the power to sustain or to destroy it. Consequently there is a strong desire to maintain communication with those powers and this provides the reason why the people offer sacrifices.

In a negative sense sacrifice may be offered to counteract the powers of destruction. Awolalu (1979:138) stated that there needs to be a pertinent reason for the offering of any sacrifice. Apart from the preservation of life, sacrifice in Bafut induces the gods to grant the people more success and an increase both in procreation in general and in material wealth.

Underlying every sacrifice is a specific goal in mind. Most of the materials for sacrifice are usually costly and constitute mostly live animals – which range from live birds to cattle – and in the olden days they included human beings. Bloodless sacrifices have been reserved to what we may term less malignant spirits of the dead. These lifeless or bloodless articles could include coins, foodstuffs, clothing, cutlasses, etc. that are either thrown away or actually left at certain shrine areas believed to be the meeting points of the spirits of the dead.

1.6.5   The Israelite concept of scapegoat

The notion of scapegoat has been reported in many cultures across the world and it is often linked with some ritual process. Very few cultures, however, use words that could be directly translated to the English word "scapegoat." The Hebrew language has no direct word to translate the English scapegoat. This term is referred to as the שָׂעִיר לַעֲזָאזֵל *("Goat for Azazel")*. To the Jews this is the most familiar of all the biblical rites and is reported in the Old Testament ritual. (Lev. 16:8-10).

The early Israelites believed that sin could corrupt and disrupt their relationship with the gods. They were constantly reminded of the presence of evil, which could disrupt this relationship, and it was similar with later Israel in its relationship with Yahweh. This may help to explain the origin of the Day of Atonement in Leviticus 16, as the notion of a scapegoat has been introduced at the Day of Atonement celebration. During this day a goat would be symbolically laden with the sins of the Jewish people in order to purify the nation from their sins. Some scholars (NEB 1995:500) stated that the animal was chosen by lot to placate Azazel, a wilderness demon, upon which the goat was thrown over a precipice outside Jerusalem in a bid to rid the nation of its iniquities. Scholars have given more attention to this practice than to any other disposal rite in the Bible. It has been found to shed much light on the notion of expiation and purification in the Old and New Testament traditions.

The most problematic debate in the scapegoat ritual has been triggered by the term Azazel. While accepting that the name Azazel must designate the name of a god or demon that lives in the wilderness, Wright (1984:22) issued a word of warning regarding its designation. The function of Azazel as a demon should be compared with that of similar rites outside the biblical culture, where inactive demons were normally involved. In the Jewish tradition the term scapegoat is, therefore, a designation for the goat dispatched to the Wilderness at the Day of Atonement ritual.

The use of a scapegoat has had a long and varied history, which has involved many kinds of animals and even human beings. There is no evidence that ancient Israel ever practised the act of human sacrifice. Scapegoat sacrifice, as a concept, has been extended to include any group or individual that innocently bears the blame of others. For the Israelites a scapegoat was the sacrificial animal that acted as a vehicle transporting sin from human habitation to a desolate place.

1.6.6   The Israelite concept of ritual

Zuesse (ER 1987:417) suggested a two-fold division of ritual. The first division is what he referred to as "confirmatory ritual." This seeks to maintain a distinction through a type of divine order. He termed the second division a "transformatory ritual". For Gorman (1990:54) ritual is best classed under three categories. The first relates to "founding rituals," which seek to inaugurate a certain state, institution or situation. Viewed critically, Leviticus. 8 would fall in this category since it is concerned with the ordination of the priests. The second category is the "maintenance rituals, which are designed to maintain an already established order." This is similar to Zuesse's above mentioned confirmatory order. The third category to which Gorman referred as the "restoration rituals" appear to dominate in the book of Leviticus and in particular Leviticus Chapter 16, which deals with the liturgy of the Day of Atonement and also the scapegoat sacrifice. As their names suggest, these rituals are designed to restore the order of things in the event of a disruption.

Niditch (1997:99) asserted that the law in Israelite religion is aimed at imposing order in the problematical and chaos-prone nature of human existence, while the ritual dimension serves to restore the image of order when it falls in total disarray. For the Israelites, ritual symbolises some aspect of God's creation, which dynamically or metonymically helped to recreate the cosmos on a regular, periodic basis or at critical moments to restore this in the lives of individuals or whole communities. Ritual was concerned with the shaping and reshaping of status. In Israel, it started with what we may term a "founding ritual," following the events of the nation's exodus. This has continued to be a ritual occasion held each year within each family and household, both in a decentralised and democratised fashion (Exodus 12).

In addition to the above one also encounters the ritual of atonement in which the high priest attempts to rid the community of sin (Lev. 16). The priesthood with its hereditary rites was trained in the requisite skills of slaughter, since animal sacrifice was a central feature of the pre-monarchic Israel. Most rituals involved the killing of animals and the splashing,

spattering, and daubing of blood. Leviticus. 8:18-24 describes the use of blood in the ordination ceremony for the priests.

Quite an amount of blood must have been spilt at the heyday of the Jerusalem temple for the upkeep of the various regular and occasional offerings outlined in the book of Leviticus. Blood was a vital substance in the religious life of the Israelites, holding a central place in the narrative and performative aspects of the tradition. Blood had to be poured on the ground when ritual animals were slaughtered. For the Israelites, the force of life was contained in blood. In Hebrew, the terms for blood and the earth appear to be in a special relationship and this bond has been created by animal ritual (Niditch 1997:101). This has provided biblical writers with many opportunities for word play, which in turn encapsulated complex symbolic patterns of Israelite belief. The redness of blood was a symbol of the human earthbound side of the mortal-divine dichotomy and extended to other ritual items involved in the relationship between humans and God (Niditch 1997:101). Blood was capable of purifying, mediating and even contaminating, depending upon the context and circumstances. Turner referred to it as a multiclocalic symbol (Nidtch 1997:101), meaning that blood was a symbol with a capacity for multiple, even contradictory meanings. In later times the religion of Israel made a transition to early Judiasm. The love for Yahweh – who is World Creator, the one who rescues at war and Israel's Lord in a covenantal relationship – was expressed in the ongoing mediation and communication between God and Israel by means of several experiential genres actualised in various forms of Israel's ritual and myths. The above process was able to endure because of the Israelites' adherence to ethical demands believed to originate from God Himself.

In terms of the above, blood sacrifice remained an important medium of mediation throughout the Israelites' tradition. Niditch (1997:120), however, observed that contrasting voices continued to be raised. Some writers viewed God as more transcendent than others. Some practised rituals to propitiate the dead and to secure fertility in the land. Others considered such practices to be non-Yahwistic. But it should throughout be remembered that sacrifice constituted the central feature of Israelite ritual life, providing a means of mending the relationship between God and human beings through the offering of something of great value as well as a means of mediating between people who shared this relationship.

1.6.7   The Israelite concept of sacrifice

The Israelites was a worshipping community and in the course of their worship services, sacrificial performance was an integral part of the whole system. Harrelson (1959:56) writes: "As they came into the land of Canaan, the early Israelites brought their own understanding how man was to communicate with the Holy. They engaged in rites designed to strengthen their ties with the God of Israel and to secure his blessings." The Israelites, therefore, had the conception that God's blessing could only be secured through sacrifice. There remains an unresolved problem whether or not ancient Israel practised sacrifice at the expense of their neighbours. Whatever happened, the fact is that sacrifice constituted an essential part of Israel's worship facilitated by the central shrine, which served as a converging point for the nation. This did not, however, replace the idea that the individual or family sanctuaries could still be of relevance. There were daily sacrifices, both private and official, and there was an occasion relating to each sacrifice.

All sacrifices had a common characteristic, namely that all were expected to be without blemish (cf. Lemche 1995:215). Each day of the temple year required its sacrifices in the form of blood sacrifice, and occasionally there were also vegetable sacrifices (Lemche 1995:215). Sacrifices could be made in fulfilment of a vow that an individual had to make in time of need. There were also sin offerings, atonement sacrifices, self-imposed fines to be paid to God and also sacrifices that were imposed on the individual by the sacral legislation (Lemche 1995:216). On the whole, sacrificial practice was prevalent in Israel in order to rid society from evil and to maintain the purity that God expected from the Israelites.

Scholars have expressed a renewed interest in ritual studies during the past decade. One of the works that attracted our interest and to which we frequently referred in the present dissertation, is one by Frank H Gorman Jr., who in 1990 undertook a study of the priestly ritual in the Pentateuch. The work was based on his doctoral dissertation at Emory University which was written under the supervision of Professor John Hayes. Although these priestly rituals have previously received some attention, Gorman was convinced that most of the work that had been done in this regard was merely text oriented. Most of the works focused mainly on the relevant literary-critical, form critical, and traditio-critical aspects.

Gorman's "*Ideology of Ritual. Space, Time and Status*" analysed the priestly ritual texts in the context of the conceptual, ideological and theological framework of the priestly cults embodied in these texts. Gorman was less interested in the historical-literary analysis of the

text, but advocated the study of individual rituals in relation to how they functioned in the priestly system. He observed a type of Old Testament guided scholarship with a bias among some of its Protestant practitioners which diverted attention from the study of the priestly ritual system which could only be understood as a meaningful enactment. Gorman's methodology could be regarded as a social-functional approach, concerned with unravelling the view behind the respective texts. Wright (1987:3) described an underlying danger in this approach of identifying the world contained in texts. According to Wright this could lead to an over-simplification of the views expressed in ancient texts.

A close reading of Gorman's book will reveal that he drew quite heavily from social anthropology in order to provide for both a methodological and theological framework of ritual and its elements and structures (Gorman 1990:13-38). Although Gorman thus postulated a social functional approach, he is still concerned with structural questions such as the structure, formality, order, sequence and the required situation of the ritual, and also the analysis of ritual space, time, roles etc. This would nevertheless appear to be a deficiency in Gorman's methodological approach and thus stands open to be questioned.

Another point of criticism is Gorman's presupposition of the importance of creation theology as concerns the ideology and the theological framework of the priestly texts. In itself this may not necessarily constitute a weakness, but by concentrating so strongly on this aspect, Gorman risks turning a blind eye to other valid strains of priestly thought. Other criticism of Gorman came from Grunwaldt (1993:118-119). According to him Gorman failed to provide a rationale for his synchronic approach and Grunwaldt called for some methodological transparency. It would, however, appear as if Grunwaldt may not have fully grasped the point Gorman was making or may have misunderstood his model. Gorman was not so much interested in the different levels of interpreting the original texts, but he was rather more interested in establishing the social meanings of specific rituals in the priestly texts. This is evident from his earlier criticism of the text-oriented approach.

As already mentioned above, Gorman drew a great deal from social anthropology and, therefore, his work risks seeming like a work of social anthropology rather than a theological reflection. This is reflected in such statements as: "Space and time are both creations of culture and receive symbolic meaning (1990:28). Gorman investigated five rituals of the priestly texts, namely the rituals in Leviticus chapters 16, 8, 14:1-20; Numbers 19, and 28-29 in that order. One wonders why Gorman considered the ritual of Leviticus chapter 16 before turning to treat Leviticus chapter 8, which is dedicated to the ordination of the priests who

have to officiate in the activities described in Leviticus 16. The two rituals were given almost equal attention, as he devoted 40 pages of his study to each of them.

Gorman's style of presentation is both descriptive and narrative. He discusses ritual material and finally arrives at describing some activity as either a founding ritual or a regular occurring ritual (cf. Lev. 8 and 16) respectively. Perhaps because of the many similarities and emphases within the elements of the ritual and their function, there are many repetitions, especially when he discusses the two rituals described in Chapters 8 and 16. Apart from the few points mentioned on the methodology and the general organisation of the study, one cannot fail to appreciate the effort and courage that have been exhibited in handling such controversial matters of ritual performance. This appears to be the only monograph that has been published to treat specifically the phenomenon of priestly ritual action. This is one of the reasons that has prompted us to undertake a review of the work and we hope that this would positively influence our own approach to this seemingly controversial topic.

1.7   LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The method of approach to this dissertation is a qualitative methodology employed mostly in the field study of the Nefo'o ritual of the Bafut of Cameroon. The socio-rhetorical interpretation approach to the Old Testament text was also employed to enable a close reading and understanding of the biblical texts. These two methodologies are both compatible and supplementary. The socio-rhetorical method uses exegetical tools that help to create an encounter between the biblical text and the African context. This involves a variety of ways, which link the biblical texts to the African context.

Consequently the main focus of interpretation is on the communities to whom the text refers rather than on those who produced it, or on the text itself as is quite often the case with Western exegesis (Ukpong 2000:4). There are presently two currents of academic readings of the Bible in Africa. One follows the Western focus on the world of the text and the world behind the text, while the other follows the African preference of linking the text to the world surrounding the text or in front of the text.

In the course of his fieldwork the researcher followed the participant observation approach. During this period of research, data were unobtrusively and systematically collected. The researcher immersed himself especially in those situations that he needed to understand. In his approach to the people he was interviewing, where possible he would share with them and

joke with them in order to experience fully the activities leading up to the ritual to be - described for the first time in this dissertation. The researcher knew all along that he was going to encounter some problems in the course of his investigation. The African historical tradition is mostly oral, with very few or no earlier written records to which he could refer or test his hypotheses and information. There was also a problem of privacy, in that it was at times difficult to gain access to certain information without prior initiation into the cult. In the case of the present thesis, there was an additional problem since the researcher happens to be a member of the tribe. In writing this thesis a fear of betrayal could have arisen and the writer could have been branded a sellout of the traditional practices of his people.

The investigation was not conducted at one locality. The author had to cover long distances in the company of priests and informants, which sometimes entailed having to give them some motivation in cash or in kind. At certain places we encountered "gate-keepers" – persons who control access to important personalities or places. Most of our informants were quite advanced in age and could not speak English. In this event we gathered their testimonies in Bafut and later translated it into English. During our whole period of research, we searched both the Church's and Missionary records and could not locate any written records specifically on the Nefo'o ritual. Consequently this study remains a virgin theological field to be exploited for the benefit of interpreting the Old Testament Scriptures to the Bafut.

1.8 DEMARCATION OF RESEARCH

The first chapter introduces the topic of the dissertation, the problem, the aim and the methodology employed in the research. Some working concepts that originate from the topic of the research are explained with a brief review of the book of Frank H. Gorman, *The Ideology of Ritual. Space, Time and Status* (1990) being one of the few books, that has treated the ritual process in detail.

Chapter Two takes up a special introductory background to the location of the Nefo'o ritual of the Bafut of Cameroon. This is done through an introductory study of the Bafut of Cameroon, with special emphasis on the Bukari people who happened to be the original inhabitants of the Bafut of Cameroon. This chapter concludes with a description of the annual dance of the fon of Bafut that signals both the conclusion and the beginning of the cultural and religious calendar year of the Bafut people.

The third chapter examines the historical origins of sacrifice with theories put forth by both theologians and cultural and social anthropologists to explain the origins and function of sacrifice. Special treatment is given to the study of sacrifice in West Africa and the chapter concludes with sacrifice in the ancient Near East and Israel.

The fourth chapter serves as a brief introduction to the Pentateuch with special reference to the study of modern trends in the study of the Pentateuch and emphasising the theologies of the authors. The extent of the Pentateuch is critically examined, and it emerges that we are actually dealing with a Tetrateuch, which is different from earlier notions by some Old Testament scholars.

In Chapter Five a research survey of the book of Leviticus is undertaken. It examines some theological trends in the book with their implications on Leviticus chapter 16: 1-34, our chapter of concentration. This laid the groundwork knowledge of the socio-rhetorical analysis of the text of Leviticus 16.

Chapter Six embarks on a socio-rhetorical analysis of Leviticus 16:1-34. The inner texture, the intertexture, the cultural and social textures and the sacred textures are examined through a verse-by-verse and a section-by-section analysis.

The concluding Chapter Seven is a comparative study of the two rituals – the Nefo'o ritual of the Bafut of Cameroon and the scapegoat sacrifice of Leviticus 16:1-34. This is followed by a theological interpretation of the Nefo'o ritual of the Bafut of Cameroon and a final conclusion.

CHAPTER TWO

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BACKGROUND TO THE *NEFO'O* RITUAL
OF THE BAFUT OF CAMEROON

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2.1   INTRODUCTION

Bafut is a tribe in Cameroon and the *Nefo'o* shrine is venerated by the Bafut people of Cameroon. For a better assessment of all the events leading up to the institution of the *Nefo'o* shrine and ritual processes it would be advantageous to have a knowledge of the country, town or the village that houses the shrine. The following paragraphs will, therefore. introduce some descriptions of the country of Cameroon and the Bafut people of the north west of Cameroon.

The *Nefo'o* ritual and shrine have many historical and cultural implications, so much so that before we continue to examine the ritual activities of the people of Bafut, a few crucial questions need some attention. The questions include the following: Who are the Bukaris? How do they relate to the Bafut? Where do they converge? Where do they overlap? And who pays allegiance to whom?

The above questions are not easy to answer, but attempting to do so would presuppose being somewhat dialectic in our approach. This means that we will have to consider them in terms of the traditional heritage of the people, which in turn means going back to the origins of the Bafut and the Bukari people. We will next consider them in terms of numerical strength and, in doing so, these aspects will gradually unfold as the research progresses.

Cameroon is the ancestral home of the Cameroonians among whom the Bafut happen to be one of the tribes. The name Cameroon was derived from *camaraos,* the Portuguese word for shrimps that abounded in the offshore waters. The country was discovered by the outside world as early as 600 BC by Hanno, a Carthaginian sailing on a voyage of discovery and came as far as the present Mount Cameroon, a majestic mountain rising some 4 070 metres above sea level. This discovery was only followed again in the fifteenth century when the Portuguese continued their search southwards for a route to the spice-island (Robert & Ritzenthaler 1966:5).

The state of Cameroon as it is constituted at present, is a tropical country; the southern border of which is on Gabon near the Equator. Another bordering state to the south and also the east, is Congo (Brazzaville), the Central African Republic lies to the west, and to the north one finds Chad. Nigeria is the bordering state to the west, and Equatorial Guinea rounds off the list of neighbouring states in lying to the south and also partially offshore in the islands of Sao Tome Principe and Malabo.

The estimated population is approximately 15,5 million, of whom nearly 60% are engaged in agriculture. In this sector the production of cocoa, coffee, tobacco, cotton and bananas dominate, and the production of timber and petroleum provides for the main sources of exports. Among the population approximately 53% are Christian; 25% adhere to traditional religions and 22% are Muslims. The Christians predominate in the south and the Muslims are to be found in the north of the country.

Along the coast of the landmass of Cameroon could be found centuries ago both large and small kingdoms. Each of them had a strong centralised government, a large army and many vassals (Ritzenthaler 1966:5). In the event where a kingdom was not sufficiently powerful to protect itself, it soon fell prey and into servitude to the more powerful neighbours. Such a conquered kingdom had to pay taxes and tribute, supply soldiers and slaves to its superiors. These facts are relevant because at one point in time it was also the fate of the Bafut of Cameroon, whom we will describe in the next few paragraphs.

2.2   THE BAFUT PEOPLE OF CAMEROON

2.2.1   The origin of the name Bafut

Bafut is a tribe whose residential areas are located in the north western corridors of the Bamenda plateau in the North West Province of the Republic of Cameroon. The area is quite hilly and lies between 2 000 and 2 500 metres above sea level (Nebasina 1982:1). It is some twelve kilometres away from Bamenda, the present north western provincial headquarters. Bafut is bounded in the south west by Mankon, in the north by Wum in the Menchum Division, in the east by Ndop and the Kom ethnic tribes. Most of Bafut lies within the savannah region, but the southern part is covered with some forest that is fast disappearing as a result of the excessive human interaction and a lack of proper means of conservation. Bafut has two marked seasons – the dry season and the rainy season while the climate fluctuates between hot and cool weathers.

Aletum (1971:27) correctly stated that the word ***Bafut*** – as we use it today – has not always existed in this form. It has undergone many changes in its history. From various interviews that we conducted, and also from some written sources, the word seems to have evolved as follows:

Ufueh: meaning the land area as inhabited and occupied by the people of the tribe. This land area is strictly limited to those who are able to understand and say the polite greeting ***Abeih fu'ume*** which means "*good morning*" or literally; "*is the day dawning?*" It is customary that a Bafut person would express his/her politeness and sincere greetings to the other always in question and answer form e.g., ***Abeih fu'ume? O zime? Abelah*** etc, all meaning: "*good morning, welcome, how are you?*" respectively.

Bufueh: meaning the people of *Ufueh* in terms of the population. Sometimes the word is used in a derogatory sense to mean those who have been locked up from advancing in development projects and receiving other amenities from the government, the outside world and even from non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs).

Bafuao: This has no real direct meaning, but two possible ways of rendering it have been suggested by early researchers and other informants to whom we talked. As a first possibility it would appear the word means "*the people of ...*" and it has been used in connection with the name of the leader, Afuafum, who brought them to Bambui where he died. Aletum (1971:27) is of the opinion that the name ***Bafuao*** means the people who possess many medicines. This view appears more plausible since their final settlement alongside the Bukari people whom we will be describing in the paragraphs that follow. There is a probability that they inherited some of the Bukari people's traditional medicines and other magical powers.

Bafut: This is the final form of the name by which the tribe is known and is still called at the present time. The name of Bafut has come about as a result of the Bali people – one of the neighbouring tribes – are used to employing the prefix "*BA.*" They, therefore, called the Bafut people ***Bamufu,t,*** which means "*the people of mufut.*" With the arrival of the European colonial masters it happened that most of the Bali people were their interpreters. When the Germans and the English arrived in Bamenda, they adopted the "*BA*" of the Bali people and consequently they

prefixed the *"BA"* to the names of most of the tribes of the North West Province of Cameroon (Aletum 1971:28). This occurrence was not unique to the Bafut tribe but this description then became applicable to most of the tribes for the purpose of easy pronunciation and spelling.

2.2.2   Other names with symbolic meanings

In Bafut about a quarter of the names given to animals and people have some meaning attached to them. For example a dog that steals is usually referred to as **bongwong** ("*the one who visits the pot*"). A person or an animal that runs very fast is often said to have *"a foot on the buttocks*" (**a koro chwi gho mfengne**). Persons are given names that reflect a situation, a circumstance, or an event that took place, when such a person was born.

People who were born or are born on the market day were/are given a name with the suffix of the name market. For example one would find in Bafut such names as Chemutaah, Ngwamutaah etc (mutaah = market). Those who were born on the day of the annual dance of the fon of Bafut were usually given the name that reflected the annual dance, e.g., one would have such names like Suhmandere. The name is actually Suh but the suffix *mandere* has to be added because *mandere* happened to be the official name of the annual dance of the fon of Bafut – (**mandere mfor**).

The first child of a prince or princess is usually called Numfor, meaning literally the person of the fon or one who belongs to the fon. This is because in the olden days such children were given back to the service of the palace. If she was a girl she could be given to marriage to another prince or to someone with some affiliation to the palace. Some dignified foreigners seeking asylum within the fondom could also be rewarded with such children of princes as wives.

Another significant suffix is that which ends with *Nwi*, meaning the Supreme God. Such children include twins and others who are considered to be very special to the parents. Among the Bafut twins are regarded as special gifts from God. They are usually given the names with the suffix God to differentiate them from the other children. Such names include Chenwi, Funwi, Binwi, Lemnwi, Nchangnwi, Akwanui, Afanwi etc. They are a special blessing to the parents and as such are treated with much honour and reverence. The mother is usually treated likewise and usually receives a new title (*mangyie*) after the birth of the twins. Twins are believed to be able to see beyond the other people and can even transform

into some kinds of subtle reptiles. Their choice of meat is very selective and they together with their mother (*mangyie*) may not eat a snake and many other reptiles.

Sama is the name usually given to the first son of the ruling monarch. He graduates with this name from the palace usually from about the ages of twenty-one and above to found his own compound and wives. His royal dignity could be equated to that of the fon's assistants – *Ndimfor* and *Muma*.

2.2.3   A historical survey of the Bafut of Cameroon

2.2.3.1 A people on the move and in conflict with their neighbours

The history of Bafut has since the olden days been dominated by conflict and wanderings until the 17th and the early part of the 18th century when, after conquering many other kingdoms, they finally settled in peace in the present site.

Aletum (1971:6) observed that the period from AD 800 to about 1300 saw the peak of Islamic civilisation in the world. This was because of the quality of its thought forms, arts, science, and government. It was also the time most chiefdoms flourished in Africa. Subsequently the Germans pushed through to the grasslands in 1889 to what is today the North West Province and discovered a well populated country divided into sub-tribes, some small, while others had been welded together into large groups (Ritzenthelar, 1966:8). The Bali and the Bafut tribes posed among many tribes as those whose paramount chiefs held the power of life and death over their people. But our main focus would be on the Bafut tribe.

Bafut can be traced back to about three or four hundred years to a large group of people, called the Tikars. These people had migrated to the grassland areas through Sudan and parts of northern Nigeria (Ritzenthelar 1966:8). According to Ritzenthelar the Bafut Kingdom has been in existence for about some three hundred years. This contradicts Aletum (1971:6), who traces the origin of the tribe around 800 BC. Thus the kingdom had existed since 800 BC. Such an old traditional kingdom could clearly not have been only three hundred years old. The Paramount chief who ruled the kingdom was introduced to the English speaking world by Gerald Durell through his book "The Bafut Beagles." The palace and the royal compound has traditionally been the show place for Cameroon. The above sources confirm that this is an age-old kingdom and the role it has played in the historical preservation of Cameroon's antiquity. Not all the tribes used to have paramount chiefs, but those that were there brought great honour to their people.

From Sudan the people of Bafut travelled through the north of the country and halted at the Ndop plains, after fleeing as a result of pressure from the Fulani tribes, subsequent to leaving northern Nigeria. The conflicts arose as a result of the presence of large numbers of animals found on the undulating plateaux and also the fertile nature of the land. They then lived in Ndop as cultivators under the rule of a monarch and it so happened that the population increased. With the death of the fon who has ruled them so well, they had to start moving again, upon which they eventually arrived at the present site at Mbebeli.

As mentioned above, the Bafut people had been present at the present site of their settlement for about four hundred years after leaving Bornu, in Sudan under an earlier leader known as Mbum (Gregory Ngwa 1993:xiii). Since the time of their migration a total of about eighteen fons or leaders have ruled them. Because of a lack of enough documentation only a total of thirteen out of the eighteen fons can still be traced by name and perhaps in chronological order of their rule over the people. An attempted chronological order would include the following: (1) Iyenkong, also known as Ngong (2) Abowngwa (3) Ambebei (4) Tumfong (5) Chunga (6) Suhlem (7) Nebamfor (8) Ngwaabi (9) Ngwaanka'a (10) Achirimbi I (11) Abumbi I (12) Achirimbi II (13) Abumbi II (cf. Ndonwi Thaddius Ngwa 1994:XI).

Following the above listed names, Aletum (1971:24-25) is of the opinion that the list included only the names of those rulers who commenced and ended their rule when the people were completely settled at the present site - at *Nukuru-Bujong*. The list does not include those who led the people during their wanderings right up to Mbebeli. If this should be the case, then the Bafut palace at Mbebeli must have been short lived. Despite the fact that there is some agreement on the number of fons that have since ruled the people, the two authors – Thaddius Ngwa and Aletum – differ in their timing. While Thaddius Ngwa (1994:XI) dates the rulers right from the time of the wandering to the present day, Aletum (1971:24-25) is quite categorical that the thirteen fons listed above are those who actually began and ended their rule at the present site of the palace. It may be mentioned in passing that since the present site had been occupied, the palace has not moved again but for the fact that the present fon Abumbi II had constructed another palace at Kunsu in Bukari.

The above view presented by Aletum (1971:24-25) appears convincing, because if the list had included those who started their rule before and during the period of the wandering, they would have included such names like Afuafum, Nforkekombamg and Filu. In fact, the list would have been much longer than this.

A wandering and often traumatised people would not have been able to retain these names over generations. I am of the view that it was only when the people had settled down in a peaceful atmosphere that they were able to reflect on their immediate past and retain the names of the thirteen fons that have been listed in the previous paragraphs. It so happens that the present palace is located nearer to the Bukari people and in their land, as we would discuss in the next paragraphs. A careful study of the list of names mentioned above would reveal that some of them appear synonymous to the names of the leaders of the Bukari people - the aborigines of the land. It would appear that at one point in time such names like Ngwaanka'a, had been borrowed from the Bukari people, which is also a typical name for one of their rulers.

Before the arrival of the migrating people the land that became known as Bafut, was not completely devoid of people or human habitation. Two groups of people existed, however few they might have been in number. These two groups have since been considered the original people of the chiefdom of Bafut. One of these groups used to live to the north west of the land, called the Bukari people, while another small number were found towards the south east of the land. The latter were called the Mbebeli people. These two groups owned the whole of the territory. Little remains known about their origin apart from the fact that they are usually referred to as the *Chwi-Chwis*, meaning *"those who had been there from the beginning"* (Aletum 1971:30-31).

As concerns the origin of the Mbebeli people, Aletum (1971:30-31) has the following to say:

"Mbebeli, according to the history of the Bafut ethnic group seems to have been the chief ethnic group that was present in the present Bafut before the arrival of the other ethnic groups present in Bafut today. It is difficult to trace its origin but it is commonly believed that the people of this origin were hard and strong built. They may have originated in the mountain areas."

The above assessment remains pure speculation and assumption with actually no clear indication of the real location of the people, which still leaves room for some speculation. Their origin cannot be traced even to the land which they occupied before the incoming ethnic groups. An alternative explanation could be that the people may have diverted from an earlier migratory era and settled there and have since forgotten their origins.

This is not applicable to the Bukari. They have a definite location of their origin, as we will soon see in the following paragraphs. Again they are commonly referred to also as the *Chwi-*

Chwis, meaning *"those who had been there from the beginning of time."* As concerns the origin of the Bukari, legendary history traces them as coming from an overhanging cliff by the side of one of the high hills in Bafut at a place called *Atunukieh*. Interestingly enough these two groups of people lived far from each other and shared a boundary at *Nkinsareh*, a stream just below the administrative and political palace of the fondom (at *Nukuru-Bujong*).

We have already discussed above that other neighbouring tribes of the North West Province of Cameroon surround the Bafut tribe. They have traditionally been living in a relatively peaceful co-existence, but it does not totally rule out that there were moments of confrontations since the time each tribe and chief welded a kingdom around his people. There have thus been some internal conflicts and even some full-scale wars fought in the history of the tribe.

Eliade (1987:339), commenting about war, has this to say, "War may be defined as organised and coherent violence conducted between established and internal rival groups... It is neither individual spontaneous, random or irrational, however much like all varieties of violence - it involves destructive action, even on a massive scale." This definition would imply that no war is accidental, but always well meditated in any situation before its occurrence. From history it would appear that tribes and nations have taken long periods of time to prepare for war against each other, and that any war has either had a remote or an immediate cause.

The background of any intertribal war could be envisaged the quest for territorial expansion, superiority, popularity, integrity and to some extent economic advancement. War usually takes place irrespective of the aftermath of the war, which could sometimes be very disturbing when one reflects on its disastrous consequences.

From orally handed down history the Bafut people had had a few confrontations with her neighbours. Legendary stories relate about three main wars fought by the Bafut dynasty. However, it should be recalled that small conflicts were not always counted as the conquered people were quickly incorporated into the Bafut Dynasty (Aletum 1971:15). There are reports about the battle at Bambui, which was led by Afuafum against the Babanki group to gain back the many people who had escaped to join the Babanki group. Even though the battle ended in favour of the Bafut group, unfortunately for them it was at this war that Afuafum, their skilful leader, lost his life (Aletum 1971:16).

The second battle was the war between the Kom (Bujong?) and Bafut. The Kom or Bujong and the Bafut tribes had been the military giants of the time and were greatly feared by their

neighbours. During this particular battle, and because of the hilly nature of the land area of the Bujong people, they had the advantage over the Bafut warriors so that the battle developed in their favour. The Fon of Bafut was captured and taken to Bujong as prisoner of war.

The war was fierce and disastrous indeed. This is explained by a popular exclamatory expression formulated during that war. The expression continues to be used in Bafut to the present day, namely: "*O le be chwi ncho 'jong bong janghnu le wa'a kwe'e,*" meaning in English that "*if you were present at the Bafut/Bujong war, nobody would have survived the onslaught.*" This battle was fought from start to finish purely on the Bujong land and that is why it is always referred to as the Bujong war or ***Ncho 'jong*** and not often as the Bujong/Bafut war.

As mentioned above, the Bujong people were victorious in this war and succeeded to capture the Fon of Bafut to their village. This dealt a blow to the Bafut group who could not afford to allow their Fon on exile and to submit to such an insignificant tribe like the Bujong, compared to the mighty kingdom of Bafut. The Bafut ignored the losses they had incurred, the wounded and the dead and came up with yet another slogan namely: "***Bu toh nchoa kaa wa'a nu kube senghne,***" meaning in English: "*in a fierce battle the wounded and the dead are not counted.*" This explains why during that particular battle neither the number of those wounded nor the dead has been accounted for up to the present day.

Aletum (1971:16) attested to this war and to the defeat of the Bafuts. However, he ended his findings very prematurely in that he failed to mention that the outcome of the defeat was that the fon of Bafut was captured and taken as prisoner of war by the Bujong group. Hence the Bafut people would have to go under subjugation and had to pay tribute to the Bujong tribe until such a time that they could become satisfied. The Bafut people had to pay an indemnity to all the losses caused to the Bujong people. It would not seem as if Aletum was consistent with the presentation of the facts about this particular war, in failing to refer to the rescue mission that later went for the return of the captured fon of Bafut, as oral history from both Bukari and Mbebeli has reported. The *Nkworuh* (slippery substance), which Aletum (1971:16) reports is a misinformation, which demands rectification. This *Nkworuh* (slippery substance) was rather applied by the rescue mission consisting of a Bukari delegation as a deterrent to the pursuing Bujong people who desperately advanced from behind to recapture the fon of Bafut from the fleeing Bukari delegation. We will discuss this in the paragraph that deals with the activities of the rescue mission.

Between 1894 and 1896 (Ritzenthaler 1966:41-42) the Bafut people clashed with a German/Bali alliance in a major battle in which the Germans were defeated. Many of these Germans were killed, beheaded and the skulls taken to the Bafut palace as a sign of victory, military might and for general decoration in the palace. Ritzenthaler (1966:41-42) also reported that skulls were used as important trophies of war, which served as prizes that would enable the brave warrior to receive the coveted red feather or the *Nufrununguh* from the fon, commonly referred to as *Nyareh nguh*. The jawbones of the enemies went to decorate the war drums just like flowers.

2.2.3.2   Controversy about the exile of the fon of Bafut

There are presently two royal palaces in Bafut. The recently built palace is situated at Kunsu in Bukari, some ten kilometres from the first palace. The Nukuru-Bujong palace can be considered as the political, administrative and the seat of the capital of Bafut, while the one at Kunsu – at least for the moment – serves as a recreational, agricultural and tourist site. In 1903 (Ritzenthelar 1966:22) a fiercely contested battle was fought at this site between the Germans and the Bafut people. Perhaps this was in retaliation for the death of many Germans in the earlier battle mentioned above. The Bafut army ran short of ammunition and was defeated by the Germans. The sharp guns of the Germans and their allies dealt a blow to the Bafut warriors. The palace was burnt down and the fon later had to surrender himself to the Germans and was taken to either Cameroon's largest city, Douala, or to Fernando Po, in the present day Republic of Equatorial Guinea.

The facts presented by earlier researchers and some of our oral informants, indicate that Bafut had suffered two defeats. The first was during the inter-tribal war with the Bujong tribe and the second occurred during the war with the Germans around the year 1903, when the fon was taken either to Douala or to Fernando Po. Because of a lack of written documentation it was not possible to obtain any clear details in order to present some convincing comparative views on this particular deportation.

We, therefore, relied on the testimony presented by Ritzenthaler (1966) who reported that this particular deportation took the fon to Fernando Po. The Germans were predominantly interested in elephant tusks and ivory which is why they remained only around the coast at a place the stubborn Bafut people could only reach with difficulty. This was Fernando Po, an island in the Atlantic Ocean. Aletum (1971:16) suggested that the fon who was taken in exile to Fernando Po was Abumbi. This was probably Abumbi I, the father of Achrimbi II.

In the above paragraphs we presented the historical development of the various stages of the people of Bafut. It was thus seen that they were originally a Sudanese group who – under pressure by both religious and political forces – started migrating through northern Nigeria into the northern part of Cameroon and through the Ndop plains as the Tikari group and finally coming to settle at the present site. As already noted they had to wage many wars even at the present site and were ruled by many charismatic leaders, chiefs and fons as history unfolded.

A total of eighteen of this category of leaders ruled and led the Bafut. Of this number only thirteen could still be committed to memory in the chronological order of their period of leadership. As events narrowed down to a more peaceful settlement, this history became intermingled with that of two ethnic groups. These migrating people came and met in the present kingdom of Bafut. Two aboriginal groups had accepted co-existence with the incoming people. We would, therefore, refer to the later period as one of assimilation.

This brings us to the question posed at the beginning of this section: "who pays allegiance to whom?" The next paragraphs will be dedicated to the examination of the cultural and political orientations of the people of Bafut.

2.2.4.1 The cultural orientation of the Bafut of Cameroon

Culture, language and religion form a type of union in diversity. This is a unity in the sense that culture is transmitted through the articulation of speech forms and symbols which are passed on from generation to generation with very little or no changes. This is what then gives rise to tradition. In other words the study of any language of a group of people would, therefore, mean the study of that particular culture. Sometimes the terms of tradition and culture are used interchangeably, whereas this should not be the case. Tradition can be differentiated from culture in the sense that culture depends upon the processes of teaching and learning. It is only when the sum total of these teachings and learning are preserved and handed down from one generation to the next with little or no change that we can talk about tradition (Eliade 1987:1). In short, tradition in itself becomes the sum total of all what is thought, learnt and presented to coming generation.

Tradition may either be oral or written. In the history of traditions it is often the oral tradition that precedes the written. In oral tradition, a body of material and information is received from the hands and lips of the authors or examples of others rather than being discovered or invented (Eliade 1987:1). The period of invention or discovery is not yet a tradition. To be

conceived as a valid tradition that should endure for coming generations, the authors and oral transmitters need to be accurate and reliable. In a sense tradition can be dynamic but it is important that substantial changes, rumour and fashion be avoided. Tradition would be able to command respect only because of its relative antiquity and the presumed trustworthiness of its authors and oral transmitters.

2.2.4.2 Language

Language is a crucial factor in society. It is the means of identification of both a people and their culture. Ambe (1992:11) has this to say as concerns language in the Bafut tribe: "Language is an important aspect of culture as it also unifies. It has been pointed out that among the Bafut people it is considered shameful for any one in the tribe not to know and speak the Bafut language well." On the other hand Tillich (1952:47) reiterated that "every language is the result of innumerable acts of culture creativity." In the NOED (1995:147) language has been defined as a system of conventional spoken or written symbols. This is the means by which human beings as members of a social group and participants in its culture communicate. Language, therefore, distinguishes members of socially and culturally oriented groups. This is a reminder for us of the heterogeneous nature of the origin of the Bafut people and what impact that could have on the language of the tribe.

Aletum (1976:8) writes: "The Bafut people speak *fueh* which is a common language." He also observed that a few changes occurred in the names of certain things and their pronunciation, but all is understood by the people. It is hence clear that the migrating groups that settled here seemed to have lost their original dialects with the passage of time, so that all groups eventually spoke the *Fueh* originally spoken in the land. This is one of the factors that conspicuously distinguished the *Mumela'ah* people from the rest of the Bafut people, referred to as the *Ntarah* people, meaning the people of upper Bafut. Even though they may virtually speak the same language, certain expressions differ according to the two sections of the tribe as mentioned above. There are such language variants as for example the expression *Ntukueh nlueh yi'e fueh?* meaning "*and keep us where*?" This is used by someone coming from Mambu or Mankwi, being the villages that are within the range of the *Ntarah.* To the southern part of the fondom this term is *Ntukueh lueh wi'ie fueh?* The word *yi'ie* in the expression has been replaced by *wi'ie.*

The same applies for example to the names of certain things and food items. There are two names for groundnuts in Bafut. While the original name for groundnut is *Nju'uh*, the *Ntarah*

people would have it as *Munjuh*. There are many other examples, but for the sake of brevity we limit these examples to the one quoted above.

The reasons for these variations are multiple and obvious. This could be ascribed in part to the composite nature of the tribe. When we contacted a few of our oral informants on this aspect it was explained as follows: According to Nebalem Cornelius and Johnson Ngwa from Akosia and Ala'abutang Bukari, respectively interviewed on 12 and 13 December 1998, they blamed the variations on modernism and the influx of other foreign languages such as French, English, German, and even Latin. Prior to the advent of the First World War the colonial powers and other missionary bodies introduced these languages in the tribe. Another respondent merely said that it was a matter of style and the way one articulates the tongue. The other tribes had to learn the language from the aborigines, who were not been able to get it right.

McCulloch (1954:17), commenting on the linguistic variation of the area, stated: "So marked is the linguistic heterogeneity that the villages only a few miles away from one another speak languages which are not mutually intelligible and this occurs within as well as across administrative boundaries," (quoted in Aletum 1971:17). Aletum (1971:17) also stated that it should not be forgotten that the original ethnic group of the Bafut population had contributed a great deal to the language spoken in Bafut today.

From the above observations it may be concluded that the Bukari people and the rest of the *mumala'ah* people speak the original *fueh*. Those who had migrated to the land and occupied mostly the upper limits of the land, acquired it from the *Chwi-chwi* or the aborigines of the land. Hence the assimilation, as we observed above, constituted a two-way traffic. While the immigrants assimilated the aborigines in terms of numerical strength, the aborigines also assimilated them in cultural and traditional awareness, a factor that accounted for the relatively peaceful co-existence of the two parties right from the olden days.

We have given some deserved attention to the definition of and the differences between culture and tradition. Following the historical reconstruction of both the Bafut people and the Bukari people in Bafut, we would now be concerned more with the cultural orientation of the Bafut, even though at certain points the two overlap into each other and appear difficult to separate. We will observe this especially when we deal with the section regarding the *Nefo'o* ritual of the Bafut.

2.2.5   Political orientation of the Bafut of Cameroon

2.2.5.1   The political structure of the tribe

Among the Bafut people the tradition is more oral than written. We have consequently relied on the combined testimonies of the oral transmitters, other informants and the few written documents that we were fortunate to obtain. The traditional structure of the tribe is still very much intact and tradition is still highly respected. As we saw when dealing with the list of the fons who have ruled the Bafut people, a fon heads the tribe. The current fon is one of the paramount chiefs of the Northwest province, by the name Abumbi II. Ritzenthaler (1966:8) correctly observed that the Bali and Bafut were two of the great tribes whose paramount chiefs held the power of life and death over their people.

2.2.5.2   The fon of Bafut

The present fon of Bafut, fon Abumbi II, is a well-educated man, a lawyer by profession and one who has his people at heart. This is evident because he has chosen to use his professional knowledge to rule his people and not as an income generating factor. He is also committed to the overall development of the entire tribe. Especially within the last decades the tribe has seen a network of roads being constructed, although the provision of pipe born water and electricity supply still lags behind. The fon attends to the problems of his people almost on a daily basis and to other state duties when he is invited, or when the need arises for his personal intervention on behalf of his people.

Chieftaincy in Bafut is hereditary and this has been the tradition since the days of old. Only the sons are eligible for succession to the throne of their late fathers. Therefore, traditionally sons appear more valuable than daughters. A man was considered a man when he had a number of male children in his family. This accounted for a number of influencing factors on the tradition. There used to be a widespread practice of polygamy, resulting sometimes in cases of divorce and broken marriages. In the case where a woman was not able to bring forth children, she was either replaced or another one brought into the family without even the formers' consent. There was a general lack of the education of female children until a few decades ago (the 1960s).

As far as succession to the royal throne is concerned, a new fon takes the title of his grandfather and not that of his biological father. It would appear that this innovation came about during the reign of Achirimbi I. Prior to his accession to the throne the other fons or rulers were presented in their personal names or single descent (see list of names of former rulers above). We may even take a step further to say that the predecessors of Achirimbi I

could only be classed as charismatic leaders. The time of the monarchy only started with the reign of Achirimbi I, who was in turn succeeded by Abumbi I. Since then the two titles – Achirimbi and Abumbi – have been adopted as the generic names of the royal family.

The two royal names of Achirimbi and Abumbi have a great significance in the traditional and cultural spheres of the Bafut people. The name Achirimbi means "*the one without any equal, incomparable with another person or thing*" and the name Abumbi signifies "*ruler of the whole world or one who controls the whole world.*" In days of old the Bafut people had the conception that they were and formed the entire universe and there was no authority that could be compared with their fon. This explains the reason why, when the fon makes his appearance at public occasions, he is praised and hailed as follows: **Achia bufor, ko'o kekang, Atie njong-njong** etc., meaning in English: "*The fon of fons, an unclimable tree, a tree full of thorns.*" The might of the fon depends largely upon the support he obtains from the subjects. One often hears spoken in Bafut that: "**Nfor bonghna nu berbi,**" meaning in English: "*The fon is there because of his subjects.*"

The Bafut initially assumed that they formed and constituted the whole of the universe population-wise. When they later came to realise that they were actually in a competitive world, they felt that they always had to strive to remain unconquerable or indomitable by any outside influence. Despite the above notion becoming very popular in Bafut, we found it to be only a later connotation, perhaps coming from the aborigines of the land - the Bukari and the Mbebeli. We found it difficult to imagine that the migrating people had this notion right from the beginning since they had all along been on the move and had been war-like people for centuries and had furthermore passed through several cultures and civilisations. They were under constant harassment by the various ethnic groups through whom they migrated from Bornu in the Sudan, through the northern tribe of Northern Nigeria. They fought and conquered many tribes during their constant migration. The only possible explanation for the above notion could be that when they came to the present land and met the **Chwi-Chwis,** the aborigines, they assimilated in time with the people, the entire culture and all their traditional practices.

Sub-chiefs and other titleholders within the fondom ably assist the fon in his day to day rule. The political administration is conducted from the paramount chief (fon) down through *the* **Atangchos** to the **Buta bechuoh** (cf. Aletum 1974:32-34). A brief chronological assessment of each of the political authorities that wield power over its members or subjects will lay the

groundwork for a better understanding of the historical, traditional, as well as the cultural and religious discussions which are crucial to the origins of the *Nefo'o* ritual of the Bafut.

As already mentioned above, the fon, *(nfor)* is at the top of both the traditional and political authority. The popular titles that are accorded to him at his enthronement – fon or paramount chief – distinguish his authority and activities from those of the other sub-chiefs (Aletum 1974:39). His duties are multitudinous and include political, religious, judicial and social attention. Outside of his jurisdiction the fon conducts external relations with other tribes and is the liaison between Bafut and the modern institutions (Ritzenthaler 1966:64). In the above capacity, his role is effective in the following spheres of influence:

- He is the head of the Bafut central chiefdom, otherwise called *(nfor bufueh)* - the fon of Bafut.

- He is the ruler of the Bafut tribe.

- He poses as the immediate representative of the Bafut national ancestors.

- He may at times assume the role of high priest in some sacrificial rituals especially those at the *achum,* meaning a traditional house in the palace, but never at the *Nefo'o* shrine, which is forbidden for him and the princes.

- The fon and the members of the *nda kwifor* crown the sub-chiefs, the *Bukum,* and other noble ranks.

2.2.5.3 The Atangchos

According to Aletum (1974:36) the title *Atangcho* is derived from two words, *Atang* and *Achuoh,* meaning in English: "*one who unifies.*" A few observations are necessary on both Aletum's derivations of the word and the explanation he has given to arrive at the meaning of the word. There is no doubt that the word is derived from two words. What we dispute here are the two words constitute the title and the resulting explanation he has rendered. The word can be divided into *Atang,* meaning "*to count*" or "*to arrange*" and also *Ncho,* which means "*war.*" Aletum failed to explain the meaning of *Achuoh,* which to him is part of the word that makes up the title *Atangcho.*

We spoke to one of our respondents, Mufunemuh, who lives at Muchwini, on 13 December 1998 during our field research. He explained as follows: "*Atangcho* refers to someone who comes from a foreign land, probably fleeing from war or other undesirable condition in

search of protection and land to resettle with a number of persons accompanying him." We received almost the same explanation from Ayunguh of Bukari, whom we contacted even before the start of this dissertation, as long ago as 17 June 1991. According him the *Atangcho* of Bukari arrived from Mudele in the Menchum Division and was accommodated by the Bukari and he later became the chief of Bukari and referred to as *Nfor-Bukari*. After this historical development the title has since been applicable in some instances to a person of royal descent. We make this explicit statement because some of the *Atangcho*s in Bafut are not from royal descent.

Hence the *Atangcho* is the titular head of a village in Bafut. He could be equated to what one would call in English a village chief or sub-chief in order to distinguish his authority from that of the paramount chief of the tribe. The title is of hereditary royalty (Aletum 1974:37), even though in recent times the title has been acquired and adopted in some quarters in the tribe that originally were not entitled to the *Atangcho* leadership. The leaders of these quarters are acquiring the title for the first time. Some of these quarters include Nsem, Swie and Njibujang.

Among the many reasons for this novel approach one can discern the following motives: a diversification of chieftaincy as the tribe has experienced an increase in population during the century; the bringing of administration nearer to the people; a cultural revival and the attraction of other governmental development programmes. One may not rule out a possible quest for power and personal integrity.

The above are the highest political titles that operate within the fondom. Of course, the *Tala'ahs* also fall in the category of the *Atangchos*. Other lesser titles exist but these would be dealt with under the paragraph that concerns the Bukari people. The above titles are the ones that wield political power at the village level.

2.2.6 Religion: the influence of African Traditional Religion and Christianity in Bafut

2.2.6.1 The influence of African Traditional Religion in Bafut

The next paragraphs will be dedicated to an examination of the influence of religion within the Bafut fondom. Strictly speaking religion plays quite a crucial rule in the life of the Bafut person. It is part of life and the well being of each individual depends upon his/her relationship with his/her god or God. There are two religions, the African Traditional Religion and Christianity, in the fondom. Up to the present century no other religion has made its presence felt in the fondom apart from the African Traditional Religion and Christianity. Even Islam is completely absent and there is no question of animism. Talking about the influence of religion in the tribe means the influence of African Traditional Religions and Christianity.

Just like many other African tribes, the Bafut people are very religious. Just about everywhere one finds either a church house for Christian worship or a shrine dedicated to the veneration of the ancestors of the tribe. One of such shrines is the *Nefo'o* shrine, which stands out as the national shrine for the tribe. We will provide a detailed description in some later paragraphs. Aletum (1971:135), commenting on the *Nefo'o* shrine, has described it as the most important national shrine for the people and that is why much attention has to be taken to single it out among the rest of the shrines in the fondom.

The Bafut man's original religion teaches the belief in a supreme God, called *Nwingong*, which means "*God of the universe*" (Aletum 1978:15). This is also the view of the fon of Bafut. When we interviewed him on 1 January 1999 at his recreational palace at Kensu, he was categorical that the Bafut people have both the concepts of the supreme God and the lesser gods or the ancestors. The Christians have often accused the Bafut people and others who professed the African Traditional Religions for worshipping trees, streams and other natural phenomena as their God. But accordingly the Bafut people are very conscious of the existence of the supreme God. He is referred to in the singular - *Nwingong* ("*God of the universe*") as contrasted with *Bunwi* ("*the gods*") and that is why God is considered to have no equal. In the Bafut context the gods range from those of the individual family to the tribe's gods, often referred to as *Nwi gho, Bunwi bu ngwe'e nda buh*, and *Bunwi be la'a*, meaning

"your god", *"the gods of your family"* and *"the gods of the land"* respectively. These are the immediate ancestors and they act as intermediaries between the society and the supreme God.

The destination of God is somewhere beyond the blue sky and that is why He is able to see and control the whole universe, including the ancestors. The spirits of the ancestors are still very active and influence the affairs of the living. These spirits can be divided into two main groups. There are those with very good intentions about the tribe and even individuals and these could be those ancestors the people venerate. The other group include the malevolent spirits and they live in the underworld otherwise referred to as ***bangshie***. These are quickly forgotten, sometimes having been identified only at their funeral. They are buried face down and without a coffin since it can be envisaged that the destination of such an ancestor is the ***bangshie***.

The reason why the people venerate the ancestors is because God is not within their reach and they believe that the ancestors are those in direct communication with God and their demands could go through them to the Supreme God. We should also understand that the ancestors are located in natural phenomena like pools, rocks, trees, hill, rivers, forests etc. These are not gods in themselves, but since God has created the trees they represent a meeting point for the living and the dead. The people acknowledge that the natural phenomena around them have been created by the Supreme God and the ancestors take some kind of care over them. The Bafut people, therefore, pay homage to these gods so that they can continue to care for both these things and transmit their petitions to the Supreme God.

As already mentioned above, there are a large number of shrines in the fondom. Some of them are seen as minor shrines that may include the ***Nufum***, where the late fons are buried, ***Nsanimunwi***, where the grave of ***Ndula'a-mbue*** (the place where the person who discovered the site of the present palace was buried alive). Other sacrificial shrines located at waterfalls may include: ***Nebetuh, Nkinjaah, Nubemufersi*** etc. It is believed that when a fon dies he would eventually establish his abode in one of these waterfalls (Aletum 1971:135).

The most important national shrine in the tribe remains the ***Nefo'o*** shrine which is visited once annually and at a specific period of the year. This is always towards the end of one year and the beginning of the other, in other words during the month of December. In very rare cases it may be visited twice in a year and only in the event where the officiating priests might have met with an abject rejection of the sacrificial objects. In this case it is revisited

even during the very same day, or otherwise it may not be later than December of that year and before the annual dance of the fon of Bafut.

However, private persons such as geologists, geographers, tourists etc. may obtain permission to visit the sight for research purposes. Traditional doctors do go there to wash and release animals on behalf of either a terminally ill patient or a woman who is unable to have children. The animals that are released are usually caught in the woods by predators. The priests on a religious mission often provide some feedback to the palace after their encounter and, if the mission was abortive, it is indicative that all is not well. An animal then has to be released to go and perish after the conferral of sins upon it. It is reported that a goat was once released in this fashion and before the priests arrived back at the palace, the goat was already standing there.

Aletum states that the Bafut traditional religion has neither modern churches nor temples. It has no figures synonymous with Christ or the apostles, but this religion has what could be termed "traditional priests" (Aletum 1971:134). While partly accepting this view of Aletum, I differ with him where he claims the Bafut traditional religions have no temples. The various houses both in the palace and in the quarters into which only the priests may enter to pour libations, should be seen as temples. Such houses may include the *Nufum*, which we have already mentioned above, the *Ndereh takumbeng* (a central shrine that is built in many quarters in the fondom and visited annually or during crisis moments) and the various stones and wooden objects found within these buildings which serve as the altars.

Priesthood is strictly hereditary. Trends began to change with the advent of Christianity, coupled with modernism. The initiation of new members and acquiring of the position by enthusiastic persons may be found, although at a lesser scale. I found this to be a positive innovation in the sense that this would entail continuity in the event of a possible extinction of one family. The office of priesthood is reserved for men alone and especially for men of reasonable ages who are able to keep and conceal secrets.

During our investigation – by means of interviews and other related conversations – most of our respondents could not distinguish between the high priest and the ordinary priests. According to most of them the position of high priest was a matter of longevity in the *Nefo'o* priesthood rather than that of an established institution. However, they were unanimous that at the shrine it was the eldest members and those that have visited and perform the ritual for several years that led the rest in the activities of the ritual while the others observe keenly.

We however concluded that there was a type of implicit high priesthood even though not well developed as that in the Jewish religion.

High priesthood is conferred by age and the frequency of performance rather than by strict initiation or consecration. The priests of the *Nefo'o* ritual are men who interact daily with the population. It is only when they are about to officiate that they appear differently, an aspect that changes them from the ordinarily sphere to the holy. In this way they become well placed in their office and function as priests to the people. Their attire is changed from ordinary clothes to the abnormal and hence they also behave in strange ways. These distinctions place them in the office of priesthood and elevate them from the ordinary life to another world that is higher than that of the common citizen. Their clothing covers only half of the body and they wear what has been referred to as *Mann mo'o*, one piece of a traditionally embroidered loin cloth, which starts from the waist and ends a little below the knee.

Their heads are shaven with just two rounded spots of hair left at the back of the head. All these differences in the way of dressing and general appearance are also for the purpose of identification because on their way to the shrine they neither speak to any person nor are they spoken to. General conversation and some interaction may begin again only when they have completed performing the ritual and are on their way back to the palace. They make gestures and invite people for anointing with cam-wood.

Those who live close to the shrine usually keep the path clean that leads to the shrine before the arrival of the priests. In return, for the priests to be lenient with the researcher, the latter had joined in maintaining the path clean for the priests in December 1998. Sometimes the processes begin as late as about 17:30 and could drag far into the night, as it was the case during our period of research in December 1998. This happens especially on days that they are said to meet with some resistance from the inhabitants of the shrine. Meanwhile on the day of the ritual people are not expected to do any work. It is a total day of rest during which the population stays indoors and wait in great expectation for the return of the priests and their message to the entire population. Those who live close by, would line the roads to receive the special anointing and blessing from the returning priests. It is not possible that all can receive the cam-wood but is believed those who receive it do so also on behalf of the rest of the population. It is clear that African Traditional Religions still play a very big role in the entire tribe.

2.2.6.2 The influence of Christianity in Bafut

Other religions within the tribe include the so-called imported religions from Europe and America. They have since co-existed with the tradition and culture of the people for almost two centuries, despite the fact that there had been some resistance from the start. Nowadays Christianity is very much alive with many denominations, such as the Roman Catholic Church, Baptists, Presbyterians, Churches of Christ, Full Gospel Mission Apostolic Faith, and a host of other sects that have been introduced in the tribe some decades ago. Commenting on the Christian church in Bafut, Aletum (1971:138) has correctly stated that the seed of Christianity was planted in Bafut around 1904 through the Basle mission missionaries. The Roman Catholic missionaries came in later in 1937. Since then Christianity has witnessed tremendous growth, with the Presbyterians in the majority. Today Christian Bafut can be estimated at about 72% of the total population (cf. also our interview with the Rev. Aaron Su, former Synod Clerk and retired pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon, on 1 March 1998).

Islam is completely absent. To date there is no Muslim community in Bafut. Although Christianity has not been able to completely eradicate the religion of the people, Christianity nevertheless poses a big threat to African Traditional Religion as more and more people are being converted to Christianity. This process has, however, led to a degree of religious and cultural revival in the Bafut fondom to preserve some of the traditional and cultural practices of the people. New members had to be initiated into some of the prominent societies and some traditional dances and societies have been revived. This is to counteract the foreign cultural influences alien to the tribe which have been introduced into the tribe through these missionary bodies. There is thus some hope that those worthwhile cultural identity and traditional aspects of Bafut, such as the priests of the *Nefo'o* ritual, would continue or at least be maintained.

The above paragraphs have been dedicated to the examination of the historical, cultural and religious outlook of the Bafut of Cameroon. This was in a bid to introduce and situate the reader to the various stages leading up to the introduction of the Bukari people who in turn form the prelude to the *Nefo'o* shrine which came into being through them, being the seat of that important shrine. We believe that these paragraphs have also helped to clarify and situate the reader regarding the relationship between the Bafut and the Bukari, as they continue to try

to answer the question: Where do we converge? Where do we overlap? And who pays allegiance to whom?

2.2.7   The Bukari people in the Bafut fondom

2.2.7.1   The origin of the name Bukari

From the facts presented in the previous paragraphs dealing with the historical development of Bafut, questions have often emerged as to whether it is the Bafut who have merged with the Bukari or were the Bukari dissolved into the Bafut? The question is as a result of the fact that it is presently the Bafut (in coming populations) that weld power over the Bukari. The question is not easily answered. But historical analysts would choose to answer it in a more logical way. Historically the Bafut came to settle in the land of the Bukari who were the original indigenous population of the land. Since then, and through a process of assimilation, they continued to co-exist peacefully. The whole land area was owned by the two original occupants of Bafut, as we saw above. The incoming people of Bafut later chose to settle and constructed the palace of the paramount chief on Bukari land. Presently, and as a result of the said assimilation coupled with the numerical strength of the immigrating people, Bukari became absorbed into Bafut. Present day Bukari is one of the villages that make up the Bafut tribe. It is situated on the northwestern skirts of the tribe, some seven kilometres from the royal palace of the fon of Bafut. The population is estimated to be about 4,500 people, including women and children.

It has a transitional climate that alternates between the wet season and some four months of an intensive dry season. The village has some forests towards its northern part where a variety of both subsistence and some cash crop such as cocoa, bananas, coffee and rice are grown. Towards the north eastern part one begins to experience a mixed savannah region. This region is quite hilly but with the abundance of rainfall in each year, there is enough pasture for gazing of cattle. The land area extends from Titaassi, sharing a boundary with Mantaah. From Titaassi it continues through Mughom, Akoyo.oh, Akomungooh, through to Kensu, sharing a boundary with Buwe at Fenkiti.

There has been a great deal of debate among earlier writer on the origin of the name Bukari, the original inhabitants of the land who are today globally called Bafut. We will come to a detailed discussion about these people who, since their origin, organised themselves and accepted a co-existence with what is today the kingdom of the Bafut. It is rather difficult to

estimate how long these people have been present on the land before the arrival of the rest of the Bafut people some four to five hundred years ago.

Linguistically the name Bukari comes from the verb **Nkarise**, meaning "*to be surrounded, to become encircled.*" Contrary to the suggestion of Nebasina (1982:12) that the Bukari people must have come from the villages around the area known as **Bukaa**, and this led to them being referred to as the **Bukaris,** we gathered from the elderly people of the village and other respondents that the sense behind the name is simple. The Bukari people woke up one morning to discover that some immigrating people who were quite strange to them had encircled them on all sides. Probably these were the incoming Bafut people. When the Bukari people saw these people coming in their numbers one of them exclaimed with excitement and fear as he altered the phrase "**Weh-meh! Bu kemu Nkarise yi'ie**", meaning in English: "*Oh, how we have been encircled.*" Thus the name has from the beginning been merely an indication of surprise and exclamation. **Bukari** is today a noun in the plural form meaning "*the encircled people.*" This big surprise came as a result of the fact that they had actually believed they were the inhabitants of the whole universe and that no other human species existed or exists anywhere else. They knew of themselves and the numerous kinds of wild animals that interacted with them, and which are today facing total extinction.

2.2.7.2   Other names and meanings attached to them

Perhaps the above accounts for the Bafut people at present having two generic titles or names for their fons – Achirimbi and Abumbi – meaning, as we have seen above, "*the indomitable and ruler of the universe.*"

In Bafut some names have meanings attached to them while other do not. Twins are given the names for example, **Afanwi, Chenwi, Binwi, Lemnwi** etc. Twins are regarded as special gifts from God, which is why they have the suffix **Nwi** (*God*) added to a normal name. Strangely enough one village in Bafut – Buwe did not welcome twins until some four decades ago when they first started to allow twins to live there. Apart from this isolated case twins to the Bafut person has usually been a blessing. Conversely such names like **Akoti, Afuko'o, Kokangko'o** (*forest, colocosia leave, take and care for* etc.) usually are given to children of parents who have constantly lost their children either at infancy or even when they may already have reached adult age. The name Muyo, which happens to be the family name of the researcher, is actually a nickname, which eventually became the generic name of the family line.

The name of Muyo is important here because it has been found to have both a historic and symbolic significance to the development of the anthropological section of this dissertation and the Bukari people of the Bafut fondom. The name was given in ancient times to the ancestral line of the researcher. Muyo happened to be the last charismatic leader of the Bukari people before the transition from the able leadership to the monarchy under the lineage of the *Atangcho*. Formerly this great, great grand ancestor, as we can imagine him to be, was known and called Ngwamukoh.

When we contacted some respondents on some pieces of historical information regarding the slow, but chronological progression of the growth of the oil palm trees in Bafut from the north western part toward the south and its link with Muyo's continuous leadership influence over the people of Bukari – despite the fact that there is an official *Atangcho.–* one of our respondent had this to say: "This is for historical and traditional purposes. When the need for oil was increasingly being felt and for fear that the oil palm tree could eventually become extinct, through the ignorant destruction of the trees since they had to be felled before harvesting, they devised a means of the conservation of the trees as they practised planting more.

"A means of climbing the trees using a rope was also devised, which has endured until today and is the only means still widely used in Bafut. With this discovery, oil could be produced in a greater quantity and even stored for future use and distributed equally to all the members of the society since life was communal. A person was then selected to be in charge of rationing out the oil and this person happened to be Ngwamukoh, who was later to be called Muyo. It happened that hence, when someone was in need of oil for immediate family use he/she would go up to him and demand just the quantity needed and he would give him just enough for food preparation. The habit continued and for the purpose of politeness, whenever someone came up to him to demand for oil, he/she would say, *'Ta, fa muyoo ta ma ghe nu'u mujeu gho andah me,'* meaning in English; *'Pa, give me some little thing (oil) with which to go and prepare food in my house.'*

"The practice continued for quite some time. Coupled with his great sense of responsibility, humorous and indiscriminate way of rationing out oil to the members of the community, he was often referred to as *Taa Muyoo.* This means "the man of the little thing." (Oil), and gradually his real name went out of use and had been replaced by this nickname *Muyoo,* - the little thing. Hence a nickname has become a generic name because of a sense of able leadership and distribution of the rare commodity - oil to members of the community."

(Interview conducted on 13 December 1998 at Muchwini Bukari-Bafut). It was from that time that Muyo had cultivated his leadership qualities and gradually became a great leader of his people before the arrival of the immigrating tribes into Bafut. This signalled the change from the charismatic leadership to the introduction of monarchic rule in Bukari under the title *Atangcho*, a title, which became strictly hereditary.

During the period of the German colonisation of Cameroon Muyo – probably Muyo IV (died 27 April, 1980 at the age of about 82 years) – was of great service to the Bafut people. He was at the time one of the tax collectors who collected revenue from his people and paid it to the colonial administration. This was in part also because he could speak English and some German.

2.2.7.3   Bukari - a historical survey

It is believed that the Bukari people originated from a rocky cliff on one of the high hills in Bafut located at some twelve kilometres of the royal palace. The place is called *Atunukieh*. Below this cliff lies the river *Mughwi'ie* and the evergreen forest of the *Akoyo'oh* area, extending through the *Akomungoh* to *Kensu*, the seat of what we have earlier referred to as the recreational palace of the fon. All these names have some historical significance, which may require some explanation. *Akoh* in Bafut means forest in contrast to the grassland or savannah region. *Akoh-mungoh* is a forest that favoured the cultivation of plantains; one of the staple food crops for the people until the present day. *Ayo'oh* means a temporary shelter where hunted game could be smoked and made ready for transportation back to the village at a later stage. *Mughwi'ie* means maggots. Any uncountable noun to the Bafut man is comparable to a number of things that include sand, hair, water, and maggots one of the most frequently used. This is and was the practice with the Bukari people. They lived and enjoyed the two natural gifts from God - the forest with all its natural resources and the river with its swarming contents. Life was communal and there was no question of private ownership to property.

The socio-economic and cultural life centred on fishing, hunting and the general gathering of wild fruits from the forest for food and other medicinal plants. Periodical hunting expeditions were organised and announced to the entire male population of reasonable age and physical ability. Such hunting campaigns were compulsory since after the expedition the resulting harvest or catch was shared out to all the members of the community and according to families.

There was no notion of private ownership of land or property of any kind. The land area was previously referred to as **Banjanghe**, which means literally *"an area or that which belongs to nobody, free for use by any person."* The river was named **Mughwi'ie** (cf. above) because of the enormous schools of fish that could be found in each pool in the river. Just like the hunting expeditions, there were also organised periods of community fishing, but each person was allowed each day to catch or fish just enough that could be used for a day's meal for his or her entire family.

The administrative organisation appeared not to be complicated since there was no market economy yet and members of the community were honest amongst themselves.

We would like to mention one of the many fruits that were gathered in the forest, since it has become the mainstay of the economy, not only that of the Bukari people, but of the entire Bafut - the oil palm tree. This particular tree (**nughoeh**) to the Bafut person is just like "the tree of life." All its component parts have been found to be useful starting from the fronts (leaves) used for decoration and indicative of a serious event, the arrival of an important personality, also used for firewood and fertiliser. From the oil palm tree comes the broom, cotton, palm oil, kernel oil, wood from the trunk, wine, and the fibrous roots are very medicinal. The oil palm tree is not easily blown over and has been used as windbreaks. Above all there is the theological interpretation that has been retained to the oil palm tree. It is said to be a strong intercessor on behalf of first the area where it is found and also to the entire tribe during time of crises or thunderstorms.

During theses crisis moments one finds the fronts gathered together and tilted to one position in a prayerful manner. (Arriving at the University of Stellenbosch the researcher was quite attracted by the logo of the Department of Old and New Testament Theology being the symbol of the oil palm tree). Nebasina (1982:12), discussing about the oil palm tree in Bafut had this to say: "Oil palm trees thrive in the hot places with heavy rain fall. In Bafut oil palm trees grow very well in **Mumela'ah**. The Bafut met the palm trees there especially in Bukari. Soon they were spread to other places by people and animals ... most producing areas include Buwe and Bukari." Such an assessment further conforms with the fact that the Bafut people came in from without to co-exist with the Bukari people who were already firmly established in the land for such a period that no one had yet been able to determine, apart from guesswork. One could even state that they started the art of domestication and agriculture in the region.

While we appreciate the effort put in place in preserving some historical data regarding the historical, geographical and agricultural development of Bafut, Nebasina (1982:12) should, however, be consistent and careful in the way he presents historical facts. He has not only contradicted himself by refuting the fact that the Bukaris are the aborigines of the land, but he has also failed to give reasons for this assertion and to trace their origins, as earlier researchers have done. Furthermore he considers Buwe and Bukari villages as one village, whereas they are actually two different villages, each with its own *Atangcho* and system of local government. He writes, "I would rather not consider the Buwe-Bukari people as the aborigines but as some of the earliest settlers on the Bafut soil." If they were earlier settlers as such, it needs to be asked where they originated from, when did the Bafut finally arrive and under whose leadership?

Others and earlier researchers, including Nebasina, hardly noticed that the Mbebelis and Bukaris are referred to in Bafut as *Ala'ah Bukari* and *Ala'ah Mbebeli*, meaning literally "*the countries of Bukari and Mbebeli*." This gives them the status of a whole country or tribe in that sense. Each has its own chief, government, *quifor* (the highest secret society in Bafut and the government of the people). This secret society was only centred around the paramount chief and was limited to the palace. Possessing such secret societies automatically places them on a status higher than the rest of the villages and they pose as single entities. Others may have some of these traditional arts, but all have a later origin.

As mentioned in the previous paragraphs, the fruits or nuts from the oil palm tree were accidentally discovered by one of the Bukari people. In the course of hunting, one of them came across an oil palm tree bearing ripe cones. The nuts had fallen to the ground and when he tasted them he found out that they could be eaten and even provided a lovely flavour to food. Meanwhile the tree was difficult to harvest since it grew so tall. The only way was to fell them whenever they were found to have ripened cones. The destructive and wasteful method went on for quite some time. A crude way had to be designed to harvesting them without destroying the tree and at the same time when the oil was produced in a great quantity some of it had to be preserved in a special place for use by everybody. Since there was already a type of socialism among the people, a leader – probably the one who first discovered the fruits – was selected to take care of the crudely processed oil and to ration it out equitably.

As the people of Bukari continued to expand into the hinterland, coming closer to the "immigrants" they moved along with their oil palm tree, which had hitherto not been known

or introduced to any other quarter in Bafut. This is the more reason why up to the present the palm trees are still dominant in the Mumala'ah areas and more plentiful to the limits of the Bukari land.

The Bukari people have since moved from their original site - Atunukie. They are presently settled at the fifth station of their settlement, some ten kilometres from Atunukie. These movements had been necessitated by both social and economic development concerns. As they moved, they went along with their palm trees. They have since remained the main producers of palm oil in Bafut in addition to the recently introduced rice crop and other cash crops such as cocoa, coffee, bananas etc. Other foodstuffs for local consumption are also produced in a large scale.

From handed down oral history and from other important cultural announcements when they had to recount the names of the former rulers, many chiefs have ruled the Bukari people but chronologically only the following seven can still be remembered by name. According to information gathered from respondents we came across during our field research, with interviews conducted on 18th December 1998 at Bukari, those who could still be remembered include the following: (1) Kongie (2) Nsangforde (3) Bughngwen (4) Ngwanka'alem (5) Neba'anubor (6) Fubukari (7) Ngwatajong, the present ruling *Atangcho*. These names do not include those who had ruled only as charismatic leaders before the introduction of the monarchy under the title *Atangcho*, which was only later introduced with the shift from charismatic leadership to monarchical rule. As noted above the last of these charismatic leaders was Ngwamukoh, who later lost his name to become popularly known and called Muyo.

2.2.8   Cultural orientation of the Bukari people

2.2.8.1 Language

Apart from a few variations, the cultural activities of all the people in the fondom are quite homogeneous. We earlier referred to the aspect of cultural assimilation, which has occurred on both the side of the Bafut and on the side of the Bukari people. Most of the cultural activities within the Bafut tribe have been taken over from the Bukari people as we will soon establish in the paragraphs that follow. Most of the changes occur in speech communication. We will, therefore, next examine this aspect.

We discussed at length the role of language in a community in the paragraph that dealt with the cultural orientation of the Bafut people. We discovered with the aid of earlier researchers that what is spoken in Bafut today as the Bafut language, has been greatly influence by external forces and other modern languages. The same situation may be true with the Bukari people. However, many of the people still speak the original Bafut language, especially the Bukari people including the populations of the Mumela'ah people as distinct from the Ntarah people. Language is an important aspect of the culture as it also unites the people (Ambe 1992:11). It is partly the language structure that has kept the people of Bukari united so as to be able to identify themselves as the aborigines of the land. In this way language can be seen as a way of life. The Bukari people are able to communicate through signs, symbols and gestures that only members of a certain age group can understand. They are able to relate information by the use of traditional instruments, such as antelopes' horns, the calling drum and any other hollow instrument.

Songs and other chants are commonly used at social gatherings, an aspect that has contributed to certain people becoming natural poets. In Bukari the people, especially the womenfolk are so artistic, that through mere observation they can compose either a song or some other piece of poetry.

This has prompted many of them to become what we have referred to as social critics, an aspect that has been able to reduce the incidence of crime in that particular society. As we have noted above, the Bukari people are not an island in Bafut *vis a vis* her neighbours. Contrary to the ancient belief that they were the inhabitants of the universe, they appear to be in the centre of that universe flanked at all sides by other people. They interact with the other tribes like the Babankis on the eastern side, the rest of the Bafut people in the south and the *Mbu'uti* (people of lower Bafut) in the north. They have started to experience a language variant also. The wisdom of a people's culture is carried in their language and, therefore, the researcher is advocating very strongly a cultural revival in Bukari in particular and in Bafut in general, beginning with this aspect of language.

2.2.8.2 Communal life among the Bukari people: A rescue mission

As we have seen in the previous paragraphs, life in Bukari was communal with no question of private ownership of property. Everything was for the common good of all. When game, which was normally plentiful, was hunted, it was brought before the elders and the leaders for equitable distribution. Hunting and gathering of other forest resources was reserved for the

male population, while women did the farming, bearing of children and other domestic activities. Once a troop of monkeys or chimpanzees was spotted to have encamped at a particular grove, the male population of the village would be alerted and the time scheduled for a community hunt. Such an expedition would usually be organised at night when the animals were sleeping soundly. Often clubs, sharpened sticks and nets would be used, since there were no modern weapons yet.

One evening, it happened that such an opportunity was in the offing. The news quickly spread by means of a messenger or town crier. Such an announcement was usually made at about nine o'clock in the evening when nearly everybody would have returned from the farms and other daily activities and were enjoying the evening meals or telling other related stories to the future generations.

Take off for the expedition was usually at about two o'clock in the morning in order to provide enough time for preparation. It was punishable for any responsible male who failed to participate in such campaigns. It was in such occasions that male maturity; boldness and strength from each individual could be determined. At the appointed time each person would come out with his weapons and torches in hand, since there were no lanterns yet.

One evening a disguised announcement was made calling on all the Bukari male population to get ready at the early hours the next day to go to such an expedition. The announcement went thus: ***Oo-ho! Oo-ho! Be swonghna nu yu'uh le Bukari! Ta yu'eh swonghne be wu'o. Ankerkeh tonghne kwateh ngah mumbanghne yi'eme chwi'eme nukong a wa'a chwie. Abooh be nkamume yia chu kweru ngwu, a muchwiene. A nhu le ne baaiyi nggieh yu aob'oh nunukongni. A numbangne wa'a twie, oo-ho oo-ho***. Translated into English this meant: "Oo-ho! Oo-ho! Bukari people listen very well to this. When you hear it relate it to your neighbour. When the cock has crowed repeatedly, every male of the village capable of holding a spear should not remain behind. A hunt for chimpanzees has been foreseen for 2 o'clock this morning or when the cock has crowed twice. A troop of chimpanzees has been spotted encamped around the pool of **Akwere ngwu**, which is quite close to **Nefo'o.** Everybody is expected to go and to be in time. Everyone should go to bed this evening with his bag and net ready to move. No male could afford to be absent. Oo-ho! Oo-ho!" At the appropriate time everybody left for the hunt at the indicated position, with weapons and torcehs in hand, led as usual by **Atangcho**.

On arrival where the animals were believed to have encamped, a man stood some fifty metres away inviting the people and directing them to the exact spot of the hide out of the animals. It was soon discovered that the people were going and never returning but disappearing in the dark with yet no sign of any beast. **Atangcho,** who led the people approached, lifted up his torch just to discover a huge hole where the people had been going and falling in. A good number had already perished there. **Atangcho** raised up his torch and exclaimed: **La'a Bukari bia ghen nchoa cho! Buuneh!** which means in English: "Oh! The Bukari people are going and they are perishing. All of you return!" At this his exclamation the whole area collapsed forming a deep cliff and claiming a greater number of the Bukari people. Thus the creation of the **Nefo'o** shrine came about. Neba'amfor, one of the late fons of Bafut who happened to establish his abode at that pool, decided to come and bring his maltreated people along to live on that spot. **Atangcho** eventually returned with only a handful of the people to tell the story to the remaining women in the village. Even though the Bukari population appears to be quite small, it is believed that they live in two worlds. It had been the belief that whenever a person dies in Bukari, he/she retires to meet his/her ancestors at the **Nefo'o** shrine.

Whenever a prominent person was about to die in the village a pair of eagles would fly past the village, making some strange noises. In course of this research the researcher experienced the appearance of the two birds in the presence of one of our informants who immediately related their appearance to some bad omen as he exclaimed "**Buzyi me chuchonghna loke me!**" which means: "*have they come this time to take me or another person?*" Quite soon, just after four days, one of the illustrious sons of the village - Chumbow Ambesi Samuel – died. During his burial it was reported that the pair of eagles flew passed the village and perching on a tree below his house, made their strange sounds indicative of the imminent demise of someone important in the village. The victim was a practising Christian and the author preached at his funeral and discovered that there was still a strong belief in life after death in Bafut and in Bukari in particular, influenced by the belief in *Nefo'o*.

From the start of this study we have posed the question of the relationship of the Bukaris and the Bafut, wanting to know where they diverge, converge and even overlap with each other. Some of the questions have been attended to in course of our treatment of the historical survey of each of the above mentioned groups. It would be no exaggeration, therefore, to say that from very early on the Bukaris and the Bafuts were two different entities. The former

were the aborigines of the land while the latter were nomads, a people in search of settlement (Nebasina 1982:11).

The point of convergence could only have come when the Bukari people received and accommodated the incoming tribes from Ndop and the North of Cameroon. Nebasina (1982:11) observed that the whole venture has been a study of history full of migratory movements, factions, and wars culminating in the formation of united tribes. This unity was never limited to the incoming tribes but it became an all-enclosing one with the Bukaris and the Mbebeli countries. The question of the overlap between the two could be considered in terms of numerical strength, integrity and a feeling of superiority. This aspect became apparent only after the peaceful settlement of the incoming tribes who had by then started to co-exist with the owners of the land. Being in the majority the northern tribes gradually assimilated the aborigines and incorporated them, reducing them to the status of a quarter in the whole agglomeration instead of a country, as it originally was thought to be. Obviously it became evident that the oppressed had to pay allegiance to the oppressors.

The Bukari pay allegiance to the Bafut as a matter of course, even though one may also consider that in a way the Bafut in turn pay allegiance to the Bukaris by way of the annual performance of the *Nefo'o* ritual. We discussed at length the cultural orientation of the Bafut people in the previous paragraphs. Following our discussion so far as to the relationship between the Bafut and the Bukari people, it would appear that both peoples have a great deal in common at the present time. There are nevertheless still some details that we need to highlight concerning the culture of the Bukari people. To be able to appreciate this important aspect of the people, and recalling that we have seen earlier that culture and religion go almost hand in glove, we have found the following assessment made by a notable anthropologist very illuminating:

For Geetz "Religion is a set of symbols which acts to establish pervasive and long lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such aura that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic." And regarding culture he stated: "It denotes an historically transmitted pattern of meaning embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic form by means of which men communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about and the attitudes towards life." We find that the definition encapsulates well all the elements that are involved in the religion, culture and language of a people, especially when one takes into account the aspect of the use of symbols and that of inherited values. In other words, religion

is practised though the medium of a formulated code, called language, and this has to be understood by all within a given geographical demarcation that may range from a local tribe up to even the whole of a country.

Language, the principal factor that influences culture, uses symbols as well as religion. When we refer to religion, especially in the case of the African Traditional Religion, this is in the context of culture and that is why one cannot possibly treat either of them without digressing into the other.

There are diverse elements in these three concepts – religion, culture and language – which are contained therein. For example, culture can accommodate both language and religion. The African culture is able to co-exist with other cultures and it has not been completely altered to become in effect a foreign culture. The Bukari people still regard their culture with respect and when we mention that they are the wellspring of the Bafut, it was not solely in economic terms, but above all religiously and culturally. Many of the traditional crafts can still be found in this quarter. Some of the very ancient traditional and secret societies such as *Bugwachu, Munang, Buchwangchwang, Nkukooh, Afurengweh, Nka'atu, Fubong*, etc. are present in Bukari so much so that the above may well be regarded as the cultural heritage of the entire Bafut.

The researcher happened to have been brought up in this milieu by non-Christian parents until about the age of fifteen, when the mother and himself were converted into Christianity on 17th December 1965. His father died in April 1980, at about the age of eighty-two years without being completely a converted Christian. The main missionary bodies that came into Bafut from the latter part of the 19th century established schools and other centres for learning. The lone school in Bukari was opened in 1957 by the Basle Missionaries from Switzerland. It has since trained the children and other people who now serve in Government Departments and other church institutions.

In Bafut as a whole the literacy percentage could be rated at about 62% and although many end up in the high schools, they finally drop out due in part to a lack of funds and reduced interest in education because of the high rate of unemployment. In Bukari, the situation appears to be worsening and the rate of illiteracy is on the increase. One could estimate the present literacy rate to be around 37%. No one has as yet studied up to the level of a doctoral degree in any field in Bukari, but two of their sons have received Masters degrees in the sciences and Theology. Embroidery, carving, weaving of bags, black smithing, etc. used to be

practised widely, but today nearly all these crafts are dying out. The situation is due to the problem of finding markets for these products and also in part to the importation of more improved varieties.

In the previous paragraphs we discussed the war in ancient times between the Bujong and the Bafut tribes, which resulted in the capture and taken to exile of the fon of Bafut. Left then with a vacant throne and expected to pay heavy tribute to an inferior tribe – the Bujong – until such time when they would feel satisfied, the Bafut had to resort to devise a means through which they could kidnap back their fon from Bujong. Every device proved abortive or met always with an obstacle. As we have mentioned, the Bukari people were a force to be reckoned with when tradition and magic are concerned. These people then opted to bring back the fon of Bafut from Bujong. Hence preparations went ahead for an effective rescue mission to be undertaken purely by the leaders of various family groups from Bukari.

Embarking on a rescue mission is one thing and succeeding is another. It is always a mission to save life, yet it can also turn out to be that lives are put at risk. Sometimes "the hunter becomes the hunted instead." After consulting with many of their diviners the Bukari people finally announced to the rest of the Bafut people their intention to go to Bujong and rescue the fon held there as prisoner of war. The Bafut people – then left with no other alternative – quickly accepted this proposal. Prominent family heads in Bukari came together, each with his own magical powers, commonly referred to as *tetah* meaning literally "*pepper*," which they were to use in Bujong to hypnotise the people and rescue the fon while deterring their enemies' movement if they attempted to pursue them. Our respondents were not unanimous with regard to the composition of the delegation that left Bukari for the rescue mission at Bujong. Some were of the opinion that any person who possessed any strong and approved magical powers went, while others stressed that it was a matter of selected family heads only.

According to the latter proposition, those who had gone to Bujong to effect the operation "save the life of the fon and restore the prestige of Bafut" were firstly *Atangcho*, otherwise also known as *Nfor-Bukari*, who took along his magical stick; Awankwee produced thunderstorms and clouds; while the family head of Mbele and Ayunguh produced ants and the *Nkworeh*. These are the magical powers to which we referred earlier. The latter proposition regarding the selected family heads appears plausible since these families remained the most prominent among all others in Bukari to the present day.

A number of rehearsal sessions were held and during which the first group presented the thick clouds, thunderstorm and hailstones. The second group presented the slippery substance, *Nkworeh*, that was to be applied on the road to make it difficult for those who might attempt to pursue them on the side of the Bujong people. The next group or family had ants, *Muliuh*, which they produced while *Atangcho*, the leader of the delegation, had only his magical stick, also called *tonghne*. When everything was ready for the encounter, they sent and asked for permission to embark on the mission to rescue the fon.

The moment finally arrived and the Bukari delegation left for Bujong. Back in Bafut the population mourned for their captured fon, while in Bujong it was a time of jubilation. The Bujong people had carefully kept the captured fon of Bafut in a special house under the custody of an old woman, otherwise called *Nwlen-mangie.* She ensured that she was at all times present in the house to report any attempt by the fon of Bafut to escape. The Bujong people weekly celebrated their victory over one of the tribes that was feared most. On such a day they usually came out in the afternoon to stage some cultural manifestations and traditional dances, while waiting for the Bafut delegation to bring to them their tributes and other indemnities. It was on one of such days and before the arrival of the rescuing mission from Bukari that the Bujong were in full celebration. Part of the rescue mission led by *Atangcho* with his magical stick, joined the rejoicing people in their dancing. The other went into hiding and the group with the ants sent the insects, which kept the woman – the guard of the fon – worried and uncomfortable. As she concentrated on the biting ants, the fon was quickly kidnapped. Meanwhile *Atangcho* and his group continued with the dancing. He would dance and plunge his magic stick into the ground and ask that the Bujong people pull it out. Each time they failed to pull it out, *Atangcho* would easily pull it out with just his left hand. This attracted a great deal of attention as the Bujong people concentrated on trying to pull out the stick in order to disprove the magical powers of the Bukari people.

As this continued, the group that brought the ants and the fon sneaked out *en route* to Bukari. Those with the clouds, the thunderstorm and hailstones poured out their goods and it rained "cats and dogs," which brought total confusion and *Atangcho* and his group gathered the magic stick and took off. The groups with the clouds and the *Nkworeh* left last and the clouds and the slippery substance applied on the road made it difficult for the pursuing Bujong people to continue and as such they had to retreat to their village.

Since then they had never been in good terms with the Bukaris in particular and the Bafuts in general until recently. They are very close neighbours, only separated by a river, yet they have hardly intermarried with each other right up to the present.

When the rescue mission reached Ntamussang near Buwe village, they played and danced *Ngwaba'a*, a war song of victory to alert the entire Bafut that the mission had been successful. When the mission arrived at Bukari, the fon ordered that he be left there for some time so that the entire Bafut community should in turn compensate them for their bravery, courage and the restored prestige of the Bafut fondom. This was to be by way of paying some tribute to the Bukari people for some time. While in Bukari, the fon was lodged in Bansi's compound. It was a tradition that the fon did not share the same entrance with ordinary people, let alone with women. In those days houses in Bafut had only one doorway, except in the royal palace. A second door had to be introduced at the back wall of the house where the fon was lodged so that he could use that entrance.

This ushered the beginning of having the two doorway houses or two doors in the parlour of a house in Bafut. Not all the people were then even permitted to have them, because people had to be initiated before. The system later became reserved solely to the nobles of the village. With the coming of enlightenment, the situation has since changed even though traces may still be found in the palaces and some of the nobles' compounds. We found this practice again with a neighbouring tribe - the Bali people of the north-west province of Cameroon. The nobles of that village had extra entrances for women who were on their menstrual periods.

The Bukari people had no intention to having a fon, but they conferred the title of *Atangcho* to their leader. They could have decided to retain the fon forever in Bukari, but in time they decided to let the fon resume the throne of the Bafut fondom. When finally reinstated on the throne, the fon – in appreciation for what the Bukaris had done in rescuing him from exile – decreed that the whole of Bafut should give respect to the Bukaris and should never maltreat them in life.

But then that particular fon went missing (died). In Bafut the fon is never spoken of as being dead, but only to be missing, since he would soon establish his abode at one of the rivers.

A fon who did not know the Bukari people assumed the throne after the death of the rescued fon. The Bafut people started maltreating the Bukari people and subjected them to hard labour. Their property, children, and land would be taken at will from them. They were given

a derogatory title, **Utooh Ngooh**, meaning in English: "*those who were only to be exploited*". They were made to pay heavy tribute to the palace and some of the nobles in Bafut.

To some extent this system is still being practiced. It is said that the late fon – probably Neba'anfor who had found his abode in a pool in the river Muchwini at **Nefo'o** – saw the maltreatment of his people, heard their groaning and was moved by the situation. It would appear as if he had said "I have seen the suffering of my people and heard their cry. I must take them to live with me where I am." As mentioned above, the *Nefo'o* shrine is located in a pool below an overhanging cliff whose height can be estimated at about 150 metres. At the approach from the top one feels his/her heart begins to accelerate with fear. It is difficult to get down to the pool. The only way possible is to go round and negotiate it from downstream. Once down there, one is either attracted or is frightened by the almost total silence of the environment as compared to other waterfalls, especially those in the stratified nature of the basalt stones which are a common feature of the grassland areas of Cameroon. Two flat stones lie under the falling water from a height of about 150 metres so that the water enters the pool only gradually which accounts for the almost total silence of the area. The area is surrounded by evergreen vegetation, which had remained untouched for centuries. This makes it difficult for the rays of the sun to penetrate right into the encircled pool. It is in this pool, where it is believed most of the Bukari people and some nobles of Bafut, including the late fon Neba'nfor, reside after death.

The Bafut people had maltreated the Bukari people contrary to the will of the deceased fon Neba'nfor. The attachment and love he had reserved for the people of Bukari, would not have liked to see them being continuously oppressed, and this moved him to have sympathy with them. As a consequence the late fon then decided to take and live with them at **Nefo'o**.

2.2.9   Political orientation of the Bukari people

2.2.9.1   The *Atangcho* (*mfor Bukari*)

As mentioned above Bukari, is one of the villages in the Bafut tribe. The village is ruled by an **Atangcho**, otherwise called **Atangcho-Bukari**. Under him are other political bodies whose authority has the scope of enforcing law and order in the society. The first unit to wield political authority over its members is the **Ayien-enda**. These are close neighbours. They live together in a small demarcation, but may have no blood relation. The only important matter for them is that they live and co-operate in matters of common interest.

2.2.9.2 Other political units that exercise power in the village

The next unit is the *Achiuoh*: This is a more united body with some far blood relations. The *Achiuoh* is led by the *Tachuoh*, a patrilineal leader who may actually hold the title for life. As such the title is hereditary. Aletum (1974:32) has correctly stated that the *Achiuoh* can be seen as a group of families whose members are able to trace their descent from a common ancestor. There are nowadays in Bukari many *Achuohs*; some small and other large enough to form a whole ward. The main *Achiuohs* in Bukari and their leaders or titular heads include the following in order of numerical strength: The *Achuoh Bachi*: This is the most numerous of all the Achuoh in Bukari. Awantu heads it. This is the Achuoh that has close affinities with the palace in Bafut and wields a type of local diplomatic link between the quarter and the palace of Bafut. The titular head of this *Achuoh* is married to the princess of Bafut. The next *Achuoh* are the *Bafirnji* people. They are the next in numerical strength and are respected for their hard work. They are quite reserved and very co-operative.

The *Mandeh* are the next *Achuoh* that is also very co-operative. Nowadays the titular heads of the *Mandeh* and the *Bagho'oh* co-operate in such a way that one hardly sees any division between the two *Achuohs*.

The next *Achuoh* are the *Bebuche*, mostly consisting of the family of *Bansi* and perhaps those of *Mufueh*. This *Achuoh* is hardly heard of in Bukari because they operate from the background.

The next *Achuoh* is an amalgamation of the *Achuoh Atangcho* and that of the *Bagho'oh*. Even though made up of two families, it is still the smallest unit. It is headed by Muyo – and not by *Atangcho* – as the ruler of the whole village. This is what tradition stipulates and can thus hardly be changed. It is the most influential among the villages and some of the educated people originate from this part. The author happens to be an offspring of this amalgamation.

2.2.9.3 The Butabunukuru

Another political unit, which wields authority over the people of Bukari, is the *Ta nukuru* (plural *Butabunukuru*). This is a recent introduction into the Bukari administrative system. This unit became influential after the present fon of Bafut came to the throne in 1968. It is regarded as his innovation, because the Bukari people had before been ruled through another political unit known as the *Bukum*. They were quite limited in number but their authority was strict and reasonable. The *Bukums* were the direct advisers to the *Atangcho* whose

administrative principles were appreciated by a greater number of the villagers and which helped the villages to become as developed as they are today.

2.2.10 Religion: The influence of African Traditional Religion and Christianity in Bukari

2.2.10.1 The influence of African Traditioal Religion in Bukari

Religion and culture are so inextricably intertwined that when one discusses each of them, certain elements from the other still find a place in such a discussion. Just as in Bafut, one finds several religious sites and other elements distributed throughout Bukari. There are both shrines for the veneration of the ancestors and other imported religious bodies. The *Nefo'o* shrine of the Bafut and other minor shrines are found in this village. We have mentioned the *Nefo'o* shrine before and will continue to do so in the coming paragraphs.

Some of the minor shrines that could be found in Bukari, as we gathered during our time of research, are mainly concerned with the protection of life, property, the enemy and fertility of the crops. The fertility of women is also the responsibility of the national *Nefo'o* shrine. The religious sites have a general name, *Busaah*, meaning the shrines of a specific ancestor whose name is then attached, or sometimes that of the area where it is found. One finds such names as *Saah mufuche, Saah Kwa'a Saah Mbah* etc in the tribe, and those in Bukari would incude: *Saah Buko'oh* found at *Atula'ah* Bukari which is charged with protecting the inhabitants against enemies and thieves coming to invade the village.

Nchulongseh is found at the entrance to the village from the south east and it is said to be responsible for the protection against enemies and witches who are responsible for the retardation of children's growth. With its two large stones, thieves could be allowed to enter and steal, but on their return they would be made to stand still and continue carrying until the next morning whatever they may have stolen until the inhabitants would recover these goods from them.

Musoyaah is the *saah* concerned with the fertility of the land in Bukari. It is visited once a year and during the approach of the rainy or the planting season. The priests go there to ask for the fertility of the crops for that year and some possible protection from witches of the neighbouring villages who may mysteriously come to take away the expected yield for that year. During the visit by the priests to this shrine, the rest of the population stay indoors because it is believed such a visit ends up with heavy downpour of rain indicative of the

fertile season in anticipation. Failure to rain is usually a sign of bad harvest during the coming year. The ***Ndere Takumbengs*** are also found both at ***Mantie*** and at ***Atula'ah***.

2.2.10.2　The influence of Christianity in Bukari

Apart from all the above religious aspect influencing the life of the Bukari people, there are a number of other Christian denominations, like the Baptists, Presbyterians, and a host of sects. The Basle Mission Church – which is today Presbyterian Church in Cameroon – was the first denomination to be established in the village around 1937, the year the first Christian in the area was baptised. The Presbyterians remain the dominant denomination, accounting for about 85% of the Christian community in the area. Only one woman, Ngum Margaret Muyo, has since been the lone Roman Catholic member in the area for decades, and she attends church services outside the village, since the denomination is not found there. As usual, no Muslim community has been established here. As it is the case with the entire Bafut tribe, Christianity has been the chief source of outside culture and religion that has been able to penetrate the Bafut as well as the Bukari Traditional Religion. This has been by way of teaching and the introduction of other social amenities.

As we have been discussing the historical, cultural and the religious background to the ***Nefo'o*** ritual of the Bafut of Cameroon, we will examine in the next paragraphs the ritual activities of the shrine and the significance of a pilgrimage.

2.3　THE NEFO'O SHRINE

2.3.1　Location of the shrine and the ritual process

The next paragraphs will be devoted to a detailed description of the ***Nefo'o*** shrine and ritual. It will also touch on the influence Christianity must have exerted on the ***Nefo'o*** ritual – the chief sanctuary of the Bafut people – a place they converge yearly to pay homage to the gods of their ancestors. Indeed pre-Christian Bafut had no other centralised place apart from the ***Nefo,o*** which – according to our findings during our field research – had not existed until the arrival of the immigrating Bafut population. It would appear that the ***Nefo'o*** ritual could be estimated to have existed for up to about 450 years. Despite ***Nefo'o*** being the chief place of worship, it is not necessarily the oldest. The people had other diverse places of worship, which consisted of the ***busaah*** and other family and individual gods. What really united the people were the ancestors who had continued to do so to the time of the ***Nefo'o*** ritual.

From what we have so far discussed it can be deduced that the Bafut people are extremely religious. This is because there are still several shrines in the tribe. When Christianity was introduced it met with a great deal of resistance by the long established cultural, traditional and religious practices of the people. The 19th century opened up with the acceptance of the Christian faith in most parts of the tribe. Since then it has coexisted with the African Traditional Religions. If Christianity had diminished the importance of other shrines and religious sites in the tribe, it seems to have had little or no influence over the *Nefo'o* shrine and ritual. It is clear that the whole tribe is unanimous about the force and significance of the *Nefo'o* shrine. "The place of sacrifice is the *Nefo'oh*; a waterfall some way off the fon's palace. It is the most important ancestral home where all the late fons retire." (Ambe 1992:35). The above statement is indicative of the role the *Nefo'o* shrine plays in the traditional religious lives of the people. *Nefo'o* is believed to be the abode of one of the most famous deceased fons of Bafut, called *Neba'amfor*. Not all the late fons retire there as Ambe (1992:35) has asserted, for two fons cannot rule in one palace.

2.4   SACRIFICIAL INSTRUMENTS IN RITUAL PROCESS

2.4.1   The Gong

Gestures and instruments in the performance of a ritual are the ingredients for communication. They convey the message even more than the spoken words. Instruments used for the ritual proper include the following: a one-sided gong, *Nkueh nja'a mo'o*; camwood *Buruh*; raffia palm wine, *Muluh*; a special powder, *Mboreseh*; special leaves, *Mbuembow*; and occasionally a live goat, as explained above. All the above are supplied from the palace and conveyed accordingly by the officiating priests. During the 1998 episode six priests were in attendance. On their way to the shrine the priests are on a special mission on behalf of the entire Bafut community. They bear "holy things." Once on the way to the shrine, they do not speak to anybody who meets them. One of our informants reported that no communication takes place because they are carrying "holy things." Once blessed, these objects are completely set apart and restricted from common contact. During this period the priests are restricted from sexual intercourse and prior to their departure to the shrine they do not spend that night with their families. If one of them needs to urinate on the way, he washes his hands with sand if there is no water.

The gong is a metal disc with a turned rim, giving a resonant note when struck (cf. Della Thompson 1996:26). In Cameroon – as in other West African countries such as Nigeria, Ghana, Benin etc. – the gong plays the role of alerting the population for a special and important announcement as the messenger had been mandated to communicate such information to the people. It is also used in secret societies like the **Quifor, uchong, Munang, Nkueh** of the Bafut tribe. It has of late become a popular musical instrument in many of the Christian denominations, which was unheard of during the missionary era. As concerns the **Nefo'o** ritual, the gong is used to announce and alert the arrival and presence of the priests from the palace to the shrine area. It is also an accompaniment to certain incantations. Long shouting and acclamations invariably follow the gong from the officiating priests, which can be heard by others far away from the scene of action. At the steps leading to the shrine a second shout is uttered and at this juncture the water – cascading down to the shrine – is expected to reduce it velocity while the priests continue to clap their hands in humble and total submission. This is usually the moment of anxiety, fear and expectation among the priests, because if the flow of the falling water and the tide do not slow down, they cannot go ahead with the performance of the ritual, which is an indication of total refusal by the ancestral gods.

2.4.2   The cam-wood

This is the trunk of a species of red wood that has been reduced to powder and finally into a paste. It symbolises unity, peaceful co-existence and fertility. When the waterfall and the pool have receded to lower levels, the cam-wood would be made into a rich paste and placed on special leaves, which are ritually left to float upon the pool. As the priests patiently observe the floating cam-wood, they continue to say, **Bi'ie loa antoh, nu kum bufueh buchume. Bi'ie yia nu njoh jua, Buruh, yieme aboreseh ne la'ah, nghere nu me ta la'ah nung nu mbornu nkuh nchwi nchu mo'oh. A jueh njooh bin faa looh juame. Tekeh fa bukeh ta bi' bue nu juh antoh ambo Bufu buchime**. The translation into English is: "We are from the palace and in the name of all the Bafut people. We have brought these things: Cam-wood, which unites us and encourages us to be in peace with one another. We have also brought your own share of things for the annual dance this year. Take your own share and leave the rest so that we can bring them back to the palace for all the Bafut people." The above incantations – usually accompanied by the gesture of clapping hands – usher in the ritual materials to the ancestors. At this point the priests begin to sense the outcome of their mission to the shrine. A sudden disappearance of the cam-wood in the open water of the pool indicates acceptance by the

gods. The priests are, however, not necessarily unanimous. It is sometimes not clear whether part of the cam-wood, which is left to float, returns and is taken to the palace, or on the other hand, whether two portions are divided so that half is left to float and the other part may then be reserved and taken back to the palace. We found it difficult to come to a conclusion on this matter, as there are no earlier sources with which we could compare our findings. We concluded that part of the contents seems to be usually reserved from the part to be taken back to the palace.

2.4.3   Palm wine

Palm wine is the next item' which is taken along for the ritual. Very few rituals in a Bafut context would take place without the use of palm wine. Palm wine concludes and cements covenants especially when it concerns the whole peoples or transactions between the living and the departed. However, in Bafut there are some exclusive rituals that use water e.g., the final blessing of a family by the most elderly person (*Mbwesu ndah*) after an important family reunion. Using the same words of incantations, the priest of the *Nefo'o* ritual presents the palm wine in a calabash. It was not quite clear in what manner it is usually presented. Some are of the opinion that the calabash of wine is ritually left to float, whereas others insist that the wine has to be poured into the pool. We were not in a position to judge on this matter, since we were not permitted to take part in the ritual process. We, however, thought that the later proposition was more plausible.

2.4.4   The thigh of a goat

Next would be the leg or thigh of a goat, which should be presented in the same manner. This part of the goat is left to ritually float on the water and at a certain point it has to disappear never to be seen again. Its reappearance would indicate abject rejection by the gods and it was reported that in the 1997 episode the ritual the leg of the goat was rejected and the priests had to report their failure to the palace, after which they had to repeat the process. Where a live goat had to be offered, the priests – on behalf of the people – lay their hands on the live goat and confer the transgressions of the entire tribe on it. The priest releases the goat at the shrine to go and perish in the woods, using the following incantations: ***Bi'e loa antooh, nu kum Bufueh buchime. Amume looh youa me gheme ka mea, bi' kwere bong kwere bueh. Mbie me bi' fansu nu ji gha'atu. Meghor mibueh, Ngueh nchim, nu ndoor chim bu nungme atu mbi youa. A-ndoor mayia youa me bu nung me tuo laa. Tuku mbi'e la ghe***

ncho nu you. Ghe-la! Translated into English, this would mean: "We are from the palace. In the name of all the Bafut people we are aware that in the course of the concluding year we received both good and evil. We are aware that we committed transgressions against you. We experienced bad omens and diseases, abominations and even deaths. All the abominations and the sins of the people have been laid on this goat and from now it will carry these to the world of the unknown. Leave immediately."

Thereupon the priest releases the goat into the woods where it will be killed by predators. After the presentations the priests return to the palace where the fon, his wives and *quifor* have been waiting in great anticipation for their return and news on the outcome of the pilgrimage. Approaching the palace, the priests would alert the population from a distance with the following incantation: *Ta wa abumbi nfor o bi'kwe netu oh ... oooho!* Translation: "*Our fon, fon Abumbi, fon of the people, we have returned with the head.*" This is an indication that the priests were successful in their mission to the shrine.

If the mission was abortive the priests usually return to the palace in silence and diviners are immediately contacted to predict the outcome and the next thing to do. If the mission is successful *quifor* would fire a gun and this is followed by shouts of joy and heavy feasting with special food, which was prepared and kept for the priests. The feasting would continue right into the night and the priests would then spend that night in the palace before rejoining their families only after a thorough bath in the palace.

After this the day of the annual dance, *Njwi bin* or *Njwi mbore bin*, is foreseen and the date made public to the anxiously waiting population at the next market day. They would receive this with great acclamation and immediately preparations for the great day commence. The whole venture entails close secrecy on the part of the priests and as it demands a high degree of honesty and devotion. They must be willing to sacrifice their time, energy and their lives for the sake of the entire tribe. Although priesthood may nowadays be acquired, candidates are not randomly selected. They must come from families or be descendants of people who had a great deal of influence in any domain of the cultural heritage of the tribe. These men are completely separated after their initiation. Once they are in the office of priesthood, they may not mingle carelessly in public. Such a person must be sincere and may not have committed adultery with the wife of any of his colleague priests. As already noted above, prior to the day of the ritual a priest is not expected to spend the night in his house and he must abstain from sexual intercourse with his wife. He must bathe himself before and after the ritual both for an effective service and clean reunion with his family. He may contaminate

the materials and the vessels of the sacrifice if he failed to bath before officiating. He can also contaminate his family if any reunion is effected without having bathed as prescribed. We discussed earlier the attire of the priests and we saw that the clothes they wear are specifically designed for that purpose and they store them in the special office of the priesthood. When they take their clothes off after the ritual, the priests are reintroduced into the everyday world as they return to normal life.

A priest is expected to be courageous and should be well versed with incantations used during and after the ritual in order to be able to transmit ritual messages sent and received. Ritual language goes with hand in hand with symbolism and gestures so that the officiating priest has to be able to recognise and perform them and at the right place and time. Any profane language and arrogant behaviour may result in the death of the priest, and total calamity will ensue to the whole tribe by way of excessive drought, famine or other occurrences of bad luck which may demand further cleansing. Undertaking a pilgrimage is often a sacred and religious encounter, which may at times be very risky. There have been reports of pilgrims who had gone on such missions and never returned to share their experiences with the rest of their fellow tribal members. Once on such a pilgrimage, the general anticipation of the rest of the population is to know whether the pilgrims arrived at their envisaged destination and have accomplished their mission. The entire tribe eagerly expect a healthy and cordial relationship with the ancestors and consequently with the God of providence. This is the message they wait to receive from the returning priests. Should the mission be abortive, it means that the matter be given further thought on the same day, because the whole situation must be clarified and reconciled urgently before the day for the final celebration of the annual dance of the fon is fixed.

When every aspect of the ritual has been concluded successfully, this also marks the conclusion of the ritual activities in the tribe that year and signals the close of the year and the imminent commencement of the new one. Once this has been accomplished, the day for the launching of the *Abine nfor* (the fon's dance) is fixed and announced in the market, which is always a week in advance.

2.5   THE CONCLUDING SCENES OF THE *NEFO'O* RITUAL OF THE BAFUT

The *Nefo'o* ritual combines both traditional and religious acts. It is traditional in the sense that it has been practised for generations since the tribe came into existence under a stable monarchy. It is religious because it is the chief sacrificial performance of the people and where the cultic community convenes annually to perform the chief act of worship to God and to honour their ancestors. The ritual takes place in December to complete the religio-cultural activities of the concluding year and in readiness for the following year. All the preparations for the ritual take place in the royal palace, some twelve kilometres from the shrine. The palace serves as the storehouse for all the materials involved in the performance of all the rituals and other libations in the fondom.

On the eve of the ritual two or more animals are brought forward in the palace. One of them is dealt with according to special rites and is slaughtered. The blood is used to sprinkle on the elements to be used at the shrine, other altars and execution stones (*Ngo'oh manforti*)? The meat is shared and eaten by the priests. A leg of the goat usually accompanies the other elements to the shrine. The second goat is slaughtered and is buried under the two fork-sticks planted just at the entrance to the ceremonial area close to the execution stones. This goat appears to be fulfilling a dual purpose since in ancient times human beings were victims at this shrine. Animal sacrifice has come to replace or substitute the human beings who were sacrificed every year and buried under these sticks. Human sacrifice was long practised in Bafut on a large scale, but it no longer takes place. Whole animals are not usually taken to the *Nefo'o* shrine, but only in serious situations, such as an epidemic in the tribe, famine and other serious natural phenomena, that a whole animal needs to be taken to the shrine. This is however a new renovation but from the olden days usually whole animals were involved.

It has been reported that on one occasion a live goat was released and before the priests could arrive back at the palace they found the goat already standing there. That was a signal of unfavourable relations between the ancestors and the rest of the tribe. (Testimony of one of our respondents at Alabutang-Bukari, 13th December 1998).

2.6 THE FON'S ANNUAL DANCE

Although often referred to as the fon's annual dance (**Abinefor**), it is an occasion that involves the entire people of the fondom, including both natives and foreigners living within the tribe. When the time approaches, information is circulated to all the **Ndabumanjong** (literally "*the military houses*") within and outside of Bafut for effective preparation. Within Bafut the preparations run from the ranks of the nobles through each ward or quarter, the VIPs in Bafut, and all the institutions in the fondom. Contributions – both in cash and in kind– are collected and received by the various committees in charge of the effective organisation for the event. When all preparations are complete, the activities of the day would start with some traditional recognition to deserving personalities. Honours and decorations are accorded to deserving personalities, and even foreigners working in the fondom. These meritorious decorations range from **Miemfor, Nyare-nguh, Ntingooh** etc. (the right of direct access to the fon, a red feather decoration, and that of the spike of a porcupine etc). Successors of important nobles of the village may also be crowned during the morning of this day. This is closely followed by the feeding of the invited guests who are usually treated to a luncheon party in the fon's reception area (**nda-nikang**), part of which houses some of the artistic antiquities of Bafut. The dance commences in the afternoon after the feeding of the various delegations. Ritzenthaler (1966:88) reports that: "By four o'clock in the afternoon the plaza was packed with spectators. An eerie hooting on the ivory drone trumpet signalled the opening of the festival and **weyifor** (sic) marched out of the door striking his double gong. Behind him were his two assistants, each blowing an ivory trumpet ... The drums began softly, slowly building up to a crescendo of pounding rhythm for dance. Suddenly Achirimbi came out of the door and sat on his throne." And this usually signals the commencement of this magnificent ceremony. The dancing and firing of guns continue for the next three hours. Men and women are usually dressed in embroidered regalia of assorted colours. About four to six young princesses with iron rattles on their feet and scantily dressed usually start the dancing. The princesses are followed closely by the military houses or delegations (*Ndabumanjong)*, and then the general public.

The whole show is celebrated according to ranks in dressing. Those in pure traditional regalia maintain a certain line and pace while those in assorted dressing occupy the other lines. No one is refused the right to participate. This dancing could continue for the next forty minutes before the fon can join in the dancing. "Achirimbi occasionally slipped down from his throne

to join the men in their dance round the field, waved to the crowd of spectators and kept time to the drum throb ... The men with their guns kept loading and firing until finally Achrimbi stood up and with a differential wave of his hand retired to his palace" (Ritzenthaler 1966:189). It would appear as if some of the above statements do not accord with normal practice. There is for instance absolutely no random firing of guns. Everything is carefully planned and the firing time is fixed midway during the dance and it is always the fon who signals the firing by getting up, whereupon he fires his short gun, otherwise called **Kwareh**, with his left hand. As mentioned above, the arrival of the fon in the ceremonial ground is usually announced by the blowing of two elephant tusks. He would then suddenly emerge through a special door that connects the interior of the palace and the field.

The throne is a traditionally carved stool on which the fon sits and his feet rest on one of the elephant tusks. His shoes are sometimes traditionally made and on his head he may wear an embroidered cap or his head-dress of elephant tassles and a new velvet gown of blue and gold that fall in graceful folds as he waves to the cheering crowd (Ritzenthelar, 1966:188). The fon is usually seated and flanked on both sides by his neighbouring chiefs, his direct assistants, **Ndimfor** and **Muma**, directly followed by the **Atangcho**s and other sub-chiefs in the fondom. As already mentioned, the first gun shut comes from the fon, followed by the **Atangcho**s and then by the various delegations. After hours of dancing, the fon would gradually dance away, waving at the cheering crowd and would retire to the palace, signalling the end of all festivities for that year.

2.7   CONCLUSION

It may be apposite to mention some limitations we encountered during the research. It would be recalled that this study deals with a variety of matters shrouded in secrecy. It was not easy to convince the people we interviewed regarding the aim of the research. Furthermore no one has as ever written specifically about the **Nefo'o** ritual of the Bafut of Cameroon. Some of the people to whom we spoke sheid away from being explicit for fear that they would be regarded as the sell-outs of a life-long tradition. This caused some of them to prefer to remain completely anonymous in presenting the facts to us, and we emphasised that they were welcome to do so. Some, however, were very co-operative and did not mind disclosing their identities. This is why at certain points names are mentioned and at other times they were not.

Long distances were covered, sometimes on dangerous paths that led through the forest and over slippery stones and cliffs. It was sometimes not easy to find a guide who could lead us to

the various shrines and sites that needed our attention. We recall a few incidents when the researcher was nearly abandoned at the shrine and had to remain in the forest alone. Some of our instruments for the research, e.g., tape recorders, sometimes went out of order in the forest, causing us to lose some already recorded material. At the palaces we had many gate keepers to go through and as one who has been brought up in that particular traditional milieu, no one needed to remind him of the slogan that "he who enters the palace empty handed should expect to go out empty handed."

The *Nefo'o* ritual, especially by the Bukari people, remains a virgin field to be exploited by other interested researchers. A few ethnologists, geographers and other community development workers have mentioned it here and there, but none has given any in-depth treatment of the historical-religious studies as we have attempted to do. This accounts for a lack of written references.

In this chapter we traced the various stages of events that lead to the institution of the *Nefo'o* shrine and the ultimate annual sacrifice. We observed the *Nefo'o* ritual by means of our investigation into the historical and cultural orientation of the people of Bafut who accommodate and venerate the shrine. From our findings it was seen that the *Nefo'o* ritual was and still is a religious event of the entire Bafut. The shrine was seen to be the central worshipping place of the people. There may be other individual shrines, but the *Nefo'o* shrine stands as the annual converging point of worship to the people. However, the palace may also be regarded as a converging point, but it also handles the day to day administration of the population. It is true that the palace is the custodian of all what is traditional, but when it comes to serious acts of religious attention (both positive and negative), the people turn to either the Christian religion or to the ancestors.

The *Nefo'o* ritual is the chief means through which the Bafut people pay homage and strict allegiance to the ancestors whom they believe are in a position to intercede for them with the supreme God. The ritual is the external expression of gratitude to God and the ancestors for what the people have achieved in the course of the year and also the acknowledgement of their disobedience. This acknowledgement of their transgressions seeks to re-cement the broken relationship that might have been created by the disobedience of the community, both corporately and individually.

The ritual may also be considered as a thanksgiving offering from the people to their God through the ancestors. This is evident from the words of incantations, which we have seen

above. The people of Bafut, while accepting their shortcomings to the ancestors also express their gratitude for what they have achieved in course of the year. Through the use of animal sacrifice it becomes both a purification and eliminatory rite. The blood is used to sprinkle on the altars, shrines and the instruments. By the act of sprinkling they hope to purify both the altars and the sacrificial instruments. The people's transgressions are ritually washed away by the priests through the shedding of the blood of the animal. It is eliminatory in the sense that either the slain goat, or the one released by the priest into the woods, is believed to root out evil from the community before the coming year. The priests are the main actors from the beginning to the end and they seem to bear the whole burden on behalf of the people. Priesthood is normally hereditary, but recently devotees have started to acquire this status. All signs are that the ritual is still a feature in the religious life of the people.

With the above introduction to the cultural and religious system of the Bafut we now turn to examine the question of sacrifice in other contexts.

CHAPTER THREE

SACRIFICE IN WEST AFRICA AND THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

3.1   INTRODUCTION

In this chapter we will be undertaking a general survey of the concept of sacrifice by tracing its historical development. We will also aim to explain the relevant terminology, which is so crucial to the topic under discussion, where after we will continue with the examination of sacrifice in West Africa and conclude with the question of sacrifice in the ancient Near East and Israel. Since the section dealing with the conceptualisation, we followed the sequence of events relating to the Bafut and Africa in terms of the ancient Near East. This sequence is crucial, especially when we come to that section when we will be making a theological interpretation of the Nefo'o ritual of the Bafut of Cameroon.

"From earliest times people found it natural to express their devotion to God through offerings and sacrifices" (Fleming 1988:86). This notion came about since the earliest times when human beings began to develop a good knowledge of their environment, God and the other deities. The statement by Don Fleming cited above indicates that sacrifice has been practised for a long time indeed. Sproul (ER 1987:554), commenting on the history of sacrifice – noted that it would never be possible to write a complete history of sacrifice. Sacrifice is as old as religion and it has been present in many of the religions known to us the world over. From its inception sacrifice has taken various forms in the range of articles that were offered: from animals to even human sacrifice by certain cultures especially during antiquity. The motive of sacrifice finds religious value in its symbolic role, and reflects the bond between God and humanity.

Sacrifice is present in so many myths around the world that the human mind seems to have taken the phenomenon for granted. This is seen in the role it plays in many myths that deal with primordial time. Some of the early sacrifices could be traced to the time Utanapishtim, the hero of the Mesopotamian flood, made an offering after a devastating flood (ER. 1987:554). There is also the sacrifice that Noah offers in the biblical flood story (Gen. 8:20-21) and even earlier the Bible reports about the sacrifices offered by Cain and Abel (Gen.

4:3-5). The sacrifices by Cain and Abel have been expressly referred to as being firstling sacrifices. Aristotle was of the opinion that the sacrifices of the firstlings (of the field and flocks) are the oldest forms of sacrifice. These examples and observations express how long and how important the practice of sacrifice must have been.

Before we proceed further, I believe a good knowledge of some of the terminology used in the research is essential. We hope that this would result in a good working understanding of the topic, especially in the context within which this research was conducted. Some of the vital terms to be examined will include Culture, Religion, Ritual, Offering and Sacrifice, in that order. Some additional terms will be explained as they arise during the discussion.

3.2   SOME RELEVANT TERMINOLOGY EXPLAINED

3.2.1   Culture

Bowker (1997:284) believes that culture consists of at least three dimensions. A typical dictionary definition of culture would thus be: "The cultivation of human natural capacities, the intellectual and imaginative products of such cultivation and the whole way of life of a group or society." In this definition, the idea of cultivating stands out as opposed to learnt culture. The cultural values of a people become cultivative from earlier generations from the same society - an aspect that helps to show the distinction between different cultures. Another definition for culture that has gained wide recognition in the field of cultural anthropology is that presented by Tylor (1871). He defined culture as "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, moral law, customs and any capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society." Geertz (1971) has made another reformulation of the concept of culture as a socially constructed and historically transmitted network of symbols system. Malina (1986:9) states: "Culture refers to a system of collectively shared interpretations of persons, things, and events. It involves symbolising persons, things and events, endowing them with distinctive functions and statuses and situating them within specific time and space frames. The way in which persons, things and events are symbolised, endowed with functions and statuses and situated in time and place result in socially appreciable meaning and anchorage focused on that meaning." Although this definition may appear quite abstract, it is loaded with meaning that characterises human interaction in time and space.

The Latin *cultura* means cultivation, improvement or refinement especially of individuals by training and education. This scene seems to reflect the English tradition. In contrast the

humanistic tradition in German *Kultur* is associated with enlightened values and as distinct from the crude nature (ED 1979:958). From the above definition by Geertz it may be deduced that cultures are varied and progressive. Towards the end of the 18th century the term was taken up by the social sciences and variously defined according to the interest and purpose of each school of thought. Some of the definitions concentrated on the structures while others leaned more on the genesis of transmission of the various social heritages, whereas others emphasised the psychological forces at work, while yet others employed a comparison which may have been normative of the dominant theme.

In another sense culture has been seen to be a three dimensional concept - the cultivation of human natural capacities, the intellectual and imaginative products of such cultivation and the whole way of life of a group or society. These three dimensions are all present in present day usage and each of them having a varied development of its own. These ways of usage are in contrast with some of the earliest usages of the term in Roman antiquity, which regarded culture mainly in terms of tending the land.This is a view that was rediscovered and popularised in the 18th century by people like Wilhelm von Humbolt and Schleiermacher (Bowker 1997:248).

3.2.2   Religion

Religion and culture are terms that are not easily defined in a deductive fashion. Clifford Geertz, a notable anthropologist, defined religion as "a set of symbols which act to establish powerful, pervasive and long lasting moods and motivations in human beings by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and great dealing these conceptions with such aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic." And regarding culture he offered the following: "It denotes an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols. (It is a) system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which human beings communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about the attitudes towards life." The inter-relationship between the two terms has made it difficult to define the one without the other. That is why in the latter definition of religion, culture has again been highlighted. In a sense religion is the sum total of customary ideas, images, affections and physical factors as forming the patterns characteristic of social behaviour in a human group and expressed in its rituals and works of art. These symbols, rituals and actions have a binding influence on the life of the people concerned or affected. Geertz provided a definition for symbol, which appears to be the principal defining word in

the two definitions for culture and religion. "A symbol is any physical social or cultural act or object that serves as a vehicle for conception" (Geertz 1973:90). Following this definition one could suggest that the documents of the Old Testament or the Bible as a whole are all symbols. They convey meaning to the worshipping communities, such as material objects, including for example church houses, cemeteries, altars and even divine images. Ritual worship played a crucial role in the worship life of ancient Israel and this has been embodied in symbolic performance.

For Schleiermacher (19th century) religion is "a feeling of absolute dependence." He places more stress on the absolute in order to contrast it from any other dependence (Eliade 1987:283). Other social anthropologists employed other factors to define the term religion, which include social, economic, historical and cultural contexts. Some sociologists and anthropologists argue that religion is never an abstract set of ideas, values or experiences developed from the total cultural matrix and that many religious beliefs, customs and rituals could only be understood with reference to this matrix (Eliade 1987:284). Durkhen (Eliade 1987:284) – described as a pioneer and chief proponent of this societal interpretation – asserted that a society has all that is necessary to arouse the sensation of the divine in minds merely by the power that it has over them. Thus the Gods are nothing but society in disguise. Mensching (1961:961) has also advanced a restricted definition for religion. Accordingly, Mensching see religion as being the "*erlebnishafte Begegnung mit heiliger Wirklichkeit und als antwortendes Handeln des vom Heiligen existentiell bestimmten Menschen.*" A translation into English would read as follows: "*An encounter, based on personal experience with a holy reality and as responsive actions of certain pre-ordained human beings vis-à-vis a holy being.*" Mensching appears to have been strongly influenced by R. Otto's *numinus* or the "holy." Analysing the biblical accounts of the experience of the prophets and the saints in their encounter with God, Otto believes that the essence of religious awareness is awe, a unique blend of fear and fascination before the divine. He continues that this could be seen in Isaiah's encounter with God. Upon realising the presence of God in the temple sanctuary he cried, "Woe is me for I am undone!" We find here a type of creaturely fear of his creator coupled with his sinful state. We refer to confirm the broader definition that has been advanced by Geertz. Both point to the supernatural aspect of religion and help to discover a perspective on the meaning of life (Dearman 1992:1-3). We now turn to the next term to be considered, which is offering.

3.2.3   Offering

Just as it is not easy to separate religion from culture, so are sacrifice and offering two concepts that cannot be easily distinguished from each other. At a certain point they would fit together and at another stage one finds a real demarcation line between the two terms. In a sense, there can be no sacrifice without an offering, while it is the reverse with offering, especially when sacrifice is considered as a process that always entails the destruction of the life of a living being. The blood is used for a specific religious act and directed to a Supreme Being. But what then is offering?

Thomas Aquinas provided a distinction between offering and sacrifice (ABD 1992:873). He considered the distinction to be one of "*genus*" and "*species*." Aquinas defined offering as the more general category of gift or oblation. Accordingly, sacrifice is a specialised version of this category and entails a more specific means of delivery to the deity (cf. ABD 1992:873). The act that separates sacrifice from offering is "immolation" from the Latin *immolare*. In Latin, the term *immolare* does not mean to destroy as its English cognate would suggest, but it means to sprinkle with sacrificial flour. For Turner (1977:190) oblation can be taken as immolation and as a form of sacrifice. The Bible, on the other hand, has two basic terms for offering. They mean simply gift or something that is brought near to the altar (ABD 1992:873). The term for sacrifice in Hebrew is זֶבַח which means to slaughter. When blood sacrifice became so important in the Israelite religion, זֶבַח as a term for animal sacrifice, became exclusively used to mean sacrifice. The Hebrew term זֶבַח also appears in the Hebrew word for altar מִזְבֵּחַ meaning the place for slaughter. Therefore, offering would designate those donations which were brought to the sanctuary and sometimes presented to the altar, but not burned in any way at the altar. This remained the more general category of offerings. We found these terms to be very important in the treatment of the phenomenon of sacrifice. Others will be explained as arise according to the context.

In terms of this explanation sacrifice is distinguishable from the other cultic actions. The external elements of prayer are words, gestures or – as some call them – bodily attitudes, but they are not external objects comparable to the gift in sacrifice. It should, however, be noted that both these terms undoubtedly presuppose the element of gift. Henninger (1987:545) writes: "Eliminatory rites, though they may include the slaying of a living being or the destruction of an inanimate object, are not directed to a personal recipient and thus should not

be described as sacrifices." The same applies to some ritual slaying that may indeed have nothing to do with any supernatural being as recipient, for example the slayings that are not part of the dramatic representation of an event in primordial time. Some theories consider the conception of sacrifice as gift-giving as the result of a secondary development or occurrence of some misunderstanding of rites that originally may have had a different meaning. Offerings in a way may be related to almsgiving or tithing which are mainly meant for the support and improvement of needy situations in which the offerer expects no return for what he/she loses. Sometimes offerings have been levied (cf. Amos 4:4ff, 1 Sam. 8:13) whereas this cannot be the case with sacrifice.

3.2.4   Ritual

Ritual occurs in all religions, yet it is possible to contrast ritualism with a deep spirituality and mysticism. Ritual is especially stressed in mystical groups and other secret societies. In the Oxford Dictionary of World Religions (Bowker 1997:819), ritual has been defined as: "Actions repeated in regular and predictable ways both in religious and secular contexts serving so many purposes that summary is possible. Ritual is clearly an integral part of religious life." However, rituals are not limited to the religious life of a people. Ritual would include any meaningful gesture that can attract attention in all domains of life. In a sense human environment and activities are composed of ritual actions.

Another definition for ritual is rendered by R. Otto, namely "those conscious acts and voluntary repetitions and stylised - symbolic bodily actions that are centred on cosmic structures and/or sacred presences, verbal behaviour, chant, song and prayer are of course included in the category of bodily actions" (Eliade 1987:405). This appears to be a very general definition for ritual and we could certainly narrow it down to religious ritual to fit better in the context of this dissertation. Religious ritual, therefore, would be seen as the bodily actions and physical manipulation during the performance of a religious ceremony. Understood in this way, this would entail the body having to be taken very seriously as a vehicle for ritual and religious experience. Ritual is more than just a symbol, although it uses symbols. To some anthropologists ritual has been regarded as a category of behaviour and as such they have defined it as a "form of behaviour characterised by its religious nature or purpose" (Seymour-Smith 1986:248). This definition is quite limited in scope in the sense that it has been restricted to only religious ritual. Against this limitation Gorman (1990:18) has advanced a broader definition for ritual, which considers ritual as a general class of social

action that covers a broad range of behaviour. According to Gorman the emphasis is on ritual behaviour as social behaviour or action. It does not matter whether such behaviour is performed as a sacred or profane ritual.

Thus any action that is undertaken and has all the characteristics of ritual action – as characterised by the interpreter – is ritual action (Gorman 1990:19). In general Gorman, however, does not appear to have any specific interest in the various categories of rituals. It is possible that one can use ritual to refer to a specific process, in which case the said process would then become a rite. Any specific ritual therefore has a distinct and definite purpose, and constitutes a specific example of actions that could in general terms be referred to as ritual. This is the reason why one could refer to a ritual that is about to occur in a specific place, situation and to be performed at a specific time. It is also possible to refer to ritual as a system, which is constituted of a number of distinct rituals and thus it is appropriate to talk about a priestly ritual system consisting of all the priestly rituals. The definition and interpretation advanced by Gorman appears to tie up with Hillers' (1990:351-364) discussion centred on rites and ceremonies in the context of law and treaty in the ancient Near East.

As we scanned through the literature dealing with ritual, we noticed that there were a number of schools of thought for the defining of rituals, varying from the psychoanalytical, via sociological structural or ecological approaches. We will touch on a few of these approaches since we will be dealing with a ritual that may fall under one of these categories.

A recurrent and almost dominant theme found in these definitions is the aspect of the "re-centring of the participant involved in his/her environment or his/her own mind (Zuesse 1987:412). Another way of understanding ritual has been advanced by Turner (1968:5) in which he suggested that any type of ritual forms a system of complexity and must possess a symbolic structure, a value structure and a role structure. Zuesse (1987:414-417) suggested a twofold category of ritual. In the first category he referred to – as he termed it – confirmatory rituals. This category of rituals seeks to maintain a distinction through a type of divine order. He termed the second category as transformatory rituals, the purpose of which is to bridge some gaps and also to effect transformation (Klingbeil 1995:22). On the other hand Gorman (1990:23) suggested a threefold division for rituals which was quite different from Zuesse's proposals. Gorman identifies "founding rituals" and among this category he placed the rituals designed to inaugurate a certain state, institution or situation (Gorman 1990:54). It is noteworthy that he classed the ritual in Leviticus chapter 8 – to which we will return – in this category. The second category relates to "the maintenance rituals, which are rituals designed

to maintain an already established order." This second category appears to be in line with Zuesse's description of confirmatory rituals, discussed above. The third category is "the restoration rituals" which appear to dominate in the book of Leviticus. As the name indicates, they are designed to restore the order of things in the event of some disruption.

3.2.4.1   Ritual as symbol, enactment, form, order and sequence

Klingbeil (1995:10) writes that "the study of symbolism in a religious or cultic context is part of anthropological and religious studies. With this in mind it is important to stress the interdisciplinary nature of this study. By way of definition several differing and/or complementary definitions of symbols follow below." It is in very much in the same vein that we found the notion of symbolic action of decisive value in terms of our study into the phenomenon of rituals. Geertz (1973:208) defined symbol "as any physical, social or cultural act or object that serves as a vehicle for a conception." Viberg (1992:3) gave a rather wide and uncomplicated definition for symbol, being "one entity stands for and represents another entity," while Fawcett (1970) sees symbol as standing for something other than itself, but created arbitrarily and is thus intrinsically rooted in a person's consciousness. This would appear to be only partially true in certain areas. Both anthropological and sociological studies would rather stress the importance of understanding the individual cultural traditional and the context in which symbols occur. Turner (1969:52) and Olsen (1980:45-6) stressed the multi-vocal nature of a symbol. This refers to one symbol being able to represent many things simultaneously. It would be observed from the above definitions, that the scope of understanding and arriving at varying definitions for symbol is very wide. It ranges from the first definition by Viberg, extending to the multi-faceted nature of symbol as put forth by Turner. As this section of the dissertation advances, we shall always keep in mind as our point of departure the definition rendered by Geertz (1973:208), namely that a symbol denotes "any physical, social, or cultural act or object that serves as a vehicle for conception."

Symbols constitute the basic building blocks for ritual performance. The word symbol here denotes any object, an activity, movement or a gesture which serves as a vehicle for conception and capable of conveying a socially meaningful message (Gorman 1992:22). The symbols that are present in ritual in turn derive their meaning from the cultural system within which human beings exist. As such culture becomes a system of meaningful symbols, which could provide a guide or framework within which people can perceive and understand themselves, others and the world at large. In reply to Gorman, Geertz defined culture as an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited

conceptions expressed in symbolic form by means of which people are able to communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about attitudes towards life. Thus ritual actions are meaningful actions. They are the structured behaviour of the society within individuals and the world at large - which derive their meaning from the cultural system within which they are enacted. When symbols are thus enacted they produce results with meanings that are more than mere descriptions. The meanings that emanate from ritual action are at the same time derived from a cultural system, which supports it and also helps to inform humans regarding order, structure and meaning.

Turner (1969:52) makes a distinction between what he refers to as the dominant ritual symbol and instrumental symbol. He defines dominant symbols as symbols that are ends to them and have value in and of them. These are found in a wide range of distinct rituals and have a fairly constant meaning in these categories of rituals. The instrumental symbols find their meaning only during the execution of a particular ritual. In other words, they are the means to achieve a desired effect and these are to be realised within the context of the specific ritual in which they are found.

Dominant symbols could easily be identified by the way they manifest themselves in certain circumstances. According to Turner (1969:52) these relate to condensation, unification of referent and polarisation of meaning. By condensation Turner refers to a single symbol that contains a great deal of meanings. Such symbols are multi-vocal and at the same time they are capable of unifying different ideas and referents such as one symbol could draw together a wide range of distinct ideas and phenomena. To conclude, dominant symbols could, therefore, unify distinct fields of meanings - biologically and physiologically based in the human organism. A dominant ritual symbol could also draw together the sensory and ideological poles of meaning in which the biological referents are ennobled and the normative referents are charged with emotional significance.

Every ritual falls within the framework of form, order and sequence. These three elements function according to a special pattern to the extent that the enactment of pattern behaviour lies at the heart of every ritual. Form refers to the quality of the action undertaken and the style in which those actions are performed. A ritual is also characterised by order, which in this case is the structure or the relationship between certain behaviour and predictability (Gorman 1992). Thus ritual actions are repeated actions. They would constantly produce the same effect and communicate the same message. For example the ritual of the recovered

leper (Lev. 14:1-20) will always bring about the cleansing of the leper. The message is that the leper has been cleansed and is, therefore, fit for rehabilitation into the camp or society.

Every ritual owes its durability to its repeatable and predictable character, which then leads to the sense of continuity within the cultural context of its enactment. Order helps to enhance control and manageability, especially of life situations of indeterminacy within the socio-cultural milieu. The repeated actions in ritual performance are not just placed in any haphazard manner, but are carefully arranged in a chronological order that makes sense to the participants. Ritual procedure follows a specific sequence from one symbolic act to the following. Such acts should be distinguished from mere repeated actions, even though a fixed sequence offers the possibility of standard and repeatable actions.

One should also stress that rituals are performed in specific situations. In ritual performance time and space thus appear intimately related. Whenever a converging point of time and place occurs, then a specific ritual action is produced. A certain type of behaviour, which may be appropriate at one place may not necessarily be conducive at another place and the same is also true of time. This may in part be because both space and time appear to be creations of culture and it is only in this context that they can receive their symbolic meaning. Thus culture supplies meaning to space and time, which then combine to create the appropriate situation for a ritual.

Another important aspect of ritual is that it controls and regulates societal structures. It is able to maintain existing socio-cultural systems because ritual in itself forms part of the regular operation of society. It often happens that the normative order of society has been broken or ruptured. At such crisis moments, ritual is intended to restore the societal order. Gorman (1990:29) explains this societal order as being primarily an order of meaning by which human beings live, communicate and interact in their environment. Ritual can always provide a pattern for enacting an ordered existence within a community.

3.2.4.2   The structure of the ritual and societal order

The three concepts of ritual that we have discussed, will be structured in the following category analysis so that other aspects, which have not been discussed, will presently find their place. The following categories of analysis will be used:

The structure of the ritual: This category is concerned with the complex structure of the ritual. In this case, both the individual segments and the broader outline of the ritual, should

be considered so as to arrive at a meaningful whole. It is important to note the structure that assists in the communicative process, which we will discuss hereunder. Structure too helps in the interpretation of the intention or the function of the ritual (Klingbeil 1995:38).

Formality, order and sequence: Certain pattern behaviours are often reflected in ritual action, which underlies any analysis of the ritual and the individual symbolic acts and would be able to highlight the underlying pattern. Gorman (1990:26) suggested three different connotations for the order of ritual as follows: (a) A ritual is a structured event. (b) It proposes that ritual action is predictable action since it is form-orientated and (c) This points to the manageability and control of ritual in live situations, especially in view of the two above mentioned points - structure and predictability.

Situation and context of the ritual: This category seeks to investigate the pre-conditions and context of the ritual. This may also refer to the relationship between context and action. It poses the question what conditions may have led to the ritual. This category becomes relevant in terms of those cultures where fieldwork has not been done previously or may not be possible as yet.

Ritual space: It was noted above that space and time go hand in hand in ritual performance. Space plays a crucial role in the structure of a ritual. Rituals are relevant only if they are enacted in a specific place, which may take the form of a temple, shrine, in front of an altar etc (Gorman 1990). Space in religious ritual action is sacred space. This is distinguished from other spaces. "A sacred space would normally focus attention on the forms, objects, and actions in it and reveals them as bearers of religious meanings" (Brereton 1987:526). However, it should be understood that the symbols that give such a place a meaning in terms of its sanctity typically refer to the specific religious context. Thus sacred spaces are places of communication with the deity. They could be seen as possessing divine power - the place where God's actions are manifested.

Ritual time: This category seeks to understand the time aspect of a ritual action. Rituals are not performed at the same time. Each specific ritual is related to a specific time, such as the new moon, the end of the harvest, the seventh day of the week, and the end of the year. As for the timing in ritual, a distinction should be made between regular and extraordinary times. Regular sacrificial time is when specific periods are set aside for such ritual performance. But ritual time is also important in terms of the inner-ritual time sequence. Sproul (1987:535) stated: "Time is the context and the content of reality at once the eternal, unchanging

environment for our being and its momentary, ever-changing mode of expression." Thus understood, it is important to discover the significance of ritual time expressed in ritual performance and to investigate its meaning for the context and content of reality (Klingbeil 1995:40).

Objects involved in ritual performance: Grimes (1982:23-24) is of the opinion that to come to realise what the objects are involved in ritual performance, a comprehensive set of questions need to be asked. What is used? How is it used? Why is it used? In answering these questions, meaning has to be established from the immediate context of the ritual and also from the broader cultural context. As concerns the ritual of the scapegoat in Leviticus 16, one would need to look for other rituals described in the Pentateuch that use similar objects. They may not necessarily have the same meanings, but the analysis would provide a broad basis for determining the most probable significance of an object. The significant role of each object in a ritual performance would also be realised when its symbolic meaning is able to establish an impression in the minds of the participants.

Ritual roles. Ritual roles seek to answer the question of what precisely is involved in the performance of the ritual and what part does the said participant play in accomplishing this ritual? Gorman (1990:23-36) differentiates between three main rituals roles, namely: (1) The role of the specialist or the ritual specialist (priest) whose presence is crucial for the performance of the ritual. (2) The people whose situation has necessitated the performance of the ritual and (3) The one(s) on whose behalf the ritual needs to be performed. Sometimes it becomes difficult to stratify the roles of the participants because one person is capable of performing more than one function.

Ritual action: This refers to both what is prescribed and performed. This category has some specific problems in the context of the literary character of the relevant biblical primary sources (Klingbeil 1995:40). Accordingly most actions that could be deduced from the text are of a general kind.

Ritual sound and language: Gorman (1990:36) stated correctly that it is in the area of sound and language that the Old Testament accounts of rituals fall silent. Some of the rituals include priestly declarations, although more regularly a silent cult seems to be envisioned. The sound which the various instruments and the participants produce, serve as the language of the ritual. These include the priestly declarations and other symbolic instruments.

As already mentioned above, ritual entails actions which are performed. Performance in this sense may not be limited to the manifestation of form alone, but also it would include the bringing to completion or simply accomplishing perceived events. Turner (1969) in particular analysed ritual as "social drama" and characterised it as conscious acting, stylised performance, evocative, a presentational style of staging and similar theatrical terms. The performances are usually complex and involve a great deal of symbolism.

3.2.5   Motive for sacrifice

Through the history of religion scholars have grappled with the question: why was it necessary that sacrifice be introduced or instituted? What was the motive behind sacrifice? These questions prompted a number of scholars to produce theories and other approaches to explain the intention for sacrifice. Barrett (1998:23) writes: "Theories of sacrifice have been responsible for the spilling of as much ink on pages of sacred and secular tombs down the centuries as have rituals sacrifices been for pouring of blood on mother earth." Such a statement reveals how much concerted effort has been reserved for establishing theories to explain the manner and function of sacrifice.

Many scholars are unanimous that the term sacrifice is derived from both the Hebrew noun זבח and the Latin *sacrificium*. The Hebrew term זבח means the slaughter of an animal (cf. Eliade 1987:544). The Latin term can be broken down into two words: **sacer** "*holy*" and **facere** "*to make*" and thus the whole term means to "*make holy*." The Hebrew term lays more stress on the aspect of the slaughter of the victim for sacrifice, while the Latin carries the connotation of the highest religious act (Eliade 1987:544; Barrett 1998:23). Sacrifice may consequently be understood as the act of sanctifying or consecrating an object. Barrett (1998:23), however, observed that sacrifice should not be regarded as "bloodletting" as Christian theology began to interpret this term.

The many theories advanced by anthropologists and other ethnologists all seek to explain the why and how of sacrifice. Most of the theories are quite general in the way they have been formulated, thereby not taking into account the complex nature of sacrifice. I am, therefore, not in agreement with Barrett (1998:23) who is of the opinion that one should progress from a more particular situation to the general hypothesis. I disagree with him because this would not apply in all situations. This theory may be applicable in his situation, as he is discussing the sacrificial system of a small group of people in Africa (the Turkana of Kenya) whereas this system may in fact be quite different for other tribes. Sacrifice should be explained by the

use of a variety of terms, which could take into account the meaning of sacrifice both in the past and present situations. Evans-Pritchard (1956:281-282) proposed the use of such words as communion, gift, apotropaic rite, bargain, exchange, ransom, elimination, expulsion, purification, expiation, propitiation, substitution, abnegation, homage etc. According to the situation and circumstance, it is possible that in the complexity of the meaning of sacrifice, that one element may be stressed in one rite and some other element in another rite, giving rise to a more specific meaning to sacrifice in a given context.

3.2.5.1   Theories for the interpretation of sacrifice

We now turn to the interpretation of sacrifice to which a number of theories have been advanced to explain the why and motive for sacrifice. Bourdillon and Fortes (1980:17) are of the opinion that no overall theory of sacrifice has yet proved completely satisfactory. While Bourdillon and Fortes may be correct in their assessment, it is equally true that some of the theories have provided useful themes in the interpretation of sacrifice. Some of these theories have helped to bring out prominent themes inherent in particular types of sacrifices since a variety of sacrifices are performed in different cultures and situations.

The question has often been asked: "Why were sacrifices instituted and especially animal sacrifice?" In the opening paragraph of this section of the dissertation the question of the theories for sacrifice was alluded to. The following paragraphs will be devoted to the examination of some of these theories in a bid to shed some light on the meaning and motive of sacrifice. Just as some notable anthropologists have formulated theories for the interpretation of sacrifice, so can this section of the research equally be seen as an anthropological approach to the interpretation of sacrifice. The variety in types of sacrifice is a result of the existence of various cultures and situations. All sacrifices do not serve the same intention. Theologians have often distinguished four main intentions for sacrifice namely: sacrifice for praise (acknowledgement, homage), thanksgiving, supplication and expiation (Eliade 1987:549). However a combination of all four terms, or any combination of them, functioning as one is also possible. For example, it is difficult to find praise and homage sacrifices that express nothing but homage and veneration, without the combination of other intentions.

These types of sacrifices occur chiefly where a regular sacrificial cult is constantly in practice, resembling to some extent the ceremonies in a royal court. Thanksgiving sacrifices appear to be the most common and to this group may be added the votive and the firstlings

sacrifices, to which we referred above. Another more common intention is the sacrifice for supplication. This usually starts off with petitions that may range from material goods to the highest demand for spiritual blessings (forgiveness of sins, divine grace). On occasions it becomes difficult to draw a clear dividing line between sacrifices for supplication and sacrifices for expiation and propitiation.

Sacrifices for supplication seek to establish or consolidate the link with the world of the sacred. Such a relationship includes the maintenance of the cosmic order, the consolidation of the powers on which this order depends. The gift of blood in human sacrifices of the Aztec, the sacralisation of places, objects and buildings (Eliade 1987:549) provide good examples in this respect. As concerns expiation sacrifices, they presuppose the consciousness of a moral fault that could be punished by a higher being. That is why such a being is usually placated with suitable acts on the part of the human beings, who are involved. The expiatory act is closely related to the idea of atonement. Some of the beings (spirits and demons) could be very unpredictable, capricious, malicious, envious, cruel and blood thirsty. Under such conditions expiation would mean the removal of whatever reason may have roused the anger of the beings with the result that the human community could be in peace. Sometimes the higher beings may be quite benevolent so that any disturbance of the good relationship with them is attributed to a human fault. The normal good relationship is restored by an expiatory sacrifice.

A brief review of some of the theories for sacrifice is nonetheless appropriate, since each of them emphasises certain aspect of the phenomenon of sacrifice. Some of these theories for sacrifice may include:

The gift-theory: Some scholars reasoned that this may arise from two concepts. These are the gift as bribe and also as homage to the deity (Eliade 1987:550; Barrett 1998:23). Sproul (1987:550) observed that long before anthropology formulated the gift theory for sacrifice, theologians and philosophers had already analysed the phenomenon from this point of view. For the anthropologists gifts prevail upon the gods and reverend kings while the theologians rendered gifts with the Hebrew word מִנְחָה which also means sacrifice. This term covers both bloody and non-bloody offerings until after the time of Ezekiel when it henceforth specifically referred to cereal offerings (Gen. 4, Leviticus 2).

Tylor (1871) advanced a gift theory, in which he suggested that the higher forms of religions, including monotheism, are the offspring of animism. He observed that the spirits resident in

nature are capricious but may also be influenced or bribed with gifts. As such sacrifice to him was originally a bribe, the one giving so that the other may give also. Such a gift secured the favour of the spirits and averted their wrath. Hubert and Mauss (1964:2) also observed that from sacrifice as a gift, other forms of sacrifice have developed, such as homage, abnegation and renunciation, which all contain the element: "I give so that you will give in return." Sproul (1987:550), however, criticised the notion of sacrifice as gift, as this misses the moral significance of the said sacrifice. According to Barrett (1998:25) Tylor saw "the deity" as chief and the other spirits of nature as smoke; hence their desire for burnt offerings or a "holocaust." It was only at a far later stage that a more moral meaning for sacrifice surfaced. Taylor's statement appears to throw more light on the institution of sacrifice. From the history of religions it would appear as if the gods have both grown in stature and have also become more removed from the reach of men. The need to continue to pass on gifts to them thus gave rise to sacrificial rites intended to ensure that the objects thus spiritualised would reach these spiritual beings. The gift was followed by homage in which the devotee no longer expressed any hope for a return (Mauss 1968:2).

Frazer (1890) was of the opinion that all sacrifice developed from ritual slaying a "divine king" (ABD 1992:871). It was a type of magical impulse, which according to Frazer, led to a ritual murder which then aided the growth of the crops. At a later date this ritualised murder became spiritualised. The notion of a substitute for the divine king was then developed. It will later be seen that Frazer in his work, "The golden Bough" (1890), appears to fluctuate between sacrifice as gift and sacrifice as communion, emanating from the theories of both Tylor and Robertson Smith.

According to Barrett (1998:31) it was only later during his research on totemism and exogamy that he started to stress the social aspect of totemism, while Robertson Smith – as will be seen in the following paragraph – emphasised the sacramental aspect. Frazer concluded that sacrifice was as a result of the evolution of the ritual killing of the divine king who was thought to be responsible for some catastrophes in society. It was later extended to an ailing king who no longer represented his people. However, Frazer faced some criticism for his failure to explain a number of sacrificial systems. His theory nevertheless appears to suggest an important sacrificial system - the scapegoat sacrifice.

Robertson Smith's approach (1889) differed from both Tylor and Frazer. For Robertson Smith, sacrifice was holocaust and a sacramental meal which created a type of bond between humankind and the deity. As the notion of eating a human being became increasingly

repugnant to society, an animal was as a consequence substituted for human beings and such an animal was then offered in the holocaust (Barrett 1998:26).

While still considering sacrifice originating as a gift, Hubert and Marcel Mauss (1964) went further and stated that sacrifice fashioned a type of link between the profane and the sacral worlds. The animal partakes of both worlds and as such becomes the vehicle for mediation. The flesh of the animal victim belongs to the physical world while its life belongs to the spiritual. Critics of Tylor have questioned how he regards and considers a cephalous society (cf. Barrett 1998:26) while Bourdillon and Meyer Fortes (1980:17) criticised Tylor for his failure to see the importance of gift giving even in what Tylor referred to as primitive culture. Regarding the so-called primitive societies or cultures, Tylor failed to appreciate the affection, which a gift creates between the giver and recipient. A new and dynamic reality is established, resulting from the strong relation that the gift has established.

Schmidt (1912-1955) saw in sacrifice a gift in homage and gratitude to supreme beings considered to be the ones to whom everything belongs. The giver presented portions of what he/she gathered from his/her own struggles, mainly for the purpose of thanksgiving and appreciation. This aspect used to be quite common among the agricultural economies and the herding populations. The practice took the form of offerings and firstlings (cf. the Israelite ancestors). It is Schmidt's opinion that since all things belong to the Supreme Being, he cannot be tricked with gifts. It is true that the deity may not be tricked but it should also be understood that since the Supreme Being is not within reach, the normal human being is not always certain about the anger of the deity. Therefore, the gift given to the deity – whatever the form – frees the human partner's conscience and releases his psychological state of being.

Smith (1894) in his theory for sacrifice as communion – and perhaps influenced by the work of McLennan – saw totemism as the foundation of sacrifice. According to Robertson, Semites and all other people passed through a totemic stage. Sacrifice provided a type of communion between the animal and God and the human being. In a sense during a meal all three are united into one substance. When people eat the totemic animal they are in a way eating the deity (Smith 1894:409). The meal allows the person who offers the sacrifice to enter into communion with the totem and as such the community is renewed. Robertson remains critical of Tylor's gift as bribe theory and accordingly he is of the opinion that since each of the three parties possesses similar sacred substances and are thus related, the mechanistic theory of Taylor may not apply. What is required is the communion and solidarity to which they now belong. The central point of the communion is what Barrett (1998:27) termed "theopagy,"

meaning the eating of the deity. Robertson, on the other hand, seems to have misunderstood Taylor in that he has failed to recognise the connection between sacrifice and communion and mostly projected the central tenet of religion as being the relationship between the god and his worshipper. Robertson seems to have restricted the idea of communion only as communion of substance brought about by sharing the same food but he should rather recognise that the gift contained an element of communion in a sense than even the meal. However, other scholars have seen in Robertson's theory an arbitrary attempt to destroy the unity of sacrifice.

We will next consider some recent and evolutionary theories for sacrifice. Although we have already referred to Hubert and Mauss, they nevertheless qualify as recent contributors to recent theories employed to explain the phenomenon of sacrifice. Hubert and Mauss (1964) – while rejecting the communion theory of Robertson Smith and accusing him of merely assuming the universality of totemism – offered a different view of sacrifice from such earlier writers. They couched their theory in more comprehensive, scientific and provisional terms than the earlier ones by Tylor, Robertson and Frazer (Mauss 1964:1). Hubert and Mauss defined sacrifice as "a religious act which through the consecration of a victim, modifies the condition of the moral person who accomplishes it or that of certain objects with which he is concerned." According to this definition – and contrary to Robertson's views – the victim is not holy. So it is only in sacrifice that the victim is made holy through the consecration effected through destruction.

Where Hubert and Mauss do agree with Robertson, is that sacrifice creates a union between humankind and the deity. It should, however, be observed that Hubert and Mauss, in developing the general scheme of sacrifice, concentrated more on the mechanics and technology of sacrifice than they earlier proposed to do, in defining the function of sacrifice as it appears on the title page of their book. According to what they finally advanced in their definition, it was not clear at all whether the victim must or may not necessarily be killed (Barrett 1998:30).

Girard's theory (1977) is more psychological in that it explains not only sacrifice, but also the phenomenon of the sacred. According to Girard, both these phenomena resulted from the displacing of a violent impulse upon a scapegoat or substitute. The human being is nasty, brutish, and short on patience (Barrett 1998:33) and is engaged in an everlasting struggle with his neighbour for the same resources. This invariably provokes tensions, which could only be neutralised by orientating the aggression towards a neutral object, and this has been referred

to as the scapegoat. In the course of this transaction the object becomes psychologically sacred for in such a state it brings salvation to the troubled community (Barrett 1998:33). As such sacrifice focuses the violence on an object within a ritual, thereby setting the community free from fear. Girard's concept appears to be quite narrow in the sense that he seems to focus his study mostly on the high cultures. It would appear as if non-bloody sacrificial offerings have no place in his concept. We have hitherto been examining the various theories of sacrifice. They ranged from sacrifice as a gift, communion, substitution, violence etc. All of them claim to explain the phenomenon of sacrifice. Barrett (1998:36-37) is of the opinion that none of the above theories in their present form is capable of explaining sacrifice. This may be partly true and Barrett would do well in acknowledging that all depends on the relevant method of approach. He approached the matter of sacrifice from the particular to the more general, which could lead to the oversight of certain facts, which may be relevant to other situations which he did not describe. For instance: The Turkana tribe – the subject matter of his investigation – certainly cannot represent the whole continent of Africa, let alone the whole sacrificial system which is as complex as society itself.

For his part Barrett (1998:39) categorised all the theories for sacrifice as being heuristic. He further classified the aspects of separation, recombination, and reconstruction as being present in sacrifice. I share these pertinent points with Barrett on the treatment of the phenomenon of sacrifice. All these categories fit when we consider sacrifice at both the particular and the general levels.

With the Turkana – just as it is with the Bafut of Cameroon – *Akuj* (God) owns all things. In sacrifice, when the animal is offered to God or the ancestors, its spirit is recombined with God in the act. In sacrifice, therefore, the human being brings a gift to God. In this way a type of tripartite relationship is constructed between God, humankind and the animal. When the animal is immolated, burnt and thrown to the gods and eaten by the human being a type of inter-relationship is created among them and we may thus refer to this as a recombination. After every sacrificial ritual a new identity and status are reconstructed. Sacrifice could, therefore, change the state of the individual or that of the community. Regarding the aspect of identity, God is both owner and recipient of the sacrificial gift. He is owner in the sense that he owns all things, including even the one who brings the sacrifice. God is the recipient because the sacrifice is made in his honour. What previously used to be three separate entities are then transformed through ritual activity into a substantial totality, and not merely a metaphorical likeness.

3.2.5.2   Types of sacrifices

As we saw above, it is not easy to classify sacrifices. Various forms of sacrifice may, however, present common characteristics, which may be discovered by posing the following questions: Who are presenting the sacrifice? What elements are offered? What external features or ritual actions are involved? Where and at what time are the sacrifices offered? Who are the recipients – or better still – to whom are the sacrifices intended? What is the motive behind the sacrifice?

Only when answers are provided to the above questions can we obtain the relevant knowledge of the type of sacrifices offered in the past and some which still exist among some religions and societies. In broad terms sacrifices may be grouped under two main categories, namely blood and bloodless sacrifices.

The blood sacrifices: This is a category of sacrifices whereby animals and even human beings serve as sacrificial objects. The shedding of blood is regarded as part of the sacrificial action. Ritual slaying was a long-standing practice by both the cultivators and the herders although the slaying was not usually regarded as part of the sacrificial action. Blood played quite a significant role in the sacrificial system since it was regarded as a power-laden element that assured fertility especially when it concerned these groups of agriculturists. The fields were often sprinkled with blood so that crop yield could always be assured. On the other hand, human sacrifice was regarded as a means of maintaining cosmic order. Sproul (Eliade 1987:546) reported the appearance of a combination of blood rites with magical conceptions of fertility that occurred more frequently among the legume cultivators than among the grain cultivators. She, however, contested the view that all blood sacrifices originated among the food cultivators and were adopted by the nomadic herders at a later stage. For blood sacrifices only domestic animals were used and the most preferred animals include sheep, goats, cattle, horses. Dogs seemed to be the top choice because in many cultures they provided company even to the dead.

The bloodless sacrifices: This category of sacrifices is often referred to as offerings. In this category may be included in the first place all vegetable materials. After their harvest farmers may offer a portion of their produce to the higher beings whom they believe are in need of nourishment, sacrifice of food and drinks. "Fruits, tuber grain and the foods that are made from these plants (meal, baked goods, oil), along with drinks, especially beer and other alcoholic beverages are poured out as libation" (Eliade 1987:546). Other producers in the

other sectors of the agricultural economy may also bring their sacrifices in the same manner as we described above.

3.2.5.3 Preliminary conclusion

In her article in ER (1987:546), Sproul stated that in the act of ritual pouring, the intention may not necessarily be for sacrificial purposes, but it may entail a type of rite, in the description of which she uses terms such as expiation, purification, ritual etc. Some contradiction seems to surface here regarding her statements, since we have seen that anything, which is ritually presented to a second party (deity) for the purpose of restoration of ruptured order or relationship, is sacrificial. Some of the inanimate objects used in sacrifice include such articles of great value, jewels, weapons, precious stones, and metals like sacrificial vessels made of metal, while in the more enlightened civilisations coins are used, especially as substitutes. Votive gifts that can be kept in sanctuaries are also used, which interestingly enough coincide with the sacrificial system of the Bafut people of Cameroon. Such objects have often been found preserved at the sanctuaries and other shrines in the Bafut tribe. Thus sacrifice may either be of material or animal form. What ultimately matters is the way of presentation and the culture involved.

3.3 SACRIFICE IN WEST AFRICA

God who made the universe, discloses himself in various ways. To the African person God is omnipresent to the extent that one scholar expressed the notion that "where the African is, there is his God." Humankind expresses this in a diversity of ways and languages. A truly religious person is always conscious of the feeling that he is the immediate product of the universe. This religious feeling is manifested in piety in so far as he is the outcome of the operation of God in us by means of the operation of the world upon us. Kayode (1984:1) rightly stated that any human being who is able to love, reflect, express fear, appreciate, be happy, and be depressed, ultimately possesses the ingredients of religion. Accordingly, we are religious beings by virtue of these attributes, without which we are incomplete beings. One of the components that unite us with the deity is sacrifice or our knowledge of gratitude to him. Almost every sacrificial system is the product of one kind of religion or the other. It would be rather difficult to treat the subject of sacrifice in West Africa without first considering the religious world of the African people. The religion whose sacrificial system we wish to investigate, is the so-called African Traditional Religion (ATR).

3.3.1   Religion in West Africa

West Africa forms a sizeable portion of the huge continent of Africa. The region is rich in religious practices; both the traditional and the so-called "imported" religions – Islam and Christianity. Thus African Traditional Religion is the indigenous religion of the Africans. It has been embraced and practised for centuries by the forefathers of the present generations. Awolalu (1979:111) rightly stated that this religion has emerged from the sustaining faith of those past generations of Africans that have given birth to what is being practised today in various forms by Africans.

The Bafut of Cameroon are not excluded from the above. They form part of this worshipping community. As seen in the previous chapter, this is a religion whose founders cannot be traced, no matter how far we look back into history. Its philosophy lies in the belief in the Supreme Being, spirits, divinities in life after death and also in some mysterious powers. Since our main concern in this section is to examine the sacrificial practices of West Africans, we will not elaborate on the beliefs and practices of this specific religion, but they may make an appearance as we progress into the subject matter.

3.3.2   The cult and worship in African Traditional Religion

The cult of the African Traditional Religion could be viewed in a diversity of ways, depending upon the related subject to be studied. Among many approaches one finds the cult of the ancestors, which is the most important of all (Meiring 1996:14), and the religious functionaries – the so-called priests and priestesses. The cult of the ancestor is so prominent because of its influence and effect on the daily life of the community or the individuals. The ancestors are seen as the mediators between the deity and the tribe and it is through them that the vitality of the Supreme Being flows to the entire community.

There are persons dedicated at applying this form of worship, comprising both priests and priestesses who represent the community or individuals when it comes to ritual enactment. Kayode (1984:6) pointed out that the cultic functionaries in the religions of the Africans are the officiants who direct the mode of worship as they venerate and offer sacrifices to the gods. Both men and women may be intermediaries, because the Sacred has often found to be mysterious and should thus be approached through an intermediary.

Meiring (1996:16) argues that some Protestants traditions have rejected the ancestral veneration as idolatry and superstition and regarded it as a transgression of the first

Commandment. According to him this is as a result of not being able to distinguish between worship and veneration. Because of this, the veneration of the ancestors has been relegated to the background to continue in secret while the Church has provided no alternative. It seems rather difficult to study the subject of sacrifice in any religion without touching on the aspect of worship since sacrifice holds a central place in worship. Many scholars are of the view that the term worship may be understood in two ways – it has both secular and religious connotations. In the secular sense, it is used as a title for honour to address a person of a high status – for example, a city's Mayor is often addressed as "His or Your Worship."

In the religious sphere, Awolalu (1979:97) stated that worship could be a means of honouring a spiritual being, an act of veneration which human beings pay to spiritual beings. To other scholars it is the response of the creatures to the eternal. Idowu (1966:107) is of the opinion that worship is an imperative urge in man, the beginnings of which are traced back to the basic instinct, which was evoked in man by the very fact of his confrontation with the "*numinus*." He maintains that man perceived that there was a power greater than he who dominated and controlled the whole unseen universe in which he felt himself enveloped.

Sometimes a human being may commit a wrongful act against the benevolent Supreme Being in spite of the latter's kindness bestowed on him. In such a situation the human being needs to show penitence. On the other hand the supernatural power may be malevolent and terrible. Such a situation would perforce create fear among the worshippers and, therefore, the need arises to appease such an angry god.

In Africa worship may be expressed by word of mouth or through actions. These words and deeds often take the form of rites, ceremonies and rituals. These rituals may include among others praying, invoking, prostrating, hailing the spirit of the object of worship, and making offerings, singing, drumming and dancing. Worship as such has no unique formula and it may be private, offered by someone in his/her house or at a shrine. Awolalu (1979:99) has stated that worship may also be a corporate activity, but in whatever form worship is undertaken it is often in reverence and in an appreciative manner and mode. Comparing worship in the African context to biblical worship Awolalu (1979:99) distinguished among others the following elements that may also be found in any organised African worship ceremony:

- **Liturgy**: This consists of rituals that have form, context, including music, prayer and dancing.

- **Sacrifice**: This entails the presentation of various offerings, which are either directed to the deity or other purposes.

- **Cultic functionaries**: These are the officiating ministers and attendants at worship. They may include the priests and other leaders who help to regulate and care for cultic elements.

- **Sacred places**: They include places where worship is carried out such as shrines, temples and altars.

The African traditional peoples may not have worshipped God in exactly the same way as the members of other religions do, including Christians, Muslims and Buddhists. They are nevertheless able to receive the message of God who manifests Himself to them in their own particular situation. Idowu (1973:108-110) is of the opinion that the term, "diffused monotheism," is a convenient expression that could best describe the religion of the African people. The crucial point here is that the African recognises religious intermediaries in the same way as he would approach to the kings in various traditional communities. The king is approached through the lesser chiefs and princes. In the same way God may be reached in Christianity through one mediator – Jesus Christ. An adverse point regarding traditional religion is that they are so many stopping points, being the deities who are duly respected. It has been reported that among the Yoruba tribe in Nigeria one could distinguish between as many as 1700 different divinities (cf. Kayode 1984:2). One could also expect to encounter an almost equal number of shrines to the number of deities. Kayode (1984:2) reported that in Ile-Ife in Nigeria alone, there are more than 35 shrines and only one day in a year is not devoted to some religious ritual or the other. This supports Professor Mbiti (1975:1) who observed that the Africans are notoriously religious with each people having its own religious system and a set of beliefs and practices. Religion, therefore, permeates through all the facets of life and one cannot possibly isolate it.

Everything that the African personality experiences, attracts him/her to religion. All the works of nature – such as geographical features like rivers, rocks, hills, whole forests and trees – instil in each African the awareness that there is a superior force that is greater than the individual. The experience that one derives from divine providence, for example the availability of abundant supplies of food for human beings and animals, procreation, growth

and the development of the crops and other plants, makes a person aware of this superior force in the universe.

On the other hand, the experience of adverse situations such as epidemics, poor harvest, infant mortality, drought etc., are a call for some religious concern in the form of sacrifice. During such times people may turn to blame the suffering they encounter on some external force, probably the superior forces which are beyond their control and as such the need to appease the gods, divinities or the ancestors. In most cases when things go well again, the African usually gives praise to God from whom all blessings flow.

From these experiences of life people are able to form their religious concepts of the deity and gradually these concepts become established. To the African the concept of God is extremely broad. He is present everywhere and knows and sees all things. The Bafut people of Cameroon have a proverb that God's eyes are in the sun and metaphorically they would even say that *mi'eme kwefor chwia yhengeh* (*"the eyes of kwefor are in the grass"*), equating *kwefor* in this sense with God who sees all things. Because of the endless attributes conferred on God, He becomes too great to be confined to a shrine or to be limited in time and space. Biblically God is also not limited in time and space. Interestingly enough certain shrines are specifically reserved for the lesser divinities and the ancestors.

All the other divinities are believed to have been brought into being by the Supreme Being. Each of the divinities has a role to play in the governance of the community (cf. Kayode 1984:4) who stated that the most intimate gods of the Bantu tribes of South Africa are the ancestral spirits. They form part of the family tribe, who are consulted very frequently. This is because the African ancestors are not dead, buried and gone forever. Mbiti (1975:25) called them the "living dead," which is the reason why they have to be consulted and appeased in times of crisis, since they still exert a great deal of influence on the living. From the foregoing paragraphs it could be concluded that there are certain similarities between worship in A.T.R. and Biblical worship, although they differ decidedly in most respects.

3.3.3   Elements of sacrifice in West Africa

Many of the rituals in African religion take place in the animal kingdom. The most common types are animal sacrifices and rites of passage. These two rituals exhibit characteristically African forms of ritual "saying" and "doing," as we mentioned above. Ritual sacrifice is able to accomplish a two-way transaction between separate and partially opposed realms (Ray 1979:78). The animal victim performs a dual function: it is psychologically present and acts

in the two worlds. It is the mediating symbol because it partakes of the said two worlds – the human and the spiritual worlds. Furthermore ritual sacrifice is able to combine certain symbolic features that link the human with the divine so that the divine is subject to human control (Ray 1979:79). This becomes the only means through which humans could mediate their relationship with the gods.

3.3.3.1   Ritual behaviour

Ritual behaviour may be approached in a variety of ways. According to Ray (1976:78), ritual sacrifice may be regarded as a way of communicating with the divine for the purpose of changing the human situation. Among many definitions and considerations Gorman (1990:18) finally arrives at the conclusion that ritual could be used to refer to that complex performance of symbolic acts which are characterised by formality, order and sequence and it tends to take place in a specific situation.

From the above observations made by the two scholars, a number of observations may be made. In the first place ritual has been seen as an act of communication. Ray stressed the communication aspect, while Gorman emphasises the aspect of performance. Both these terms shed a great deal of light in the meaning of the term ritual, especially in the African context. It would be recalled that we stressed earlier that the Bafut culture is almost one of silence when it comes to ritual sacrifices. Nearly everything is enacted through symbolic actions and little language is used, if at all. Sometimes it becomes difficult even to the person on whose behalf the ritual is being performed to follow up what is happening. Rituals presuppose the use of technical language and actions, sometimes understood only by the officiating ministers. There are moments when ritual action, timing, language and the environment have even become frightening to the client. This goes to express the complexity that Gorman (1990:18) ascribed to ritual action.

According to Ray (1979:78) rituals are performed to change the human state. In the case of a ruptured human relationship with the divine, a ritual sacrifice is needed to re-instate the cordial atmosphere that used to exist between man and the deity, in order to escape the current anger of the divine. Other rituals are performed to cure illness, increase fertility, to change people's social and religious status, to defeat the enemy and to remove impurities from the community. Thus it may be concluded that the dimension of "saying" and "doing" are closely related. "What is 'said' in symbolic terms is what is 'done' in ritual terms to modify experience in accordance with what men desire" (cf. Ray 1979:78). To a large extent, rituals

promote psychological and sociological integration without which such actions would have been quite meaningless. In the previous paragraphs we examined the subject of worship in which sacrifice constitutes one of its main components. In the paragraphs that follow we will concern ourselves with sacrifice in the African context, with special emphasis on the West African region.

Idowu (1966:118) stated that it becomes inconceivable to practice a religion without some form of sacrifice. Sacrifice is for instance the essence of the Yoruba religion, as it is regarding virtually every religion that the world has known. Sacrifice is the means of contact or communication between man and the deity. According to the Yoruba tradition (cf. Idowu 1966:118) all kinds of foods, drinks, and other objects are sacrificed or offered to the deity. Each divinity has its own tastes and requirements. Idowu (1966:118) has even reported on human sacrifice among the Yoruba in the olden days and he doubts whether it has really ended or whether it is still being done in secret.

For Mbiti (1975:58), sacrifice and offerings are the most common acts of worship among the African people. Sometimes it becomes exceedingly difficult to make a distinction between the two. James (ERE 1920:1) on the other hand defined sacrifice in the African context as a rite in the course of which something is forfeited or destroyed. The purpose of this is to establish relationships between a source of strength and one in need of such strength for the benefit of the latter. For Awolalu (1979:136) sacrifice is a religious act that takes the form of rendering something to a supernatural being for various intentions and purposes. As could be observed, all the above definitions relate either to the divinity, supernatural or Supreme Being. In other words they appear to be religiously inclined and are meant for the re-establishment of relationships between the two categories of beings – the humans and the deities.

Other scholars are of the opinion that sacrifice may not necessarily be religiously inclined. Sometimes sacrifice means denying oneself certain benefits and advantages in preference to some other purpose. It does not matter what purpose that may be, but its significance relates to something of great value or importance which is renounced in order that a certain end may be achieved. The sacrificial element – be it material or otherwise – is often costly, and as such one could say that sacrifice involves cost.

Awolalu (1979:135) maintained that in general the meaning of sacrifice is equally the extension of its metaphoric meaning, which emphasises the renunciation of one thing for the

sake of another, which is higher in value. From close observation and also from the foregoing paragraphs, it would appear that the concept of sacrifice varies among the African people in a number of respects. As concerns the Bafut of Cameroon, the understanding of sacrifice is usually connected with the giving of something to a deity or to the supreme God in return for a greater benefit. This means that sacrifice in the context of the Bafut always has some religious connotation. They are able to distinguish between those sacrifices that are offered to the gods and those to the Supreme Being. In this case there is no question of the metaphorical use of the term sacrifice.

The Bafut have two distinct vocabularies or words to describe the destination for the sacrifices, either to the Supreme God or to the gods of the ancestors. When offering sacrifice to God, the Bafut person uses the expression *tugne Nwi* – to sacrifice or reward God. If the sacrifices are meant to the gods, the words used are often descriptive and symbolic. A typical term often used is *ma'a bunwi*; literally "*to throw to the gods.*" The Bafut people understand that the gods or the ancestors are numerous, while the Supreme God is unique and has created the universe and even the gods of the ancestors. To sacrifice to the ancestors they use the word *ma'a bunwi* – *throw to the gods*, because sacrifice to the gods often presuppose that the concomitant rituals are fearful and bear a great deal of risks and uncertainties. Each shrine usually creates an atmosphere of trembling fear, where the uninitiated may not be admitted during some of the rituals. All the activities there are done in haste and uncertainty – thus the expression "*to throw to the gods.*"

To sacrifice to the supreme God is usually an occasion of joy and celebration. Recently even the priests of the big shrines in Bafut have shown their presence at Christian ceremonies when they were invited. This goes to support the notion that the African is very conscious of the fact that the Supreme God is the creator of the universe together with the divinities and spirits (cf. Awolalu 1979:137), whereas the divinities and the spirits are higher and more powerful than human beings.

Scholars of religion are almost unanimous that sacrifice is an important element in all religion. As pointed out before, sholars still find it difficult, if not impossible, to agree on the purpose of sacrifice. Tylor (1958:461) asserted that sacrifice serves as a means of a bribe to the gods. (Compare also the explanations by some social anthropologists above). It may also be to pay homage to them in the same way as men pay homage to their overlords. In this way sacrifice remains limited to the gods alone. Awolalu (1979:238) convincingly stated that behind every sacrifice there is usually a definite purpose. "There is no aimlessness in making

an offering, and we assert that no one ever makes a sacrifice without having a goal in mind. Other quarters have therefore seen sacrifices as a means of teasing the gods to act as favourably as possible to those who give them the gifts. Other reasons are to cement communion between man and the supernatural being" Smith (Awolalu 1979:138).

The divinities and spirits could be of great help to those who worship loyally and keep to the ethics of the community. In the event of any negligence of the above, they could turn to the community's detriment. Among the evil forces that could be experienced, are sorcery and witchcraft, which could make life to be very unpleasant, and thus the need arises to sacrifice to the gods. Positively, life is to be preserved and continued and this depends entirely upon the favour of the beings, which have the power to sustain or destroy it. There is consequently a strong desire to maintain communication with the deities. Thanks are hence always due to the so-called benefactors, given in the form of thanksgiving and sacrifices, usually during annual festivals.

3.3.3.2   Sacrifices and offerings

Mbiti (1975:58) distinguished between sacrifices and offerings. He defined sacrifices to be the process whereby animal life is destroyed in order to present the animal either in part of in whole to God, a supernatural being, spirit or the living dead. He observed that offerings belong to the remaining cases which do not involve the killing of an animal. These objects may include foodstuffs and other items (1975:58-59). This distinction furthermore emphasises that sacrifice entails immolation and the shedding of blood. The sacrifices are directed to the ancestors and the spirits who are the intermediaries between God and human beings. In a way God is the ultimate recipient of sacrifice, irrespective of to whom it was meant. The one who offers may not even be aware that this is the situation.

The verbal components of sacrifice facilitate this transaction by way of influencing the gods with words of incantations and prayer. The preparatory and conducting phases of the sacrificial process are often crucial because the participants need to purify the time, place and the victim of the sacrifice. The sharing of the victim's flesh symbolises the bond between the worshippers and the gods. In animal sacrifice we are able to discern a threefold structure (Ray 1968:79), which includes consecration, invocation-immolation and communion-purification.

Sacrificial rejoicing seems to be a common bond that rallies the ancestors together. As was the case with the Israelites and the ancient Near Eastern cultures, sacrifices are both communal and private in Africa. A word or two may be in order about private and family

sacrifice in Africa. The researcher was quite thrilled to see that de Heusch (1985:49) reported about this category of animal sacrifice among the Bafut of Cameroon, even though he described the Bafut as "Mufut." This is the name, which the neighbouring tribes use to refer to the Bafut people. In the case of the family sacrifice, the rite takes place in the family compound, for it is there that the ancestors remain closest to the living. Reasons for sacrifice may vary, but the *schema* remains constant.

The principal officiant is always the most senior member of the immediate family group. But – as we mentioned above – if the sacrifice is purely personal, the sacrificer is at the same time the officiating minister. In the case of the Bafut of Cameroon – a fact confirmed by Heusch (1968:49) – there is no strict law on the selection of the animal victim. Sometimes a diviner dictates it. However it should be made clear that the latter has no part to play because he is not allowed to shed the blood of the animal. He may also indicate the parts that should be reserved for the ancestors. In Bafut the animals most frequently used are dogs, sheep, goats and also fowls. Just as Heusch (1985:50) has reported among the Zulu, the goat is becoming increasingly preferred to any other animals.

3.3.3.3   Motives for sacrifice

As we have observed as regards social anthropology, there are many theories for sacrifice to explain its meaning in the African context. These could include the communion, the gift theory, the propitiatory and the thanks offerings theories. A type of ontological balance is expected to be maintained between humankind and the spirits of the departed and the living (cf. Mbiti 1975:58). When this balance is absent, people experience misfortune and suffering or the fear that the spirits will strike against them. Psychologically the making of sacrifice and offerings could be a device to restore the ruptured ontological balance.

3.3.3.4   Forms and types of sacrifices

Many forms of sacrifice have been reported over the African continent with particular emphasis on West Africa. King (1986:65) is of the opinion that ritual sacrifice is present and performed in all parts of Africa. What differs is the way in which such ritual sacrifices are performed by each people and environment. He highlighted some examples from Ghana, Sudan, Ogun in Lagos Nigeria, Kinsasha in Zaire and Soweto near Johannesburg (cf. King 1986:65). He continues: "It may be the breaking of a hen's egg under a tree in Ghana, the use of a sheep's blood to propitiate the soul of a statue, the offering of an ox by the Sudan people,

the decapitation of a dog in honour of Ogun in Lagos Nigeria etc." King (1986:65) also reported on some human sacrifice within the West African region, which to him meant to dispel the atrocities and the influence of the white men. This assertion is very much under dispute because before the arrival of the whites to the continent, this custom and culture had been continuing for centuries. This may in fact have been the origin of the scapegoat sacrifice in Africa.

As a social being the African has learned to show his gratitude for everything that comes his way to raise his state of being. As concerns sacrifices, he offers them in recognition and gratitude for anything that he positively experiences (cf. Kayode 1984:9). Thus a person would offer the first product of his labour as a consecration to God. He recognises that the increase in his family, cattle, farm products etc. come from God. It is only when he/she offers the firstlings of his/her labour to God or the deity that he/she may freely enjoy the rest.

There are many types of sacrifices in Africa, and among them scholars have identified the thanks offering, adoration, propitiation and expiation, foundation and, of course, the scapegoat sacrifice to which we alluded above. These are also others that concern us in the present research and, therefore, we propose to discuss them in more detail. Just as the Christian would offer sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving to Christ, the traditionalist or the African would offer sacrifices to the divinities and God who are considered to be responsible for their well being. These praises are often expressed through music, songs and even through wise sayings or African proverbs.

(a)   Adoration sacrifices

It is a common belief in the African cultures that by feeding the gods or the divinities, they would continue to preside over human destinies (cf. Kayode 1984:8). Sacrifices for adoration often feature a communication meal. This enables the donor of the sacrificial meal or the element to share in the life of the god who is believed to have taken up the offering into union with itself. In many parts of the world – including West Africa and the Bafut of Cameroon in particular – the blood of the victim is mostly sacrificed to the deities. Blood is invariably of crucial importance of any sacrifice and it symbolises the very essence of existence.

(b)   Propitiation and expiation sacrifices

The above two terms play quite an important role in the study of sacrifice in both the biblical and the African contexts. To clear some ambiguity in the application of the two words, it would be important to elucidate each of them by way of definition.

Bushinski (ERE 1979:2905) defined propitiation as "the action that one takes to restore himself with another after having incurred his displeasure." It was stated earlier that the African is a social being and in this state there are moments when he may encounter some frustration. This definition presupposes that there are situations where one may be either overjoyed or sometimes one may have some misunderstanding with another person. Often it may not be intentional and done unconsciously, but one should not rule out the possibility of intentional behaviour. When such an individual returns to his/her normal senses and is able to realise his/her fault towards the neighbour, he/she would be expected to try at all costs to rectify the situation or to re-cement their previous cordial relationship.

Biblically the term of atonement is used of one human being to another, or a human being with respect to God. In the Old Testament it is often used in relation to the Hebrew word כַּפֹּרֶת , a propitiatory place or thing. (cf. Seat of mercy where *Yahweh* was thought to accept propitiatory action (Lev. 16:2). Many scholars have however expressed doubts as to where the emphasis should be laid, whether on propitiation or on expiation.

Expiation is typically an Old Testament term, which has been taken up in the New Testament. This term can best be equated with the Hebrew כַּפֵּר which occurs in the great feast of the Day of Atonement in Leviticus 16. In the Old Testament the verb to expiate means to purify, that is to make a person or thing pleasing to God. This presupposes the existence of sin in which case expiation would work to destroy it (ERE 1979:1294). Sin therefore becomes the rebellious alienation of man from God. Hence expiation has the effect of effacing sin while reuniting man with God.

"On this day the high priest went beyond the veil of the holy of holies bearing the blood of the ram and bull which he pours to cover the Ark," the כַּפֹּרֶת which has been translated as the mercy seat or propitiatory, the place where the glory of God dwells. Expiation would only occur when there is a willingness to be cleansed or purified. Thus we can say that both terms are important in both the biblical and the African sacrificial systems. Propitiation is the discovery or becoming conscious that a relationship has been strained which needs to be restored through the action of expiation.

(c)   Foundation sacrifice

According to Kayode (1984:9), foundation sacrifices are those sacrifices which change the status of either an individual or of whole communities. Most of the sacrifices in the African context are foundational. This is so because they are effected in most cases during the period

of initiation. According to Awolalu (1979:159) these types of sacrifice are preventive in nature, through the action of initiation. These sacrifices perform simultaneously the dual function of propitiation and thanksgiving.

Since the African sacrificial system is never a unique phenomenon, we cannot claim to be exhaustive on the different types of sacrifices. We have thus rather selected mostly those best relating to our topic. In the paragraphs that follow, we shall be concerned with what conditions constitute the elements for sacrifice and the rites that are usually performed to have them accomplished. This is because, before a person comes forward for the rite of sacrifice, he is expected to have the required materials or victim for the sacrifice. Awolalu (1979:162) is of the opinion that an oracle dictates such requirements in most of the cases or that it may be dictated by the prevailing conventional circumstances.

Throughout the continent, victims for sacrifice vary from one circumstance to another and from one divinity to another. It is also commonplace that things offered are those used by human beings in their day-to-day life. Awolalu (1979:162) has correctly observed that such things range from the smallest living and non-living matter to large domestic animals. Thus materials for sacrifices are drawn from both the animal and the plant kingdoms. We could add that centuries ago the human kingdom was also included, with particular reference to the Bafut of Cameroon and other tribes of the continent, as already mentioned.

(d) Human sacrifice

Under the heading of conceptualisation and operationalisation we defined the term scapegoat. Thomas (1911:984) reported the following in the annual custom of the people of the then Dahomey in West Africa: A few hundred years ago, the people of Dahomey practised the scapegoat sacrifice, including the messenger and expiation. It is reported that the human victim was kept in captivity and fed very well before the day of the ritual. This was intended to transfer the sins of the community to a desolate place. The people laid their hands upon him and he was led in procession to the shrine with his head covered in ashes. At the appointed sacrificial place – the shrine – the victim was slain and his blood offered to the gods. Parrinder (1975:62-63) reported a similar situation in both Uganda and Dahomey, but admitted that sometimes the number of human victims were exaggerated in order to scare the slave traders who raided the area. He concluded that the practice continued up to 1860.

The above examples lead us to conclude that scapegoat sacrifice has been an ancient practice in West Africa and only at a later stage was it replaced with animal sacrifice. The scapegoat

sacrifice was thus not limited to the Israelites, as we find recorded in Leviticus 16, and it had a long history in some cultures of the African people. The same practice regarding scapegoat sacrifice and human sacrifice was prevalent among the Bafut of Cameroon and the Yoruba of Nigeria, as we have seen reported by Onibere, Awolalu Idowe and the researcher in these places. As time lapses one is unable to say with certainty when the practice came to an end. In Bafut, and during our field research, some of our interlocutors thought that this practice came to an end in the 17th century, while others suggested a much later date.

As already mentioned above, most of the materials used for sacrifice are connected with the human day-to-day life. Hence it follows that most of the animals selected for sacrifice are domestic animals and they may include dogs, goats, sheep, cattle and fowls. Great emphasis is usually laid on the blooded animals because blood plays such a vital role in the sacrificial system of both the Bible and of Africa. Blood in African sacrifice represents life itself. We referred above to the problem of human sacrifice. A human being was the highest and most costly victim of sacrifice (Awolalu 1979:167). He continues:

"Human beings were offered not because of a sadistic desire for wanton destruction of life or lack of respect for human life but mainly because the people's philosophy of life with regard to sacrifice, held that it was better to sacrifice one life for the good of the community than for all to perish. A human victim was seen as an ambassador believed to be going to represent the people before, and carry their petitions to, the higher power."

The above quoted passage summarises also the philosophy of the Bafut people of Cameroon who practised human sacrifice before the 18th century. As gathered from those communities who used to perform human sacrifice in West Africa, that this was practised mostly during periods of national crises and disasters, and such a sacrifice was meant to propitiate certain divinities and purify the whole of the community.

Human sacrifice was seemingly widespread among the cultures of the African peoples. Heusch (1985:155) undertook a structural study of the African sacrificial system and concluded that the aspect of human sacrifice and the way it was done was quite similar to each other. Almost everywhere it took the form of a scapegoat. The sacrifice of the albino described in his book, "Sacrifice in Africa" (1985:155), is quite similar to the sacrifice of the albino among the Bakweri of Cameroon, which has since been abandoned.

3.3.3.5   Symbols and meaning in material sacrifice

It is important to point out that many, if not all, of the materials and victims for sacrifice have some specific symbolic meaning. Intentions for sacrifice vary from one circumstance to another. The intention may be to request a peaceful existence, to avert danger, an increase in the family or in agricultural products. In each case the material is carefully selected so that it possesses some symbolic meaning relating to the specific need.

The example Awolalu (1979:165) relates is illuminating. To the Yoruba people of Nigeria, the snail (*Igbin also called ero*) symbolises softness, gentleness or simply that which softens. They would offer the snail on those occasions when the emphasis is on peace or painlessness. The god *Ogun* is always in anger and such objects are often offered to calm down his anger. Before a child of the Yoruba people is circumcised the slimy fluid from the snail is sprinkled on him especially on the part to be cut. It is believed that the slow motion of the snail helps or dampens the pain from the cut spot. There are many such symbolic meanings for sacrifice and initiation.

Most sacrifices occur during great festivals. As such they require a great deal of training and preparation on the side of the officiating ministers. For exemple, in the Nefo'o ritual of the Bafut of Cameroon, the officiating priests have to prepare themselves following the required norms of the ritual in order to be worthy and acceptable before the divinities or the intermediaries. They have certain codes of conduct to observe, avoiding such things as coition, insulting language, cursing, fighting and certain foods.

In the case of the *Nefo'o* ritual of the Bafut of Cameroon, the prescriptions do not permit the priest to spend the night preceding the day of the ritual in his house. The priests have to dress in a special way and are expected to bathe both before and after the ritual before normal life commences again. Awolalu (1979:170) reported on the experience of the Yoruba people of Nigeria. Long ago, when a human victim was to be offered, the chief priest and the person designated to carry out the immolation had to spend four days in a grove before the actual day of the festival. During these days the priests usually had to devote themselves to ritual discipline and prayers.

Invocations and incantations often accompany prayers. They have to be memorised beforehand. The contents of these prayers and incantations are usually earnest appeals to the divinities inviting them to be present and listen to the petitions of their children. The priests

may sound a gong and after a while they/he may then pour a libation. After the libation, they can then proceed to ritually present the rest of the sacrificial elements (cf. The *Nefo'o* ritual of the Bafut described above).

It often happens that anyone who comes to make a sacrifice is asked to stand before the shrine and state the purpose of the sacrifice. After this an earnest prayer is made that his request may be granted. If the item the supplicant brought is an animal, he holds onto the rope to which the animal is tethered; and standing before the shrine, the supplicant would state all good things he/she desires and then pray to the divinity to grant his/her request (Awolalu 1984:172).

The priest may at this point continue and address the supplicant, enumerating all what he has brought. In the case of a childless woman for example – which we witnessed during our research period in December 1998 at the occasion of the Nefo'o ritual of the Bafut of Cameroon – the priest would then present the woman as follows: *"Bu taa bi'i mughur gwoua me yie me nu mbi abo'o nu buru."* ("Our fathers, this your daughter has brought this goat and this cam-wood"). After this the priest will then state the reasons for her coming. In the case we have just cited above, the priest would continue to say, *"Bu yie mangie a njem mu. Gwuo a yie me nsibu ne malaa mi'i you, nloo ne ntukute mu ke kun mbara njem you. Nu fa mu ghou mbo."* ("A woman is recognised through a child. She is childless and she has come with tears in her eyes to you. She wants to handle or carry a child on her back. Give her a child"). After this, part of the cam-wood is left at the shrine while the other is given to the woman to anoint her body with it.

The animal (goat) is released to go and perish, carrying the offences and sins of the lady or her family. The supplicant's sins are usually conferred upon the goat before it is sent away. The woman may also be washed with special leaves, *Ndoro*. Awolalu (1984:172) reported a similar ritual with a slight difference in that – after all the incantations and the prayers from both the priest and the supplicants – the animal victim is slain and the blood used or buried in the ground.

We mentioned earlier the concept of the scapegoat sacrifice under the problem statement at the start of this dissertation. We referred to the immolation of the lower forms of animals, such as birds. In some important and official sacrifices human beings have been used in past centuries. At present such human sacrifices is a matter of the past among many African tribes, including the Bafut of Cameroon. We cannot claim to have first hand information

about how such persons were treated and finally immolated. We have to rely on the history of the tradition that has been handed down through the centuries in oral form as concerns the Bafut people.

James Johnson and Talbot (1969:858) reported that such human victims were paraded through the streets of the town and before the sovereign who would eventually sacrifice them. Awolalu (1984:176) also reported on the scapegoat sacrifice and, just as Talbot explained, such a person took it upon himself to act as a scapegoat. He would decide to take upon himself the sins of the people in order to bring good fortune to the entire community. He was usually chosen by the priest and thereupon another person or the priest performed the execution. There appears to be some difference in the above method of selecting the victim in the case of the Nefo'o ritual of Cameroon where the relevant person was completely in the dark about his fate.

3.3.3.6   Preliminary conclusion

In conclusion we would like to examine the present situation of sacrifice in the West African context. Lawson (1985:76) observed that no religious system remained static over time. Each is influenced significantly by new conditions and discoveries. This means that when the religious system is subjected to change, then nearly all its component parts are bound to experience such changes and conform to the new system and conditions.

This we believe to be a convincing and valid judgement by Lawson. The sacrificial system in the African context had had to pass through many innovations as a result of several factors, both socio-religious and political. In the religious sphere, Christianity in particular played a crucial role in influencing the sacrificial system in the African continent by way of the gospel message of love and moral teaching. Some of the Protestant traditions have been particularly harsh on the practice of sacrifices made to the ancestors and ancestral veneration, qualifying this situation as idolatry.

Over the centuries, Christianity and Islam have infiltrated into many communities and as a result have determined and influenced many cultural forms (Meiring 1996:19). Nevertheless these religions have not completely eradicated all sacrificial and other traditio-religious activities. Christianity and Islam have become a threat to some of the vital components of the African religions such as animal sacrifice. In some of the communities the priests nowadays perform this with some hesitation especially since some of their members have been

converted to Christianity. An example is the case of Pa Baboni, a member of the priesthood of the traditional Bafut in the early 1970s.

Human sacrifice has been completely abolished, even though Idowu (1966:118) still wonders whether the barbaric act is not still being performed in secret. The abolition in part came about because of the Christian doctrine of "love your neighbour as yourself." In the political sphere some colonial systems were harsh on the people of the colonies who practised human sacrifice and stepped in to completely terminate the practice in such regions. With the emergence of the economy based on money some individuals are no longer able to provide the required animals for sacrifice, and as such only its symbolic nature remains nowadays. Despite the above factors which adversely influenced the sacrificial system in the African context, and as long as the religions continue to be part and parcel of the whole life of the African personality, sacrifice in West Africa will continue to be practised in one way or the other.

3.4   SACRIFICE IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST AND ISRAEL

This chapter will focus upon the examination of sacrifice in the ancient Near East and Israel. Before developing this theme, it may be apposite to point out that two terms have been used to designate the ancient Near Eastern people, excluding Israel, being the ancient Orient and the ancient Near East. Neither the designation of ancient Orient nor ancient Near East are terms of physical geography (Von Soden 1994:1). We emphasise this because there is often a lack of clarity on what really comprises the ancient Near East or the ancient Orient.

The Orient, therefore, has no clear geographical demarcation and may include the Near East with Egypt and Iran. This is in contrast with American usage, which identifies the Orient with East Asia (Soden 1994:1). An attempt to demarcate the Ancient Near East would equally place it within these suggested boundaries. In the north lie the Black Sea, the Cancasus and the Caspian Sea, and to the south east is the Indian Ocean (Soden 1994:1). The expression "suggested boundaries" has been used here to indicate that the boundaries of the ancient Orient were never constant in relation to the adjacent cultures around the Mediterranean region in north eastern Africa, in eastern Iran or later the Occident, Central Asia and India.

Islam was the dominant power of the Orient during the Middle Ages and it extended its influence beyond the confines of the Orient. This was because there had been no comparable dominant power in the pre-Hellenistic ancient Near East. There were marked differences

between the cultures of this region and the boundaries were very unstable. Egypt was cut off to the east by the Red Sea and the Sinai Desert. In this position of semi-isolation she created an exclusive system of writing and similarly in many other respects also saw a development of her own (Soden 1994:1). It has nevertheless traditionally been customary to include Egypt in the ancient Orient in the wider sense of the word.

The ancient Israelites have been regarded as being the bearers of the oldest religion of revelation. For centuries, both Christian and Jewish biblical scholars have occupied themselves with studies on Israel. For them the ancient Near East as a whole constituted the environment of the Bible. Many of the orientalists in the early days were theologians. Because Israel remained a central theme of biblical scholarship, for reasons of exclusiveness this country was not regarded as part of the areas in the ancient Oriental studies. As far as this study is concerned, Israel will be treated separately and the areas we have chosen to include in the ancient Near East would include Egypt and Mesopotamia.

The following paragraphs will seek to establish what the ancient Near Eastern people conceived about the universe. This is important because this will enable us to understand their view of both their religion and the sacrificial system with which we would soon concern ourselves. Harrelson (1969:2) writes: "As is well known the Ancient Near Eastern people conceived of a universe consisting of three regions or levels closely related to one another but clearly distinguishable. As early as 3000 BC it would appear that the Sumarians in lower Mesopotamia had worked out the chief features of a cosmology that was to endure for well over two thousand years."

According to the understanding of the Ancient Near Eastern peoples, the abode of the gods was the region of the upper heavens, which was quite distinct from the world of men. The earth was conceived to be like a disc, surrounded by water and anchored to mountain peaks and was separated from heaven by the open sky or firmament. The underworld contained the vast seas and land, and this was believed to be the destination of the dead.

The Babylonian beliefs followed in the same direction and depicted the origin of the universe in the same three-dimensional structure. The origin of matter was not absolutely stated. It was believed that the gods lived in heaven until a time of confusion arose and the gods were dispersed throughout the universe. It then came to pass that the gods could not govern both the affairs of the world above and of the world below. The result was a world fraught with chaos, disorderliness and fear. Babylonians conceived the notion of appeasing the gods,

which eventually became the point of departure for worship and the concept of sacrifice within the ancient Mesopotamia and her neighbours.

3.4.1   Sacrifice in ancient Egypt

In the earlier paragraphs we examined the concept of sacrifice, both generally and in particular terms. In the following paragraphs we will be examining the phenomenon of sacrifice and its component parts, as practised by the Ancient Egyptians. Because religion precedes sacrifice, we will briefly review some of the religious aspects of the Egyptians that would lead us into a better understanding of their sacrificial system.

3.4.1.1   Religion

The religion of the ancient Egyptians consisted of a seemingly limitless mass of deities. It may be classed as being pantheistic in nature. Hornung (1983:21) stated: "The Egyptians used various methods of ordering their endless pantheon; as elsewhere in their thought, these principles do not compete with one another but coexist equally." This quotation suggests that their religion was not only polytheistic, but there was a general belief that God or the deity could be identified with the forces of nature and with natural substances. Hornung also suggested that despite the numerous deities in the religious system of the ancient Egyptians, one could envisage a type of "syncretism" and a large degree of tolerance among the many deities. The symbols of the religious system of the ancient Egyptians were composed of hybrid creatures that bore the heads of animals on human bodies.

For centuries, the material culture of ancient Egypt left for posterity figures both in paintings and as sculptures. The diversity of deities indicated a direct reflection of the vast number of local cults and cultic centres. They were established mainly along the Nile valley prior to the political unification of Upper and Lower Egypt in 2925 BC. These deities figured prominently in religious texts during the long history of the country and formed part of a complicated and sophisticated set of religious beliefs (Silverman 1991:7). Despite these religious representations in the religious system of the Egyptians it would be quite wrong to label the one deity the god of one thing and the other the god of something else. There was a spirit of interrelationship among the members of the pantheon, yet under this complex network of deities one would still find a highly developed concept of the divine (Byron E. Shafer 1991:7).

This divine phenomenon came into being during the early stages of the ancient civilisation and evolved into the doctrines upon which the religion of ancient Egypt would be based for thousands of years. With the advent of the national cults a number of theological concepts developed in order to define and situate the world for the Egyptians. The concept of Ma'at (a world phenomenon) became very prominent. Ma'at signified the correct world order as given to man by the gods (Norton NEB 1995:392). This order included the precepts of truth, justice and correct social behaviour. The King or Pharaoh became the administrator of Ma'at which provides the reason why the king was seen at various occasions presenting Ma'at to the gods. Ra was the sun god and had a close association with the other deities because of his universal nature.

There was a belief in the continuity of life, so much so that life on earth was only one aspect of a person's existence. Thus death did not destroy the individual, but it merely transformed him/her into a further facet of the universe (NEB 1995:392). To the ancient Egyptians time was cyclical. When the king died, he became Osiris, the dead king and ruler of the netherworld. His son would become the new Horus, administrator of Ma'at. It was also the practice that after a living king had ruled for 30 years, he underwent a series of rituals. In the process he would become ritually dead and would consequently become Osiris. Mystically he would become rejuvenated and thus symbolically rejuvenated the entire land, which was associated with the yearly inundation of the land by the Nile (NEB 1995:392).

3.4.1.2   The cult in ancient Egyptian religion

In this paragraph we will concern ourselves with the cult as it functioned in the religion of ancient Egypt. Most cults centred their activities on the daily tending and worship of the image of a deity and were analogous to the pattern of human life. The shrines were opened at dawn, the deity was purified, greeted and praised, clothed and finally fed (NEB 1995:109). Then followed several other services until the image was finally returned to its shrine in the evening. The temples where these activities took place were in a festive mode throughout the day. The events at the temples were carefully co-ordinated by a small group of priests who at various festivals would bring out images from the sanctuary on a portable barge and made them visible to the people. It is important to note that the daily cult was a state concern that functioned to restore reciprocity between the human and the divine. This reciprocity was quite fundamental because the deities and humanity sustained the cosmos. It was common belief that if the gods were not satisfied they could become angry and cease to inhabit their

images and retreat to their abodes - the sky. This is the aspect that necessitated homage, praise and above all sacrifices to these deities.

3.4.1.2.1 Cultic centres

As already noted above the gods were numerous and had associations that corresponded to their chief cult localities. For example Ra, the sun god's cult was at Heliopolis, Ptah's was at Memphis and that of Amon was at Thebes. The principal cult of Khum, the creator God, was at Elephantine, since he was the Lord of the first nearby cataract (NEB 1995:108). Deities, therefore, had principal manifestations which were associated with one or more species of animals. The most important forms of animals for the gods were the falcon and the bull. The images of the cow, the cobra, the vulture and the lioness represented the goddesses. There were other animal representations too, but not as prominent as the above mentioned. Three quarters of the body of representation of each deity bore a human form, so that gods with animal manifestations were shown to have human bodies. A human head with an animal body represented the king.

3.4.1.2.2 Priesthood

Sacrificial worship in ancient Egypt was carried out on a priestly system. The ancient Egyptian priesthood functioned in like manner to the Israelite priesthood system in that the priests were teachers to the community, teaching the people morals and religious principles. They controlled education and provided guidance on morals and character (Patrie 1924:41). The priests were revered for their piety towards the gods and their wisdom and learning in which they instructed the people. Through the help of astrology and viewing the entrails of the sacrifices they could divine and foretell future events. From the records of actions performed in former times they could read the present. Priesthood, especially in the early ages, operated on a local basis since the gods were usually rivals. Each god was supreme in its own city and the priest was therefore part of the city organisation. Hierarchy among the priests was not stressed as one would find among the Israelite priesthood. Egyptian priesthood was hereditary although there were instances where the king's son was induced to become a priest. The attire of the priest in ancient Egypt was quite distinct from the dressings of the ordinary citizens. In other countries the priests of the gods wore long hair, but in Egypt it was the opposite, because they had their hair shaved. Herodotos (Patrie 1924:44-45, Davies and Renee Friedman 1998:157) added that the ancient Egyptian priests in fact had their whole body shaved every third day and they wore only linen and shoes of papyrus, apart from one

pair of leather shoes per year. In common with the other priesthoods that we have described, they washed in cold water twice daily with an additional washing twice every night. It is not certain whether this ritual washing was partial, as is the Muslim practice before prayers. They never feasted on any part of the sacrificial elements brought by individuals for worship.

Since priesthood varied with the gods and each god had its own taste, abstinence among the priests from certain matters varied too. Some could partake of wine, while others were not allowed to do so. In the early period it would appear as if there were no official or full time professional priests, but people could hold part time high priesthood offices or humbler positions on a rotational basis (Norton 1995:109) performing duties for one month in four. Their chief may have been a professional. The priests, while performing their duties, were expected to submit to rules of purity and abstinence (Norton 1995:109). It would seem as if the system of non-professional priesthood may have had a slight advantage over other religions with a strict high priesthood hierarchy. The Egyptian version provided for more functionaries in the cult, creating easier access to the temple than it would have been the case among permanent staff.

The priesthood positions were reserved for the menfolk, while the women were involved in the cult of the goddess Hathar. From the period of the New Kingdom and later, many women held the title of "chantress" to the deity, as they were mostly concerned with the singing and musical cult performances. Priesthood was graded into four orders. Each order served in turn, a month at a time. One order would thus be responsible for the cult once in each of three seasons. This division and rotational process in priesthood resembles the Jewish system (Luke 1:5,8). It implied that the priests had both homes and affairs apart from the temple service. The lowest grade of the priest was called *Uab* (Patrie 1924:48), and this grade was responsible for the strict examination of the animals presented for sacrifice and also performed routine tasks at the temple. A priest in this grade was also known as the "Wash" or the purified man (Patrie 1924:48). The Kherbed was a learned man who could recite all of the liturgy and spells in a manner that would give proper direction to the general service. The next grade was that of the servants of the god (*bemu neter*) who were the prophets of the cult. This implied that they could have foreknowledge of what had to be done but otherwise there was no element of prophesying in the priestly functions.

3.4.1.2.3 Worship

The temple was the focal point of community worship. At certain periods the king acted in theory as high priest for all the gods, but in practice he appointed others to perform his daily ritual functions. In considering Egyptian religion one should guard against isolating particular areas of activities of life as being the only phenomena identifiable with Egyptian religion. The ancient Egyptians saw no area of life that could thus be isolated, because no division existed between church and state and all was within the domain of divine power. There was consequently no marked distinction between the sacred and the secular. Every human activity was totally within the order, while the system was upheld and sanctioned by divine power. Tobin (1989:3) summarised the position: "religion consisted of life itself." In the course of his life the individual was automatically part of the universal divine order. "The gods, the natural order, the state, the king, the individual and even the dead were all integral parts of the unified cosmic order" (Tobin 1989:3). Ancient Egyptian was clearly not only polytheistic, but pantheistic as well.

3.4.1.2.4 Ritual and human sacrifice in ancient Egypt

Bonnel in his foreword to the book: "*Theological Principles of Egyptian Religion*" (Tobin 1989:1) observed: "Ancient Egyptian religion provides material for intriguing and fascinating study. Its gods were numerous, varied and colourful; its temples suggest the performance of mysterious and complex rituals; its texts appear to be full of rich mythology, the details of which were frequently elusive. The remains of Egyptian religion appear to many to constitute a confused mass of symbols, beliefs and rituals..." This is the scene when one embarks on the study of ancient Egyptian religion and its sacrificial practices. This religion was pantheistic and which seemed to overshadow the rituals and symbolism of its sacrificial system. We can rightly say that little remains known of Egyptian ritual. Our knowledge rests mainly on pictorial evidence and archaeological findings or discoveries. According to Thomas (1911:984) at Deir el Bahri, animals had their throat cut in the Muslim way, lying on their side with their legs bound tight together. The heart was taken out, and then the liver. It would seem as if the burnt sacrifice was hardly known, but that purification was strongly emphasised. The priest had to be ritually purified before the offering of the incense and other sacrificial material. Gestures and other incantations followed the offerings, using some of the words we mentioned previously. Since the whole of society was religiously inclined with very little distinction between the sacred and the secular, rituals did not appear to occupy a

prominent place in the religion of the ancient Egyptians, as was the case in the religions of other nations.

Archaeological, epigrahical and literary evidence indicated aspects of a strictly ritualised cult amongst the ancient Egyptians that was administered by a highly organised priesthood, which included daily sacrifices in the temples. Here the deities were treated as sovereigns in their palaces (Eliade 1987:554). Sacrifices and offerings constituted the choice parts of the oxen, various birds - particularly geese, vegetables, figs, grapes, melons and bread covered with lotus flowers (Patrie 1924:34), and they were usually accompanied by incense. Sacrifice formed part of the routine activities of the king, which he performed each morning to the gods.

Patrie (1924:34) writes: "When the victims were brought to the altar, it was the custom for the high priest in the presence of the king and people ... to pray with a loud voice for the health and prosperity of the king." The above quotation is a reflection of the fact that sacrifice took place on a regular basis among the ancient Egyptians and it constituted a crucial element in their worship system. Thus the Egyptians populated their world with an ever-growing array of divine beings – deities and even demons who exercised a great influence on every aspect of life. Their influence even extended to the world beyond (Davies & Friedman 1998:152). These divine beings had to be appeased, controlled and even threatened if necessary. Harthor was the great cow deity and mother of Pharaoh (1998:152) and was said to be the goddess of fertility and love who could also destroy her environment very easily.

The above is also indicative of the types of sacrifices that were made. Most of the sacrifices were of the intercessory type executed on behalf of the people by the priest, and in most cases by the chief priest. The cult of the gods was in the temples that had carefully been designed to mirror the cosmos (Davies & Freidman 1998:55; Patrie 1924:35). The sacrifices were offered to *Ra* three times daily and accompanied by incense of different kinds. Ra was seemingly the most popular deity, who rose with the world each day. Each deity had his/her own taste for sacrifice. To the heavenly deity a white cock was offered, and as a guide to the dead a saffron coloured cock was offered. The first fruits of the growing lentils were offered to Harpocrates while an ox, goose and wine, a burnt offering and a drink offering were offered to Isis of Kapto and Harpocrates etc (Patrie 1924:35). On special days (19th of Thoth) honey, and figs were eaten accompanied by the symbolic expression: "how sweet is truth" (Patrie 1924:35).

There were reports of human sacrifice, especially during the first dynasty where it was the custom that at the death of the king the court and other high officials were all killed. Patrie (1924:35) wrote that more than five hundred officials were killed at the death of the king, but this custom dwindled down to about a tenth by the end of the first dynasty (7000 BC). As described before, human sacrifice was widespread in Africa and lasted for centuries before its total extinction. The occasion for and the class of people for sacrifice were found to vary between the various African communities. In West Africa (cf. Dahomey, Nigeria and the Bafut of Cameroon) mostly slaves and foreigners were sacrificed. Only prominent people who violated the tradition could be put to death. It is interesting to see how the Egyptian practice differed from the later African versions as in ancient Egypt, the court was killed at the death of a king. Patrie unfortunately failed to provide any reasons for the latter practice.We can only speculate that the court had to suffer, just as they enjoyed the time they presided over the population. Life was cyclical and it may be that the courtiers had to die to rejuvenate the king to a new life. Various references were made to this practice in the Book of the Dead. It is quoted from Manetho that at El Kab men were burned alive and their ashes winnowed through a sieve and scattered in the wind. Athenaeus is quoted as testifying to human sacrifice right up to the 5th century B.C (Patrie 1924:36).

Other special sacrifices and offerings were performed at certain sacred festivals. They were carried out in a procession and made at certain cataracts in the Nile and at public fountains. Patrie (1924:36) reported on the offerings of Ramsessu III (Ramsess III?) which were usually done at the Nile. From a record in the Harris papyrus it is reported that there were 106 stages on the Nile and a shrine at each stage which was separated from each other by a distance of six and a half miles. Its priests attended the shrine each day. One can still observe some traces of private sacrifices as we could gather from the following quotation, "Soon after sunrise, taking one of the eunuchs of the palace with her and ordering a maid to follow her with cakes and other requisites for sacrifice, she hastened to the temple of Isis. Upon arrival at the entrance she said she came to offer a sacrifice for her mistress Arsace who had been disturbed by portentous dreams and wished to propitiate the goddess" (Patrie 1924:37).

3.4.1.3   Preliminary conclusion

From the study of both the religion and sacrificial system of the ancient Egyptians it may be concluded that life had no end. Both the present world and the world after life played a crucial role in the world view of ancient Egyptians. Life was cyclical, following the rhythm

of the solar system (cf. Davies & Freidman 1998:53). Ancestral veneration was regarded with such prominence that shrines for the dead could be found in individual living rooms. Direct communication with the ancestors was believed to be possible so that letters could be written to the dead (1998:178). Thus – similar to any other African community with ancestral veneration – the dead had direct access to the gods and could even intervene on behalf of their respectful families.

3.4.2   Sacrifice in ancient Mesopotamia

Ancient Mesopotamia has been described as the cradle of civilisation (cf. Black & Green 1992:7). This description may not just be limited to the fact that Mesopotamia was the home of some of the world's earliest cities and the place where writing was invented. Its literature, its religious philosophy and its arts earned it the additional fame of being regarded as the direct ancestor of the Western world. The uses of the invented writing (cuneiform) ensured that in addition to administrative, commercial and historical documents, extensive attention was also paid to the recording of religious matters (Black & Green 1992:9). In pre-modern societies religion had a much more pervasive influence on every aspect of life than any other socio-cultural phenomenon. In this context – and as we earlier defined the term religion – it could be seen as a wide sweep of ideas and beliefs ranging from magic at one extreme to philosophy at the other (Black & Green 1992:9). A considerable part of the ancient arts was produced within this broad religious sphere with the application of images derived from religious traditions. We will now commence the following section with a study of the religious ideas of ancient Mesopotamia.

3.4.2.1   Religion in ancient Mesopotamia

Basic to all religions is the unique experience of dealing with a power that is not of this world. The German theologian, Rudolf Otto, has termed this the "numinous experience" and has further classified it as the experience of the *mysterium tremendum et fascinam.* (cf. Eliade 1987:450). This confrontation with the mysterious is what has been referred to as the "wholly other," that is outside of normal experience and is indescribable in any terms. The religion of the ancient Mesopotamians had much in common with that of the ancient Egyptians, which we described in the previous paragraphs. Our knowledge of the religion of early Mesopotamia depends solely on the results of almost 150 years of excavation. Even though most of the original artefacts were either stolen or taken to a safe place (Nemet-Nejat 1998:175), some written sources could fortunately be recovered. Such sources included

myths, "manuals" explaining the religious ideology, rituals, hymns and prayers. Personal names and other administrative documents could also communicate religious beliefs to many scholars and researchers.

Many myths answered pertinent questions for the ancient people regarding the origin of the world around them, and matters regarding the gods and their activities (Nemet-Nejat 1998:177). Sin against the gods was a serious crime for which reason there was an extended vocabulary explaining the notion of sin. The gods could punish, as well as forgive sins. For the ancient Mesopotamians personal wellbeing was linked with correct worship. Sin could be both individual and communal and this sin could bring about disorder, plagues, earthquake, fire or other evil on the community.

The ancient Mesopotamian religion was a religion of priests and the kings, which focused on the image of the gods and the temple. The priests took charge of most of the religious services – sacrifices and hymns of praise. The king performed some of the prayers, fasts, mortification and taboos. It was also a religion of several deities appearing in various physiomorphic forms and it seems probable that the oldest forms in which the gods appeared were human forms. Even though other animal forms were prevalent, human forms were in the majority. The human forms and the non-human forms could coexist, but the human forms were much favoured and more dignified. The religion was pantheistic and found throughout the land. It was anthropomorphic and sociomorphic at the same time placing the deities in a chronological order which first placed the deities of heaven, the wind, the eastern foothills and the underground fresh waters; each with his or her family household (Eliade 1987:453). The early Mesopotamians believed that storms, rivers, lakes, marshes, mountains, the sun, wind and fire were all living beings (Nemet-Nejat 1998:178), and consequently forces of nature were worshiped as gods. Next came the smaller deities such as the moon, the sun and the evening stars.

3.4.2.2   The Cult in ancient Mesopotamia

According to Thorkild (Eliade 1987:464), the communal cult of the gods was performed in two parts. One section was concerned with a celebration of the appropriate festivals of the various gods and at suitable times. The other part related to the provision of services to the gods in a dignified manner. The earlier of the two patterns in serving the gods appeared to have been festivals, most of which were best seen as being communal magic rites for prosperity, which later developed into cult dramas performed by the community's

representatives. Traces of these dramas could be found in the "sacred marriage, the death drama, the journey drama and the ploughing drama" (Eliade 1987:464). The death drama had the function of performing for the dying god of fertility while in the journey drama the god represented by his image travelled to visit a god in another city. Other celebrations and performances took place in the cult but it is not in the scope of the present dissertation to discuss them in detail. The Mesopotamian temple was initially used as a storehouse for sacred objects by the nomadic peoples. It later became the dwelling for the gods. The temples were rectangular in shape and entered through a door at one of its end walls. The gods manifested themselves on earth through the medium of their cult statues and most of them were kept in the temples.

Cult statues appeared as early as the third Dynasty of Ur and they were usually carved on expensive imported material and overlaid with gold (Black & Green 1992:56). It was attested that during the Babylonian period newly dedicated images were imbued with the presence of their deity through the performance of a ritual known as "washing the mouth" and "opening the mouth" (Black & Green.1992:56). Since it was customary for the deity to eat and drink, the temple kitchens were charged with the preparation of daily meals that were derived from the animals and plants raised and grown on temple fields. Sacrifices and other offerings from devotees supplemented the stock of food, which in practice was eaten by the clergy and other temple staff. The cult statue was not only fed, but it also had to be dressed in the finest garments, constantly bathed, taken to bed in its well-adorned bedchamber and treated to sleep with fine music.

3.4.2.2.1 Worship in ancient Mesopotamia

There was not such an elaborate and clearly designated priesthood for the cult, as one would find among the other religions that we have so far described. Divisions from the routine services, other monthly festivals and other occasions – such as visits by the land or river to the other cities by the deities – provided servants for the daily tasks of the temple. There was not such a strict stratified priesthood as one would find for example in the religion of the ancient Israelites. The highest classification in the Mesopotamian religion was what could be equated with the priests and priestesses coming from a list of some officials being administrative functionaries of the temple bureau and other religious specialists dealing with particular areas of the cult (Nemet-Nejat 1998:190-191).

From Mesopotamian literature it was possible to obtain lists of several types of priests who functioned at the shrines. Some of them officiated only at the daily rites presiding over the sacrificial activities, others acted as prophets to the gods while others acted as interpreters of dreams. Others yet performed the dual functions of priests and prophets and they often accompanied the kings into battle in order to be able to interpret both favourable and unfavourable signs before the battle could be fought. The gods had barges and boats in which to travel by river or canals and were used mostly when the statues of the gods made ritual journeys to visit one another at festival times (Black & Green 1992:45). The boats were propelled by rowers. Sumerian religious practices showed that priestesses served as chief attendants to the gods, while priests equally served the goddesses. As was the case with the priests of other religions, the functionaries in the Mesopotamian religions obtained their food from what the population left at the sanctuary (Nemet-Nejat 1998:192).

3.4.2.2.2 Ritual and human sacrifice in ancient Mesopotamia

To the ancient Mesopotamians a sacrifice was first and foremost a meal to a god (De Vaux 1961:433). The altar was the table of the god and every kind of food that people ate was laid upon it. This included especially mutton, even though beef was also sometimes used. Added to this were poultry, fish, vegetables, fruits, sweet drinks and beer. It is reported that the table of the god was laid twice a day and that a priest arranged the feast. Throughout our investigation we found very little information about the use of blood victims. There was no explicit reference to libations of blood in the normal sacrifices. The presiding officials, otherwise called "the sword-bearers," merely cut the throat of the animal that was destined as food for the gods. After that the food was shared between the god and the priest king, the clergy or other staff of the temple, as we pointed out above. This should, however, not be seen as a communion sacrifice, since in the process the person who offered the sacrifice did not received anything in return.

No part of the victim was burned upon the altar, so that the essential forms of Israelite sacrifice – the holocaust and the communion sacrifices – are completely absent in the Mesopotamian sacrifice. Whole animals could only be burned on particular occasions (purification, consecration and conjuration etc). Expiatory sacrifices were also absent and in the event of any crisis the people of Mesopotamia took an animal from a different source other than that offered for sacrifice or they simply made a model of an animal from reeds or mud and paste. The animal or model (*puhu* or *dinanu*) then became the substitute for the

person offering it. An exorcist priest would then kill it, using special formulae, and so the anger of the god was averted. In this way the demon was turned against the substitute (De Vaux 1961:434).

In ancient Mesopotamia it was man's duty and the reason for his creation to take care of the material needs of the gods. This included the provision of food and drinks to the gods. Animal sacrifice was regarded as a way of satisfying the gods' appetites. The food was prepared in the kitchen of the temple court and offered to the god's cult statue. The meat of the animal offering – in contrast with Israelite sacrifice – became the property of the temple and was used to feed the clergy or the temple functionaries (Black & Green 1992:30). Sheep were the choice animals, even though goats and cattle could also be used. Findings from the results of excavations relating to pre-historic and historic times included the discovery of sizeable quantities of fish bones, believed to have been remains of sacrificial deposits indicative that fish constituted material for sacrifice too (Black & Green 1992:30). The sacrifice of a goat, called "man-substitute," was reported and used in some rituals to divert sickness or potential evil from individuals (Black & Green 1992:32). It would thus seem as if the concept of the scapegoat sacrifice in the form we find recorded in Lev. 16:8, 10, 21 was alien to the Mesopotamian. Some scholars are nonetheless of the opinion that the sheep that was offered during the New Year ceremonies could be regarded as a scapegoat sacrifice. However, the elaborate rituals performed in the ritual of the scapegoat of Leviticus 16, were missing in these ceremonies, and therefore the above could not be classified as a scapegoat sacrifice. The isolated animal sacrifice that appeared from time to time was connected with building rites. Such animals were sacrificed and buried beneath the floors and foundations of such buildings.

Reports and other evidence from the excavations of certain royal tombs at Ur by Sir Leonard Woolley (Black & Green 1992:105), attested to some evidence of human sacrifice. The occupants of the royal tombs could seemingly be attended to by a number of human victims (6-8 persons). The victims were equipped with tools and arms which were appropriated by the deceased during his lifetime. On the occasion of the burial of the above mentioned personality the human victims would be placed in various chambers or "the great death pit" as it was called when the grave shaft was being filled up. The victims were believed to attend to the lord or lady who was installed and seated within the tomb. Sometimes the victims were made to drink poison or take sleeping drugs, which carefully and steadily brought them to their end. The animals that drove the carts were also killed and the pit was then filled up. This

large scale human sacrifice survived only during the early dynastic period and was finally abandoned. Some scholars (De Vaux 1961:435) argued that such a practice in Mesopotamia never existed but, however, failed to advance convincing evidence for his contention.

3.4.2.3   Preliminary conclusion

In conclusion there is no doubt that sacrifice was also practised in ancient Mesopotamia, even though there were differences in comparison with other nations regarding ritual behaviour. The motive for sacrifice remained similar to that of the other nations, namely to feed the gods so that they could enjoy a good relationship with the living. The gods were thought of as sources of providence and even protectors of the community, to the extent that if they were not well nourished, they could become malicious and bring evil to bear on society.

3.4.3   Sacrifice in ancient Israel

For centuries, scholars of the Old Testament regarded the ancient Israelites as bearers of the oldest religion of revelation (Von Soden 1994:1). This is the more reason why ancient Israelite studies have often been singled out from the studies of the ancient Near East. Ancient Israel is also treated separately in this study although it remains of course a related field of study to, which occasional reference have to be made. Biblical scholars after all regarded the ancient Near East as the environment of the Bible. Von Soden (1994:1) thought that many orientalists were actually theologians, who broadened their interests.

3.4.3.1   Religion in ancient Israel

It is apparent that the religion of Israel – whose sacrificial system we are about to examine – exhibits influences from the neighbouring cultures of the ancient Near East, although it obviously has the traits of a unique religious system (Schmidt 1983:4). This religion has close links with its history and it would thus be appropriate at this stage to provide a brief historical overview of its existence.

The religion of Israel has been referred to as the religion of the ancestors. In the early period of Israel's history the ancestors established various worshipping places, which eventually became important religious sites or the cults during the time of the monarchy. At these sites sacrificial rituals and other religious practices were carried out, and there was for example some sacrificial worship and tithing. Many scholars agree that these cultic centres were occupied even before Israel was founded (Dearman 1992; 14). In addition there is a strong

opinion among many scholars that some concepts of God which were developed, were based on some form of ancestral worship which then evolved into God being associated with the patriarchs of the area (Schmidt 1983:14).

While there is general consensus that monotheism was a later development, the Hebrew Bible constantly presented this as a fundamental religious norm since the earliest times. As indicated, evidence shows that there were different attitudes towards monotheism and polytheism throughout the history of Israel. The name by which this God was addressed is still debated, although the Bible identifies him as *Yahweh* (Exod. 3:6,13,15). He is represented in the Bible as the God of promise, blessing and the One who is actively involved in saving the lives of his people (Dearman 1992:19). One finds the image of this caring God throughout the narratives of the first five books of the Old Testament, the Pentateuch. The religious history of Israel continued to the period of the monarchy that witnessed the establishment of the eternal covenant between *Yahweh* and the Davidic dynasty. Jerusalem became the religious centre of the nation and with the building of the temple, it also became the place where *Yahweh* chose to dwell (Dearman 1992:58).

The topic for consideration in this chapter is sacrifice in ancient Israel. It would seem difficult for us though to treat sacrifice without touching on other aspects of the religious system of the Israelites, such as worship, the cult, the cultic functionaries and the whole religious system. Anderson (1987:1) observed that the most important social and political institution in tribal Israel was the cult of the league's patron deity. It was here that the gatherings of the people became the primary fashioner of social and religious unity. The league's shrine functioned as the meeting point for the people. It was here that the worship services took place facilitated by the shrine, which later on became centralised and served as a converging point for the people. In addition sacrifice and the cult also played a pivotal role in the religious life of the Israelites.

3.4.3.2   The ancient Israelite cult and cultic centres

Harrelson (1952:45) defined cult as follows: "By the term *cultus* or cult we refer to all those activities of a people directly related to their dealings with the 'holy'." The central cultic activities could be observed during the great feast days. During these days the community gathered to perform their chief act of worship. The above definition by Harrelson does not appear to be quite exhaustive. In focusing on the gatherings of the people for worship particularly on feast days, it seems to neglect the family and even the individual religious

functions outside these feast days. These still occurred under the jurisdiction of the cult, even though officiated by family heads or even by individuals. Official cult functionaries was a later development in the sacrificial worship of ancient Israel.

According to De Vaux (1961:271) the cult comprises all those acts by which the community or individual persons give outward expression to their religious life. Through these religious acts they seek to achieve contact with God. Because God is the creator and sustainer of life, any action in cultic worship initiated by man then becomes the response of the creature to his creator. In another sense, cultic worship can be seen as a social phenomenon, because worship is practised in accordance with fixed rules at fixed places and gradually also resulting in a fixed time. Thus cult cannot exist without rituals.

The Hebrew word for the cult is עֲבֹדָה meaning *"service rendered to a king"* (cf. 1 Chr. 26:30). In the cult this service would consequently be directed to God, which becomes man's outward worship. This is the type of service that the Lord requires from his people (Exod. 3:12, 9:1, 13). The Bible also refers to the service to *Yahweh* in Jos. 22:27, and the service of the tent (Exod. 30:16). It is also of the dwelling place of *Yahweh* and the temple (Exod. 27:19, Ezek. 44:14) respectively.

In cultic worship one encounters religious rites which eventually became rituals. Israelite rituals were performed at the cult and were discovered to resemble those of the religions and rituals of the other nations of the ancient Near East, or to phrase it differently, these appear to have been borrowed from the neighbouring nations. But Israel gave such rituals new meaning, determined by the religious ideas of Israel's faith (de Vaux 1965:271). This made it possible to distinguish the Israelite cult from that of the other Oriental nations. Early Israel had a cultic calendar with various prescriptions about sacrifices. These calendars were carefully oriented to the changing seasons of the year. In Exodus 23:14-19a, it is stipulated that Israel should assemble before the Lord or *Yahweh* three times a year. This is further developed by Deuteronomy, Leviticus and in fact by the whole of the Pentateuch. Such assemblies are based on cyclical elements, which are associated with agricultural and animal husbandry, which were often celebrated in honour of *Yahweh's* great and wonderful manifestations in the life history of the people. These included sections that dealt with sacrificial rituals, as well as detailed instructions to the cultic functionaries.

The sacred places in the religion of the ancient Israelites may be equated with the shrines in the other religions. It was at these sacred places that they experienced the presence of God.

Harrelson (1952:33) stated that just as the appearance of the Holy is associated with particular times, so is it also associated with particular places. God is holy and wherever His presence is manifested, the particular environment becomes holy (Exod. 3:1-7). Where God had once appeared, He could repeat this and relations thus had to be maintained with the Holy. The choice of the place where the cult could be practised was never left to man's discretion. This was the place where the worshipper could meet his God, and this location was indicated by a manifestation of God's presence or by His activity. This could take the form of an explicit manifestation, for example God could appear or give a command or a sign. It could also be an implicit manifestation in the sense that natural effects were ascribed to the power of God (De Vaux 1965:276). These manifestations sometimes took the form of a theophany – God could appear in natural scenes, such as clouds, sacred trees, waters etc., which is a phenomenon quite similar to African Traditional Religions.

Before the appearance of the sanctuaries with regular functionaries, such holy places existed many decades earlier. It was at a later period that cultic functionaries occupied the holy places in the ancient world and as such they had to provide some protection for the worshipper by way of providing easier access to the Holy. The holy sites – just as the shrines in the other religions – were considered to be potentially dangerous. Harrelson (1952:33) writes: "When God appears, who knows whether that appearance will mean good or ill for those to whom he reveals himself?"

3.4.3.2.1 Cultic centres

There is evidence that in ancient Israel there were places of worship that were sacred to the tribal league as a whole (Harrelson 1952:33). Harrelson observed that the later centralisation of worship in Jerusalem by King Josiah was not actually an innovation, but rather a reformation; a point which is strongly disputed. Harrelson's contention is that the change of place did not mean the change of form in sacrificial worship. Some of these sacred places could be found at Shechem, Shiloh, Gilgal and Jerusalem (Harrelson 1952:33-35). A brief account of each of these places will help to explain who did what at each of them.

(a)   Shechem

Shechem was an ancient Canaanite city located between Mount Ebal and Gerizim. It was connected with the worship of the patriarchs. This cultic centre was clearly of decisive importance because it served the tribal league during and after the days of Joshua. Some elements of a typical act of worship could still be traced to Joshua chapter 24, which were

practised before the time of the monarchy. Shechem is believed to have been the earliest sanctuary, which served as a meeting point for the representatives of the tribes for annual festivals and the renewal of the covenant. Some scholars are of the view that with time Bethel most probably succeeded Shechem.

(b)   Shiloh

Shiloh soon rose to prominence. It was here that the Ark of the Covenant was located. Some scholars are of the opinion that annual celebrations took place here but it is not very clear whether it was Shiloh that succeeded Shechem or Bethel as the central shrine. After the fall of Shiloh the situation became so confused and precarious that for a time no central shrine drew the tribal groups together for the observation of the regular feasts (Harrelson 1952:34).

(c)   Gilgal

Some authors maintain the view that Gilgal was the location for a spring festival, which commemorated the arrival into the land and the exodus from Egypt. There does not seem to be a clear answer as to when Gilgal rose to be such an important site. According to Harrelson Gilgal used to be an important shrine during the time of the early settlers, but at the time of Joshua Shechem succeeded it. With the fall of Shiloh and the ultimate rise of the Philistine menace, Gilgal became the central shrine for all the tribes. Gilgal continued to be an important gathering place for tribes at springtime until when it was overshadowed by Jerusalem during the time of David and the establishment of the site there. Hence, with the building of the temple in Jerusalem, the celebration of the autumn festivals and the introduction of the Ark took place there. All sacrifices were transferred there and this eclipsed Gilgal's cultic importance.

(d)   Jerusalem

As indicated above, Jerusalem became the most important of all the sanctuaries. This was because of the skilful steps taken by David in introducing a new priesthood: that of Zadok, which gave him firm leadership over all cultic matters. Another aspect that made Jerusalem important was the transfer of the Ark to Jerusalem, which gave it prestige and made it the most important rallying point for the worship of *Yahweh*.

Hence a special sanctity was reserved for Jerusalem, which seemed to have prompted the Israelites to resort to the mythological ways of thinking prevalent among the people of Mesopotamia (Harrelson 1952:36). They had the notion that God had destined the temple to

be built in Jerusalem, which was to be the meeting point of heaven and earth, the dwelling place of *Yahweh*. Indeed, Jerusalem was thought of as the "navel of the earth" (Ezek. 38).

The holiness of this site did not depend on the holiness of *Yahweh* alone. In addition deeds of holiness and events in the life of Israel also made such a place holy. The holiness of such places was not permanent and they could be abandoned when the movement of history left them behind. In this connection it may be noted that Hebron and Mamre, associated with Abraham and David – even though later tradition never maintained Mamre as a pilgrimage site – gradually lost their cultic influence. Even Jerusalem, which at one stage almost posed as the centre of the world, witnessed a spiritual decline with the destruction of the temple, although God's name continued to dwell there.

3.4.3.2.2   Cultic objects

The Israelite cult used sacred objects, which assisted in communication with the Holy God. These objects were associated with a three-dimensional period of Israelite history of sacrifice although some of them appear universal to all three stages. Before the time of Moses the various cultic objects at the various shrines were of great significance, and these included the altar, a stone pillar and a wooden object (Harrelson 1952:53).

(a)   The altar

The altar was the central object on which sacrifices were made. It had to be erected where the people were confronted by the manifestation of the Holy. This is in accordance with the notion that a site was made holy by the appearance of God. Altars offered a special possibility for communication with God. They were originally made of undressed stones or special earth, on which more elaborate stone pillars were erected for the sacrifice of animals. Fruit and vegetable altars differed from the stone pillars, appearing to be a later introduction.

(b)   The stone pillar and the wooden object

The stone pillar, as suggested by Harrelson (1952:54), probably represented a male deity while the wooden object represented the female deity. They were found in ancient texts to be the religious furnishings of the shrines. The stone pillar was referred to as *massebah;* while the wooden pole – shaped to resemble a female figure – was called *asherah.* Later tradition rejected these objects, especially with the rise of Yahwehism. From the time of Moses special objects included the tent and the Ark of the Covenant. Other objects were contained in the Ark and tradition often referred to them as sacred objects.

(c)   The Ark

The Ark has been described as a portal chest in which sacred objects were kept. It also contained a seat upon which *Yahweh* was believed to take His place. Although being invisible, He was present especially during the community's wanderings in the wilderness. Harrelson (1952:54) advanced that both the tent and the Ark may have originated at the time Israel was at the fringes of the land of Canaan, while some scholars identified the tent as a Judean shrine. The Ark was considered an object originally sacred to the tribe of Joseph (Ephraim and Manasseh). The tent was originally located at Gibeon (2 Chr. 1:2-4) in the early days of the reign of Solomon, while the Ark was already in Jerusalem.

(d)   The temple

According to Harrelson (1952:55) the temple in Jerusalem was designed by a foreigner: Hiram from the city of Tyre in Phoenicia. The design was similar to those of other known sites in Syria and elsewhere in the Mediterranean area. A large courtyard surrounded the temple. There was also an area for the bronze container, called "the sea" (Harrelson 1952:55). Altars for the sacrifice of animals, grain and fruit could also be found. The interior of the temple contained the Holy of Holiest with the Ark of the Covenant, which was a main room furnished with candle stands and an incense altar. The temple thus served simultaneously in a dual capacity as a shrine and cultic object.

3.4.3.2.3   The cult functionaries

In previous paragraphs we discussed the question of what constituted the cult in early Israelite religion. People had to appear before God at the places of worship – otherwise called sacred places – where the cultic objects were housed. We will next occupy ourselves with the examination of the cult functionaries who were in charge or directed the people and the general affairs of the cult.

It was earlier noted that the religion of early Israel was one of revelation. The Holy could choose to appear at any time and place without prior warning. As Harrelson (1952:46) convincingly stated, it was necessary to keep the community alert to the possibly that God could appear repeatedly at specific times and places. This presupposed that members of the community, gifted in discerning the coming or appearing of the Lord, be assigned to guide the holy place and to be able to calculate the flow of time when the Holy may next appear.

Several groups functioned at the shrines, and among them were the priests, Levites and other servants.

(a)   The priests

The priests were the guardians of the sanctuaries (cf. Harrelson 1952:46). They directed the community on what to do at the appearance of the Holy God: for example how they should approach the sanctuary. What gifts were suitable for offering and which were unsuitable, etc. Just as early Israel's shrines were not very different from those of the Canaanites, this was also true of the cultic functionaries. Their tasks and their qualifications were almost identical. Israel's earliest priests were guardians of the sanctuaries and supervisors of the activities that took place there (Deut 33:8-11). The priest was a teacher to Israel who maintained and interpreted the sacred traditions to the people and to assist them at all times.

Lemche (1995:213) stated that, the legitimate cult in the temple in Jerusalem was maintained by an authorised priesthood who received practical theological training and came from a certain line of descent. The cultic activities at the shrines were so complex and varied that these needed a large number of people to be employed, each with his special tasks and competence. This was similar to the position in the great cultures of the ancient Near East (Harrelson 1952:47).

(b)   The Levites and their origin

Another group that functioned at the cult was the Levites, whose origin caused a great deal of controversy among scholars of the Old Testament. Scholars are still not unanimous about their origin. Since the time of Wellhausen there has been widespread acceptance that the elaborate picture of the priests and Levites that appear in the priestly passages of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers represent the last stage in the development of Israelite priesthood (ABD 1992:297). According to Wellhausen the Levites did not form a special priestly class in early Israelite history of the sacrificial system. There was a tribe of Levi in remote antiquity, but it had no connection with the office of priesthood. Hence the priests who functioned at the time were not Levites or, in other words, they did not originate from the tribe of Levi. As a priesthood the Levites assumed the name in order to organise themselves in a specific manner. A number of suggestions were advanced by De Vaux (1961:258); concerning the origin of the Levites. Etymologically he is of the opinion that the word Levite is derived from the Hebrew לוה which could mean "*to turn around.*" In terms of this view the Levites were seen as ecstatic dancers. The second meaning meant "*to accompany someone or*

to be attached to someone." This would in effect describe the secondary functions of the Levites at the cult. Although they were found in the cultic environment they were never allowed full rights of participation in the sacrificial activities of the shrines. They could, therefore, not be considered as full priests.

3.4.3.3   Worship in ancient Israel

Our focus is on the element of sacrifice, but it should be remembered that this only formed one aspect of the cult, albeit the central focus.

Rowley (1967:3) pointed out that worship contains both form and meaning. Meaning is more important than form, as he explains: "The quality of worship is to be found in the spirit even more than in the form, for worship belongs to the heart rather than to the act" (Rowley 1967:3). This suggests that we need not go into all the detailed ramifications about worship in ancient Israel, but we could rather concentrate on those aspects that relate to our topic of reflection, namely sacrifice in ancient Israel. Wellhausen (1974:52) on his part stated that a disproportionate emphasis has been laid upon the technique of sacrifice, which included the theory of establishing the when, where, by whom and how sacrifice was conducted. In the paragraphs that follow we will examine sacrificial performance in ancient Israel.

3.4.3.4 Types of sacrifices in ancient Israel

To the Hebrews sacrifice constituted the main act of worship (Wellhausen 1974:52). The priestly code in the Pentateuch devoted a portion of its narrative stories to the subject of sacrifice. It described the various kinds of sacrifices and also outlined the procedure that had to be followed in each case (Lev. 1-7). Ritual sacrifice formed an essential element in the Mosaic legislation as Moses received the relevant instructions from God (cf. Exod. 25:1ff Lev. 1ff).

It is important to determine when Israel practised sacrifice or how old the Israelite sacrificial system is, because this would enable us to gauge whether Israel at all times worshipped in the same manner and how this was done. According to Wellhausen (1974:53) the Yahwistic history is the only source from which we can gain some authentic information, since it extends beyond the Mosaic legislation. Since the time of Moses the Israelite cult was distinct from any others, especially by its form, which was the hallmark of the distinctive and constitutive element of the holy community.

Sacrifice extends beyond the Mosaic legislation, as we noted above. Wellhausen remarked that sacrifice is as old as the world itself. Various proof-texts during the different stages of the history of Israel attest to this assertion. For example the Hebrews – in the course of their liberation struggle from Egypt – wished to celebrate a sacrificial feast in the wilderness. Moses built an altar at Rephidim at Sinai (Exod. 27), and before the ratification of the covenant a solemn meal was prepared in the presence of *Yahweh* and also when Jethro visited Moses (Exod. 28). In early biblical history Cain and Abel sacrificed in the same way it would be done thousands of years afterwards. Subsequently Abraham, Isaac and Jacob practised sacrifice, and after the flood Noah offered a sacrifice to *Yahweh*. All these instances testify that sacrifice is an ancient practice and was a universal way of honouring God.

When describing cult and its practices in ancient Israel, the important role of the patriarchs should be considered. Wellhausen observed that despite their influence on the sacrificial system in Israel, they were not the discoverers of the ritual. They should rather be seen as those who founded the places where Israel was to dedicate their gifts to *Yahweh*. There may be some doubt whether Wellhausen was correct in his assessment of the patriarchs, because as he rightly says if archaeologists had been able to discover these worshipping places, they would also be in a position to know what exactly had taken place in each centre. Another striking observation by Wellhausen (1974:54) is that the priestly code made no mention of any sacrificial activity prior to the time of Moses. It did not reflect the fact that there were occasions of sacrificing and slaughtering already in the time of Noah, indicative that cult had existed before Moses and continued to exist in later history, although with marked differences to the initial systems.

According to various exegetical works the history of sacrifice in ancient Israel could be divided into three periods. The first period extends from the time of the patriarchs to the reform of Josiah in 621 BC (De Vaux 1961:424). During this period there was not much stress on the matter of rites. The main concern of the people was to know to whom they were offering the sacrifice and not how it was offered. At this time, much emphasis was put on two main types of sacrifices – the holocaust sacrifice and the communion sacrifice (De Vaux 1961:424). This is similar to what we find in the historical books, the prophets of the 8th and the 7th centuries BC and also in the Yahwistic and Elohistic passages of the Pentateuch.

The second period ushered in what we may call a transitional period, motivated by the reform of Josiah. Although the rituals were not altered, one essential innovation in the sacrificial system did occur. All sacrifices had to be offered in the temple at Jerusalem. This entailed a

unification of the ritual and accordingly it was a decisive step taken towards the systematisation of the different usages of the previous sanctuaries throughout the provinces. This is reported in the book of Deuteronomy, but according to Wellhausen (1974:59), it is not the work of the Deuteronomist, but was introduced by Ezekiel who happened to be both priest and prophet and was one of the first groups of the exiles. In 573 BC Ezekiel continued to hope for the Lord and had also great hopes for the future salvation of Israel (Ezek. 49-58). Hence the temple and the cult held a central place, since sacrificial worship remained in actual practice.

During the third period new trends appeared. This was at the beginning of the exile and among the changes was a passion for ritual (De Vaux 1961:424). Ezekiel laid down a description of rites to be followed, which hitherto had not been the case. He strongly emphasised the idea of expiation by introducing two sacrifices. These were the sacrifice for sin and the sacrifice for reparation, which we will be discussing in more detail in a later paragraph. These new developments finally resulted in the revision of the priestly code, which contained all the texts that deal with sacrificial worship. Wellhausen (1974:76) rightly stated that what we find today in the priestly code is the mature result of that event, namely the reforms of Josiah, resulting in the centralisation of all worship which excluded individual sacrifices and private altars.

Israelite and Canaanite sacrificial rituals stand in marked contrast to those of the other Semitic peoples; the great distinguishing feature being the treatment of the animal victim. In Israel and Canaanite ritual when an animal is sacrificed, either the whole victim was burnt (holocaust) on the altar, or at least part of it. According to De Vaux (1961:440) this rite did not exist in Mesopotamia or in Arabia, but it was practised among the Moabites and the Ammonites to which the Bible alludes. The rite was peculiar to the West Semitic peoples, and subsequently it occupied a prominent place among the Greeks too.

"When the Israelites settled in Canaan, they adopted Canaanite sacrifices, called עֹלָה and זֶבַח, which were burned upon the altar. They then combined these sacrifices with the ancient rites regarding the use of blood rites, which then retained their efficacy and were not found among the Canaanites. Two rituals, Israelite and Canaanite, afterwards developed independently from each other" (De Vaux 1961:441).

With the centralisation of the cult in Jerusalem a type of strictness within the sacrificial system developed. The altar became the sole recognised place for sacrifice, which was the

principal act that was carried out in the cult. Sacrifice was redefined as being any offering, animal or vegetable, which was wholly or partially destroyed upon an altar as a token of homage to God (De Vaux 1961:15). Some ambiguity seemed to have arisen in the terminology for ritual sacrifice. Several terms were employed for sacrifice, which could not be well distinguished, since the same word at certain moments could describe more than one kind of sacrifice. Sometimes it was only the context and the intention that threw some light on some of the terms used for sacrifice.

De Vaux (1961:415) is of the opinion that the vocabulary was a reflection of an historical development and fusion of various practices, which were similar to each other but originating from different backgrounds. The code of sacrifice that concerns us most was practised during the time of the second temple, which was the more important period, recorded in Lev. 1-7. These chapters belong to the last revision of the Pentateuch, and are legislative in character. They appear to deviate from the traditional worship of the Israelites in the wilderness, which ought to have continued from the erection of the sanctuary or tent of meeting (Exod. 40) up to the installation of the priesthood in (Lev. 8-10).

After this brief historical account of sacrifice in Israel, we will now turn our attention to those sacrifices that specifically concern us in the present dissertation. Within this framework, we would deal mostly with the expiatory sacrifices as described in the priestly code in the Pentateuch. Of specific relevance would be the holocaust, communion and peace offerings. As already noted above, many terms have been used to describe these sacrifices and as our discussion progresses, it may appear that some are described in other terms but this would depend on the context in which we wish to discuss the said sacrifice. Some would even be sub-divided into various parts, especially as concerns the expiatory sacrifices. A brief definition of each of them would serve as the point of departure in the consideration of the function and significance of each.

(a)   The holocaust sacrifice

The first definition offered by Thompson (1996:473) of a holocaust, is that it is a case of large-scale destruction, especially by fire or by nuclear war. This English rendering has emerged through the Vulgate from the Septuagint, where it appears as a translation of the Hebrew form of עֹלָה, which is derived from the root meaning *"to go up"* (De Vaux 1961:415). This means that a holocaust is a sacrifice taken to the altar or one whose smoke rises up to God when it is burnt. In this version of a sacrifice the whole victim is burnt and

nothing – except the skin in the case of an animal victim – goes either to the person who offers it or to the priest in charge. The Greek term of holocaust means literally "*wholly burnt*." The term עֹלָה in Hebrew was sometimes replaced by the term כָּלִיל which means "*a total sacrifice*" (1 Sam. 7:9, Deut. 33:10, Ps. 51:21). The ritual of presentation of the victim in this particular sacrifice resembles that of the scapegoat sacrifice of Leviticus chapter sixteen. In the same way, the offerer lays both his hands on the animal victim just as is done in the ritual of the scapegoat sacrifice, but the meaning of both gestures differs completely.

In terms of Leviticus 16:21 the sins of the community are transferred to the goat by the same gesture of the laying on of hands and the goat is thus loaded with the people's sins and becomes defiled. In the holocaust, the laying on of hands on the animal by the offerer is an identification that the animal was offered by that particular individual. This distinction came about because it is the priest who has to present it on behalf of the offerer (De Vaux 1961:416). In passing it should be noted that it is the offerer who cuts the throat of the animal and the priest only comes into contact with the animal on the altar.

In support of the above aspect of identification between the offerer and God through the gesture of the laying on of hands in this sacrifice, Levine (1974:22) reiterated that the essential role of the עֹלָה was that of attraction. It was offered with the objective of evoking an initial response from God; even though in other passages the emphasis would be slightly different from the one discussed above. Elsewhere the holocaust has been referred to as, that which a man brings near God or the altar.

(b)   The communion sacrifices

The communion sacrifice is referred to in Hebrew always in the plural, except for one place in the Bible where the singular was employed (Amos. 5:22). This is indicative that such terms could be used interchangeably in parallel passages Apart from the English translation of "*communion offering*", other translations are possible too. It may for example be conveniently referred to as a "*peace offering, the welcome offering*" (De Vaux 1961:417).

The ritual has divided this sacrifice into three types, namely the sacrifice of praise, תּוֹדָה (Lev. 7:12-15; 22:29-30) the voluntary sacrifice נְדָבָה, which means "*one that is offered out of devotion, not because of any precept or promise*" (Lev. 7:16-17; 22:18-23) and the votive sacrifice. This is the sacrifice to which a person has committed himself /herself by a vow to offer to the deity. The principal feature here is the fact that the victim is shared

between God, the priest and the person who offers the sacrifice. The ritual here appears similar to that in the holocaust, which was described above. The part that goes to God is burnt upon the altar. This comprises of the fat-tail, regarding which De Vaux (1961:418) is of the opinion that the fat and the tail, were considered life-giving parts just as blood was. After the parts assigned to the priest (Lev. 7:28-34; 10:14-15) the remainder of the animal belongs to the person who offers the sacrifice. This may be eaten by his family and even by any guests who may happen to be under his roof at that time.

(c)   The expiatory sacrifices

This group of sacrifices specifically requires our attention. Almost half of the sacrificial code of the second temple falls under this category, namely the expiatory sacrifices, which are known under various names and titles. Their main purpose is to re-establish the relationship between God and humankind when it was broken by sin. They are called amongst others "*a sacrifice for sin*" חַטָּאת (De Vaux 1961:418, Baruch 1974:26, Milgrom 1983:67) and also as "*a sacrifice for reparation*"

In order to be consistent in our approach, we started the discussion with a general consideration of the terminology that is relevant in this class of sacrifices, being the expiatory activity in the context of the Israelite cult. The Hebrew word, which conveys the process of expiation, is the verb כִּפֶּר (Levine, 1974:55). As already noted above, the principal expiatory sacrifice in ancient Israel was the חַטָּאת. A problem which confronted scholars, is to establish the precise sense of the verb, כִּפֶּר which may not necessarily be ascertained on the basis of the context.

According to Levine (1974:56), conventional scholars have taken the verb כִּפֶּר to mean, "*to cover up.*" This definition has the notion that expiatory sacrifice consists of the covering up of sins. In a way this may be understood as that forgiveness has been given to a person whose offences are covered from God's view, which indicates that He does not take notice of such offences or any intent to exact punishment. Its Akkadian cognate with the D-stem of *Kaparu, Kupuru,* has the sense: "*to wipe off,*" hence "*to purify.*" After a serious consideration by scholars on the various meanings attached to the Hebrew term, כִּפֶּר , and those found in both the Arabic and Akkadian roots, Levine concluded that the derivation from כִּפֶּר is suggestive of "to cover up." To him this possibility was somewhat misleading and he

consequently proposed that כָּפֵּר could only be correctly rendered by the term "*to wipe out*" or

"*to purify*."

The latter argument is supported by Milgrom (1991:1081), who also observed that the term

כָּפֵּר , in all the instances of the חַטָּאת offering, bears this exclusive meaning. According to

Milgrom, therefore, the blood of the sacrificial victim is literally daubed or aspersed on the

sancta thereby "*rubbing off*" their impurities. כָּפֵּר may in other narrative texts mean, "*to rub

on*" but this is not the sense that has been employed in Lev. 16:20-21. For instance פֶּשַׁה could

probably mean "*protection*" even though the verb כָּפֵּר is not used in the text of the paschal

observance. Sacrifice may also not be seen as a חַטָּאת (cf. Milgrom 1991:1081). In

conclusion, therefore, the verb כָּפֵּר could only be translated as "*to wipe out*" which contains

the notion of effacing, total elimination of evil or sins from the community.

(d)   The חַטָּאת sacrifice

Two kinds of חַטָּאת were identified by Milgrom (1983:70), but according to Levine

(1974:56), only the burnt offering עֹלָה is purificatory; the reason being that it is provided by

the priests as a safeguard to the sanctuary and its ministering priesthood from contamination.

On the other hand, the eaten חַטָּאת comes from the people and it is meant to expiate certain

offences of the individual and community. This, however, still leaves some room for

contention, since the sacrificed goat on the Day of Atonement is burned only outside the

camp, even though brought by the people (Lev. 16:5,27). It should, therefore, not be regarded

as an exceptional case since it fits the role of חַטָּאת whose blood is brought inside the

sanctuary (Lev. 6:23, 10:18, 16:27). We furthermore discovered that Lev. 4:13-20 gave

another instance where we discovered that the sanctuary was purged by a חַטָּאת brought by

the people.

Milgrom's argument that the eaten חַטָּאת no less than the burnt one, also has a purificatory

purpose then becomes quite plausible. It could consequently be concluded that if there is any

difference at all between the two sacrifices, it should be in terms of the degree of impurity

that they are meant to purify the נֹתְ חַטָּאת purges the outer altar, which is the first place that

is met upon entering the sanctuary.

The burnt חַטָּאת , on the other hand, represents a higher degree of impurity which may be caused by the inadvertence sins of the high priest (Milgrom 1983:73) and the community. This particular impurity is considered powerful enough to be able to penetrate the shrine and the *adytum*, which at the same time becomes dangerously contagious.

(e)   The sacrifice of reparation

Another type of sacrifice which requires some consideration, is the אָשָׁם

. The sacrificial code has given less attention to this sacrifice with the suggestion that its rites are similar to those for the sacrifice for sin – the חַטָּאת . According to De Vaux (1964:98), the reparation sacrifice means "*the offence and the means of reparation.*" If we should agree on this definition, then it would seem as if the sacrifice has not been given a fair treatment by the sacrificial code, since all sins of which society needs to rid itself, originate from offences committed against God. Performing the reparation , therefore, bridges the gap created by such an offence or would repair the ruptured relationship.

It is evident from Lev. 5:14-16, 21-26; Num. 5:5-8 that if the rights of God or those of one's neighbour have been infringed or damaged, and these could be estimated in terms of cash, then the guilty party should offer a ram as a sacrifice of the restored reparation. The priest has an interesting role in that he represents *Yahweh* or the damaged person. The amount of damage includes one fifth of the fine. There are marked distinctions between sacrifice for sin and the sacrifice for reparation, even though it may appear difficult at times to determine these distinctions. The difficulty arose because since antiquity already the point of distinction had gradually become blurred. Philo suggested that the חַטָּאת was an expiation of involuntary faults against one's neighbour, while the reparation sacrifice was the expiation of involuntary faults against God and all other voluntary faults (De Vaux 1961:99).

According to Josephus, the distinction lies between those sins committed without witnesses and sins committed before witnesses. For his part Origen laid stress on the gravity of the sin: חַטָּאת for sins or faults which deserved death, and the reparation for those who did not deserve it (De Vaux 1961:99). Whatever the case, modern opinions appear to be based on the ground text, even though they are still quite varied. For modern scholarship the interpretation of the reparation sacrifice is that it is intended for the reparation of a wrong done to property, the divine or humankind. This seems to reinforce the fundamental idea of expiation already cited above by חַטָּאת which expiates a fault against the divinity, but it appears that both of the

above relate to the expiation of sins. If we should limit ourselves to these few examples, the conclusion would then be that the dominant aspect of the חַטָּאת lies in expiation, while that for the reparation sacrifice rests on reparation, yet both are expiatory in nature. This may admittedly not seem to be conclusive at this point, since the sacrificial system remains a confusing field of study, especially when it relates to the juxtaposition of the sacrificial code and certain special laws. Some purification rites call for both the reparation and חַטָּאת sacrifices and so does (Lev. 15:10-32). Whatever we may deduce from these two kinds of sacrifices, the resulting confusion between חַטָּאת and reparation sacrifice seemed to have confused the final revisors who were not exactly sure what חַטָּאת and reparation specified. One would guess that they wished to distinguish between terms, which were originally synonymous.

Our study on ritual sacrifice indicated that human sacrifice has been practised in many African societies. It is also true that Israel's neighbours practised human sacrifice, especially when we refer to the historical and prophetic texts. In addition there are reports of human sacrifice in pre-Islamic Arabia, Mesopotamia and in Canaan (De Vaux 1964:50-58).

The question thus arises whether Israel was also involved in the practice of this seemingly horrific sacrificial system. If they did so, to whom were the sacrifices offered? Was it to *Yahweh* or to the gods of the land? Some scholars of religion are of the opinion that animal sacrifice replaced human sacrifice. In general terms this is true, especially as regards some African societies. When it became impossible for humans – regardless whether they were children, slaves or prisoners of war – an animal replaced the human in such circumstances. The offerer laid his hand on the head of the animal for the purpose of identification so that the one who placed his hand on the animal could be identified as the person who brought it as an offering to God. This is a generalised explanation which may not do justice to the full spectrum of the unique Israelite sacrificial system.

Boring (1975:209) observed that human sacrifice was neither condoned in Israel nor was it unknown. Passages, such as 2 Kgs. 16:3; Ezek 20:25-26, 31, the virtual sacrifice of Isaac as described in Genesis 22, etc., may move the reader to consider this possibility. Scholars such as Rost and others, questioned whether the holocaust sacrifice practised by Israel did not initially consist of human sacrifice. Rost cited the cases of the son of Mesha, the near sacrifice of Isaac and the daughter of Jephthah. It should be stressed that each of these cases

just cited, occurred in their specific contexts. Scullion (1992:175) argues that in the case of the near sacrifice of Isaac, it is not clear whether there was an older story behind the biblical story, having as its origin a practice of child sacrifice and concluding with a prohibition of sacrificing such a particular child. There is some proof of child sacrifice in the ancient Near East, but its extent should not be exaggerated. It seems to have been practised in Assyria and the plains of Moab, outside Israel. There is a reference to Abiram's sacrifice of his first-born and his youngest son for the construction of the foundation and the gates of Jericho respectively. Through the aid of archaeological research it was proved that this was a case of foundation sacrifice according to which infants were buried under a house. This did not necessarily amount to child sacrifice, as the child of the builder could conceivably have died during the construction (Jones 1984:300).

There was also a great deal of controversy between the Molech cult and the cult of *Yahweh*. The name Molech comes from the Vulgate, which was transcribed in Hebrew as מלך (De Vaux 1964:67). This word is found 5 times in the Holiness code, prohibiting child sacrifice to Molech (Lev. 18:21). It is punishable by death to offer any sacrifice to Molech. (Lev. 20:2-5; Jer. 32:25 and 2 Kgs 23:10). These texts, especially 2 Kgs. 23:10, seem to contradict 2 Kgs 16:3, 17:31, 21:6; Jer. 7:31, 19:5; Deut 12:31, 18:10; Ezek 16:21 etc. In the latter texts it was reported that children were indeed offered as sacrifice in the Hinonnon valley.

Some scholars are of the opinion that even though Molech was a foreign god, those who worshipped him had equated him with *Yahweh*. Many of those people then identified sacrifice to Molech with the offering of the first-born to *Yahweh*, as mentioned in the Pentateuch. However, the passage from Jeremiah 32:35 and the others, as we saw above, runs counter to this assumption. God did not sanctify the offering of children as sacrifices as it was practised in the Hininnon Valley, the seat of the Molech cult. This leaves us with the stern warning from *Yahweh* in Jeremiah 32:35, referring to Jer. 7:31 & 19:5. "They built high places for Baal in the Valley of Ben Hinnon to sacrifice their sons and daughters to Molech, though I never commanded, nor did it enter my mind, that they should do such detestable things ..."

The Molech worshippers may have thought that *Yahweh* commanded the sacrifices, but the same law in Exod. 43:19f which is ascribed to the J source, and Exod. 13:2, 15 from the P source, is quite different from what took place at the valley of Ben Hinnom. There appears a modification in these passages, as there is a provision for the redemption of the first-born (Exod. 34:19f). A further confusion arose because the verb "*to devote*", as used in Exodus.

13:12, is the same as that employed in connection with the Molech cult. It is sometimes thought that the passage in Ezekiel 20:25f claimed that human sacrifices were of divine origin (Day 1989:66). This was expressly denied to be such, as we saw in Jer. 7:31 and 32:35.

We would, therefore, agree with Day (1989), Gese (1970) and Heider (1985) who argued that the Molech sacrifices and the offering of the first-born to *Yahweh* could not be equated. The major distinction here is that the passages in the Pentateuch specifically refer to the first-born without any reference to Molech, while the references to Molech never refer to the first-born and rather to the offering of children in general. Whereas the law of the first-born in the Pentateuch involved only sons (cf. Exod. 13:12-15, 22:28f, 34:19f. Num. 3:12f, 40ff etc), the references to the Molech cult repeatedly mentioned the offering of both sons and daughters (cf. Deut. 12:31, 18:10; Jer. 3:24, 7:31, 32:35; Ezek. 16:20; 2 Kgs. 17:17; and Ps. 106:37f). Ezekiel, who accepted that *Yahweh* has demanded the offering of the first-born (Ezek. 20:25f), was not referring to the Molech cult, since in other passages he strongly opposes both child sacrifice and daughters devoted to idols (Ezek. 16:20f, 20:31, 23:37-39).

It could, therefore, be concluded that Molech sacrifices cannot be equated with the first-born offered to *Yahweh*. Above all the Molech cult did not take place in *Yahweh*'s temple in Jerusalem, but in a separate site in the Ben Hinnon valley. The isolated passages in the Old Testament that allude to child or human sacrifice, are not to be taken as a demand from God for human sacrifice. Molech could clearly not be equated with *Yahweh* although – just as there are some syncretistic tendencies in Christianity today – there were those who worshipped both *Yahweh* and Molech and who must have believed that *Yahweh* had approved of the Molech sacrifices. Otherwise ancient Israel does not seem to have been involved in human sacrifice.

3.5   CONCLUSION

In this chapter we provided a general survey of sacrifice. From the many theories presented by both anthropologists and theologians we discovered that sacrifice is as old as religion, dating back to the stage when human beings began to develop a knowledge of the universe in which they lived. When they could not find answers to certain phenomena, the fear of the unknown brought about the notion of some divine powers that could be above any explanation. As a reply to their unsolved problems, they believed there had to be some other forces that could control the situation and thus the notion of gods or deity arose.

The sacrificial systems of the antiquity were not uniform, but varied according to need and the situation. Most communities practised animism, polytheism or monotheism. Some African communities and ancient Near East practised animal sacrifice alongside human sacrifice. In the course of time some of these sacrificial systems were influenced by other religions and more modern tendencies. In Africa Christianity had a great impact on some of the sacrificial systems, but since it has not been able to completely eradicate the African Traditional Religions, it is clear that dialogue between the two religions has become a crucial matter.

Contrary to the view by some scholars that ancient Israel practised human sacrifice, we saw that the Bible passages that alluded to human sacrifice in ancient Israel were illustrations of practices foreign to Israel and which were found among her neighbours. However, it seems difficult to rule out completely the possibility of some syncretistic tendencies among the Israelites regarding their neighbours. Having laid down the groundwork for the examination of the Nefo'o ritual of the Bafut of Cameroon and also sacrifice in general, we propose to turn next to a brief introduction to the Pentateuch, within which is placed the book of Leviticus which will be our direct concern as the present dissertation progresses.

CHAPTER FOUR

INTRODUCTION TO THE PENTATEUCH

4.1   AN OVERVIEW OF THE PENTATEUCH

One of the most extensively read sections of the Hebrew Scriptures is the section containing the first five books of the Old Testament, also known as the Pentateuch: Genesis to Deuteronomy. Their well-read status may be ascribed to the fascinating narratives regarding the so-called primeval history, contained especially in the first eleven chapters of Genesis (Genesis 1-11), depicting a world in which the supernatural was commonplace (Whybray 1995:1).

Hamilton (1982:11) pointed out that few sections of the Old Testament have been treated in more details than the Pentateuch. A study of any bibliographical reference volume on biblical research will almost invariably reveal the vast amount of material produced in any given year on this portion of the Bible. On closer examination it becomes clear that Genesis and Exodus have been studied most extensively with studies in Deuteronomy a close second. In contrast articles, monographs and commentaries on Leviticus and Numbers lag far behind in terms of volume.

Events in the Pentateuch are vividly narrated as they move along in alternating intervals of fascination and even moments of frustration. From the primeval history on the creation of the universe, the focal point is the relationship between God and humans. A shift of emphasis appears when the focus falls on a particular family who would hence become the patriarchs and ancestors to the future nation of Israel. This ancestor is Abraham together with his descendants, as we find recorded in Genesis chapter 11:27-25:11. With time this narrative continues to narrow down through single families to Jacob's family, who finally gives birth to a whole nation - the Israelites (cf. Friedman ABD 1992:605). The picture of a concerned God is clearly drawn, as we find in the narratives of Israel's subjugation in Egypt (Exod. 1:1-22) and His ultimate intervention in miraculous deeds as He delivers the Israelites from the Egyptian bondage (Exod. 5: 1-15:25). *Yahweh's* intimacy with the people of Israel becomes ever increasingly as He reveals Himself to Moses, the leader of the Israelites, at Mount Sinai, otherwise also known as Mount Horeb. It is on this mountain that *Yahweh* enters into a

covenant with the children of Israel (Exod. 19:1-25), giving them the *corpus* of the law (Exod. 20:1-17). He is the God of providence who would provide his people not only with a means of subsistence in the heart of the desert waste, but also ultimately would supply his people with a land that flowed with milk and honey (Deut. 7:1-8:20; 4:4).

The Pentateuch (meaning a book in five parts) has since the second century CE been the designation for the first five books of the Old Testament and hence of the Hebrew Bible. It is not quite known when the Pentateuch assumed this form, but Philo and Josephus (cf. Fretheim 1996:19) already knew such a division. According to Fretheim (1996:19), the flow of the Sinai narratives from Exodus 19 through Leviticus to Numbers 10 indicates that this is a later division. Fretheim suggests that the five parts division may have been a formal move dictated by convenience in scroll handling. Exodus and Numbers appear similar in length, while Genesis and Deuteronomy are more independent in outlook or character. Leviticus is the shortest in length of the five books. Yet, its particular content and its placement midpoint in the Pentateuch is a clear indication that it was separated for religious purposes. The central concern of Leviticus is the people to whom it was addressed (Fretheim 1996:19).

The Biblical text makes no reference to this five-part form. The reference to it is just "the book of the law" (Ezra 10:3, Neh. 8:3). This formulation is at times confusing and it becomes difficult to tell whether the above wording refers to the law as or to the entire Pentateuch, which – according to Fretheim – was completed about 400 BCE. It should be noted that the basic form of the Pentateuch is not law, but narrative that moves from the creation of the universe to the eve of Israel's settlement in the promise land. The laws are merely woven into this narrative fabric at certain points. The Pentateuch is first and foremost the story of God and a people, the Israelites, who interact with each other. The narrative texts in the Pentateuch are vital in the transmission of the faith of Israel's community and this aspect will be discussed under Leviticus 16, relating to the liturgy of the Day of Atonement.

The Pentateuch has for millennia been an essential part of the Jewish Scriptures, as we saw above, and it was traditionally recognised as such by both Jews and Christians. For the Jews the popular name for the Pentateuch was תרה, which is the most authoritative of their scriptures. Moses is traditionally and unmistakably its author. After all Moses occupies the pride of place as the main character at least the first four books, excluding Genesis. This popular and traditional view of Moses' prominence as author of the Pentateuch must have been influenced by the biblical texts and other written facts, which present Moses as the only person who spoke face to face with God (Exod. 33:11, Deut. 34:10 etc). These texts place

Moses as God's most authoritative spokesman and the one who could communicate the will of God to the people.

As regards the Christians, it was undoubtedly recognised that the Pentateuch, together with the rest of the Old Testament, constitutes an essential part of Holy Scripture. Jesus quoted and alluded to the authoritative teaching of Moses, as found in the Pentateuch, more than any other Old Testament books. The Pentateuch combines prose, poetry and law in a chronological narrative that spans through thousands of years and, with the exception of a few words of Aramaic that occur in the text, the entire work is written in the Hebrew language. Another reason why the Pentateuch is recognised to hold a special place in relation to the other biblical books is that the events it describes are central to the faith of Israel and many of the other books in the Old Testament refer to it (e.g., Ezra 8:1-3). Friedman (ABD 1992:622) observed that the singular place held by the Pentateuch has continued to be influential in modern biblical scholarship. This influenced the questions raised concerning its history and authorship, which in turn played a fundamental role in the development of the field of biblical studies.

4.2   MODERN TRENDS ON THE STUDY OF THE PENTATEUCH

Modern scholarship has questioned the appropriateness of the way in which the Old Testament books have been distributed into the various sections where they are still found. Some scholars questioned the applicability of the term Pentateuch to the first five books of the Old Testament. The traditional viewpoint has been to regard the books of Genesis to Deuteronomy to compose the so-called Pentateuch. Up to the end of the 20th century there were countless counter opinions. Some scholars would prefer to refer to a Hexateuch, rather than a Pentateuch. According to this view the original section comprising of only the first five books should actually include the book of Joshua. Thus bringing the number of books to six von Rad in (Blenkinsopp 1992:16). The scholars who hold this view argue that because the book of Joshua records the account of the settlement of Israel in the promise land, it is only then that one can arrive at a true conclusion of the Pentateuch (Whybray 1995:1).

Others went a step further to propose that the section be extended to include the books from Joshua to Kings. Noth (1972; Blenkinsopp 1992:17-18) proposed the notion of what he termed a Tetrateuch (comprising of only four books), Genesis to Numbers, dropping Deuteronomy on the grounds that the latter did not fit coherently with the other books. He observed that Deuteronomy formed the beginning of another major historical work; the so-

called Deuteronomistic History, comprising of the books of Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings. Each of the above proposals has its merits, but also some shortcomings when viewed from another angle. A number of factors emanating from modern critical studies increasingly question for various reasons the traditional view of the first five books, which we will discuss as we deal with some of these proposals.

This researcher is favourably inclined to the notion of a Tetrateuch, but one which differs from Noth's Tetrateuch which is based on the books from Genesis to Numbers. I am of the view that a Tetrateuch which would truly relate the activities of not only the history of the Israelites, but also above all their religious experience *vis à vis Yahweh*, should actually range from Exodus to Deuteronomy. Moses, Aaron and Joshua played such authoritative and leadership roles in both the events and narratives of this section of the Bible, that we cannot possibly refer to a Pentateuch or Tetrateuch outside the active participation of these personalities. These three important figures in the historical reconstruction of the faith of Israel are quite indispensable in this context. A Tetrateuch, therefore, should rather exclude the book of Genesis, because it does not include the activities of Moses who appeared on the scene when the children of Israel have been present in Egypt for about four hundred years.

The only reference in Genesis that links the period of Moses and of the patriarchs is the narrative about Joseph. Genesis is best seen in the narratives of the patriarchs – Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – and should, therefore, retain its rightful place in the primeval and patriarchal periods. I would consequently propose that such a Tetrateuch should exclude Genesis, and range from Exodus to Deuteronomy.

Some scholars referred to the language variant, style and the theology of Deuteronomy, which would presumably set it outside the Pentateuch or the Terateuch, as the case may be. When this book is analysed carefully it would be seen that the unity of the text and the chronological flow of events does not differ significantly from the rest of the books in the Pentateuch. The point of departure for a proposed Tetrateuch should commence with the vivid description of the oppression, the deliverance and the ultimate journey to Sinai, the scene of the giving of the law, the erection of the Tent of Meeting and ultimately up to the plains of Moab. This is the scene of the handing over of command by Moses to Joshua.

Leviticus – otherwise referred to as the manual of the law – was given on Mount Sinai to the priests who would soon become the ministers of the Tabernacle. Leviticus is the third book in the Pentateuch and the second in this proposed Tetrateuch. It contains the bulk of the priestly

material, which is the main concern of the first five books of the Old Testament. The book of Numbers resumes from the dedication of the tabernacle at Sinai in the second year of the wanderings, up to the point of arrival at the Jordan in the fourth year. Deuteronomy is actually a lengthy farewell address of Moses, which he delivered to the children of Israel before handing over the leadership command to Joshua. Moses died after this lengthy speech at the plain of Moab at the ripe age of 120 years (cf. Oswald 1992:7).

Against this background, Deuteronomy would justifiably contain a change in the language style, as some scholars have observed. If we were to take the meaning of Deuteronomy seriously, *"a repetition of the law,"* and the prevailing circumstances surrounding Israel and their leader, it would be but normal and certain that a farewell speech should be different from an everyday speech. It was a long speech and could be expected to be solemn, being both a reminder as well as a handing over of leadership. The book of Deuteronomy relates more to the preceding discourses of the previous three books, Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers, rather than with what follows it. An authentic Tetrateuch within the first five books of the Old Testament would, therefore, exclude the book of Genesis, while maintaining Deuteronomy. It is only when Genesis has placed the creation of the universe in a universal setting that the Tetrateuch (Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy) in describing the manner in which Israel came into existence as a people, is well situated. This Tetrateuch would then continue to present the fundamental traditions of the Hebrews to a point prior to the entry of Israel into the promise land (Harrison 1969:496).

4.2.1   The authorship of the Pentateuch

For many years the question of the authorship of the Pentateuch has been a point of debate among scholars of the Old Testament. Although not directly stated anywhere in the Pentateuch itself, the traditional view is that Moses wrote the Pentateuch. In listing the contents of the Old testament, some versions of the Bible refer to the first, second, third, fourth and fifth books of Moses (cf. The Holy Bible 1876:3; The Holy Bible; the Revised Version of 1903 etc). Moses was after all the only person to whom God spoke face to face and he was the most authoritative spokesman for the people of Israel. It is widely accepted that Moses has written certain passages, including the laws in Deut. 24, and the laws to extirpate the Malekites (Exod. 17:14).

The influence of the traditional past played a strong role in influencing the general reasoning by the proponents who support the notion of the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, such as

the description of the wisdom of Ben Sira (Ecclesiasticus) which was written in the second century BC. Because of the frequent occurrence of the phrase "the book of the Law of Moses," a popular belief arose that inspiration for the writing of the books had to be channelled through certain individuals (Blenkinsopp 1992:2). Thus Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch had been questioned.

The scholars who have questioned the traditional view of Moses' authorship base their arguments on a number of assumptions and hypotheses, some of which we will be describing in the next paragraphs. Around 1670 Spinoza listed certain verses which – according to Ibn Ezra – may not have been written by Moses. Some of these passages include Genesis 12:5; 22:14 and Deut. 1:1; 11, 27:1-8; 31:9. Spinoza concluded: "It is thus clearer than the sun at noonday that the Pentateuch was not written by Moses but by someone who lived long after Moses" (Blenkinsopp 1992:2). It is further contended that the passage in Deuteronomy 34:5-8 could not have come from Moses' pen. This passage reports on the death of Moses, who certainly could not have written about his own death and burial. The whole of the chapter, which also relates about the appointment of Joshua as successor to Moses, is seen as a general survey of Moses' achievements and is consequently seen as a later addition to a work that had already previously been concluded. A passage in the Jewish Talmud also attributed this to be the work of Joshua, Moses' successor (cf. Whybray 1995:12).

For centuries the debate continued and even included a discussion on the date and the history of the composition of the text of the Pentateuch. It should, however, be noted that many scholars are no longer as curious about the question of the history of the text as earlier historians have been. These questions are increasingly being regarded as so-called side issues. While one could sympathise with the difficulty in tracing and obtaining clear-cut dating, authorship and the exact date of the composition of a work such as the Pentateuch, it nonetheless appears to be an over-simplification to regard such issues as no longer important. This is because the Pentateuch is both a theological and a historical document compiled through centuries and by many sources, as we will see.

History deals with the course of events and leaves it to scholars to wonder and speculate about the exact time span of such events. Opinions may differ on matters with a lifespan of some years. But all would nevertheless leave the firm impression that there once lived a historical figure (Moses) and that a piece of history unfolded at a particular time or period regarding the Israelites; all of which happened alongside other historical events.

4.2.2   The date of the Pentateuch

Just as it has not been easy to resolve the problems of the authorship and final compilation of the Pentateuch, so the question of the date of the same seems even more complicated. On the face of it, it does not seem possible to establish logically the date of the compilation of the Pentateuch. The date of writing the book of Deuteronomy would hence become an essential aspect of the contemporary documentary hypothesis.

During the second half of the nineteenth century a number of biblical scholars, mostly from Germany and the Netherlands (e.g. A. Kuenen from the Netherlands and Julius Wellhausen from Germany) came to the conclusion that the Pentateuch was constructed on the basis of four sources (DBI 1999:25; Whybray 1995:15). Although associated with the name of Wellhausen, much credit is due to his predecessors such as Eduard Reuss, Herman Hupfeld, Ewald and Heinrich Graff (cf. DBI 1999:258). These scholars combined an imposing conception of the insights gained during the first half of the nineteenth century from divergent areas of history and historical criticism and accordingly they were able to produce a theory as to how the Hebrew Bible arose. This made it possible for scholars to date the rest of the other pentateuchal sources – called JE and the second Elohist, which was later referred to as P – based on the bulk of the material to be found in Leviticus.

A great deal of the pentateuchal material was concerned with the description of the cult. The worship life of Israel was depicted in a concentration of passages, such as Exodus 25-31, 35-40, parts of Numbers and almost the whole book of Leviticus. Thus the book of Leviticus is based directly on the outcome of Israel's worship life, as evident in both the priestly narratives and the writings (Jensen 1992:15).

Unfortunately the book of Leviticus has seemingly not received a fair treatment by scholars, and this general neglect led to a decline in studies on the priestly writings in the pentateuchal corpus. It was subsequently argued that JE and P reflected the earlier stages of Israel's history, which Wellhausen described as a process characterised by centralisation, ritualisation and denaturalisation, and a historisation of the cult. The nomadic and agricultural religion of early Israel developed via the emergence of the law in Josiah's time, in which the religion of the prophets exerted a great deal of influence on the priestly legal religion of Judaism (DBI 1999:258). JE and P. were, therefore, seen to have preceded (D) Deuteronomy. In 1866 Graff established the view that the laws in P – as we find in the later part of the book of Exodus and Leviticus – all belong to the latest strand in the Pentateuch. P is thus the latest source of the

Pentateuch and is dated even later than D. All four were later combined by a series of editors, referred to as RJE, RD and RP.

4.2.3   The era of critical studies on the sources of the Pentateuch

Doubts about, and even the denial, of the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch continued to be expressed over centuries. Both Jewish and Christian scholars – and later Catholics and Protestants – presented varying viewpoints on the matter. As early as the 12th century a Jewish scholar, Ibn Ezra, singled out passages in both Genesis and Deuteronomy which he considered as a later addition, rather than coming from the hand of Moses. This ushered in for the first time the historical critical method of examining the problem of the authorship of the Pentateuch which was later to play a crucial role in the debates of the 18th and 19th century.

The 17th century witnessed the powerful currents of rationalism as several great intellectuals, such as Hobbes, Ide la Peyrere, B. Spinoza, Richard Simon and J. le Clerc (cf. DBI 1999:257) strongly questioned the traditional view of the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. Apart from items that they considered could not have emanated from Moses, they also drew attention to some historical errors, inconsistencies and the presence of remarkable repetitions, differences in style and also deficiencies in the arrangement of the materials (DBI 1999:257).

In 1753 Jean Astruc, a French scholar, made quite an advance towards these historical criticisms. Astruc published a study on the book of Genesis and concluded that the Pentateuch was written on the basis of earlier written memoirs in which Moses did the editorial work. His purpose was not to abandon completely the notion of Moses taking part in the compilation of the Pentateuch. Astruc pointed out the differences in terminology in the passages, which resulted in the discovery of documents that differed in the way the authors referred to God. Some addressed God by the name *Yahweh*, and others by the name Elohim

This position provoked strong opposition in the 18th century. In Germany scholars voiced criticisms that were not only limited to the problem of the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, but the debate even included the whole Bible. In France Voltaire expressed some critical sentiments about the matter. The 18th century witnessed the formulation of various hypotheses, which were intended to resolve the problem of the authorship and the final compilation of the Pentateuch. These included the so-called older documentary, the fragmentary, the supplementary, and the newer documentary hypotheses (cf. DBI 1999:257). Before continuing, it may be advantageous to provide a brief explanation of each of the hypotheses for a better comprehension of the subject matter.

- The *older documentary hypothesis* presented the theory that Moses used old written documents in building up the Pentateuch. This hypothesis did not dismiss Moses from taking part in the composition of the Pentateuch. Jean Astruc, who refuted the criticism of Hobbes and others, maintained that the irregularities that occurred in Genesis should not lead to a denial of the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. According to him, Moses wrote the history from before his time based on information from older documents, which were later transcribed by scribes who made it a continuous story and they should be held responsible for the chaos of the current state of the text (DBI 1999:257). Astruc made his own reconstruction of Moses' work and based his theory on the repetitions and alterations of the divine names *Yahweh* and Elohim in Genesis and Exodus 1-2. Other adherents to this hypothesis included J.G. Eichhorn (1780-1783) and Karl David Ilgen. In his Introduction to the Old Testament Gottfried Eichhorn pointed out further stylistic distinctions between the two Yahwistic strands in Genesis, while Ilgen again distinguished two Elohistic sources.

- The *Fragmentary hypothesis*: According to this theory a series of unrelated fragmentary sources accumulated over the years and, when later assembled, the documents resulted in the complete Pentateuch. This was also identified to be an exilic compilation. Formulated by the Catholic priest Alexander Geddes, this theory gained support from Severin Vater. This theory soon lost credibility for it failed to identify a credible motive for the process. It also became quite difficult to identify what scholar adhered to which particular theory as far as the origin of the Pentateuch was concerned. De Wette disputed among other things that Moses could not have written the laws in the Pentateuch while others were of the view that the Pentateuch received its present form only after the exile. De Wette for instance, who initially defended the fragmentary theory, turned to side with the supplementary theory.

- The *Supplementary theory*: This was developed by J. Stahelin and Ewald and supported by a number of scholars. The theory postulated that an Elohistic narration runs from Genesis to Joshua, supplemented by a Jehovist who not only used the name *Yahweh*, but also Elohim. This in a way suggested that the Pentateuch was not the work of Moses. This theory was to provoke the formulation of another hypothesis, being the so-called newer documentary hypothesis.

- The *Newer documentary hypothesis*: According to this theory the Hexateuch was constructed from a later priestly source (P) document and earlier Elohistic (E) documents.

These were later combined with yet a later (J) document and Deuteronomy accordingly found a place in this theory. In summary the Pentateuch was compiled from four sources. These hypotheses gradually paved the way for the dating of the Pentateuch.

4.2.4   The ongoing debate from the 20th century

The emergence of and acquaintance with archaeological research and the ancient Near Eastern literature in the twentieth century was soon to create an impact on pentateuchal research. The pre-literary transmission of the narrative material in the Pentateuch was intensely examined by Gunkel and H. Gressman and their findings concluded that J and E were no longer regarded as authors, but as schools that have gathered orally transmitted material and folklore narratives.

Gunkel then employed as tools for his research the European folklore which had begun in the eighteenth century and which was developed in the early part of the nineteenth century by Jacob and Wilhelm Grim. The work of the folklorist Axel Olrik on the Icelandic traditions, which transmitted tales of the pre-literary past was also important. Following a set of epic laws enunciated by Olrik, Gunkel then classified the stories of Genesis concerning the patriarchs. According to him these originated independently of one another (Whybray 1995:17). Gunkel also concluded that Genesis had originated at an early stage in Israel's history and was handed down in oral form over the years and committed to writing in due course. He did not completely abandon the documentary hypothesis, but gradually attempted to trace the process of integration of the individual stories, especially those that concerned the patriarchs of Abraham and Jacob. This process was soon extended to include the whole of the Old Testament, to which he also gave the name of "the History of Tradition".

Drawing inspiration from the work of Gunkel, Gerhard Von Rad formulated in 1938 a comprehensive theory of the development of the pentateuchal traditions. He concerned himself mainly with the themes of tradition, namely the entry into Egypt of Israel's ancestors, the deliverance in Exodus, the guidance to the final destination and the gift of the land of Canaan (Rad 1966:1-3). This was hitherto the common heritage of all the tribes at the celebration of the feast held at Gilgal during the period of the Judges (Whybray 1995:18). At this feast a credo was often recited, based on the annual offering of the first fruits which contained all the elements in Israel's liturgical prayer (Deut. 26:5-9).

What appears to have been left out by Von Rad was the tradition of the giving of the law at mount Sinai. This might have been due to the fact that it posed a completely different

tradition since it was celebrated but at the feast of the tabernacle at Shechem. The two sets of traditions continued quite separately and only became combined at a later period and committed to writing by (J). For Von Rad, J was the pre-Deuteronomistic narrative including Genesis 1-11, which to him was the earliest, composed. He proposed its existence already during the reign of Solomon in the tenth century, which happened to be the age of Israel's imperial expansion. They had occurred in Israel during this period a type of cultural revolution - the so-called Solomonic enlightenment during which time Israel had come into contact with the higher cultures like Egypt resulting in an unusual shift of literary as well as other skills. So to say, Von Rad's date of writing of the Yahwists is earlier than had been proposed by Wellhausen. This was nevertheless not a conclusive hypothesis.

Ten years later, (1948) Noth in his book, "A History of pentateuchal Tradition," expanded on the work of Von Rad but he rather concerned himself with the first four books of the Pentateuch; the so-called "Tetrateuch". He excluded Deuteronomy in its entirety because he doubted the historicity of the narratives regarding Moses. Noth suggested that the books Deuteronomy to Kings was a connected work and as such was limited to J.E and P to the Tetrateuch and this hardly contained any authentic material about Moses. These radical views by Noth were soon to provoke further a serious debate on the subject of pentateuchal investigations.

The next authors to pursue the debate were two Scandinavian scholars, Pedersen and Egnell. (DBI 1999:259). They postulated that the Pentateuch was the result of a complicated process of transmission. "The material in the Pentateuch was transmitted between simultaneously coexisting circles and that in the transmission process archaic and later material congealed together" For Pedersen in particular, JE, D and P obtained their present form in the post-exilic times and as such were of pre-exilic and post-exilic dates. Mowinkel, together with other scholars, confirmed the documentary hypothesis as streams of traditions.

This concludes our description of a centuries long discussion concerning the various aspects of the Pentateuch. This included the sources of the material, authorship, the date of the final compilation and the manner in which the final writers employed the material to arrive at what we now call the Pentateuch or the Tetrateuch, as the case may be. These investigations continued from period to period and from one group of scholars to the next. Certain periods were named after the authors of a certain hypothesis, such as for example, "the 19th century, from Wette to Wellhausen ..." (Blenkinsopp 1992:4,12).

Towards the end of the Second World War, the four source documentary hypothesis proposed by Wellhausen in the 19th century became very popular and was replicated with some variations. Scholars such as Umberto Cassuto and Moshe Hirsch Segal (Blenkinsopp 1992:13) clearly rejected this hypothesis. A real converging point only emerged after the Second World War, with the emergence of Jewish Biblical scholarship from the United States and Israel on the one hand, and also more agreement between Christian and Jewish scholarship on the other hand regarding the Pentateuch and the Hebrew Bible in general.

This convergence was based on the 19th century views of biblical scholars who started agreeing on a specific model regarding the formation of the Pentateuch (Carr 1997:22). The newer documentary hypothesis, which stated that the Pentateuch was formed from the successive conflation of originally separate documents, was thus adopted. "J" may have been a ninth or tenth century Judean proto-Pentateuch, "E" a late independent Northern Pentateuch, "D" largely the book of Deuteronomy and "P" an exilic or post-exilic pentateuchal source. Since then scholars have often worked within this framework of the documentary hypothesis. The above mentioned scholars were able to work backwards in time to examine issues such as oral pre-history, content and the theology of the documents. Some scholars still work within this framework, even though they vigorously question certain presuppositions, such as the date of the earliest pentateuchal stratum. Was "J" a ninth or tenth century source? Questions are still raised about the existence of an independent Elohistic document (E) or the identifiable Elohistic supplementary layer, or the limitation of the deuteronomistic elements to the book of Deuteronomy. Others question at this juncture whether we are able at all to produce anything meaningful about the formation of the Bible during this ongoing debate. Drawing some inspiration from the new system of literary criticism, other scholars argued that the text was actually more unified than had previously been supposed (Carr 1997:22).

Scholars such as Frank Kermode (1973:49-73) Stephen Moore (1994:66-81) and David Carr (1997:23), were of the opinion that it was mere assumption by researchers studying the formation of texts that the present complex text must have a hidden coherence. Their conclusion was that such coherence was actually a construct of the interpreter's own interests. Carr (1997:23) stated: "No matter what eventually emerges from this debate, one outcome of the ferment has been to highlight the fragility of hypotheses that in the past were all too often treated as dogma. The truth is that we do not have copies of the early sources of the

Pentateuch or editions of it." With the above conclusion we can now turn to see what the views of scholars are in the current debate.

4.2.5   The present debate on the Pentateuch

At the turn of the twentieth century the greater part of the study on the Pentateuch concentrated mostly on authorship, sources of material and the demarcation between the individual written sources. Much emphasis was placed on the study of the language structure, the determination of the sources' origin, including the process of editing and compilation. More recently the study of the above aspects of the Pentateuch shifted to a concerted interest in the theology of the written sources of their authors. Efforts were directed at establishing whether a clear profile of individual pentateuchal sources could be formulated.

In a lecture at a conference in Gottingen Germany in 1977, Brevard Childs officially launched Canonical Criticism, a modern revision of the documentary hypothesis. The post-exilic date of the Yahwist had just started and the impact of the ethno-archaeology upon writing the history of Ancient Israel had yet to be felt. Thus paradigms began to change by the late 1970s. The contributions of Rolf Rendtorff and Hans Heinrich Schmid appeared as works that would change the face of pentateuchal studies in the twentieth century. Students of social anthropology were able to indicate that it was time to apply archaeology to study the Bible (Rogerson 1996:13).

For Rendtorff and Schmid, the Pentateuch as we have it in the present form is basically a Deuteronomistic composition and that the contributions of P was quite limited in scope and lacking in homogeneity. The material is such that had been accumulated from the smallest to the bigger blocks and finally being grouped together to form a comprehensive history. It should however be recalled that Rendtorff had earlier proposed the availability of D in Genesis - Numbers (Whybray 1995:22) with the view that P is actually not the latest strand in the Pentateuch.

It is Rendtorff's further proposal that while considering the development of the Pentateuch, the larger units like (the primeval history, the patriarchal narratives, the Exodus, the Wilderness wanderings, the Sinai scope and the occupation of the land), be seen in respect of their separate development and growth. The connection of the larger units came in only at a relatively late stage when the individual units had undergone a lengthy process of transmission. There should be therefore no continuous pre-exilic narrative source corresponding to J and E of the documentary hypothesis. Christoph Levin (Carr 1997:26)

appears to be a moderate to the traditional four-source material used by J even though he still differs with the date of the Yahwist. Accordingly Levin (Carr 1997) the Yahwist is a product of the exile, which dates from around the 6th century. In her book *Ancient Israelite Religion* Niditch *(1997)* has concluded that the Hebrew scriptures took shape over the time and this process was through the combination and revision of various sources that can be distinguished according to differences in vocabulary, style content and theme. Niditch accordingly had dated the sources as follows: for the Yahwist (J) she accorded the period of the tenth century, for the Elohist (E) the Ninth century, for (D) the seventh century and (P) the sixth century which was during the exile. This leaves us with at least some clues as to when the Pentateuch was composed.

Following the present debate on the date and sources of the Pentateuch it would appear that there is no consensus yet regarding the origin of identifiable and continuous narrative sources, which would cover the entire Pentateuch. This researcher would like to see a co-existence coming about between divergent interpretative systems with different, but not incompatible, agendas. Some degree of tolerance is, therefore, needed between these systems so that the theories held in the past may not be discarded without any further ado. An important task for emerging theologians should consequently be to find ways of integrating past and present theories on understanding how the Pentateuch was finally constructed.

In summary, it is clear that scholarly attention has been devoted largely to the meaning and history of the constituent parts of the Pentateuch rather than on the Pentateuch as a whole. The latter would entail questions concerning its literary basis, extent and intention.

The opinions of Von Rad and Noth were not in agreement on the extent of the Pentateuch. Noth (Knight & Tucher 1981) considered the book of Deuteronomy to introduce the so-called Deuteronomistic history (Joshua - Kings), and he was thus left with a Tetrateuch (Genesis - Numbers) and some priestly material at the end of Deuteronomy.

In contrast Von Rad (Knight & Tucker 1985) considered the conquest narratives in Joshua to be the conclusion of the affirmation of the promises to the partriarchs, as well as the promise of the land in Genesis (Knight & Tucker 1985:286). He therefore combines Genesis to Joshua to be a coherent theological and literary unit – i.e; the Hexateuch. Mowinkel (1964) thought that there should be neither a question of a Tetrateuch nor that of a Hexateuch. He was of the opinion that there was only a Pentateuch into which the Deuteronomic laws were incorporated and that the J and P conquest material had been included in the Deuteronomistic

history. Regarding the literary basis on which the Pentateuch was formed, auuthors also disagreed about the priestly material. Recently scholars like Van Seters, Cross, Schmid and Rendtorff considered P not to be a distinctive source, but rather a redaction layer (Knight 1985:287).

Our intention in the above paragraphs was to present aspects of the research concerning the Pentateuch as the larger unit within which the book of Leviticus will be examined further. For quite some time the subject matter of Leviticus appeared foreign and irrelevant to biblical scholars, but recent research has shown that this is one of the most theologically orientated books of the Old Testament. As any other Old Testament book Leviticus has to be examined in its canonical context and how it fits into the Pentateuch (House 1998:126).There has not been consensus about the priestly material in the Pentateuch, and in the book of Leviticus. It is at least clear that the bulk of Leviticus relates to priestly material, which we will discuss in the paragraphs that deal with the book of Leviticus in more detail (chapter 5).

4.3   CONCLUSION

It has been said that the Pentateuch (Torah) is the wellspring of the Bible. One could well agree with this assertion, as one finds in the Pentateuch a work of impressive literary artistry, and evidence of theological reflection that must still be taken seriously. The Pentateuch is a composite entity in which the works of many individuals have been assembled together into a meaningful whole. One could regard it as a single work, comprising a collection of five books that evolved through the editorial merging of sources.

In the Pentateuch the combination of narratives concerning Israel's religious experience and the laws concerning religious instruction dominate the discussions. Narratives form a framework into which the laws have been woven. The survey indicates that much more emphasis is being put on the theology of the authors of the various sources than on the sources themselves. The documentary hypothesis has been fundamental to most existing pentateuchal studies. Many scholars still work from this perspective with the result that the Pentateuch is regarded as a composite work that grew over the course of almost 500 years incorporating instructions and narratives which interweave with each other. The narrative section dominates the first third of the Pentateuch (Genesis - Exodus), while a collection of laws or instructions dominates in Leviticus and Deuteronomy. Our attention will hence be tilted to an examination of the book of Leviticus in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

A RESEARCH SURVEY OF THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS AND LEVITICUS CHAPTER 16

5.1   THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS

5.1.1   The name of the book

This chapter will focus mainly on a research survey of the book of Leviticus with special emphasis on chapter 16. The latter chapter is placed almost midway in the book and in a similar fashion to the role of Leviticus in the Pentateuch, so does chapter 16 constitute a transition in accordance with our discussion in the previous chapters. It is closely linked with the preceding chapters 10, and 11-15; also with the succeeding chapters (chs. 17-26); the latter known as the holiness code.

In order to develop a sound knowledge of the events taking place in Leviticus 16, we found it necessary to start off with a brief and general introduction to the book. It is furthermore our conviction that this will help in the development of a feasible model of understanding the phenomenon of ritual with which we are concerned in Leviticus 16 in the context of its cultural and religious background. Most of the contents of Leviticus 16 has been echoed in the previous chapters, albeit in different contexts, and we will be observing these chapters in both their historical context but also then project them into the future in order to best situate Leviticus 16. With the above in mind we will now turn to a brief introductory survey of the book of Leviticus.

The name Leviticus has been a bone of contention among scholars of the Old Testament and there has been very little consensus for the origin of the name. Many scholars have taken the title Leviticus to indicate some historical links with the Levites. Perhaps this emerged as a result of the influence of its Greek title, *Λέιτικον* , as found in the Septuagent whence the English title has been derived. The Greek word, *Λέιτικον* , could be translated literally as *"pertaining to the Levites"* (Hill & Walton 1991:119). On the other hand Levine (1989:xii) writes concerning the title of Leviticus: "The more commonly known name ויקרא was

intended merely as an aid to memory; it classified the book by making reference to the first significant word in its opening verse (cf. מוֹת for Exodus and Deuteronomy)."

The Latin name for the book of Leviticus goes back to the word Λέιτικον which reflects the Hebrew Levi: in which case a Levite was intended to characterise the contents of the book. Levine, however, concluded that the name may have been conditioned by the terminology from the priests as Levites and as they use such designations as לַכֹּהֲנִים הַלְוִיִּם (to the Levitical Priests, Deut. 17:18, 18:1 etc). According to Wenham (1979:1) the first word of the book serves as its Hebrew title וַיִּקְרָא "*and he called.*" Accordingly the title Leviticus as used in English, has been borrowed from the Latin translation which was in turn adopted from the Septuagint: the early Greek version of the Pentateuch. Wenham thus concluded that this must have been a fairly appropriate title for the book. He is favourably inclined to the historical theory that the name Leviticus has historical links with the Levites, since the book of Leviticus is concerned with priestly matters and the priests were from the tribe of Levi.

Writing twelve years later, Milgrom (1991:1) suggested that the title Leviticus is the equivalent of the rabbinical title of "*the manual of the priests,*" which has no connection with the Levites as priests. According to Milgrom the Levites are mentioned in passing in a lone passage in Lev. 25:32-34, and this is in any event as an afterthought and it moreover occurs in a non-cultic context. The Levites are seen to be active only in the book of Numbers with the description of some minor related activities in the cultic environment. They were in charge of the transport of the *sancta* and the protection of the ark against unauthorised access. Knight (1981:3) observed that the Hebrew name for Leviticus is וַיִּקְרָא and that the title is rather theological in meaning and in tone. He failed to comment on the theological implication, which he initially envisaged doing. Gerstenberger (1996:3) writing from a historical perspective, is of the opinion that the Hebrew scribes followed some ancient oriental convention in the naming of the book of Leviticus וַיִּקְרָא (Lev. 1:1). He consequently questioned the Greek Λέιτικον and doubted whether this could really be an authentic description to the book, since by this designation the notion is introduced that it refers to the Levitical priests. He, however, did not completely discard the idea that the name of Leviticus had such historical links with the Levites. They were considered as the lower members of staff of the temple, being in charge of the lesser tasks in the temple. In contrast the priests were in charge of the sacrifices of the temple and the general welfare of the people. Noth (1965:9), Milgrom (1991:1), and Gerstenberger (1996:3) argued that the book made no mention of the hymnic praise which was a typical activity of the Levites (1 Chr. 23:30). They

plausibly concluded that the book of Leviticus was concerned with the priestly sacrificial system and the other institutions for which the Levites were exempted from certain duties of the temple. The book of Leviticus could thus be rightly referred to by its first opening and descriptive Hebrew word, וַיִּקְרָא , which means "*and he called.*" The word וַיִּקְרָא offered us some information about the history of transmission of the book, the long process of growth covered by the entire tradition of the Pentateuch, as we saw in the discussion in the introduction to the Pentateuch (Gerstenberger 1996:3).

5.1.2   The placement and importance of the book of Leviticus

The book of Leviticus occupies quite a unique place in the Pentateuch. It is the third book in the Pentateuch and has been found to overlap back into the book of Exodus (cf. the activities of the cult from Exodus 25 and the beginning of the book of Numbers) and forward to the book of Numbers. It may, therefore, not be an exaggeration to state that the book of Leviticus provides an anchorage or stability to the Pentateuch. Leviticus is a highly theological book that contains the core of the priestly ritual material of the Pentateuch and in fact the entire Old Testament (NIDOTTE 1997:907).

During the early period of Israelite history God made a promise to Abraham, which included three particular points and one universal goal (Gen. 12:1-3). God promised Abraham a people, a relationship of the covenant blessing and also a land in which to settle. The goal or the ultimate purpose was the blessing of all the nations (NBC 1994:123). The book of Leviticus relates to all these aspects. As described in Exodus 1:7, Israel became a nation. Leviticus touches on this covenant relationship. As regards the land, the theme is developed in the book of Numbers and Deuteronomy. The important issue in Leviticus is how to maintain the relationship between God and Israel – a relationship that was established by God's redeeming grace and described in the book of Exodus. Apart from this covenant relationship inherent in the book of Leviticus, the book contains regulations that bring to bear a theological impact on both the Old and New Testament at various levels. These theological concepts would include for example holiness, purity, sacrificial atonement, forgiveness etc.

The sacrificial system that we find recorded in the book of Leviticus should not be taken as a means of buying favour from God, but it should rather be seen as a means of achieving Grace. Obedience to the law, which is discussed in later chapters of the book, is also to be approached likewise. It was only through the appropriate response to God's grace that Israel could continue to depend on their greatest blessing, which was the presence of God in their

midst (NBC 1994:122), symbolically localised in the tabernacle, but felt in every area of everyday life.

For the Christians the grace that Leviticus offered through the sacrificial system, has been fully developed in Jesus Christ. The sacrifices enumerated in Leviticus provided the New Testament authors with some rich imagery for interpreting the significance of the Cross. All these themes are found developed in Leviticus 16, to which we will next turn. Despite the theological contributions of Leviticus to both the ancient world and the present, the book has since remained a neglected portion in the Pentateuch. Many modern scholars and other readers often feel ill at ease with this book (Contesse & Ellington 1990:1). Many readers may regard the book as too difficult for the average person, and Leviticus may seem to be out of date and lacking in any spiritual significance.

Some believe that the various rituals and regulations found in the book seem to have little to do with our modern society. It is also claimed that the book is composed of mainly outdated rituals and regulations, which have nothing or little to do with the contemporary situation. Contesse and Ellington (1990:1) rightly observed that the fear for reading the book of Leviticus is really unfounded. It is the opinion of these authors that many people do not yet appreciate the contents and religious value of the book of Leviticus. "People often feared the unknown and Leviticus is feared in part because it has remained unknown to many." We agree with the above assessment by Contesse (1990:1) and Ellington. This was also the experience of the author before embarking on the research survey of the scapegoat sacrifice and the Nefo'o ritual of the Bafut of Cameroon. He soon came to see that the book of Leviticus occupied a significant place in the Pentateuch, and especially as it related to Israelite worship services.

It is quite revealing that Leviticus is the book first introduced to Jewish children at school. Milgrom (1991:3) stated: "From earliest rabbinic times Leviticus was the curricular foundation of the Jewish primary schools. Why do the young children commence with the priest's manual (i.e., Leviticus and not Genesis) – surely it is because the young children are pure and sacrifices are pure, so let the pure come and engage in the study of the pure." The book of Leviticus should therefore not be avoided. Scholars of biblical interpretation should avail themselves of a closer study of the book of Leviticus, especially those researchers who embark on a canonical study of the entire scriptures of the Old Testament as they may otherwise run the risk of having an incomplete appreciation of the Old Testament canon. Similarly Leviticus becomes an essential aid in the understanding of certain portions of the

New Testament. The Letter to the Hebrews would be difficult to understand without some background knowledge of the book of Leviticus.

Most of the themes that have been taken up in the book of Leviticus are summarised in Leviticus chapter 16, our chapter of concentration. The themes of impurity, holiness, atonement, the divine presence, ritual sacrifice etc, which occupy a prominent place in Israelite worship and spirituality all find expression in Leviticus 16. The contents of this chapter consequently resemble the contents of the whole book in many respects.

5.1.3   The authorship of the book of Leviticus

Before we turn to a detailed study of Leviticus 16, which scholars have described as the theological centre of the book of Leviticus (NIDOTTE 1997:910), we will first sketch the preliminaries that will lead us to the understanding of the events of Leviticus 16.

No human author has claimed responsibility in writing the book of Leviticus. The phrase "The Lord said to Moses," occurred more than twenty-five times in the whole book. It is found at least once in every chapter, with the exception of chapters 2, 3, 9, 10 and 26 (Hill & Walton 1991:119). Perhaps it is thanks to the influence of the above mentioned phrase that some orthodox Jews and Christians scholars have traditionally attributed the authorship of the book to Moses, as is the case with the rest of the Pentateuch. Moses was the lawgiver of Israel. There is no record of any divine commandment assuring that this legislation, which was given through Moses, should be written down. By analogy with passages in the book of Exodus, it may be assumed that Moses could have written down the words spoken to him by God (Exod. 17:14; 24:4; 34:37). It is true that Leviticus provides a record of part of God's revelation to Moses while Israel encamped at Mount Sinai shortly after their redemption from the Egyptian bondage (Carson NBC 1994:121), but the book is not explicit as to who its author was.

The lack of explicitness about the literary origin of the book has prompted a great diversity of views among many scholars about the authorship. These scholars have been grouped as both traditional and modern. The traditionalists – both Christian and Jewish, amongst whom were Keil, Bonar, Gardiner, Bush and Kellog (DBI 1999:56) – accepted a Mosaic authorship of the book of Leviticus. Kellog – while asserting a Mosaic origin of the legislation contained in the book of Leviticus – however allowed room for the possibility that a later person could have written and edited the Mosaic laws Hayes (DBI 1999:57). Kaufmann (1960:156-157) accepted the existence of the documentary source, but still argues that P was older than D and

that JEPD must have been the case. Other scholars who supported Kaufmann's views that Leviticus was essentially a pre-exilic document, included Milgrom (1991) and Hurvitz (1982), basing their arguments on the assertion that the language in P belonged to the pre-exilic era, which they dated to the time of Moses.

5.1.4   The date of the final composition of the book of Leviticus

Critical scholarship (represented by Wellhausen) argued that the book originated from priestly circles and represented some of their prescriptions for the second temple. This would, therefore, suggest the post-exilic period. Such authors place the date of composition of the book nearly one thousand years later than the traditional scholars, at a time after the Jews had returned from exile. A third view put the date of Leviticus earlier than the exile, although not as early as the time of Moses. The discussion regarding the date of composition has to be seen as part of the wider issue relating to the composition of the whole of the Pentateuch.

The scholars, who date Leviticus much later following the exile of the people of Israel to Babylon, concluded that the work was not that of a single author. According to them a group of authors emanating from the priestly class compiled the work. According to Contesse and Ellington (1990:3) these scholars gathered diverse old material and presented it in a single coherent whole. Nevertheless a closer examination of each of the viewpoints periodically presented would help to bring out the crux of the matter.

As observed above, the traditionalists (mostly Israeli scholars) continue to be active. According to these authors the subject material in the book of Leviticus – including its final shaping – should be seen in the time of Moses. The way the material has been presented in the book presupposed that the laws were all given to Moses in the wilderness (cf. the often repeated formula "the Lord spoke to Moses"). These scholars argued that the sacrifices referred to in Leviticus chapters 1- 6 have actually been offered in the tent of meeting and not in the temple. The reference to the leper (Lev. 13:46) is that he/she has to live outside the camp, and not outside the city. Almost every activity at the cult was centred around the tent of meeting, otherwise also called the tabernacle. It should be borne in mind that ancient Near East texts attested to the elaborate system of sacrifices by Moses. It is thus not plausible to date these sacrifices as a late institution in the religion of the Israelites (Wenham 1979:9).

Leviticus chapters 18 and 20 dealt with questions of conjugal relationships, yet there is no reference to intermarriages with the Canaanites, which was a burning issue during the time of Ezra and Nehemiah (Ezra 9-10; Neh. 13:23ff). From the tithes' laws it would appear there

was a ratio of ten Levites to one priest. From Ezra 8:15 it could be seen that after the exile the situation had reversed (cf. Ezra 2:36, Neh. 7:39). Both these passages suggest a ratio of twelve priests to one Levite, who were among the returning exiles. Another pertinent point is the fact that the book of Ezekiel quotes and alludes to Leviticus (cf. Ezek. 20:11; Lev. 26 are parallel to Ezekiel 34). Accordingly the book of Leviticus should not be seen as a product of the post-exilic period.

Gerstenberger (1996:10) thought that it was not possible to ascribe to Old Testament writings the genuine names of their authors. Most of the texts were passed on orally and only a few in written form. This was a longstanding practice because the text was intended to be used in practice and not for mere preservation. It would thus appear that the final editing of the text of Leviticus has to be seen alongside the history of the returned exiles who had organised themselves under a spiritual leadership consisting of Levites, priests, scribes, elders and spiritual scholars. The sources from Elephantine and later those from Qumnran were the only original and written extra-biblical texts of the period (Gerstenberger 1996:11). Scholars usually, associate the development of the so-called priestly literary strata (the book of Ezekiel) and the priestly source with the ruling priestly classes in Jerusalem.

It was in Jerusalem that the temple was situated and only there could sacrifices be offered (Deut. 12). It was only logical to seek compilers of the cultic texts in the vicinity of the temple. Despite the development of the cult in Jerusalem it may not necessarily be reasonable to ascribe the collection of the cultic traditions to have been only in the hands of the priest. The exiled theologians in Babylon (Ezra 2:36-42, 61-63; Neh. 7:39-45, 63-65) consisting of Levitical and priestly lineages may well have contributed too. Gerstenberger (1996:13) writes, "It is not just the temple organisation itself or the elite priestly caste in Jerusalem that stands behind the third book of Moses." In the light of the above the work of compiling the book of Leviticus cannot be seen to have been limited to an individual even if he/she were a priest, and it would not seem feasible to ascribe the authorship to Moses.

According to Douglas (NBD 1996:684), the author of the book of Leviticus cannot be traced in the book itself, but the whole text rests on divine revelation. Some writer(s), perhaps at a much later stage, must have been responsible for the orderly setting of the material. It is nevertheless possible that Moses may have been involved in organising the material in the present form to be used by successive generations. The theory of later scholarship assigning the book to the priestly code is still being resisted. It is clear that the issue regarding the

author of the book of Leviticus should be considered as a part of the wider ranging problem of the Pentateuch.

The traditionalists' views were closely followed by the so-called standard critical views, which postulated a post-exilic origin of the priestly work (P), and which may have been responsible for authoring the book of Leviticus. Julius Wellhausen's Prolegomena to the history of Israel (1878) gave a classic exposition of why P was considered to be the latest of the pentateuchal sources. According to Wellhausen, this is the point to which the development of Israelite religious life could be traced (cf. the previous chapter). Worship in the early days was simple, free and spontaneous. The act of sacrifice subsequently became bound by law and custom until it reached a stage of rigid ritualistic legalism. Increased emphasis was laid on form and ritual, which led to the increased powers and the privileges of the priests. The priestly code and the book of Chronicles seemed to have signalled the end to this religious evolution. Several areas of Israelite religious life bear witness to these prevailing trends.

The place of worship is a point in view. In 1 Sam 16:2, one finds a hint to freedom of worship, namely that one had a free choice of where the sacrifice would take place. King Josiah then limited all sacrifices to the temple in Jerusalem (cf. 2 Kings 23; Deut 12). Some echoes of centralisation could also be noticed around the tabernacle (Lev. 17:1-9). Critical scholars interpreted the tabernacle and the cult described in Leviticus as mere projections into the Mosaic past of the temple in Jerusalem. Josiah's reforms and the resulting centralisation of sacrifice had long taken place before P was written and as such it was almost universally accepted. Sacrifice has since its inception been a joyful fellowship meal with God (cf. Judges 13:16ff) but in Leviticus sacrifice suddenly became a priestly function with the prime purpose being the atonement of sins. This mood coincides with the periodical treatment of ancient Israelite religious history as depicted by Wellhausen. According to Wellhausen's schematisation the religious history of ancient Israel moved from a religious orientation toward nature to one toward history and finally to law).

Thus the flexibility of the early period gave way to a rigid timetable for sacrifice. During the early period each tribe chose a time that suited it most to observe a festival in the Jewish calendar, especially as this moved with the cropping season of the area. Later it became necessary to establish a fixed date after the centralisation in Jerusalem so that the whole nation could celebrate the festivals simultaneously. This arrangement functioned with some difficulty as the whole nation could not travel to Jerusalem each time. According to Miller

(1990:64) the time of Moses was considered a truly creative period in Israelite history, setting the pattern and the norm for what would eventually follow. The religious core was the conviction that *Yahweh* was the God of Israel and Israel the people of *Yahweh*.

During the post-exilic times the priests became stratified with a great deal of differentiation in rank, whereas hitherto it had not been the case. Leviticus laid much stress on the high priest's office, a phenomenon that had betrayed its late origin. At first gifts to the priests were optional without any regulation, but in the book of Leviticus the first indication appears of an obligation that priests have to be given the tithes, first fruits and many other parts of the sacrificial animals. Wellhausen sees this as a late development. Accordingly Israel's religion has "evolved from simple flexible liberal Protestantism attested in the books of Judges and Samuel into the legalistic ritualism akin to the medieval Catholicism that had characterized the post-exilic priestly code" (Wenham 1979:1). The priestly code and consequently the book of Leviticus could well have been edited by the late fifth century BC, even though it does reflect some practices of the pre-exilic temple.

Kaufmann (1960:157) accepted the views of the documentary sources, but still challenged the so-called standard view. He distinguished between the traditional and the standard critical views of Wellhausen. He saw the written torah, that included P as the product of the earliest phase of Israelite religion and as not an outgrowth of literary prophecy as claimed by Wellhausen (DBI 1999:57). The existence of anthropomorphic terms in the book of Leviticus presupposed the existence of local altars and thus the antiquity of P. Accordingly, Kaufmann suggested the date of the composition of the book of Leviticus to be around the 7th century BC.

In doing so, he concentrated on the language style, the laws and other institutions of P and concluded that these aspects of the priestly code did not coincide with what else was known of the post-exilic age. This would appear to be a possible deficiency in Kaufmann's line of thought. Part of the cultic vocabulary shares a number of terms with post-biblical Hebrew which is why P – and therefore the book of Leviticus – has been considered not to belong solely to the Mosaic period, but rather toward the end of the pre-exilic age. Critical scholars, such as Schneider, Cazalles, Noth and Kelliger (1966), presented a detailed analysis of literary material in the book of Leviticus, but this did not shift Kaufmann's opinion. Kaufmann maintained that P was older than D. While accepting that Old Testament writings rarely contained the genuine names of authors, Gerstenberger (1996:10) concluded that in the case of the book of Leviticus the compilers had to be sought in the vicinity of the temple. It is

probable that scribes, priests and the other personnel of the temple could have effected the relevant editorial work.

The authorship and the date of the final composition of the book of Leviticus have a number of implications for both chapter 16 and indeed for the whole of the Pentateuch. Some scholars have described the book of Leviticus as "the manual of the priests." The core of the priests' activities is found in Leviticus 16. Just as no one single person is able to claim responsibility for authoring the whole book, the same is equally true of Leviticus 16. There is no indication in the chapter as to who actually wrote it. In both the books of Leviticus and specifically Leviticus 16, the Lord spoke repeatedly through Moses, giving him some detailed instructions to pass on to Aaron and hence to the people. Chapter 16 could be considered a monologue in the sense that it is God who speaks or issues the instructions to be observed during the great Day of Atonement to Moses who in turn listened attentively with a view to pass these on to Aaron

In Leviticus 16 Moses is only an intermediary and nowhere in the chapter is it stated that he ever wrote the communication down which he conveyed to Aaron. Tradition may have it that Moses wrote certain passages in the Old Testament, especially the book of Exodus (Exod. 17:14; 24:4; and 34:27), but there has been no such claim in the book of Leviticus and even less in Leviticus 16. We cannot go further concerning the authorship of Leviticus and chapter 16 than to state that it was assigned to the priestly code, (Douglas NBD 1996:684).

Tracing the author of Leviticus 16 is just like repeating one verse of a hymn three times. The author of this chapter should be considered in relation to the whole of the book of Leviticus and hence of the Pentateuch. After following the arguments that have been presented about the authorship of and the date of the final composition of Leviticus, we are inclined to agree with the moderates who advocated this date to be towards the end of the pre-exilic period, in other words not dating back to Moses. The composite nature of the material, the language style, and the mere fact that the books of Joshua and Deuteronomy quote Leviticus, reflect the antiquity of the priestly and cultic material. Leviticus and perforce Leviticus chapter 16 is a composite work originating from different periods which was later assembled and compiled before the return of the exiles.

5.2   THE CONTENTS AND STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS

5.2.1   The contents of the book of Leviticus

The book of Leviticus almost entirely consists of laws and rituals. It is for this reason that several scholars have qualified it as a legal document (Contesse & Ellington 1990:1). About 85% of the book is composed of laws and orders that were transmitted from the Lord almost entirely to Moses - for himself, the priests and the people of Israel. The rest of the book (15%) is narrative, recorded in chapters 8-10:5, 16-20, 24:10-14, 23. These texts have been found to originate from different sources and were intended to depict the cultic legislation given to Moses on Mount Sinai (Rendtorff 1985:145). Recent studies undertaken on Leviticus reveal that there has been a dramatic shift from the search for relevance in its message so as to apply it within living religious traditions that are in a distant relationship with the ancient Israelite community. Current research is concentrating on the reconstruction of the book's origins and also in the historical reality which one finds reflected in it (Hayes DBI 1999:54).

Modern biblical criticism in the eighteenth and nineteenth century divided the interpretation history of Leviticus into three periods, namely the Temple Period; Pre-Modern Period and Modern Period (Friedman 1999:54). The Temple Period provided a fully inclusive environment for cultic and other religious performances. With its cultic and legal systems, the ritual and its ethical prescriptions were ably carried out. Interpreters applied and adopted the laws with reference to the traditions of the temple (Hag. 2:11-12; Lev. 6:20) and communicated them in an understanding manner to the dispersed Jews. During the period of the second temple a heated disagreement arose among Jewish groups concerning the manner in which the instructions in the book of Leviticus should be carried out. Different viewpoints emerged between the Sadducees and the Pharisees in connection with the way the high priest should bring incense into the holy of holies on the Day of Atonement (cf. Lev. 16:12-30).

Documents emanating from Qumran expressed dissatisfaction with the Jerusalem priesthood and its practices. Apart from the literal meaning of practices, several other means of interpretation were employed during the second temple period. In a subsequent period the New Testament found ongoing meaning in all sacrifices mentioned in Leviticus. The New Testament viewed them as pre-figurations of Christ's death on the Cross and His subsequent

priestly mediation, a view that has served as a framework for future Christian interpretation of the book of Leviticus.

Just before the modern period (after 70 CE) Jewish interpretation of the book of Leviticus changed as to how the Jewish community may continue to maintain its identity as God's people. Several other writings appeared in a bid to maintain continuity with the temple through the discussions of its form, procedure and the principles of holiness. Subsequent periods saw the abandonment of the Midraschic and spiritualising modes of interpretation of the book of Leviticus in favour of the literal meaning of the text, even though some Christian scholars still continue to hold fast to the concept that sacrifices typify the atonement of Christ. Pentateuchal criticism, especially during the 18th and the 19th centuries, attempted to understand the plain sense involved in the historical-critical theories; an approach which was welcomed by both Christian and Jewish scholars.

By the second part of the 19th century the book of Leviticus came to be regarded as comprising part of a priestly narrative source that was woven through the narratives of Genesis, Exodus and Numbers (DBI 1999:56). Accordingly, Graf, Kuenen and Wellhausen developed the theory or the notion that the priestly source – otherwise also called P – was the latest source of the pentateuchal traditions and should be dated after the fall of the monarchy. This theory would hence completely eliminate Mosaic authorship from the final compilation of the book of Leviticus in the form we have it today. Let us now turn to examine the structure of the book of Leviticus.

5.2.2   The structure of the book of Leviticus

The structure of the book of Leviticus could be presented in various ways. At the start of the book one notices the outlines of some planned organisational material. The instructions to build the tabernacle אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד or "*tent of meeting*" which should probably take the model of the Jerusalem temple, were given in Exodus chapters 25-31. Gerstenberger (1996:17) writes: "After the intermezzo with the golden calf and the renewal of the tablet of the law (Exod. 32-34) the construction plans are carried out (Exod. 35-40). All that is missing now are the precise instructions for (Lev. 1-7), then the sanctuary can assume its role and be put into use with a great sacrificial festival (Lev. 8-9)." The above quotation reflects and confirms the overlapping nature – backward in time – of the book of Leviticus, as we have earlier observed. Broadly speaking the book of Leviticus could be divided into two main sections –

chapters 1 to 16 and 17 to 27. Within this broad framework other small sections may also be noted.

As observed in the previous paragraphs, the book of Leviticus consists almost entirely of laws and rituals. Chapters 1 - 16 present the instructions for sacrifice and the activities of the priests as officiating ministers to the Israelites in the cult of worship and the performance of rites of purification. Chapters 17 - 27 present the requirements for holiness. This section has broadly speaking been referred to as the holiness code, although the contents of chapter 27 are slightly different from that of chapters 17 - 26. These are all priestly statements addressed to the people of Israel. It could briefly be said that part one (1-16) is addressed to the priesthood, which concerns cultic officiation and the purity of the participants. It has often been referred to in Hebrew as תרת "*for the priest.*" There is a link or continuation between the two main sections of the book in the sense that the second main section (17-27) reflects the instructions of chapters 1 to 7; a section that has often been referred to as תרת "*of* or *by the priests.*" The laws addressed to Israel are found here and the main idea is to command the people to pursue holiness as a collective obligation for a righteous life.

As already observed above, the contents of chapter 27 do not deal with the so-called holiness code. Gerstenberger (1996:19) rightly observed that chapter 27 is an addendum to the material that was collected in the fourth book of the Pentateuch namely Numbers. For Contesse and Ellington (1990:424), chapter 27 of Leviticus is a separate and self-contained unit that deals with matters of redeeming offerings or gifts to the Lord. One could distinguish other subsections and breaks too within the sections, showing the uniqueness of the book of Leviticus. The detailed diagrammatic structure to the book of Leviticus as presented hereunder, will in any event include chapter twenty-seven as belonging to the holiness code. We found the following thematic structure very illuminating and precise *[q.v. p. 160].*

CHAPTERS	DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES
1-7	Regulations concerning sacrifices (types of sacrifices and instructions for the offering of sacrifices).
8-10	The inaugural service of the tent of meeting (consecration; sacrifice, the divine epiphany, negligence and the struggle for power on the part of Aaron's children).
11-15	Several Commandment for purity (dietary laws, causes of impurity, sexual defilement and the re-establishment of cultic purity).
16-17	The main festival of the Day of Atonement, regulations concerning sacrifice and the forbidden laws of the consumption of blood.
18-20	Regulations for the life of the community.
21-22	Priestly regulations (purity, unblemished conditions, consumption of offerings and sacrifices).
23-25	The sacral calendar (festivals and holidays, blasphemy, many releases of debts or the so-called Jubilee laws)
26-27	Conclusion and continuation (blessing and curse regulations concerning vows and devoted gifts).

In the following paragraphs we will provide a detailed explanation to the various sections within the above thematic structure of the book. This is in part to facilitate understanding of what takes place in the book and how each section is linked to the following. This is also in a bid to lay the groundwork for what is anticipated in chapter six, dealing with the rhetorical analysis of Leviticus chapter 16:1-34.

As seen from the above diagram – and in terms of the eventual detailed explanation of the contents of each of the subsections – chapters 1 to 7 are charged with explaining the proper manner in which principal sacrifices may be prepared and offered to the Lord. These chapters contain primarily details of sacrifices and offerings that have been prescribed by the priestly school of biblical writers. The chapters are thus devoted to two of the mainstays of the cult,

namely the burnt offering and the sacred gift of greeting, otherwise also known as the *burnt* and the peace offerings respectively. Chapters 4 and 5 in particular prescribe the sacrifices that are concerned with expiation. The חַטָּאת " relates to "*sin offering,*" while chapters 6 and 7 are charged with the responsibility of apportioning parts of most sacrifices to the officiating priests. The donors of sacrificial animals may also benefit from certain portions of sacrifices.

The cult demanded an effective leadership and in order to offer sacrifices, the institution of a priesthood was necessary (Wenham 1979:5). Chapters 8 - 10 describe the ordination of the priests and their initial activities, which have been described by some scholars as a founding ritual or rite of passage. The occasion for sacrifice involves the third section (11-15). In chapters 11 to 15 the contraction of diseases and other bodily discharges, as well as moral failure, contribute to rendering a person unclean and, therefore, provides the occasion for sacrifice as a means of purification. The contamination did not only affect the individual but also the tabernacle, which was regarded as the seat of God's presence among His people.

With the pollution of the tent of meeting it meant that the redeemer of Israel could no longer dwell among His people. Very fittingly the section closes with the Day of Atonement ceremonies. This was the time all the people and the tabernacle were to be purged of all defilement. All these actions are foreseen in chapter 16. Thus the first sixteen chapters of the book of Leviticus focus exclusively on Israel's priestly responsibility. In Exodus 19:6, Israel had been called to become "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (cf. the Sinai covenant). As long as Israel is able to preserve her purity she would remain united with God and be a constant witness to the world regarding His presence among them.

The next section (chapters 17-26), otherwise referred to as the "holiness code," may be summarised in the words of the Lord namely: "You must be holy for I, the Lord your God, am holy" (Lev. 19:22). This, and the many other formulae used in chapters 18 to 26, emphasise that God has redeemed Israel to be His people. Interestingly enough a collection of laws – typical of an Oriental formulation – concludes this section, together with the warning that Israel should keep the laws in order to be blessed, but failure to do so would mean a threat to their very existence. Chapter 27 is included in this section merely for the purpose of a good arrangement and as a conclusion to the book. As seen earlier, many scholars (Wenham 1979:5; Gerstenberger 1996:19) observed that chapter 27 constitutes more of an appendix to the whole book. With the structure of Leviticus thus set out, one would notice

that the book displays a unity to the end. The theme is that of holiness. Although chapters 17-26 have been designated as the holiness code, this section is nevertheless intimately tied up with chapters 1 to 16. Wenham (1979:241) observed that chapter 17 antedates the opening chapters of Leviticus and provides a link to the two sections of the book, as we pointed out in the previous paragraphs.

5.3   IMPORTANT THEOLOGICAL TRADITIONS IN THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS AND ITS IMPLICATIONS IN LEVITICUS 16

Leviticus is a highly theological book (Averbec in NIDOTTE 1997:907). It contains the core of the priestly ritual material of the Pentateuch and in fact the whole of the Old Testament. According to Knight (1981:1) Leviticus has the lion's share in providing today's church with an orthodox theology. The theology found in Leviticus informs us about the nature of God's people. This presupposes that the theological trends in the book of Leviticus should never be treated in isolation but always in close proximity with the other books of the Pentateuch, especially those books with which Leviticus has been found to overlap both backward and forward (Exodus and Numbers).

It should at this point be clear that with whatever theological trends we are dealing, all have their main focus in chapter 16 of Leviticus. Some of the theological themes in Leviticus with a significant impact on the Old Testament and eventually the New Testament, include the questions of divine presence, purity, sacrificial atonement, and forgiveness (Averbec, NIDOTTE 1997:907). Since our main concern is in Leviticus chapter 16, we would like to add to the above list also the theme of covenant.

5.3.1   Divine Presence

God's presence among the Israelites has often been felt both in a visible and tangible manner. This was depicted in several instances in the book to the extent that this enduring presence has become one of the theological presuppositions throughout the book, with a special emphasis on chapter 16. In this chapter the focus is the tent of meeting, located in the camp of the Israelites. The priestly traditions hold it that *Yahweh* dwells in the midst of the Israelites. He is not a partial God, but an active participant in the daily life of the community. Gorman (1997:10) observed that God appears to share the daily activities of Israel with them. Israel's identity is that of a holy community and, therefore, the holy God dwells in the midst of His people. The picture of the eminent presence of *Yahweh* becomes more vivid with the

presence of the tabernacle – a large tent at the centre of the community. All the rituals' enactments focus on the divine presence. The activities and gestures of the high priest indicate and situate *Yahweh* in the holy of holies, the inner sanctuary of the tent (cf. Lev. 16:1-3).

The laws and rituals on the sacrifices repeatedly state that the ceremonies take place before the Lord. One finds a great deal of anthropomorphic language describing the divine presence (Lev. 16:2b). This makes the idea of the presence of God a reality to the whole community of Israel. Some other examples could be cited outside chapter 16, such as the food offering being "*a soothing aroma for the Lord*" which is repeatedly used in the texts of Lev. 1:9, 2:9; 3:5 etc. When the priests preside over sacrifices, they approach the Lord (Lev. 16:1, 21:17) and this gives them the occasion to obey the instructions from the Lord. It was a matter of death whenever priests acted on their own initiative (Lev. 8:35; 10:2, 6, 7, 9; 16:2, 13). Moreover God is never to be looked upon directly. These restrictions of coming face to face with *Yahweh*, already discussed in Exodus (Exod. 19:20-25), are echoed in Leviticus 16. Contesse and Ellington (1990:241) observed that the death of the two sons of Aaron in chapter 10 undoubtedly came about because they approached the presence of God in an unacceptable manner and thus God took their lives. This is a convincing indication that *Yahweh* dwells in the tent of meeting where He could be approached in the prescribed manner.

The people of the ancient Near East had the concept of a portable shrine that signified the presence of the deity in the midst of his people. The tent of meeting thus became a constant reminder of God's supreme power, as well as His presence with them (Harrison 1980:30). Exodus 19:9, 40:34-38) describes that on special occasions the divine glory was manifested though various theophanies that became visible to the people. The reference "*I am the Lord your God*" is recurrent in the latter chapters of the book of Leviticus. In Leviticus 16 one finds a clear distinction between a permanent presence of God with His people and His visible presence which was quite obvious at special occasions. The tent of meeting – according to Leviticus 16 – serves as the permanent presence of God, which is why the priests may not approach or enter the holy of holies in the tent of meeting at any time that they wish. Not even Aaron, the high priest, was permitted to enter the tent at any time that he wished. He risked suffering the fate of Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:1-3; 16:1-2), which we believe happened not only because they brought unauthorised fire into the holy of holies, but they may have stumbled upon the physical presence of *Yahweh*. This assumption arises from

Aaron being asked to create a cloud of smoke from the incense bowl that could help to conceal *Yahweh* from the view of the people and from whatever priest who enters or approaches the holy of holies.

It was at the tent of meeting that *Yahweh* appeared in the cloud over the atonement seat (Lev. 16:2b). This presupposes that the Lord dwells permanently in the tent of meeting, even though this may be contrary to the theology of the Deuteronomist. In conclusion, Milgrom (1991:58) correctly observed in our view that the presence of God is quite related to His anthropomorphism and revelation, which is exactly what occurred in the books of Exodus and Leviticus.

5.3.2   The Holiness of God

In the entire book of Leviticus – and in particular Leviticus chapter 16:1-34 – God is not seen only as a living and omnipotent deity. He is also the essence of Holiness. This is a concept that encompasses moral, ethical as well as spiritual attributes, which had to be reflected in the daily life of the Israelites (Harrison 1980:31). The covenant relationship between Israel and God becomes a matter of importance in the sense that the two parties are intimately related to another. Leviticus identifies three interrelated aspects of holiness in the venture (Gorman 1997:13). The first aspect is associated with *Yahweh*, the Holy God. The second aspect is connected with the tent of meeting and the surrounding environment or the camp, which Gorman refers to as sacred space. The third aspect concerns the community. Seen as such, holiness becomes the concrete manifestation of *Yahweh* and his interaction with the world of human beings.

In this manner the holiness of God or *Yahweh* is bound in a relationship with His glory. This is so because wherever the glory of God is seen manifested there, His holiness was also felt "... *I appear in the cloud over the atonement cover*" (Lev. 16:2b). Jensen (1992:89-114) graded the sacred environment in the camp of the Israelites into three categories, starting with the holy of holies, progressing to the outside of the camp environment. One begins to wonder and ask why sin, which is the direct opposite of holiness, is not also graded? This question arises because, according to Leviticus 16, sin within the holy of holies results in immediate death (the death of Nadab and Abihu Lev. 10:1) while any sin committed outside the tent is or could be atoned for.

The central teaching in the book of Leviticus is based on the command of *Yahweh* "Consecrate yourselves and be holy for I the Lord I am holy" (Lev. 11:44-45). The first part

of the book contained the instructions or procedures for approaching the Holy One of Israel. It could be stated that chapters 10 and 16 of Leviticus both serve as a test case for these instructions. In Leviticus chapter 16, and especially from the opening statements (16:1-2), one is presented with certain special precautions as to how a priest has to approach the Holy God. Unauthorised fire and encroachment on the presence of God is linked to His holiness. This presupposes that the common or the unholy is not permitted to approach the Holy God. The holiness of God in Leviticus chapter 16 can consume the sinful human being or the unclean. This is the more reason why every priest – and even the high priest – has to consecrate himself before entering the most holy place to perform the ritual sacrifice.

As stated above, the Israelites are to become a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. The formula, "*be holy, for I am holy*" (Lev. 11:44-45, 19:2, 20:26) has been described by a number of scholars (Harrison 1980:31; Wenham 1979:19) as the motto of the book of Leviticus. The terms holy, unclean and other cognate words occur more frequently in Leviticus than in any other, emphasising the role of the holy life among the Israelites. Yet the precise significance of these words has in a way remained elusive.

The priests were instructed to distinguish between the concepts of the holy and the common, between the unclean and the clean (Lev. 10:10). The Old Testament term for holiness invariably conveys the notion of separation from the mundane for service or worship to *Yahweh* who is totally separate from His creation (Hill and Walton 1991:123). There is thus a double contrast between the holy and the common and between the clean and the unclean. The holy is the opposite of the common, just as clean is also the opposite of unclean. The distinction between these two concepts could be exemplified in the animal kingdom, which has been grouped into two categories - those that are clean as well as those that are unclean. (Lev.11). In a similar way chapters 12 to 15 detail the illnesses that make a person unclean and those that leave him clean.

The concept of common, as we have seen, stands as the reverse of the holy while profane becomes the converse of "*to sanctify*." Consequently in Hebrew thinking something has either to be clean or unclean, holy or common. The question of how the different concepts relate to each other is the next problem to be dealt with. Again we should be reminded that everything that is not holy remains common. Common things are also found in two categories. They belong to the clean and the unclean categories. Clean objects become holy when they are sanctified. Conversely unclean objects may not be sanctified while there is the possibility that they could become unclean when they are polluted. Cleanness should consequently be seen as

an intermediary state between holiness and uncleanness. The Lord requires cleanness and a person may be elevated to the state of holiness through the process of sanctification. On the other hand pollution degrades the clean into the unclean. Thus the unclean and the holy are two extremes that may not come into contact with each other (Averbeck NIDOTTE 1997:918).

Among the Israelites it was prescribed that if an unclean person happened to partake of a sacrificial animal, such a person would immediately be cut off from the rest of the community (Lev. 7:20-21; 22:23). The priests were regarded to be holy and were forbidden from coming into contact with corpses that were by definition and nature unclean. Cleanness is, therefore, the equivalent of purity. This is confirmed by the frequent use of water to purify both things and unclean persons throughout Leviticus. (Lev. 11:25, 28; 14:8-9) and in other Old Testament passages. Fire was also used as an alternative in certain passages in the Old Testament. In another sense cleanness could be seen as the state of normality.

Many of the diagnostic diseases mentioned in Leviticus 13 would end after the priest's examination, with the statement "he/she is clean," indicating that because the afflicted person has been restored to a clean state, he/she may now live again in the community. This also implies that the state of uncleanness could be contagious, which is incompatible with holiness. According to the theology of Leviticus, a clean person or object may in certain circumstances become temporarily unclean by coming into contact with those items that render someone unclean by tradition, such as corpses, disease, childbirth, various discharges and other skin diseases (Lev. 11-15). Illicit sexual intercourse (ch. 18) and murder (Num. 35:33) may result in temporary uncleanness that would necessitate a sacrifice.

Being in a state of uncleanness is equal to being in a state of abnormality. The greater the deviation from the norm, the greater would be the degree of uncleanness and the difficulty to become clean again. The idea of holiness in Leviticus 16 implies that Israel should implement the idea of "the holy" into their everyday life experience. Walton (1991:123) explains that applying the concept of the common, clean and unclean to the physical realms of life was very basic to the ancient Israelite worldview. These distinctions, therefore, allowed the people to order their relationship with the natural world in such a fashion that they should also be holy, just as the Lord is holy. Leviticus 16 stipulates that clean objects may become holy through the process of sacrificial sanctification. Pollution could equally result in uncleanness. Consequently the priest first had to sanctify himself and the people so that they could both approach the holy God as holy people during their worship service. A person who

becomes contaminated for one reason or the other, for instance the one who releases the goat to Azazel (Lev. 16:26-27), has to bathe himself in water before rejoining the community. As we have earlier observed, the presence of the holy God is constantly felt in the Israelite camp within the tabernacle and, therefore, it was imperative to prevent the unclean from coming into contact with the holy. Leviticus chapter 16 provides us with a gleam of how the Israelite community was expected to behave, namely to remain holy, for the Lord their God is holy.

5.3.3   Purity

Purity is a concept that has been emphasised in the book of Leviticus, with a summary provided in chapter 16. This notion is closely related to holiness. We saw in the previous paragraphs that the Lord resides in the tabernacle. This requires that special attention be paid to maintaining the sanctity and purity of God's presence. Distinguishing between "the holy and the common, between the clean and the unclean" was the major concern of the priests and their responsibility in the tabernacle (NIDOTTE 1997:919). Thus the sin offering or the blood atonement focused primarily on the concern to purify the tabernacle and the altar.

With the procedure for priestly officiation described exactly, the book of Leviticus then set out to address the purification function of the priesthood. The priests were trained to instruct the people on questions of purity as regards a proper diet. Leviticus chapter 11 presented the *torah* of dietary purity. It extended to the condition of vessels and to persons having contact with certain foodstuffs. Deuteronomy 14 also presented a similar list of the "do not eat" category of both foodstuff and animals. Freedman (ABD 1992:314) argued that Leviticus chapter 11 was patterned after the Deuteronomic code and this provided the reason why the list in Leviticus 11 similarly dealt with the purity of foodstuffs. The hallmark of purity was that it met with the norm and was acceptable in the community.

One would have expected the dietary code to appear in the second part of the book of Leviticus (17-27), since it is addressed to the Israelite people. In substance chapter 11 is dominated by the theme of holiness. We thus agree with Freedman that chapter 11 is an insertion, shifted from the holiness code to the first part of the book, and reinterpreted as purity legislation. A dominant and recurrent theme in Leviticus 11, as in Deuteronomy 14, is the distinctness of Israel as a pure and holy people. This was constantly expressed in dietary and also in sexual activities and religious worship. Israel was expected to avoid any abominations of these three areas. The idea of purity in the book of Leviticus continues through the next four chapters, discussing various aspects of the purity of persons and other

objects. Chapter 12 is concerned with the ritual state of the mother. Chapters 13 to 14 deal with all types of skin ailments, which have sometimes been described as leprosy. Chapter 15 is concerned mostly with physiological phenomena, particularly with abnormalities related to human genitals.

The first part of the book of Leviticus concludes with chapter 16, which details the elaborate rituals for the purification of the sanctuary and the people. According to the priestly tradition recorded in Leviticus 16:29-34 these rituals were instituted as an annual event that took place on the tenth day of the seventh month, a few days before the pilgrimage of the festival of booths (Lev. 23:26-44). All purification rites required sacrifice, which in turn necessitated a pure sanctuary. We could thus conclude that all the elaborate instructions and laws of purity discussed in the first part of the book of Leviticus serve as a prelude to the general great Day of Atonement. Everything, the people and the sanctuary should be kept pure and holy as God Himself is holy. Thus chapter 16 carries instructions for the priesthood on periodic measures necessary for maintaining the purity of the sanctuary.

5.3.4   Atonement

Averbeck (NIDOTTE 1997:918) suggested that the term atonement was derived from an archaic English meaning "at-one-ment," denoting reconciliation and agreement. In the light of the above rendering it could be seen that atonement has as its primary focus sacrificial procedures that deal with the violation of boundaries or with transitions between the categories of holy and common or clean and unclean. The product from any of the above categories could either distance the individual or bring him/her in close relationship with *Yahweh*. The making of atonement was required for cleansing irregular or severe uncleanness. In Leviticus 16:16 and 21 it follows that the shrine and the outer altar have been defiled by the sins of the Israelites. The sanctuary had to be cleansed on a regular basis on the Day of Atonement. The word כפר was used in a number of contexts to denote the removal of sins and ritual impurities. In this sense the word has been rendered "*to atone*" or "*to cover up*".

Grabbe (1993:40) argued that the term כפר still remained debatable among scholars. We tend to side with Levine who argued on the other hand that the root כפר would mean "*to remove, wipe off impurities*" and not "*to cover up.*" In most ritual texts the idea of wiping off impurities predominated in that the blood of the animals was thought of as wiping away all impurities. Milgrom disagreed with Levine because, according to him, Levine's apotropaic

theory on blood was not feasible. Milgrom argued that the impurities compromised the holiness of the sanctuary, so that the purpose of the offering was to remove the impurities. Since the impurities were not limited only to the sanctuary, but included the whole community of Israel, the ceremony of the scapegoat became linked to the sin offering that helped to transport evil from the community. Finally, Kiuchi (1987:15) cautioned against looking at sin in Leviticus 16 mathematically i.e., "in terms of accumulation or amount." Sin should be seen instead in terms of the occasion, particularly of the atonement ceremony. "All sins over a period of time are envisaged as being atoned for again on the Day of Atonement by the most potent blood manipulation." Thus the guilt that was related to the sins is removed by the Azazel goat which makes atonement for Aaron and, therefore, for the people. It consequently follows that this did not occur through the burning of the חַטָּאת flesh.

5.3.5   The role of sacrifice

When we think about sacrifice, this notion is invariably linked with worship. As we observed above, worship – in the context of the Israelite community – was not merely a performance undertaken before a passive divine spectator. *Yahweh* dwells in the midst of His people at a holy place. Burns (1983:203) rightly stated that when one came into God's presence at a holy place such an individual was entering a sphere of sacred activity and at the same time encountered a dynamic presence of power. The offering of sacrifice was the focal point of the worship services of the Israelites, regulated by the priests. In Leviticus chapters 1 - 7 one finds a catalogue of sacrifices and their rubrics to which some scholars referred as a manual of services which were conducted from the post-exilic temple (Burns 1983:204). Apart from water, almost every object is purified by blood and one obtains blood for purification only through the ritual killing of animals for sacrifice. It would seem as if the author of the letter to the Hebrews had in mind the rites that have been described in the books of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers when he made the following statement. Indeed, according to the law almost everything is purified by blood and sins are forgiven only if blood is poured out. The book of Leviticus is particularly concerned with sacrifice. The first seven chapters explained the occasion and the correct procedures that should be followed when performing sacrifice. But this has not yet answered the question of the role of sacrifice in the book of Leviticus.

Over the years there has been a significant debate concerning the role of sacrifice in Leviticus, which has prompted theories to explain both the problem and the priestly theology. Wenham (1979:25) observed that in the book of Leviticus the role of restoration of

relationship between God and Israel and between different individuals of the nation rested on sacrifice. The Sinai covenant introduced a fellowship, which was characterised by life, order and harmony between God, humankind and humans themselves. One could envisage death and disorder outside the covenant and its institutions. Wenham furthermore contended that anything that was likely to disturb the order such as death, disease or sin became a potential threat to the whole community. Sacrifice, therefore, was the only principal means of restoring the harmony required into the community. Sacrifice in the community was usually associated with cleansing and sanctification more than with the role of order. Both oil and blood were used for cleansing (Lev. 14:6-10).

In Leviticus sacrificial blood was essential to cleanse and sanctify, because sacrifice was able to undo the effects of sin and human infirmity. This is because sin and disease led to the profanation of the holy and also the pollution of the entire clan. In the paragraph that dealt with the holiness of God it was seen when God met with sinful man, sin and infirmity – which give rise to pollution and uncleanness – could be cleansed only through sacrificial blood. A good example may be cited from (Lev. 8:22-24) where Aaron and his children were smeared with the blood of the ram at their ordination and the rest of the blood had to be thrown on the altar. This closely resembled the procedure followed at the sealing of the covenant with the elders of Israel (Exod. 24:6-8).

When the people agreed with the terms of the covenant, half of the sacrificial blood was thrown on them. Through the ordination rite Aaron and his children were sanctified to priesthood and through the covenant Israel was made a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exod. 19:6). This elevated status accorded to Israel signified that the nation was in a unique relationship with *Yahweh*. They could draw near to Him and be able to mediate His presence with other nations. Sacrifice in Leviticus thus seals the covenant between God and nations.

Another role which sacrifice plays in the book of Leviticus is that of atonement. Sacrifice could atone for sins, even though at certain moments and situations (Exod. 32:25-35; Lev.10, Num. 25 etc) this proved to be too late. In such circumstances it was needless to take the life of an animal when the death of an individual or people had already ensued. The sacrifice of an animal was aimed to be a substitute for the death of a guilty person. This is provided for in the book of Leviticus by the Hebrew root, כפר, which could be rendered in English by the phrase "*to make atonement*". The closest description to be given to the action of this verb would be equivalent to the action, which the priest performs relating to sacrifice. Many

scholars have wrestled with the etymology and meaning of the word "*kipper*". Wenham (1979:28) suggested that the Hebrew word כָּפַר is derived from the Akkadian verb *kpr*, which means "*to cleanse*" or "*wipe away*".

This rendering appears more plausible because it fits well with those texts where the altar or the sanctuary is the direct object of the verb and whose actions involve smearing the altar with blood. Another possible derivation has been suggested, according to which the word כָּפַר may have originated from another Hebrew word כֹּפֶר which means "*to ransom price.*" The idea behind this term is to pay the equivalent amount of money by a person to escape a death penalty (Exod. 21:30 Prov. 6:3). This does not appear to fit ideally with the understanding of the term atonement in Leviticus and especially in Leviticus 16. It leaves room for continuous sinning in as far as one is able to pay the ransom price for sins. A total wiping away of sins equally means their total elimination, with no remaining trace of any other impurity. That is what the ritual of the scapegoat sacrifice of Leviticus chapter 16 is intended to achieve. We should conclude that the result of every atonement act is that God grants His forgiveness to the sinner.

5.3.6 The Covenant

The covenant is not emphasised as a unique theological theme in the book of Leviticus. The terms of the covenant are only referred and alluded to in a few passages in the book. The point here is that the book of Leviticus emerged as a special sequel to the book of Exodus. The Sinai covenant – having been concluded right in the heart of Exodus (Exod. 19ff) – is referred to in chapter 32 and 33, namely the rupture and the renewal of the covenant. Leviticus has the task of explaining how the covenant should be conducted, as we find in Lev.1-7. Throughout the book of Leviticus one encounters the root (בְּרִית) covenant on about ten occasions, of which eight are found in chapter 26. Even though the term was used very sparingly in Leviticus, notions on the covenant are distributed throughout the whole book, especially in Leviticus 16.

We will now identify some of these references and discuss what form of covenant one is likely to find in the book of Leviticus, especially in chapter 16. Recent studies have thrown a great deal of light on this question. The covenant that we traced in Leviticus has been found to bear a marked resemblance with the covenants for drawing up treaties and other laws that were contained in other ancient Near Eastern texts. Critically examined, chapter 26 of the

book of Leviticus also fits in this context. This chapter fleshes out the covenant relationship between God and Israel in terms of the Sabbath, and more especially the Sabbath of the Land (25:1-17), and also the Israelites' strict obedience to the other statutes and ordinances outlined in chapter 18 to 25 (cf. 18:4-4 with 26:2-3). It should further be noticed that in Leviticus chapters 26:42 and 44 the term of covenant occurred five times out of the total of ten times in the entire book of Leviticus. The first reference is to the Abrahamic covenant, and then to the Mosaic covenant (Averbeck 1997:921). These covenants depict the Lord's continuous faithfulness to Israel in spite of her shortcomings. As could be seen in chapter 26:44b, God will not abandon Israel, regardless of how much they test his Grace.

Let us now examine the wider role of a covenant in the region. The Near Eastern covenant/treaty form had six parts. One could also discern these six in the Sinai covenant.

The six parts of the covenant include:

(1)   The title of the treaty, which specifies the suzerain or the author of the treaty.

(2)   The treaty had a historical prologue which explained the background to its enactment. The Hittite treaties stressed the kindness of the king and the way he dealt with his people, and they also drew attention to the opponents' perversity and rebellion (cf. Wenham 1979:30).

(3)   There was usually a stipulation section e.g., the Hammurabic laws formed the central section.

(4)   The treaty usually contained a document clause. Treaties and other legal collections often mention how and where the treaty was written down and also the importance of reading it regularly.

(5)   Such readings contained both blessings and curses. Those who abided by the law were blessed, while those who rebelled were warned with the threat of terrible punishment that the gods could inflict.

(6)   A list of the gods who witnessed the treaty usually concluded a treaty.

The above was then the typical form that most ancient Near Eastern treaties assumed. These characteristics are also very noticeable in the Sinai covenant.

Just as the ancient Near Eastern tradition of enacting treaties is concerned, Exodus (20:1) opens with the naming of God disclosing Himself as the God of the people. Each time the solemn words are repeated (I am the Lord your God) Israel is reminded of how God first

spoke to the whole nation assembled at the foot of Mount Sinai. In verse two of Exodus chapter 20 a Decalogue was introduced by a short recapitulation which reminded the children of Israel of their redemption: "… who brought you out of the land of Egypt out of the house of slavery." The document clause is very conspicuous in passages such as (Exodus 24:4, 12; 32:15-16; 34:1-4; Deut. 27:2-8; 31:11-12, 24ff. References to blessings and curses appear in Leviticus 26 and also in Deuteronomy chapter 28. These are the aspects that reflect some close parallels with those of the ancient Near Eastern sources. Lastly the covenant usually involves two parties: one of whom has authority over the other. The Sinai covenant provides such a classic example of the relationship between God and His people.

The only exceptional characteristic features of other ancient Near Eastern covenants is the Mesopotamian legal collection in which the list of the gods is not often listed. This is also similar to the Old Testament texts. This could be explained theologically, namely that in the Pentateuch the laws were given in the context of Grace, the stipulations coming only after the prologue which was analogous to the historical situation. The laws came to Israel only after they had been redeemed from the Egyptian bondage and not as a means for securing redemption. The call to Israel by God actually preceded the revelation of the laws on Mount Sinai.

Each time there is a reference to the exodus in the book of Leviticus, it is in the context of the covenant of obedience (Lev. 11:45; 18:3; 23:43). The covenant relationship of *Yahweh* and Israel is further emphasised in the blessing and curses, which we mentioned in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28. As God is holy, so must the people be pure and obedient to Him. Failure to live up to this standard could result in the consequences of the curses. God remains the God of Israel in eternity and in return Israel was expected to reciprocate by paying allegiance to the One who has redeemed them. The horrifying curses of Leviticus 26 stand as a warning to Israel to turn back from their evil ways.

It was earlier emphasised that the theme of the covenant does not often appear in the book of Leviticus as a unique theological discussion. This is also true in the context of Leviticus chapter 16. The importance of the covenant is, however, inferred in several respects. The very unity of the people of Israel, which one finds exhibited in Leviticus 16 and their relationship with God was founded on the covenant. This binding relationship is found echoed in Leviticus 16 through the ritual sacrifice and especially in the shedding of blood. The more the people consecrated themselves the nearer they were drawn to the holy God (cf. "Be holy for I

the Lord I am holy"). The whole notion of the covenant in Leviticus chapter 16 therefore rests on obedience to what *Yahweh* demands.

Starting from the Sinai narratives one could deduce that the covenant between *Yahweh* and Israel was based upon some kind of blood sacrificial rite (Exod. 24:11). The sacrifices offered by Israel were intended to be sacrifices of communion; that is to say sacrifices produced a union between God and the people (cf. MacCarthy 1973:30). Here we are able to experience a very strong unique presentation of Israel's special relation with *Yahweh*. The covenant meal, sacrifice and especially the experience of the presence of God in the cultic milieu, were certainly elements of the Sinaitic covenant. The God who appeared in the cultic circumstances was One whose appearance established the relationship between Him and the people. The closer the people were to *Yahweh*, the more the covenant relationship became a reality.

5.4   CONCLUSION

In chapter 5 we undertook a preliminary survey on the book of Leviticus. We highlighted the main sections of the book in what could be termed a thematic structure. This has helped to carry us through the flow of the material, leading us to the main traditional trends that are inherent in the book of Leviticus and in particular in Leviticus 16. The themes of holiness, purity, and atonement sacrifice are so forcefully emphasised in the whole book, that we may term it a book of holiness which represents the highest calling to be pure and holy. In the course of dealing with the mentioned theological trends – although the theme of the covenant is a recurrent theme in the whole history of the Israelite community and in the Old Testament – we did not find that it was emphasised in either Leviticus as a whole or in Leviticus chapter 16. We believe that with the detailed treatment of these themes we have now laid the groundwork for the rhetorical interpretation of Leviticus 16:1 – 34, which is going to occupy us in the next chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

A SOCIO-RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF LEVITICUS 16:1-34

6.1   THE AIM OF THE INVESTIGATION

In this chapter we will undertake a socio-rhetorical analysis of the text of Leviticus 16:1-34 which forms the core of the present research. The text will be broken down into several sub-sections and textures to permit a close reading of the text. We will consider the text in terms of the following textures as set out by Robbins (1996). These include the inner texture, the inter-texture, the social and cultural texture, the ideological and the theological or sacred texture.

The question immediately arises: what does socio rhetorical analysis entails? Robbins (1996:1) defined socio-rhetorical analysis as an approach to literature, which focuses on values, convictions and beliefs both in the texts we read and in the world we live. The approach invites the reader to some detailed attention to the text itself. It moves in an interactive manner into the world of the people who wrote it and into our world, or that of the readers, otherwise also called the audience. On the other hand Harris (1992:337) has proposed a threefold definition for the term rhetorical: (1) Rhetoric means language chosen and arranged for the purpose of persuasion; (2) The use of figures and tropes, and (3) The effective use of language. These definitions are based on the history of the development of the concept of rhetoric, as persuasion. It was initially presented by Aristotle (1954:24) and was regarded as the central and classical definition for rhetoric. In summary the term rhetoric refers to language in a text that is used as a means of communication among people for better understanding. It gives special attention to the subjects and the topics used in a text to present speech, thoughts, stories and arguments. We have chosen to use a socio-rhetorical analysis for Leviticus 16:1-34 in order to be able to appreciate the study of the social class, social systems, personal and community status, marginalised people and those in position of power. Thus the rhetorical analysis of Leviticus 16 is done in the context of the Israelites and their relationship with *Yahweh*, their God.

The rhetorical questions we aim to address in Leviticus 16:1-34 include the issue of the scapegoat sacrifice. What is its purpose? Why does it appear in Leviticus 16? What does it

communicate? What is the goat for Azazel? The crucial point here is that scholars are not in agreement concerning either the person or the destination of the goat to Azazel. The beginning of the chapter alludes to the mysterious death of the two sons of Aaron, the high priest. The original incident is reported in Leviticus 10, yet not much was said about it. Why was this now introduced in Leviticus 16? We will return to this question when discussing the inter-texture of Leviticus 16:1-34. Some words and phrases have been used repeatedly in the text and have rendered the text almost confusing (Carson *et al.* 1994:143). There also appears to be a ban on Aaron from entering the holy of holies. These and other questions will constitute the ongoing debate in the present chapter of this dissertation.

In treating the above rhetorical questions we have followed an inductive approach. We are convinced that this will permit us to appreciate the relationship of the general and the particular components that are embodied in this rhetorical unit.

6.2   THE INNER TEXTURE OF LEVITICUS 16:1-34

The inner texture of a text resides in features in the language of that text. Such features include the repetition of words and the use of dialogue between two persons to exchange information. Thus it could be said that inner texture focuses on words as tools for communication (Robbins 1996:7). This is a stage of analysis prior to the analysis of "meaning," which again is prior to "the real interpretation" of the text. This type of analysis permits an intimate knowledge of words, word patterns, voices, structures, devices and modes in the text.

In the text of Leviticus 16:1-34 we will see reflected repetitive texture, progressive, narrative, opening-middle-closing and argumentative features. The repetitive progression in a text provides some clues to identify the opening-middle-and closing characteristics. It also provides us with clues to where the emphasis has to be laid. On initial reading this seems to be a confusing chapter. However, the underlying meaning becomes clearer when we come to recognise the characteristic Hebrew structure of presenting an introduction and summary of main points in a text before the details are filled in (Carson & others 1994:143). The text of Leviticus 16:1-34 deals with the details of the festival of the Day of Atonement, which was annually observed by the Israelites. Old Testament scholars have been vigorously examining the literary character of Leviticus 16 for the last century or so, without coming to any consensus (Kiuchi 1987:77). The chapter has also been found to contain a peculiar vocabulary and style, which are not found in any other part of the priestly literature. In

addition the chapter presents a highly complicated atonement ritual that has never been described anywhere else in the Old Testament. From all these variations the majority of scholars have seen the chapter as being a composite one, although no consensus has also been achieved as to the analysis of the text (Kiuchi 1987:78).

The literary structure of the chapter may be presented in a variety of ways. Milgrom (1991:1011) partitioned the chapter into the following sub-units before the verse to verse commentaries, which we found appropriate. We would consequently like to follow it when we come to the analysis of the intertexture. The sub-units include the following:

(1)   Verse 1. Introduction. This comprises the initial verse of the chapter.

(2)   Verses 2-5. Precautions and provisions, with verse 2 standing as a new introduction.

(3)   Verses 6-19. The purging ritual.

(4)   Verses 20-22. The scapegoat ritual.

(5)   Verses 23-25. The altar sacrifices.

(6)   Verses 26-28. The purification of the high priest's assistants.

(7)   Verses 29-34. The appendix.

(8)   A summary.

Wenham (1979:228-238) also proposed a similar structure, while Hartley (1992:217) observed that the regulation for the Day of Atonement forms a division unto itself. It begins with a historical reference in the introductory formula verse (1) and concludes with a compliance report (34). Its literary position, therefore, highlights the importance of the day for the Israelite community. Hartley's argument (1992:217) that the position of the Day of Atonement coming at the middle of the book of Leviticus (Lev. 16:1-34), is crucial to the religious experience of the Israelites is understandable. It requires the preceding material especially the pattern for the tabernacle and its furnishings – as we find these presented in Leviticus 16 – and it anticipates what is expected to appear in the remainder of the chapters. Thus, since the rituals of the day remove the impurities caused by the people's uncleanness, its position is timely to appear immediately before the so-called holiness code.

It could thus be concluded that the regulation for the Day of Atonement prepares for the coming material for holy living. The moral and spiritual energy for the people to fulfil the laws in the Holiness code in anticipation emerges from their finding expiation on the Day of

Atonement. The rituals for the Day of Atonement should appropriately appear before the laws of holy living, which provide the justification for the sequence of the placement of the events during the Day of Atonement, as described in Leviticus 16. However, the origin of the Day of Atonement remains a point of contention among scholars. We will examine this in more detail when we analyse verse 29, being the sole place in Leviticus 16 where the date of atonement rituals is mentioned.

In the following paragraphs we will present a verse by verse analysis of the inner texture of Leviticus 16.

Verse 1

The verse begins with an introductory formula, וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה ("*And the Lord spoke to Moses*"). It starts with a narrative formula in the third person singular and then refers back to the death of Nadab and Abihu, the two sons of Aaron. In this opening verse (1) a number of difficulties arise that need some attention. The reference here to the death of Nadab and Abihu led many scholars to conclude that the verse does not belong to chapter 16. Since no further information about the incidence is found in this chapter, we agree with Hartley (1992 234), who has suggested that, the reason for introducing the death of Nadab and Abihu in this chapter is to issue a stern warning to the high priest. He must conduct himself well when he enters the holy of holies on the Day of Atonement. On the face of it the verse seems as if it was either misplaced or could have been a later addition.

Attention   should   be   drawn   to   the   use   of   the   infinitival   construction בְּקָרְבָתָם לִפְנֵי־יְהוָה ("*When they drew near the Lord ...*") at the later part of the verse, which suggests the reason for the death of the two sons of Aaron. Many scholars have interpreted the phrase in various fashions and among many possibilities Milgrom (1991:1012) advanced three possibilities, suggesting that the phrase be translated as "*to enter, to seek access and to encroach into the presence of the Lord.*" Hartley (1992:221) translated the phrase as "*when they entered,*" while Gorman (1997:94) translated it as "*when they drew near*". All the translations appear similar to each other but the third possibility given by Milgrom, "*to encroach,*" seems more plausible. The reason for this preference is that "*to encroach*" conveys the idea of forceful and unlawful behaviour. Gorman (1997:94) asked, "How is it possible to draw near to *Yahweh* without dying in the process"? Nadab and Abihu must have encroached onto the presence of the Lord, which caused their death, after which their corpses defiled the holy of holies, for which eventuality the purging rite of Leviticus 16 is intended.

Apart from relating the purging rite to the defiled holy of holies and the possible stern warning directed to the high priest, verse 1 actually does not seem to relate to this chapter. The breaking down of the chapter into sections allows us to come to the conclusion that this pericope – verse 1 – is the specification of the punishment for encroachment upon the presence of the Lord and it could happen at any time to whoever is not spiritually prepared to enter the holy of holies.

Verse 2

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה ("*And the Lord said to Moses*"). With these words verse 2 appears to start a new beginning after the introductory formula in verse 1. Milgrom (1991:1012) observed that verse 2 forms the beginning of another narrative portion that starts from 2 and continues to 28. Considering the whole chapter then, verses 29 - 34 is an appendix. His argument is that if verse 2 were the continuation of verse 1, it would have begun with the words וַיֹּאמֶר עָלָיו ("*And spoke to him*"). This sounds convincing because verse 2 starts almost in the same way as verse 1, meaning that another narrative section is expected that could start from verse 2 with the usual narrative indicative formula וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה. ("*And the Lord said ...*"). Thus verse 1 does not seem to link properly with verse 2.

Another observation on this verse is that the events of the day are not communicated to Aaron, who is the one who would soon carry out the ritual procedures. These are rather communicated through Moses to Aaron. A number of scholars (Milgrom 1991:1012; Keck *et al.* 1994:1110) argued that Moses retained his function as spokesperson for the Lord and the receiver of revelation even after the installation of Aaron as the high priest. This may be seen as an indication that Moses combined both the functions of priest and prophet. In a manner of speaking he could be deemed as superior in rank to the high priest. Perhaps this stratification lies in the degree of holiness, since it is described later in the chapter that Aaron undergoes purification before officiating in the holy of holies. Moses receives the instructions from the Lord, but nowhere in the text is it suggested that he too is subjected to a purification rite.

In the phrase וְאַל־יָבֹא בְכָל־עֵת: ("*Not to enter at all times*"), Aaron is the subject and the imperative command is directed at him. It is not quite clear whether the statement should be seen as a total prohibition for Aaron to enter the holy of holies. Scholars such as (Levine 1989:100; Milgrom 1991:1012; Hartely 1992:221; Keck 1994:1110) all agreed that the phrase should not be taken as a total prohibition that Aaron may never enter the holy of holies. This assertion makes sense, because the jussive construction with the negative

אַל usually conveys a warning; not a prohibition. This is an example of a characteristic feature of Oriental negative construction, which initially seems all encompassing, only to be qualified by the next statement (Milgrom 1991: 1012). The connotation would be that Aaron should enter the Holy of holies on the one day (Day of Atonement) each year, and not whenever he wishes. It is also on this one day that *Yahweh* promises to appear in a cloud over the כַּפֹּרֶת "*Atonement slate*". *Yahweh* will manifest His presence in the עָנָן "*the cloud*," which both reveals and conceals the presence of the Lord.

We conclude that this pericope – verse 2 – specifies the punishment for encroachment upon the presence of the Lord. Some traditional commentaries (Rahi, Ibn Ezra and Rashbam) have understood the cloud to refer to the Lord's presence. The high priest needs to prepare himself thoroughly before he may enter into the inner chamber to the presence of the Lord. This serves to reiterate the stern warning earlier given in the initial verse, which likens the consequences of such entry to the fatal deaths of Aaron's children.

In Leviticus 16 the word הַקֹּדֶשׁ is mentioned seven times (Lev. 16:2, 3, 16, 23, 27). It is the first time that the word has been used to designate the holy of holies (Milgrom 1991:1013). Its use here is to emphasise the idea of the holiness of the most holy place, which the ritual of the Day of Atonement is meant to purge together with the people. Milgrom translated it as the Adytum and used it interchangeably with the term "*the holy of holies*."

Verse 3

All the materials and preparations for the purging rite are detailed in the verses 3-5. They include the animals, the state of being and the clothing for the high priest. In verse 3 the phrase בְּזֹאת יָבֹא אַהֲרֹן ("*This is how Aaron or with this ...*") further instructs Aaron how to prepare for the sanctuary purging. Reference is made to a young bull for the de-sinning of Aaron and his entire house, a ram for the sin offering and a goat for the burnt offering. Hartley (1992:222) is of the opinion that the demonstrative pronoun, בְזֹאת, which comes at the beginning of the sentence, is meant to stress that Aaron – even though he is the high priest – may never enter the holy of holies unprepared. On the basis of this construction, we notice a proper link up of verse 3 and the previous verse 2. As already mentioned, the preparations are not limited to the material concerns for the ritual but even the spiritual state of the high priest is also included. Hitherto there is no reference to the attire of the high priest, but his state of being is emphasised. The next verse would then continue the preparations of the high priest, both spiritually and physically.

Verse 4

This verse details the attire of the high priest on this day. The clothes are described as
כְּתֹנֶת־בַּד ("*ordinary garments*"). There is a change in the normal clothing of the high priest.
According to Snaith (1967:111) the high priest does not vest himself with his full official
garments. Normally the attire of the priest consists of up of 8 items, but with the linen
garments the high priest's clothing appears like those of an ordinary priest. This is simple
inexpensive white clothing. A number of suggestions have been given concerning the need
for the simple clothing for the high priest on this day.

Some scholars think that because angels are seen to be dressed in white, therefore, the high
priest on official duty should appear like angels. Others, however, contend that the choice of
the attire is for the purpose of humility before *Yahweh*. This explanation sounds more
convincing in the present context. At this stage the priest needs to divest himself of all pride.
He and the people have to appear simple in humble recognition of and acknowledgement of
their guilt before the Lord. In making expiation for himself the high priest acknowledges the
fact that he too is a sinner. As befits a person in the liminal state during a rite of passage he
must be stripped of all emblems of his former status. Hence the high priest wears the
garments of an ordinary priest.

בִּגְדֵי־קֹדֶשׁ הֵם ("*These are sacred garments*"). Traditionally it has been understood that the
high priest uses these garment for service. The above statement makes it clear that laymen
could also wear the garments. As a rule the high priest is required to wash his hands and feet
before entering to officiate in the inner sanctuary. In this rite he washes his whole body.
Milgrom (1991:1017) rightly observed that entry into the adytum or the most holy place
needs thoroughgoing purification. This reflects the previous verses (2 & 3) indicating the
smooth flow of the narrative progression of the pericope, especially beginning with verse 2.

Verse 5

וּמֵאֵת עֲדַת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל יִקַּח שְׁנֵי־שְׂעִירֵי עִזִּים לְחַטָּאת וְאַיִל אֶחָד לְעֹלָה: ("*Within the people or the
children of Israel he shall take two he-goats for the sin offering and a ram for a burnt
offering*"). Still in preparation for the ritual, three animals are presented before the high priest.
Two goats are intended for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering. Notice that in this
verse both the goats are meant for a purification offering even though only one is offered at
the altar (vv 9, 15). According to Hartley (1992:236) only in the context of the purification
offering has any reference been made to both goats, and this is to avoid any confusion and to

keep the verse short. This would not seem to be a convincing explanation since there are other verses in the chapter that are more complicated and longer; and we could nonetheless offer a coherent interpretation for them. Kiuchi (1987:147-156) provides a plausible explanation: the rituals with the two goats are combined to make a single purification offering. According to this view the rite with the Azazel goat is a special adaptation of the burning of the flesh of the ordinary חַטָּאת *"purification offering,"* outside the camp. Gerstenberger (1996:219) pointed out that the two he-goats and the ram are not performing the Azazel function, but remain the חַטָּאת goats for the people and the עלָה ram for a burnt offering. This is the atonement offering for the people according to the usual schema for the sin offering.

Notice that in this verse the people are referred to as the עֲדַת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל whereas in verse 17 the phrase which has been used to describe the people, is כָּל־קְהַל יִשְׂרָאֵל (*"The whole congregation of the Israelites"*). In verse 15 the word used for the people is עַם , and in verse 33 the phrase is עַם הַקָּהָל. All three words are synonymous and could be used interchangeably to refer to the congregation or the gathering of the children of Israel. In normal circumstances the offerers bring their sacrifices to the sanctuary. The sinful state of the people has barred them from entering the sanctuary and the high priest then takes the people's offerings to the altar.

We now come to the second subsection, according to the plan of analysis as set out in the beginning of the chapter. This placed the emphasis on the general preparation for the purging rite, bringing together the sacrificial animals and the preparation for the high priest who is soon to enter the holy of holies to perform the purging rituals.

Verse 6

Many scholars (Snaith 1967:113; Wenham 1979:230; Carson 1994:143) described verses 6-10 as the core of the day's proceedings. These appear in a long unit that extends from verses 6 to 19, which could be summarised as purging rituals. וְהִקְרִיב אַהֲרֹן (*"And he Aaron shall bring ..."*). As we will see, this verse is quite similar to verse 11a. The highlighted Hebrew expression has been variously interpreted, but we favour the idea of *"to bring forward"*. Aaron, after bringing the animals into the sanctuary, firstly offers the bull for purification offering כפר for himself and his entire household. Thus the word בֵּיתוֹ in this sense includes his own person, as well as the other priests. However, it should be remembered that even

though Aaron was considered as the chieftain of the priestly clan of Levi, the Levites were not included. They were grouped alongside the congregation. Aaron's household would then include his immediate family and the families of the subservient priests of the Aaronid priests. Thus the high priest must make expiation for himself and his household before he is able to act on behalf of the other people.

Verse 7

וְלָקַח (*"And he shall take"*). The subject of this sentence is Aaron. The verb לְקַח can be used interchangeably with הִקְרִיב , in which case both could be translated as "to bring forward". Both verbs deal with the aspect of bringing forward the ritual animals to the sanctuary (cf. Verses 3 & 5). This is when the priests would cast lots to determine which goat is destined for the Lord and which is for Azazel.

Verse 8

וְנָתַן אַהֲרֹן עַל־שְׁנֵי הַשְּׂעִירִם גּוֹרָלוֹת גּוֹרָל אֶחָד לַיהוָה וְגוֹרָל אֶחָד לַעֲזָאזֵל: (*"And Aaron shall cast lots over two goats, one lot for the Lord and one lot for the scapegoat"*). Two terms are crucial in this sentence, namely the terms וְנָתַן (*"to cast, give lots"*) and the controversial name עֲזָאזֵל: The use of the term נָתַן is unique in this passage. Elsewhere other terms have been used to translate "*to cast lots.*" Milgrom (1991:109) argued that the text is silent about the determination of the lots, but rather stressed their disposition. The purpose of the lots was to leave the choice of the goat to the Lord. Once determined, the lots were to be placed on the heads of the goats for identification purposes. This was to avoid confusion. The selection of the animal was left to the Lord so that it should not be seen as if Aaron and his people were giving an offering to Azazel. This is the reason why the two goats had to be brought before the Lord (cf. Verse 7).

A series of questions continue to arise from scholars as to the person of Azazel and why is the goat intended for him? לַעֲזָאזֵל "*for Azazel*". It is the first time the name Azazel features in the Old Testament. It is used a total of four times in the whole of the Old Testament and all of them are found in this chapter (vv 8, 10 and 2 times in 26). The *lamed* prefix to the name Azazel indicates ownership. The text itself attributes Azazel to be a scapegoat. Some scholars believe that Azazel is the name of the place in the wilderness to which the scapegoat was dispatched. Thus it was seen to be an inaccessible region. Verses 10 and 22 appear to favour this interpretation. When literally translated, they would read "*and send it* (the he-goat) *off to Azazel, to the Wilderness*" (Levine 1987:102). For Hartley (1992:222) the original meaning

has simply been lost. His interpretation is that Azazel would mean "*the goat that departs*" or "*that which has gone away*". This rendering has gone a long way to influence the English translation "escapegoat" which has been contracted to the term scapegoat.

The most popular explanation is that Azazel is the name of a demon that has been stripped of his secret demonic powers by the priestly legislators. As such the goat that was sent to him was not an offering. It was not treated as a sacrifice requiring slaughter, blood manipulation and the like, nor did it have the effect of sacrifice, namely propitiation, expiation etc. An animal laden with impurities will not be acceptable as an offering either to the Lord or to the demon. This goat should however not be seen as a vicarious substitute for Israel. There is no indication that the goat was punished or demonically attacked in Israel's stead. The goat remained a vehicle to dispatch Israel's impurities and sins to the wilderness (Milgrom 1991:11021).

Modern scholarship (Van der Toorn *et al.* 1999:128-131) took up the investigation in a three dimensional model. In the first place, Azazel is a demon in the desert that has to be appeased through the offering of a he-goat. It would appear that this view has been influenced by a play on the Hebrew words for goats and demons. Thus, for this school of thought Azazel remains a demon in the desert. The second view is that Azazel is the equivalent for injustice, evildoer, and culprit and is to be expelled or be kept at a distance. Accordingly an original ritual of elimination has been enriched with an additional concept of a scapegoat, received in the form of a demon (Van der Toorn et al.1999:129) The name Azazel will then mean "*the expelled or the removed culprit*". This rendering appears to have no bearing on the present text.

The third view holds that the Azazel rite is an elimination rite charged with the removal of a physically understood pollution through the agent of a living substitute. From the above discussion it may then be concluded that Azazel is neither the goat nor any demon in the desert. It should rather be seen as a name designating a place to which impurities and sins must be banished. It is the name of the inaccessible region to which impurities have to be dispatched through an agent. This view seems to hold ground because if Azazel is taken to be a demon, then its goat would not have been brought before the Lord. The scapegoat acts only as a vehicle through which evil has to be eradicated from human habitation and the sanctuary (Milgrom 1991:1020).

Verse 9

וְהִקְרִיב ("*And he shall bring forward*"). The Hebrew phrase וְהִקְרִיב. also appeared in verse 6. Its repetition at various places indicates the value it has for the text of Leviticus 16. The people will finally obtain expiation or atonement of their sins because of the bringing forward of the required animals for the purification rite. The usage here corresponds to the usage in verse 6, which also means "*to bring forward.*" The high priest's next action is "*to sacrifice,*" and therefore the action should be similar to that of the high priest's bull. It was normal that the offerer brought his/her offering to the altar, but in the case of the Israelites on the Day of Atonement the people were not permitted to enter the most holy place. They, however, provided the sacrificial animals. Having been barred from entering the most holy place, the priest had to act on their behalf.

The tradition of casting lots to make a choice between two items has been preserved among the Tannaites (Milgrom 1991:1020). This process consisted of small tablets made either of gold or boxwood on, which was alternately written the names of two items upon which a choice was eventually made.

אֲשֶׁר עָלָה עָלָיו הַגּוֹרָל לַיהוָה וְעָשָׂהוּ חַטָּאת This phrase which appears in the later part of the verse, when translated literally, would be: "*the one to whom the lot was raised*". The phrase aptly indicates the method of the lottery. The goat for *Yahweh* was immediately sacrificed for a sin offering, while the one for Azazel was left still standing alive and waiting for the procedure of the laying on of hands to be carried out later (Noth 1965:121). The connection between the two goats raises an interesting point. They are related to each other in the sense that the one goat makes the expiation of the sins of the people laid upon it and the other goat exhibits the effects of that expiation (Keck & others 1994:111).

Verse 10

יָעֳמַד־חַי ("*Stationed alive*") As mentioned in the previous paragraph, the goat to Azazel was left standing before the Lord. Early rabbinic sources have it that a red ribbon was tied to its horns for the purpose of identification. One of the questions posed at the beginning of the dissertation was to know whether the scapegoat ritual could be classed as a sacrifice as the rest of the sacrifices on that day? Levine (1989:103) argued that the goat was not slaughtered as were the others. The express purpose of the scapegoat was to carry off the sins of the Israelites conferred upon it by the high priest. While accepting the scapegoat to be the vehicle

that would eliminate evil from the Israelite community to the desert, we have not yet seen any connection between the two goats. Milgrom (1991:112) is of the opinion that prayers and or other incantations may have been made on the sacrificial goat, the same as incantations made on the scapegoat before its dispatch.

One cannot make such a statement unequivocally, since the text itself does not mention that. Thus the one goat makes the expiation of the sins of the people laid upon it while the other exhibits the effect of that expiation. Even though the scapegoat was not killed, it performed a function that is equivalent to the animal that is ritually slaughtered. Being released into the desert leaves it with no choice of a possible return to regain its domestic function and relationship. It would finally be either caught by a predator or somehow or other meet with its death. At least something costly has been sacrificed, thus ensuring its sacrificial function.

The use of the Hebrew word כִּפֶּר in the sentence appears to be quite abstract. Milgrom (1991:2023) has observed that it has a unique usage in this text. Accordingly the goat that the sins of the community are laid upon should not be seen as if it has been purged. The purging of the sanctuary is completed when the goat laden with sins has been dispatched to the wilderness. Hence כִּפֶּר takes on the more abstract notion of "*to expiate.*" The verb שָׁלַח means "*to send off* or *to send away.*" It is used here in the piel form לְשַׁלַּח , indicating the intensity of the action of sending away of the goat to the wilderness. According to Milgrom (1991:1023) the dispatch of the goat is without the possibility of any return. Grabbe (1993:40) saw the main function of כִּפֶּר in this passage being that of a total removal of sins or ritual impurities from both the community and the sanctuary. It is the word that has been used often in the text and the whole passage is concerned with כִּפֶּר or atonement.

Verse 11

Verse 11 is a repetition of verse 6. It continues with the presentation of the sin offering bull. The first part of the sentence (11a) וְהִקְרִיב אַהֲרֹן ... ("*And Aaron shall bring forward*") simply restates the statement in verse 6. Milgrom (1991:2024) regarded this as a stylistic repetitive resumption, which is frequently found in Hebrew construction. It should be noted that in the translation of the verb וְהִקְרִיב has changed in this verse from "*to bring forward*" and it now has to be translated here as "*to offer*". The practice of the laying on of hands is also not performed here. We assume that this important gesture must have been introduced at the right time (verse 21) when the man waiting to dispatch the goat should subsequently be available to lead the goat away into the wilderness. Levine (1989:104) observed that at this point

nothing was actually placed on the altar. The bull would only be slaughtered and prepared for the sacrifice at the stage indicated in verse 25.

Verse 12

12 וְלָקַח מְלֹא־הַמַּחְתָּה גַּחֲלֵי־אֵשׁ מֵעַל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ מִלִּפְנֵי

יְהוָה וּמְלֹא חָפְנָיו קְטֹרֶת סַמִּים דַּקָּה וְהֵבִיא מִבֵּית לַפָּרֹכֶת:

From (vv 12-15) Aaron alone is to go behind the veil. This is God's throne-room. "Verse 2 belongs here since it also concerned the going before the Lord. Any penetration into God's innermost chamber is extremely dangerous" (Gerstenberger 1996:215). Aaron is to enter the Holy of holies once a year and the occasion must be special. In terms of Leviticus 16 this is the festival of reconciliation that was held once annually. Here the sprinkling takes place before the veil and it was thus outside the divine dwelling (Milgrom 1991:1025; Gerstenberger 1996:215;). Tradition has since had it that the high priest was permitted to go into the Holy of holies only once a year (Lev. 16:34).

The verse suggests that Aaron performed the priests' sacrifice at the altar in the courtyard, after which he took fire from the altar along with some blood from the sacrificial animal into the tent. Commenting on this, Fleming (1988:105) stated that this particular fire was used to burn incense on the golden altar that stood in the Holy place against the curtain dividing the Holy place from the most Holy Place. Since this curtain provided access for Aaron into the holy of holies incense smoke from the external altar must have entered through the open curtain and cover the mercy seat (that is upon the ark, the covenant box) believed to be God's dwelling place.

Verse 13

Among other considerations the rhetorical question in this verse resides in the phrase וְנָתַן אֶת־הַקְּטֹרֶת עַל־הָאֵשׁ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה וְכִסָּה (*"He shall put the incense upon the fire before the Lord and the cloud ..."* NIV). Scholars are not unanimous about the use of the incense and the cloud. Questions continue to be raised whether it was the incense that produced the cloud or was it perhaps something else? What was the role of the cloud in this particular instance? According to Milgrom (1991:1021), and referring to the statement in verse two, the purpose of the cloud was to screen the Ark on the cover of which *Yahweh* dwells. הָעֵדוּת translated as *"testimony,"* is crucial to this verse. It appears here in the third person singular and means *"the testimony"*. In the present context of Leviticus 16, it refers to the Ark itself upon whose

cover the Lord appears. The incense cloud serves to protect the high priest while he stood in the immediate area of God's presence and screened him from direct contact with the Lord.

Snaith (1967) insisted that the intention of the cloud was to create an artificial cloud that would hide the majesty of the presence of God lest the high priest sees God and dies. It should also be noted that the ark was covered by the cloud of the incense and not by the incense itself. This presupposes that another ingredient must have been added to the incense that functioned as a smoke or cloud raiser. While Gorman (1997:96) was in support of the concealing nature of the cloud, he seemed to regard the cloud as a permanent presence which in turn signified the permanent presence of *Yahweh* in the holy of holies, which could not have been related to the smoke created by Aaron. He thus interpreted the verse in a theophanic manner. We are of the opinion that God is not limited in time and space. There was most probably a smoke raiser, which when added to the incense, produced the cloud to conceal the Lord's presence from direct view. The Lord's presence is felt in the tent of meeting on the one day in the year when the people gather to make atonement for their sins.

Verse 14

קֵדְמָה וְלִפְנֵי הַכַּפֹּרֶת יַזֶּה שֶׁבַע־פְּעָמִי מִזּוּ־הַדָּ֖ בִ וְלָקַח מִדַּ֣ הַפָּר וְהִזָּה בְאֶצְבָּעוֹ עַל־פְּנֵי הַכַּפֹּרֶת

אֶצְבָּעוֹ: "*Sprinkling sacrificial blood was a special procedure*" (Levine 1989:105). In verse 14 the sprinkling rite is associated with two separate actions. There is the sprinkling "on the front" and "behind" the mercy seat. This is to be repeated seven times. The number seven is always expressed as a perfect number. The sprinkling, which is repeated seven times, would emphasise the correct procedure expected of Aaron in the purification process. According to Gorman (1997:96) the blood "on the front" purifies while the blood "behind" reconsecrates. He is further of the opinion that the sevenfold sprinkling is indicative of the seriousness of this particular blood rite. The notion of the direction (eastward) is stressed here, because *Yahweh* is viewed as enthroned over the cherubim and facing eastward. Hartley (1992:239) and Vriezen (1950:232-233) stated that the blood was sprinkled directly in front of *Yahweh's* feet. We are sceptical about this view. Could it be that Aaron was in direct contact with the Lord and at the same time was screened by the cloud from the incense smoke? We would rather take Gorman's observation seriously when he asked earlier whether it was possible for someone to come into contact with God without dying in the process.

Verse 15

According to verse 15 all the blood is taken into the holy of holies probably to have it consecrated, which would henceforth be empowered to sanctify the altar. The means of forgiveness could not have been undertaken otherwise. The goat became the people's substitute, although it still remained an animal. In ancient Israel people slaughtered their own sacrificial animals but here it was not the case. As every member of the community cannot be involved in this particular ritual, Aaron thus acts as the representative of the people and slaughters the people's goat. However, it should not be forgotten that the sins of the community also restrict them from participating in the sacrifice. It would also appear that since his consecration Aaron has attained a certain degree of spiritual immunity in the sense that he could not be contaminated in the process, even when he should come in contact with the community during the purging rite of Leviticus 16. The blood of this goat is likewise the bull's blood treated and that is how expiation was carried out.

Verse 16

וְכִפֶּר עַל־הַקֹּדֶשׁ ("*Thus he shall purge the adytum or the most holy place*"). The focus from vv 16 - 20 is on the holy of holies. The rite of sprinkling the blood, therefore, cleanses (כִּפֶּר) the holiest place from the impurities of the Israelites' transgressions that have penetrated into the holiest place. The word מִטֻּמְאֹת in verse 16 that expresses the idea of uncleanness, is the key word in this section. The term here combines both the ritual and moral impurities generated by the constant violation of the prohibitive commandments. Snaith (1967:114) observed that the use of the plural וּמִפִּשְׁעֵיהֶם (meaning "*rebellious actions*") is of importance. Sin is thus seen as a rebellion against a personal God rather than the transgression of laws laid down by Him or as an infringement of some ritual detail. Terms like טֻמְאֹת ("*impurities*"), indicate any acts that constituted an intentional violation of God's law. When the expiation was accomplished, it would be for all the people.

Verse 17

וְכָל־אָדָם: literally translated as ("every man"). There is another prohibition in this verse and this is obviously still directed at Aaron since the entire Israelite community had no access to the holy of holies. In this context the phrase וְכָל־אָדָם is best rendered as "*every man*" (Milgrom 1991:1035), meaning the priests. We are rather puzzled by this explanation, as it remains unclear why the other priests are refused access into the holy of holies and leave

Aaron alone to go there to perform the purging seemingly from the outer room. We would, however, agree with the observations by Levine (1989:105) and Milgrom (1991:1035) that this special permission to Aaron to perform the purging work of the whole of the sanctuary area was for strict precautionary measures. וְכִפֶּר ("*Thus he shall effect purging*"). The *waw* in וְכִפֶּר is the purposive *waw* and it introduces the high priest's rite in the shrine, thereby being similar in function to the וְכִפֶּר in verse 16, which earlier alluded to the high priest's rite in the adytum. It was feared that the admittance of any other person in the holy of holies could introduce further contamination in the most holy place. The ritual would have been rendered ineffectual when performed by the high priest, and would have given a cause for the consuming power of the Lord's wrath to come to bear against everyone present in the tent.

Verse 18

וְיָצָא ("*He shall then come out*"). From the inner sanctuary the high priest continues the purging rite to the outer altar, which is the sacrificial altar, before the Lord. This is to differentiate it from the altar in verse 12, which was actually the altar of the burnt offerings to which Levine (1989:105) also referred to as the altar of incense. Milgrom may be right in his assessment that the high priest emerges in reality from the tent, since he was still in the process of purification. The incense altar merely created the perfumed odour and the concealing cloud. The purging blood was, however, limited to the altars and not to the entire camp environment. If the tent and its *sancta* and the sacrificial altar are "most sacred" while the tabernacle enclosure or the camp environment is only sacred (Milgrom 1991:1036), does this amount to graded holiness? There is another reference to a purging rite in verse 18, which is repeated in verse 19. However, the two differ from each other making the order of the verbs used appear crucial. We now turn to verse 19 to establish whether there is any difference with the one we have encountered in verse 18.

Verse 19

וְהִזָּה. ("*And he shall sprinkle*") This is a second manipulation with the blood purgative. The daubing of the horns of the altar purifies the altar while the sevenfold sprinkling consecrates it. The sense in all these manipulations is that the priests and the altar require both purging and consecration. The verb טהר ("*to cleanse, purify*") used in this verse may denote a number of actions. Purification in this instance was accomplished by sacrificial blood from the sin offering animal whereas in the real sense blood had no real cleansing properties. Water, for instance, did and it was also frequently used in the purification process along with

detergent in laundering clothing. In Lev. 16 blood was the most widely used element in the act of purification. Levine (1989:106) rightly observed that the verb וְטָהֵרוֹ has as its primary connotation a physical purity like that of the sky or pure material such as gold, which contains no alloy. This is also said of pure spring water. Thus if blood is used, it is because of its religious purpose.

This pericope was devoted principally to the purging rite of the sanctuary with special emphasis on the holy of holies. The next verse starts the next pericope, which details the Azazel rite.

Verse 20

מִכַּפֵּר אֶת־הַקֹּדֶשׁ וְאֶת־אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד ("*Purging the Holy of holies and the tent of meeting*"). This verse prepares the way for the Azazel rite, soon to be described in verse 21, which is the purging of the adytum, (מִכַּפֵּר אֶת־הַקֹּדֶשׁ). In the above sentence things rather than persons are emphasised in terms of the purging. The direct object of the verb כִּפֵּר would be for instance the furnishings of the tabernacle. The adytum and sanctuary impurities have first to be completely removed by the blood rite so that the priest may transfer them onto the live goat.

The statement "*and he shall bring forward*" which was used in verse nine, is repeated here. There it meant the goat for the sin offering of the people, while the Azazel goat was left standing (verse 10). It is only in verse 20 that the Azazel goat is brought forward in readiness for its specific ritual. Whereas the offerer would usually bring the goat forward him/herself, in the event of the Day of Atonement the offerer is the people who may not enter, and whose representative is Aaron. The high priest, therefore, is to act on their behalf by transferring the people's sins on the goat to be released from the community to a desolate or solitary place, namely the desert.

Verse 21

אֶת־שְׁתֵּי יָדָיו ("*Both his hands* …") The text of this verse stresses the action of laying on hands. The statement, שְׁתֵּי יָדָיו, ("*Lays both his hands*") leads us to understand the function of the Azazel goat. In Israel the usual practice was to lay one hand on the head of the sin offering. The use of both hands by the priest in this particular instance should be taken as a point of emphasis, to which Milgrom (1991:1041) accorded the action as a transference function. The goat is thus seen as the recipient of the people's sins, and the two hands gesture

emphasised the transference of evil to the animal. This important ritual of the laying on of hands is then followed by conferring sins on the goat.

וְהִתְוַדָּה עָלָיו ("*And he shall confess*"). Following the above statement, some scholars (Levine 1974:82) emphasised the demonic character of the Day of Atonement. However, confession especially by a person whose utterances are linked to the divine name sets out to release sins and the question of magical feeling is thereby ruled out. Moreover the action here looks more judicial than being magical. The laying on of hands is, therefore, aimed at transference as the text also indicates. Three key words have been used regarding the rite to translate the nature of the sins of the community. They are iniquity, transgression and sin respectively. The words are quite synonymous and, as Contesse (1990) puts it, they may be summarised into the one single word "iniquities," even though in this context they should be translated independently. It becomes clear that blood cleanses the sanctuary while the goat purges the sins of the people. The reason for dispatching the goat to the wilderness is to remove it from human habitation to a desolate and solitude place. It is released by a man in waiting (בְּיַד־אִישׁ עִתִּי), a statement that has ignited a great deal of discussion. Having considered many arguments on this point, we are inclined to agree with the explanation by Milgrom (1991:1045) that the waiting man was one who – after the release of the goat into the desert – would be able to trace his way back to the community, but the goat would not be permitted to do so. If the goat was left with a careless person there the risk would arise of the goat not being properly released in to the wild and hence that it could find its way back to the camp environment. The reference to "a man in waiting " presupposes that such a man must have been pre-prepared for the release of the goat.

Verse 22

וְנָשָׂא ("*Thus shall it, the goat carry upon itself*"). In the ritual of the scapegoat the sins of the people are seen as a heavy burden that have to be carried away by the goat. The verb נָשָׂא (22) has often been used metaphorically to mean "*forgiveness*" (cf. Hartley 1992:241) in which case when the sins are taken away from the people, as if they are at the same time being forgiven or pardoned. The destination for both the goat and the sins of the people is the inaccessible area אֶרֶץ גְּזֵרָה which is believed to be the abode of demons or evil spirits. It is the place of the origin of all evil spirits and, therefore, the goat is believed to be taking them back to their origin. It should be remembered that no demon has been identified that could be placated with goods. The goat remains a vehicle through which impurities are eradicated

from human habitation. This may also be the reason why the goat – after the laying on of hands by the priest conferring the sins of the community upon its head – is not given to any person at random, but to a specially appointed man in waiting.

Verse 23

Between verses 23 and 28 the main emphasis lies on the other rituals to be performed at the end of the priestly services on this important day. The sequence of events at this juncture appears obscure in the sense that they have been haphazardly placed. This again raises a few more questions. It would appear that the high priest re-enters the tent, undresses, and leaves his linen garments there. In the course of the purging rite; are the garments not polluted? It is reported in verses 23-24 that the priest bathes himself, but where does this happen: in the tent or in the courtyard? And is he naked? When he finally re-emerges, he continues his officiation at the altar of burnt offerings. To understand these actions, one needs to reconstruct the events to a certain extent. The rabbis (Milgrom 1991:1046) used to place verse 23 after verse 25. This was in accordance with the practice of the Herodian temple where the high priest had to bathe five times and wash ten times in course of the day, which is not really applicable in this context. The statement אֲשֶׁר לָבַשׁ בְּבֹאוֹ אֶל־הַקֹּדֶשׁ ("*that he put on when he entered the most holy place*") helps to remind the audience that the garments are meant for the purpose of purging in the most holy place.

Levine (1989:107-108) argued that at least some details concerning the passage must have been omitted. Accordingly care should be taken regarding the Mishnaic construction, which is based on the Jerusalem temple. What concerns us in Leviticus 16 is a "*tent-like structure surrounded by a courtyard*." He proposes that after the dispatch of the scapegoat, the high priest did not enter the tent again. Accordingly the phrase וּבָא אַהֲרֹן אֶל־אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד should be rendered "*And Aaron shall approach the tent of meeting*" instead of "*And Aaron shall enter the tent of meeting.*" Thus verses 23 and 24 should read as follows, "*The high priest approached the tent of meeting, entered a screened area undressed, bathed and put on his normal garments.*" This, therefore, clarifies that the high priest or Aaron did not enter the tent twice.

The possible solution to the above arrangement should be that Aaron and his garments – upon entering the most holy place and being in the presence of God – received an exceptional degree of sanctity which protected him from any subsequent pollution within the sanctuary. After officiation the garments had to be left at the place of comparable sanctity – inside the

most sacred place (cf. Gerstenberger 1996:223-224). In the light of the above argument the bathing by the high priest in verse 23 and 24 should not be seen as removing impurities that the priest might have contracted from the scapegoat. Before the dispatch of the scapegoat he became immune to impurities. It should be recalled that throughout the chapter the holy place is contrasted from the "Most Holy place." Whereas one is able to identify the latter, the seemingly lesser holy place remains elusive. It is possible that the holy place may have covered the entire courtyard.

Verse 24

וְרָחַץ אֶת־בְּשָׂרוֹ בַמָּיִם ("*And he shall bathe his body in water*"). This is the first time after the sacrifice that immersion is mentioned. As already mentioned above (verse 23), the purpose for this ablution could not be for the removal of impurities that the high priest purportedly obtains from the scapegoat. He is immune to the impurity that he removes (Milgrom 1991:1048). The only one reason for bathing in this instance is to remove the super-holiness Aaron contracted when he entered the adytum. This premise also accounts for the discarding of his supercharged garments inside the Tent and for the need to bathe when he resumes his usual operation on the lower level of holiness within the shrine.

Verse 25

וְאֵת חֵלֶב הַחַטָּאת יַקְטִיר הַמִּזְבֵּחָה ("*And he shall burn as incense the fat of the sin offering on the altar*"). Once again, as in verses 3 and 5, there is some reference to purification. Probably this still refers to what took place in the above mentioned verses: verse 3 regarding the high priest's purification and verse 5 relating to the people's purification. Milgrom (1991:1049) suggested a possible translation to the verse, which starts with the subject marker וְאֵת. Thus the sentence should rightly be translated as: "*As for the suet ...*" This suggestion is made since the last mention of the purification offering was in verse 15 and was intended only for the people.

The verse signals the end of the central drama. The tidying up of the sanctuary now remains. As we saw in verse 24, the high priest has to wash and probably put on his normal clothes (Carson *et al.* 1994:144). The priest's activities at the sanctuary have almost come to an end hence our attention will be directed to the person who releases the goat for Azazel.

Verse 26

יְכַבֵּס בְּגָדָיו וְרָחַץ ("... *And he shall launder his clothes*"). The laws on ritual purification were a vital part of ordering the Israelites' everyday life. The requirement to bathe before entering the camp applied to various impure persons, including those who were contaminated by reason of disease, although this sentence is not applicable to such persons. "*The person who releases the scapegoat shall wash his garments and bathe his flesh in water.*" The verse contains parathetical material meant to inform the people on two vital procedures this day. They need to understand why certain activities are carried out in order to apply to them. Whereas the high priest is not contaminated either during the purging rite or the laying on of hands on the scapegoat – because he bears in a manner of speaking an antidote to impurities (Milgrom 1991:1052) – the persons who handle the scapegoat (16:21), and burn the sacrificial remains (16:28) are all laymen and thus presumably susceptible to contamination. They, therefore, have to undergo cleansing before re-entry into the camp. In later times the custom evolved to engage a non-Jew for the precarious task of leading the Azazel goat. Nevertheless his garments too became impure after his releasing the goat to its death in a barren region (Gerstenberger 1996:224).

Verse 27

As in verse 25 we encounter another sentence structure which starts with the subject marker, וְאֵת פַּר הַחַטָּאת , ("*And the purification bull ...*") This construction has been prompted because the pericope of the scapegoat intervened so that the reader is reminded of the purification offering in verse 15. According to Milgrom (1991:1052) the direct object which begins the sentence, is indicative of an "*as for ...*" construction.

Readers should also note the unique use of the word קֹדֶשׁ in Leviticus 16 to refer to the most holy place. Both sin offering animals are destroyed outside the camp and the blood and the fat taken to the altar. The carcasses on the other hand have to be carried out of the camp and dealt with by an appointed person who must bathe before rejoining the community. These stringent instructions secured absolute separation between the unclean and Israel.

Verse 28

וְהַשֹּׂרֵף אֹתָם ("*He who burns them...*"). This is a reference to the carcasses of both the bull and the goat chosen by lot for *Yahweh* and for Azazel. According to regulation the carcasses of these animals must be incinerated outside the camp. The person who performs the burning

becomes contaminated. It presupposes that anyone who touches such animals becomes contaminated too, but this will presumably not happen when they are still inside the sacred precincts. Once outside, they are prone to become dangerously contaminated, requiring that anyone who comes in contact to them will need to wash and purify him/herself. As already noted above, we now approach another section of the text, which does not appear to tie up with the sequence of events as we have discussed above.

Verse 29

The discourse style suddenly changes in verse 29. Until now the congregation of Israel has been very silent and passive during the rites. Their offerings are brought to the altar not by themselves, but by the priest. God addresses the instructions for the entire ritual to Moses in order to pass them through Aaron to the people, but He does not directly address Israel (vv 1-5). For the first time now the people are addressed directly. The discourse is switched from the third person to the second person plural וְהָיְתָה לָכֶם and this has been seen as the first of several signs that verse 29 starts quite a different unit and comprises an appendix to the text (cf. Gerstenberger 1996:224, Milgrom 1991:1054). For the first time also the date for the rituals is mentioned which already happens to be quite close to the end of the text. Our attention is drawn to the piel construction תְּעַנּוּ אֶת־נַפְשֹׁתֵיכֶם which features in the verse.

According to Driver and Charles (1974:774), the *piel* construction expresses the humbling or mishandling of individuals or whole nations respectively. In the context of Leviticus 16:29, when the whole phrase is interpreted as a single unit, it is usually interpreted as referring to fasting. There may be other renderings of the phrase, but the *piel* stem alongside the *hitpael* (reflexive) with the mention of the Sabbath, must mean a self-affliction, denial from certain social and ethical practices for a period of time. Gerstenberger (1996:225) rendered the whole phrase as "*to practise self discipline*", which we find appropriate in the context of Leviticus 16:29. This is further strengthened by the strong appeal to a total cessation from work of any kind. These restrictions apply even to the resident alien not to perform any hard work. According to Milgrom (1991:1055) the resident alien was not required to practise self-denial. In this case Milgrom may not be quite correct in his assessment. This is because the violation of a prohibitive commandment requires an act. P's ruling that an act forbidden by God generates impurity that impinges upon God's sanctuary and land, makes much sense. Thus anyone in the Lord's land is capable of polluting it and the Lord's sanctuary. It is not stated anywhere in Leviticus 16 that expiation on the Day of Atonement was limited to the Israelites.

Verse 30

The verse begins with the words "*because on this day* כִּי־בַיּוֹם הַזֶּה. This is a repetition of the notice in verse 26 and is meant for the purpose of a strong emphasis, which is also indicative of a transition for the rite from being an emergency one to an annual rite. This has been further strengthened by the chiastic structure of the last verses, in which case verse 30 serves as the pivot. All along purification has been effected in the sanctuary. What was the role of the people? A strong argument from Milgrom (1991:1056) appears to answer the question, namely that the sanctuary is polluted by the people's impurities. The elimination of the impurities in effect purifies also the people (cf. the scapegoat rite which expressively carries the people's sins into the wilderness). מִכֹּל חַטֹּאתֵיכֶם, "*Of all your sins.*" This expression appeared earlier in verses 6 and 21 and is an all-inclusive term for wrongdoing. It combines both the pollution of the holy of holies and the iniquities of the people. לִפְנֵי יְהוָה תִּטְהָרוּ: ("*You shall become pure before the Lord*").

The expression מִכֹּל חַטֹּאתֵיכֶם לִפְנֵי יְהוָה appeared at various places in Lev.16. It referred to the high priest's rites before *Yahweh*. This is the only occasion where it refers to the congregation of the people of Israel appearing before the Lord. This is possible only when they are able to practise the prescribed cessation from labour and self-denial (vv. 29 and 30). Some change seems to be gradually emerging on the religious horizon of the Israelites. As they approach the so-called holiness code (ch. 17) onwards, it becomes crucial to become reconciled with *Yahweh*. "You shall become pure before the Lord for the transgressions that are between man and God the Day of Atonement effects atonement; but for the transgressions that are between man and his fellow, the Day of Atonement effects atonement if only he has appeased his fellow."

Verse 31

שַׁבַּת שַׁבָּתוֹן The Hebrew has been rendered as "*Sabbath of a complete rest*". The seriousness of the Sabbath day and the Day of Atonement is stressed here as there is a total prohibition of any manner of work. This is indicated by the repetitive construction שַׁבַּת שַׁבָּתוֹן for special emphasis and also an indication that the Israelites are prohibited from any type of work or laborious toil. Levine (1989:110) described the "Sabbaton" as "*restfulness*" which is quite a suitable rendition in this context.

Verse 32

The affixation of this section is apparent in verse 32. From vv. 2 to 28 the text focuses on Aaron as the sole officiating priest. This time the verse focuses on his successors. Many scholars have seen this change of style and personnel as a hint for the change of the original rite. Whereas Aaron is to perform the rite whenever there was need to do so (on emergency days) his successors are to officiate only on the prescribed Day of Purging.

Verse 33

Neilson (WNIDE 1946:1136) described a hapax as that state of affairs occurring once. In Leviticus 16:33, a hapax occurs. For the first time in chapter 16 of the book of Leviticus the word קֹדֶשׁ is here used to indicate the "*sanctuary*" and not the adytum. Milgrom is of the opinion that the construct form אֶת־מִקְדַּשׁ, emphasises that the author of vv. 29a –34a is different from that of vv. 2-28. Verses 29-34a should consequently be seen as a later addition. Verse 34b resumes again the narration of the section from verses 2-28, with Aaron posing as the subject. It was Aaron himself who followed the instructions from Moses, which came immediately after the death of Nadab and Abihu (cf. Verse 1).

Verse 34

The statement of Milgrom that the demonstrative particle זֹאת ("*this*") as found in the construct form of וְהָיְתָה זֹאת , refers back to the בְּזֹאת of verse 3 and forms an inclusion with it. The people of Israel stand a chance of being purged, provided they follow the procedures detailed in the chapter. Hence atonement is to be effected no longer as an emergency (vv 2-28), but it has to be done only at the appointed annual date, accompanied by the people's abstention from work and self denial (vv. 29-33). And Aaron is the subject here, since he followed Moses' instructions immediately after the death of Nadab and Abihu. Thus verse 34b may originally have followed upon verse 28 : כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה "*As the Lord commanded.*" Although seen as an appendix, verses 29 –34 still relate to the entire text in the sense that the people have to abide by the regulations given by God which reflect the activities of the entire ritual. Thus the inclusion in this verse reflects back to the opening of the passage. At the end, the supremacy of the prophet (Moses) still reigns over the priest.

In the process of investigating the inner texture of Leviticus 16:1-34 we were able to obtain an intimate knowledge of the text, the various characters and their convictions. We also considered the language patterns, the use of tenses, style and the construction of sentences,

which permit a persuasive discussion leading to various modes of interpretations. The results of the handling of the text as such have led us to believe that the text of Leviticus 16:1-34 should be seen as a composite text, although it exhibits some unity of thought, especially when we consider the long unit from verses 2-28. The text opens with a historical reference in the introductory verse (1) and concludes with a compliance report (34) allowing us to observe how the events gradually progress in the middle of the text. From the beginning it is God speaking to Moses and towards the end God speaks directly in a changed tune and tense to the people of Israel.

The whole text relates to the Day of Atonement. It is such an important day in the religious experience of the Israelites, that they are expected to come out and confess their sins and to eliminate impurities both in the holy of holies and the camp environment to be banished into the desert through an animal agent or scapegoat. After a lengthy discussion regarding the person of Azazel we could conclude with other scholars that Azazel is no personal demon, but rather an inaccessible region to which evil is banished, while the scapegoat remains a vehicle through which the impurities of the people are carried away from human habitation. Thus the passage of Leviticus 16: 1-34 serves to reinstate the cordial relationship between *Yahweh* and Israel that was strained by the presence of impurities in the midst of Israel where *Yahweh* dwells. As we seek to identify the voices that contribute to the building of the text of Leviticus 16, we will now continue from the analysis of the inner texture to the analysis of the intertext.

6.3   INTER-TEXTURE OF LEVITICUS 16:1-34

The inter-texture of a text resides in the text's representation of references and the use of phenomena in the world outside the text, which is being interpreted. This represents the interaction of the language in the text with "outside" material and physical objects, historical events, texts, costumes, values, rules, instruments and systems (Robbins 1996:40). The aim of this type of analysis is to ascertain the nature and results of processes, which affect the text from without. Among the texts that are likely to provide an authoritative argument, are those texts which articulate the norms or "codes" which order social life and govern various aspects of human interaction (Sisson 1994:91). The inter-texture of Leviticus 16 will, therefore, consider how the various voices that are evoked in the debate function together in the line of thought and the structure defined in the inner texture.

As concerns Leviticus 16:1-34, the main narrative section deals with the purging of both the sanctuary and the people of Israel. Sin and other impurities have been identified within the sanctuary environment as causing the possible pollution of the inner chamber of *Yahweh* in the tent of meeting. Several paragraphs and verses are couched in the same language that are used in other texts, especially in the other pentateuchal books. The literary position of the chapter highlights the importance of the day to the Israelites community especially at the time when the Pentateuch reached its final shape. Hartley's argument (1992:217) that the position of the ritual of the Day of Atonement coming at the middle of the book of Leviticus (16) is crucial to the religious experience of the Israelites thus becomes understandable. It requires the preceding material, especially the pattern of the tabernacle and its furnishings (Exodus 25-40), the procedure for offering, the purification offering (Lev. 4:1-5:13), the ordination of a priesthood and the inauguration of the cult (Lev. 8 and 9). Since the ritual of the Day of Atonement removes sin and impurities caused by the people's uncleanness, it was necessary that the laws of ritual purity be presented in chapters 11-15 before chapter 16. It may thus be concluded that the regulations for the Day of Atonement serve as a preparation for the coming material for holy living. The moral and spiritual energy for the people to fulfil the laws in the holiness code (17-26), is based on their finding expiation on the Day of Atonement. The rituals for the Day of Atonement appropriately should come before the laws of holy living (ch.16).

The origin of the Day of Atonement remains a point of debate among many scholars. There are no references in the books of either the earlier or the later prophets and this has accordingly made it difficult to determine with precision the exact date for the origin of the festival. We thus relied on the few passages alluded to in the Pentateuch and on some extra-pentateuchal sources. The day is alluded to in Lev. 23:29-32, while the brief liturgical agenda is set out in Num. 28-29, especially 29:7-11, and even then the day is not specifically named. In Lev. 25:9 it is stipulated that the Year of Jubilee is scheduled to commence on the Day of Atonement. In Ezek. 45:18-29 a similar ritual is mentioned, prescribing an offering to cleanse the sanctuary on the first day of the month, which is to be repeated on the seventh day of the month. An alternative reading is that it is the seventh month that is meant here, although this possibility has been highly disputed. In any event towards the end of the text (Lev. 16:29) a date is mentioned, which is equally still under debate. The lack of authentic historical evidence, coupled with the prominence given to Aaron, the high priest, led the Wellhausen school to place the day far into the post-exilic era (Hartley 1992:218). This, however, is not

conclusive because we could not imagine that at the time of strict monotheism such a rite could still be so important among the Israelites. Contemporary scholars such as Jacob Milgrom argued for the antiquity of the ritual, placing it at the time of the monarchy, but after the completion of Solomon's temple.

As mentioned above, we will follow the structured units as set above in the inner texture to investigate the intertexture of Leviticus 16, while not actually following the verse to verse analysis as we did regarding the inner texture.

The first unit, verse 1, opens with a historical report. It provides a flash back to the incidence of the death of Nadab and Abihu, the two sons of Aaron. This incident was reported in Leviticus 10 but it serves again to introduce the text of Leviticus 16 without any further comment. As we saw under the section of the inner texture above, many scholars argued that this verse does not belong to chapter 16, but serves as a stern warning that any careless encroachment into the presence of the Lord is dangerous. The unit uses language that has parallel usages in other texts, especially in the other pentateuchal books (cf. Exod. 36:2) where we meet the word לְקָרְבָה used, in which case the infinitival construction בְּקָרְבָתָ֣ לִפְנֵי־יְהוָה has been used in Lev. 16:1. It should be noted that the use of this word in the two passages, even though bearing the meaning of "*to bring in*" are not translated to have a similar meaning. In Exod. 36:2 the emphasis is on the admittance of a qualified or skilful person to undertake the construction work of the tent of meeting. This should not be strange here, since in our examination of the book of Leviticus it was seen that the book overlaps both backward into the book of Exodus and forward into the book of Numbers. In this pericope, therefore, the emphasis is on the precautionary measures that are required before the priest may enter the holy of holies. It is meant to ensure that the sanctuary is maintained and also to avoid future fatalities.

The next pericope includes verses 2-5. Verse 2 appears to be another beginning, starting a long narrative section that spans from verses 2-28 (Milgrom 1991:1012). In verse 2 there is a prohibition for Aaron not to enter the holy of holies at all. Many scholars and in particular Milgrom (1991:1012) correctly interpreted this as a temporary prohibition. To understand the real meaning we must turn to other passages in the Pentateuch and other biblical references that are expressed in the same way. The command to Aaron should be seen as a characteristic feature of oriental negative construction that seems at first to be all-encompassing, only to be qualified by the next statement (cf. the text of Deut. 1:35, which is qualified by verse 36 and Josh. 11:22a and 22b). The correct interpretation of the phrase would be that Aaron is

allowed to enter the most holy place on the one day in the year and not whenever he wishes. In this pericope the attire of the high priest on this day of purging is also emphasised. The high priest normally wears expensive garments, but then a change in the normal dressing of the high priest is prescribed. In Leviticus 8:7ff the regular garments for the high priest are made of gold, rare gems, and woven with costly dyed fabric. Some biblical passages (Ezek. 9:2-3, 11, 10:2; Dan 10:6; Mal.2:7) suggest that Angels are dressed in white and therefore the priest on official duty should also appear like Angels. Whatever the case, the high priest on this day joins the rest of the community to humble themselves before the holy God of Israel. This pericope continues to emphasise the precautionary measures to be taken by the high priest before entry into the adytum and the general provisions in readiness for the rite of purification still anticipated in future verses. Apart from the gathering of the purging material, the pericope emphasises the humbleness of the high priest on this day together with the people who should be cleared of all pride and appear simple and humble before the Lord.

The next pericope commences from verses 6-19, with the emphasis on verses 6-10, which many scholars observed as the core of the day's proceedings (Snaith 1967:113, Wenham 1979:230; Carson &others 1994:143). The phrase, וְהִקְרִיב אַהֲרֹן ("*and he shall bring*") is used repeatedly in the text of Leviticus 16, making it appear crucial to the day's sacrificial procedures (vv 6, 7, 11 etc). The phrase was variously interpreted to mean "*to bring forward*" the sacrificial animals. We are favourably disposed to the idea of "*to bring forward*," because the underlying notion of the atonement rituals depends on the bringing forth of the sacrificial animals and of the blood in due course. This meaning was also attested in other ritual passages (Exod. 28:1, 29:8; Lev. 8:6; Num.8:7, 10). Support for this rendering is also provided by the subsequent verse, where its parallel verb is לקח ("to take").

These two words are found to alternate regularly in other sacrificial passages and are clearly synonymous (8:2, 6; Exod. 28:1, 8; Num. 8:5, 8, 10, 18). Thus verses 6 and 7 deal with the bringing forward of the animals that have been specified in verses 3 and 5. The work of purging can continue only when the animals, the blood and the congregation of the Israelites have been taken or brought into the sanctuary. The purging is not reserved only for the people, but the priest commences with his own household. This practice does not include the Levites, even though Aaron is acknowledged to be the head of the household of Levi (Num. 17:23). The Levites traditionally played secondary roles in the sanctuary and that is why they are grouped alongside the congregation.

Once brought forward, the choice of the animals – one to the Lord and another to Azazel – is made by the casting of lots. Once determined, the lots are placed on the heads of the goats to avoid confusion and they thus serve as identification marks for each of the goats. This is a tradition that has been preserved by the Tannaites. The said tradition may have influenced the selection of the animals on the Day of Atonement. The question could well be asked: "why the casting of the lots? Could the animals not be randomly picked"? We agree with the suggestion of Milgrom (1991:1020) that this was to allow the selection by the Lord so that it should not seem as if Aaron and the people he represented were offering an animal to Azazel.

We earlier discussed the problem of the Azazel goat, its destination, person and purpose. It should be reiterated that according to modern scholarship (Van der Toorn *et al.* 1999:130) the purpose of the ritual is to eliminate evil and impurities from the human environment. This practice was not unique to the Israelites and it was reported in Anatolia (northern Syria) and also in Mesopotamia. In the rituals of these ancient Near Eastern people animals could be used as bearers of the pollution to be eliminated. It is probable that the rite in Leviticus 16 may have been part of the religious and magical conceptual worlds of northern Syria that has been given a new dimension. Early biblical sources for similar rites were also reported in Gen 38:28; and Josh. 2:18.

The above underlines the antiquity of the ritual, even though it may not have been similar to the one we find described in the text of Leviticus 16. The idea behind this ritual was to identify and dispatch evil and other impurities to a spot whence it could never return. As already reported in the previous paragraphs, the release of the goat into the wilderness is without the possibility of any return. This action has been compared to the case of the sending away of Haggar and Tama (Gen 21:14; 2 Sam.13:17) and the sending away of a wife (Deut 22:19, 29; Israel Exod 5:2). It is not clear from these quoted cases whether any of them left any trace after they were expelled or whether they were ever readmitted. Similarly the scapegoat should not be able to find its way back to human habitation. Verse 11a picks up again the statement in verse 6 ("*and Aaron shall bring forward*"). This is a repetitive resumption that is frequently attested in other passages in the Old Testament (Num 5:16b, 18a; 7:1, 13:13a, 17a; 21:25b, 31; 22:21 etc). This emphasises the importance of the bringing forward of the sacrificial animals and the idea that these sacrificial elements are brought before *Yahweh* by Aaron, and not by the people.

The focus in verses 16 to 20 is not necessarily confined to Leviticus 16. The main concern is the impurities that could pollute the sanctuary and the people as we have seen in chapters 11-

15. In the time of the prophets sin was described as a rebellion against a personal god rather than the transgression of the laws laid down by him or an infringement of some ritual detail. By using the word מִטֻּמְאֹת in verse 16, which expresses the idea of uncleanness, both the ritual and the moral impurities generated by the constant violation of the prohibitive commandments were combined in one term. Thus sin remains a rebellion against God which should be eliminated. Biblical traditions often use water, oil or fire for purification but in verse 19 – as regards the Day of Atonement – the purification element is blood. The sprinkling of the altars with the blood of the animals here is also reminiscent to the daubing of the extremities of the priests' right ear lobes, thumbs and the big toes during their consecration (8:24). Their clothing is later on also sprinkled (8:30). Levine (1989:106) observed that this is a type of purity that requires a high quality of being, such as the sky or any other pure material such as gold that contains no alloy. This is the state of purity, which the Lord requires from the people and also what will prompt Him to continue to dwell among His people. The above sets the stage for the high priest to perform the real purification rite intended for the day. The emphasis is on the purity of the sanctuary and the people. We now turn to the next unit, relating to the scapegoat ritual.

This unit comprises of verses 20-22, which deal with the actions of the high priest: the laying on of hands and the dispatch of the Azazel goat into the Wilderness. In Israelite tradition the practice was to lay one hand on the head of the sin offering (Lev. 4:4). The use of both hands in verse 21 and in this particular rite is peculiar. Among many explanations Milgrom (1991:1041) distinguished this to be a transference function (cf. a similar action performed by Moses on Joshua in Num.27:18, 23; Deut 34:9). Thus the two hands gesture emphasise the transference of evil to an animal agent. On the other hand, Levine (1974:82) read almost a type of demonic character in the Day of Atonement ritual. We would not agree though with this view, since the confessions that follow are linked to the divine name which are aimed to release sins. After these gestures the goat is finally taken to be released in the desert by a man standing by. The biblical text is silent about the identity of the man, but extra-biblical sources suggest that in early Israel this duty was usually delegated to a non-Israelite to release it in the wilderness. Based on such extra-biblical reports, we could speculate that the goat may have made its way back into the camp environment as it once happened in the Nefo'o ritual of the Bafut of Cameroon.

We now turn to our next unit, which extends from verses 23 to 28. Perhaps the man standing ready to release the animal may have been briefed on the method of release and the way to

rejoin the community. It is known that after the release he had to bathe himself in water before rejoining the community.

From verse 23 onward the order of events appeared to be haphazardly placed which makes a thorough understanding difficult. The washing and changing of the priest's dressings within the sanctuary compound this problem. Levine argued that some details from the text may have become omitted, which could be quite feasible. Some rabbis recommended that a type of reconstruction be done for a better understanding of the whole pericope and that verse 23 should appear after verse 25. This is in accordance with the Herodien Temple where the high priest had to bathe five times and wash ten times in course of the day, which is not quite analogous with the case in the present text. Other cultic practices of the ancient Near East do not emphasise total immersion. The practice is unique in this passage. In (Exod. 30:17-21) the washing of hands and feet is mandated, and not total immersion. The idea of washing the whole body in the present text has caused questions to be raised whether the high priest was cleansing himself, but we do not believe that this is the case here.

The unique use of the word הַקֹּדֶשׁ to designate the holy of holies has also been noticed. In the other P passages the word would refer to the shrine as a whole. According to the regulations the carcasses of the animals have to be incinerated outside the camp (Lev. 4:11). This was a common and traditional way of disposing impurities. It is not unique to Israel, as the religious regulations of the Bafut of Cameroon also prescribe burning as a form of eradication of unclean elements that have been found to pollute the environment (cf. suspected corpses, and evil trees). The one who performs the incineration in each case becomes contaminated and thus the reason arises that he should wash before rejoining the community. According to the Rabbis neither the scapegoat nor the carcasses of the burnt purification offering transmit impurities while they are still in the sacred precincts. This enables the high priest and the other priests to handle these sacrifices without the fear of being contaminated.

It would appear that during the time of Hezekiah the law for purification was relaxed. In 2 Chronicles 30: 17-20 the Passover of Ezekiel was celebrated in the Temple. It admitted many non-consecrated participants. The question arises: was this really a point of laxity? Could it not have been an attempt to liberate the people from the stringent bounds of the regulations and gradually leading them to acts of responsibility? Hezekiah was conscious of the events during that particular Passover, which is why he had to appeal to the Lord to pardon the people (2 Chr. 30:18-20). With this we come to the end of this unit, which dealt with the purification rites reported in Leviticus 16.

A number of scholars interpreted the next unit (29-34a) as an appendix to the chapter. It has a completely different texture from the previous verses and contains the regulations given by God directly to the people of Israel. The whole pericope is couched in the second person, and deals with a direct address to Israel, as we saw in the corresponding paragraph relating to the inner texture. The counter argument is that the appendix covers the duties of the people, whereas the purging rites (2-28) are the sole concern of the high priest (Milgrom 1991:1064-1065). The tune here betrays aspects of what is envisaged in the forthcoming chapters of the book of Leviticus (Lev. 17-26). According to the priestly legislation all festivals begin on a specific date (Lev. 23:5, 6, 15, 24, 27, 34, 39), but strangely enough the date of the Day of Atonement is only mentioned right at the end of chapter 16. This may denote a completely different literary source, and specifically H. Thus the pericope has been considered to be an appendix whose purpose is to abolish the privileges vested in the high priest to decide to purge the sanctuary whenever he chooses. Hence the sanctuary would be purged only on the one day in the year, the tenth of Tishri (v. 29).

The later part of verse 34 is crucial to the whole chapter and this is the only place that links the appendix to the rest of the preceding material. The verse contains a compliance report stating (by inference) that Aaron did just as *Yahweh* had instructed him through Moses. This note of fulfilment accords with this being a report of the first observance of the Day of Atonement. The commands of God to cleanse the sanctuary and the people were given in the social and cultural intertexture of the clean and the uncleanness in the whole ancient Near East environment. Seen as such clean and uncleanness and also the holy and the common, are common phenomena in the book of Leviticus and in particular Leviticus 16. In the ancient Near East ill health and other mishaps were as a result of sin and so the necessity arose that sin had to be eradicated.

In the earlier paragraphs we observed that despite the scant nature of the treatment of the covenant in the book of Leviticus and in particular Leviticus 16, the concept is nevertheless echoed at various points in the text. These echoes relate also to the Hittite treaties where the conclusion of binding obligations became a necessity. A number of parallels with the Old testament text exist e.g., in Deuteronomy 28: "If you fully obey the Lord your God and carefully follow all his commands that I give you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all nations on earth." We also have a close parallel in Leviticus 16:29: "... that you must afflict yourselves and not do any work." This is a command from the Lord entreating the people of Israel to commit themselves to what He expects from His people. It is with the

understanding that if Israel obey, their sins will be reconciled and they would eventually become a holy nation. "Consecrate yourselves and be holy for I am holy" (Lev. 11:44-45). Wright (1987:31) argues that "Hittites ritual material is abundant." As already noted, one would be able to find close parallels with the Hittites and Mesopotamian rites to the biblical scapegoat rite. The underlying notion of both is that evil is transferred from a victim to another object or living being that then becomes the bearer of that impurity. This bearer is usually disposed of or banished in some way. This rite may not be quite unique to the Israelites because it is attested in the other cultures of the ancient Near East.

The intertextual analysis of Leviticus 16 is important as it affords us a perspective of how materials outside the text have been embedded in the text under discussion. Reflecting on the historical flash back into other pentateuchal material, – the construction of the tabernacle, the death of Nadab and Abihu, the two sons of Aaron etc – provide a powerful message about the cultures of the Jews and the other nations of the ancient Near East concerning sin and atonement. Sin is a potential evil and threat to the societies, which has to be eradicated and this could only be possible by sacrificial atonement. Israel in particular should be holy, as the Lord, who dwells in their midst is holy. By comparing the text of Leviticus 16 to other narrative texts, it is found to be composite with several voices being heard at various periods.

6.4   THE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL TEXTURE OF LEVITICUS 16:1-34

The analysis of the social and cultural texture of a text takes the interpreter into sociological and anthropological theory. The latter aims at exploring the social and cultural nature of the text, identifying the type of social and cultural persons who would live in the world of a particular text (Robbins 1996:71). Consequently the investigation of the social and cultural texture of a text would include exploring the social and cultural location of the language and the type of social and cultural world the language evokes or creates (Robbins 1996:71). In Leviticus 16 we are concerned with the Jewish society. The narrators and the other characters acknowledge that the camp environment and the people have been polluted with evil and other impurities. This has not only disrupted the societal order, but is incompatible with what the Lord requires from His people so that He may continue to dwell among them. The only way to deal with the situation is to make the environment fit for the holy God of Israel to continue to live in the midst of the people, which is by way of a total cleansing of the camp and the purification of the people.

It is envisaged that the rhetorical issues which concern us in the present text of Leviticus 16, will take us to the social and cultural worlds of both the Bafut of Cameroon (cf. Chapter two) and those of other cultures, including ancient Israel (cf. survey of sacrifice in chapter 3). The crucial point dealt with in Leviticus 16:1-34 is that of sin and the expiation of the people of Israel from all impurities. Sin and other impurities have prompted the rite of cleansing and the eradication of evil from the community of the Israelites. The two societies – Israelite and the Bafut of Cameroon – appear to have experienced similar situations. The tent of meeting is situated in the midst of the Israelite nation and the holy of holies is believed to be the dwelling of *Yahweh*. He will continue to dwell among the people if only the whole sanctuary, the holy of holies and the people have been purified. Atonement is thus needed to create the real original world order, which is deemed appropriate for *Yahweh* and His people. The Nefo'o shrine – similar to the tent of meeting – is the religious converging point of the Bafut of Cameroon where the ancestors are seen to dwell as intermediaries. The people rally annually through their representatives, the priests, to pay homage to God through the ancestors.

The Day of Atonement, as we observed under the inner texture of the text of Leviticus 16, is attested only in the priestly legislation of the Pentateuch and the main discussion takes place in this chapter. The ritual of the purging of the sanctuary is an annual event, occurring on the tenth day of the seventh month (Lev. 16:29, 34). As we saw above, the prescriptions for this purging rite are two main expiatory rites: the purification of the sanctuary and some of its furnishings with the blood emanating from priestly and communal sin sacrifices (vv 3-19). This is followed by the dispatch of the scapegoat, which has to bear the people's sins (vv 20-22). This purging rite which cleanses the sanctuary reflects P's carefully conceived ritual practice that is usually achieved by a combination of blood sprinkling, beginning with the most holy place and ending with the least holy (Wright 1992:72). We see within the priestly legislation a type of graded holiness as far as the camp environment and even the people are concerned. It is also P's legislation to pay attention to direction and numeration, especially when it came to cultic sacrifices. It is important to note that the blood manipulations in each locality appear in pairs and each pair involves a sevenfold sprinkling of blood. However, the most holy place receives one sprinkling on the eastern side of the cover of the ark and seven times on the front of the ark (Lev. 16:14- 16b). It is typical of P to envisage the Lord sitting on the cover of the ark and facing in an easterly direction. Furthermore, number seven is generally expressive of completeness and wholeness. As regards the scapegoat and the sin

offering goat, it is seen that sin and impurity have an intimate connection. Sin is the cause of impurities in the sanctuary. When the scapegoat carries sin to the wilderness, it removes the cause of impurity to a distant locality, which prompted the priestly legislation to place both goats in a complementary relationship. However, it should be remembered that in terms of the priestly legislation the scapegoat is not really an offering, but merely serves as a vehicle that carries impurities away from the temple and the peoples' habitation (Wright 1992:73).

The religion of Israel – whose sacrificial system we described in chapter three – exhibits some influences from the neighbouring cultures of the ancient Near East, even though there still remains a strong feeling that it has since been a unique religious system (Schmidt 1983:4). In the ancient Near East every aspect of life was related to the gods. Each individual's life depended upon the benevolence of these gods so that they had to be appeased with sacrifices. The same applies to the religious system of the Bafut of Cameroon. Sacrifices to the gods or the ancestors play a vital role. The ancestors or the gods must be appeased in order that they may relate well to the community of the living and to perform their intermediary work on behalf of the community. The whole system is under the direction of a hereditary priesthood that functions for the community, since everyone cannot possibly be sufficiently holy so as to be able to approach the "holy places".

The priestly view of creation seems to revolve around the same notion especially with regard to the created world and the world of human beings. The created world has a relationship with God, as seen in the sacred texture of Leviticus 16. As noted above, the role of sacrifice is prominent in Israelite worship and the priests are expected to be the role model for the society. In Leviticus 16 we are presented with different categories of role players. The text opens with the conversation between Moses and Aaron. This is actually a monologue, as Aaron, although he is involved in the proceedings to follow, is merely attentive to the transmitted orders from *Yahweh* (Lev. 16:1-2).

Purity relates to the general cultural map of social time and space: arrangements with the space thus defined and especially relate to the boundaries of the inside from the outside. The unclean or the impure do not belong to the space in which they are; they ought to be elsewhere and they cause confusion in the arrangement of the generally accepted social map because impurity overruns boundaries (Robbins 1996:85). Looking at the rite in Leviticus 16, one will notice a type of classification of both the population and the sanctuary, which consists of the camp environment and the holy of holies in terms of degree of purity. There is also the camp environment, the pivotal focus being the sanctuary and the holy of holies

(Malina 1993:159-160). Moses is the spokesperson of God, while Aaron remains the priest, but in the classification of holiness he is superior to the community. This further explains why Aaron takes such precautions to prevent the sanctuary and the holy of holies from further contamination. The correct maintenance of the sanctuary, and the elimination of impurities and sins from the community are the sole responsibilities of the priests.

Priesthood plays a crucial role in both the biblical ritual of the Day of Atonement and also in the Nefo'o ritual of the Bafut of Cameroon. The populations concerned depend on the outcome of the activities of the priests. Atonement, which we will discuss fully under the theme of sacred textures, is possible through the medium of the holy persons even though it remains a work of grace from God. This leads us to consider the ideological function of this text.

6.5   THE IDEOLOGICAL TEXTURE OF LEVITICUS 16:1-34

The ideological texture, as defined by Robbins (1996:96), is an integrated system of beliefs, assumptions and values that reflect the needs and interests of a group or class at a particular time in history. The ideological analysis of a text resides in people, and the texts themselves are only secondary subjects. The emphasis here is on the dialogue between people, while the text serves as a guest in the conversation (1996:95). Discussing the ideological texture of Leviticus 16 means that we should in the first instance identify the participants in the discussion. Israel is constituted at times to look like a corporate personality in their relation to God. They have common principles to abide to as a body and they may even be thought of as having core members and members of the fringe of society: the congregation as compared to the deity and the holy people.

In addition to the above, we need from time to time to turn to the social and cultural texture to try to associate with specific social topics, the main concern of which is the idea of sin and impurity in the Israelite community. There is a visible hierarchy through which events are performed. Through Moses God issues His authoritative instructions. The command from God unites the community, especially when they obey and live up to the required standards. It is God who orders Moses to speak to Aaron and Aaron in turn performs the actions on behalf of the people. At the very start of the ceremonies of the rites of atonement in Leviticus 16, Aaron is the sole participating priest and is very attentive to the transmitted instructions from God through Moses to him and consequently to the entire community.

The solemn behaviour of Aaron may have influenced the behaviour of the community who appear to accept their ban from going into the sanctuary without questioning. This is also the case with the community of worshippers at the Nefo'o ritual of the Bafut of Cameroon. It is believed God is able to communicate directly to the ancestors or the gods and the message is transmitted to the people through the medium of the priest. In Leviticus 16, the sanctuary purification remains a very dangerous work and special precautions thus need to be taken to save the life of the officiator and that of the community least they perish (16:2, 13). The people – apart from providing the sacrificial animal – remain passive, placing all their trust in the priest. Aaron leads the way, and the rest of the Israelites follow. The figure of the priest in the Israelite community represents their relationship with God, because the communication between God and the people of Israel is conducted through the medium of the priest. Leviticus 16 represents a chain of events with God speaking through Moses to Aaron and Aaron again acts on behalf of the people, except towards the end of the occasion where God addresses the people directly (Lev. 16:29).

Perhaps God directly addresses the people at the very end of the purging ceremonies because sanctification has been effected at that stage. This would give the people the assurance of redemption or atonement with *Yahweh*. This also signals the end of the rite being an emergency one to a rite that would be inscribed in the calendar of the religious year to be observed annually, a sign of commitment to the people. Hence the people commit themselves to these obligations to maintain a good relationship with *Yahweh*.

6.6   THE SACRED TEXTURE OF LEVITICUS 16:1-34

The sacred texture seeks to identify certain aspects concerning the deity in the text (Robbins 1994, 1996:130). Such aspects may include persons, spiritual beings, divine history, human redemption, and human commitment to a religious community and ethics. It is our intention in this section to explore divine interaction in the text, His relationship to the so-called holy people and the whole community of Israel. In other words: a sacred texture considers the nature of the relationship between human life and the Divine. Readers constantly try to identify the ways the text refers to God or gods, or to the realms of religious life. Therefore, religious persons, spiritual beings, divine history, human redemption, human commitment and the religious community need to be taken seriously.

In Leviticus 16:1-34 most of these aspects are expressed. In the first instance it is God himself who has taken the initiative to dwell among His people in the tent of meeting. He

speaks in anthropomorphic language concretising his presence among the Israelites. Where God is present, so is His glory and holiness. The camp environment and above all the holy of holies are the sacred space, with the holy of holies believed to house the presence of *Yahweh*. There he speaks to Moses as His spokesperson who will then pass His words on to Aaron and consequently to the congregation of the Israelites. In Leviticus 16 the primary concern is God and His people. God is first of all closer to the individual than to the community. God operates in Leviticus 16 through a type of hierarchic status, contained in the spirituality of prophet and priest, and priest and people. God does not speak to Aaron who is the main celebrant at the ritual of sanctification, but He does so through Moses. Milgrom (1991:1012) observed this phenomenon as the tacit assumption of the priestly writers that the prophet is superior to the priest, and so is the priest to the people.

A sacred text may regularly feature one or more people who have special relationships with God or with divine powers. In the text of Leviticus 16, such holy persons include Moses and Aaron whose functions and special relationship to God we have already outlined above. Being holy, God expects His people and his dwelling to be holy as He is, but the contrary has happened. Nadab and Abihu doubly contaminated the holy of holies; both in life and with their corpses. Sin and impurities have thus been introduced into the camp sanctuary and right into the holy precincts (Lev. 16:1). Such sins and impurities create a barrier between the people and *Yahweh*. The religious history about Nadab and Abihu is relevant at this point to emphasise the precautionary measures that need to be taken to ensure that the sanctuary remains pure.

A careful theological analysis of the book of Leviticus will recall the categories of holiness and purity; that is holy and common versus unclean and clean regarding both the tabernacle itself and the nation as a whole. Atonement applies to both and, in fact, is especially emphasised at the point of transition, which is Leviticus 16 or the Day of Atonement. It focuses repeatedly on the primary concern for the presence of God in the tabernacle in the midst of the Israelite community. It can therefore be said that the main concern for Leviticus is found in three main themes: atonement; tabernacle holiness and purity: and also national holiness and purity (NIDOTTE 1997:910). Chapter 16 has been described as the conclusion of the first major section of the book of Leviticus, but it is also the theological centre of the book and integrates the two halves. The Day of Atonement was instituted principally to effect the purity of both the tabernacle and of the whole nation. The sacred elements on this day included five sacrificial animals. There were two blood atonement sin offerings for the priests

and the people (Lev. 16:3, 5, and 11-19), a single scapegoat sin offering was for the congregation and the priests and finally there were two burnt offerings for the priests and the people. All these offerings effect atonement for both the people and the sanctuary. The scapegoat ritual represented quite a different kind of atonement, which facilitated the removal of all the iniquities of all the people by dispatching them into the wilderness. The wilderness is supposed to be the place of origin of sin and evil, and consequently evil had to be returned to where it belongs.

The emphasis on physical purity and impurity prompted God to be viewed in Leviticus and Leviticus 16 as visually and physically present with Israel and inhabiting the tabernacle in the form of the glory cloud. The priestly worldview focused on this visible physical presence with which the theology of the book of Leviticus is so closely identified. Holiness in Israel had started with the sanctification of the priests and the tabernacle (Lev. 8:10-15, 30; 10:3, 12-13, 17-18; 16:19, 24). It then extended to all the people and the whole nation.

The priestly conception of matters embraced all of creation and its relationship to Israel as a nation with the Lord dwelling in its midst. Within the nation and as a place of God's dwelling or presence one could sense the notion of a graduated holiness. It extended from the Most Holy place in the tabernacle to the community outside the tabernacle complex (Averbeck 1997:912). It included not only the spatial dimension, but also the personal dimension. At the start of this section we mentioned the God–Moses–Aaron and the community relationship. As concerns the priestly tradition, it is also possible to identify the Priest-Levites and the people relationship in terms of holiness.

In Leviticus 16 Aaron is the holy person to conduct the reconciliatory link between the people of Israel and *Yahweh*. Robbins (1996:125) rightly stated that another dimension of sacred texture is the transmission of benefit from the divine to humans as a result of events, rituals, or practices. The idea is to transform human lives and take them into a higher level of existence. The moral nature of the human is changed as a burden of impurity or guilt is removed in such a way that the guilty is liberated from those powers or practices that are debilitating and destructive. Such liberation can only come about as a result of atonement.

The term atonement may be understood in various ways, especially when it is used in an extra-biblical sense. The verb could be translated to mean "*to cover, paint, smear, appease*" etc. The root *kpr* is also attested in Akkadian with its base stem *kaparu*, meaning "*to wipe off or smear*". It is also attested in other ancient Near Eastern languages, but it is not within the

scope of the present work to describe the etymologies and derivations of the various forms of the word. Our main concern is its biblical usage and meaning especially in the priestly legislation. The Hebrew stem is כפר and it is found frequently in the Old Testament, occurring 12 times only in Leviticus 16 (Averbeck 1992:690). The majority of occurrences are in the priestly texts. The English translation, composed of the unscientific "*at*" plus "*one*" (*ment*), meaning to bring about reconciliation or reparation, is interesting. This is nearest to the basic effect of "*to atone, make atonement*" – derived from the verb כִּפֶּר– had in the relationship between God and human beings in the Israelite cultic context.

In Leviticus 23:27 this term refers to the wiping away of impurities and sins on the Day of Atonement. From the period of the middle monarchy (Exod. 32:30; Deut. 21:8a; Is. 6:7, 22:14) and the exile, כִּפֶּר was used theologically to mean forgiveness and during the time of Ezekiel (post-exilic) atonement became the heart of the cultus (cf. Janowski in EC 1, 1979:153). This is reflected in the expiatory quality of almost all the offerings (sin, guilt, and burnt offerings; sacrifice) and many rites (e.g., priestly consecrations Lev. 8:34). This was later formulated in Leviticus, as we saw above. In the Day of Atonement ritual the symbolic offering of the life of the guilty in the sacrifice of the animal is crucial. Note the relation of blood and life in Lev. 17:11. It is this act that makes atonement possible, especially when it is believed that God is present in the midst of the people.

As seen above, the term atonement also denotes an aspect of entering into an agreement with the divine. Israel – who was distanced from God by transgression and impurities – seeks reconciliation. Everything, the people, the adytum and the sanctuary, should be kept pure and holy, as God is holy. However, this is ultimately an act of grace and in the process of effecting atonement, *Yahweh*'s actions on behalf of Israel constitute not only a setting free of the nation but also a victory over the forces of evil. This is also the assurance for the future salvation of Israel. This explains why the theme of atonement had such a great impact in the atoning work of Jesus in the New Testament. Seen as such, atonement should be interpreted in terms of expiation rather than its propitiatory attributes. Thus all sins are atoned for on the Day of Atonement by the most potent blood manipulation and the ultimate goal of atonement is that Israel should live, and not to die as Nadab and Abihu did.

6.7   CONCLUSION

In this chapter we provided a socio-rhetorical analysis of the text of Leviticus 16:1-34. This comprehensive socio-rhetorical analysis of the text gave us the opportunity to come closer to the text and to understand what the purpose of the Day of Atonement was and is. The chapter revealed that the Day of Atonement was the most important religious occasion in the community of the Israelites. This was the day in which – through ritual acts and the shedding of blood – both the sanctuary and the people were expiated from sins and other impurities to restore their rightful relationship with God. In our treatment of Leviticus 16 the significant role of the scapegoat emerged. Although there has not been a general consensus as to the person of Azazel and the goat associated with this name, many scholars (Wright 1987:30) believe that the purpose of the biblical scapegoat is to rid the community of sins which are the cause of impurities in the sanctuary. The sins are placed on the goat and sent into the wilderness in order to remove it from human habitation. The goat does not appear to be a propitiatory offering to Azazel, but serves as a vehicle for transporting sins. Azazel, to whom the goat is sent, is apparently not an active personality, but is rather seen as a ritual "place holder" denoting the notion of impurity.

The inter-textual analysis revealed that the scapegoat rite is primarily an eliminatory rite which is not unique to the Israelites but has found parallels in other ancient Near Eastern cultures. Hittite and Mesopotamian elimination rites would seem to display some similarities with the biblical scapegoat. This analysis also gave us a perspective of how outside material has become embedded in the text. A historical flash back into other pentateuchal materials, such as the construction of the tabernacle and its furnishings, (Exod. 25-40; Marsh & Richardson 1967:198-253) and the theme of priestly ministry, are aspects that have significantly influenced the text. We observed earlier that the Nefo'o ritual of the Bafut of Cameroon is equally an eliminatory rite which also uses an animal agent to root out evil from the natural human environment. These extra-biblical rites are a valuable aid in determining in a more comprehensive manner the meaning of the biblical rite.

The social and cultural texture enabled the reader to focus on the social aspects that either adversely or positively influenced the Israelite community. Sin, which has been identified in the community is a social evil, pollutes and confuses the generally accepted social boundaries. Sin, therefore, has to be rooted out, and the process of achieving this becomes the sole responsibility of the priests.

Through the investigation of the ideological texture one notices a type of hierarchy, concerned with persons, with individuals and their relationship to the group. God is above all concerned with the individual before the congregation of the people of Israel. Within the ideological texture one notices the descending hierarchical arrangement of the God-Moses-Aaron-people relationship e.g., (Lev. 16:1-34).

From the analysis of the sacred texture emerged the God-human relationship and the people's response. The meaning of holy living was revealed, which was contrasted in the lives of the Israelite community and the other nations of the ancient Near East. Human beings are called to commit themselves totally and work humbly with God and in obedience to His will. This concretises the covenant relationship between God and His people. God paves the way to holy living, which is the subject of the next chapters in the book of Leviticus – the holiness code.

Above all ritual studies have been found to be important in shaping the religious lives of the various communities concerned in this dissertation. It can rightly be said that the accumulative purpose of the sacrificial system in Israel and in Africa was to provide among others forgiveness, reconciliation, salvation and harmony between God and people and between people and people. Thus in the Old Testament and in some other cultures atonement breaks the nexus of sin and its evil consequences by channelling the baneful influence of the evil into an animal agent which died vicariously for man. (Janowski 1999:152-153). Expiation was, therefore, not a penalty, but rather a saving event. From the socio-rhetorical analysis of Leviticus 16 we then moved to a comparative and theological analysis of the scapegoat ritual of Leviticus 16 and the Nefo'o ritual of the Bafut of Cameroon, pointing out both differences and similarities in these processes.

CHAPTER SEVEN

A COMPARISON OF THE SCAPEGOAT SACRIFICE OF LEVITICUS 16 AND THE NEFO'O RITUAL OF THE BAFUT OF CAMEROON: ITS THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATION

7.1   THE TIME FRAME OF THE TWO RITUALS

In this chapter we are presented with two rituals arising from two different cultures or traditions and from two different periods. Culture is dynamic and it frequently cuts across other cultures. Could this be the case with the Nefo'o ritual of the Bafut of Cameroon and the scapegoat sacrifice or ritual of Leviticus 16? We believe that by comparing certain aspects of the two rituals, these would enable us to come to grips with the similarities and dissimilarities between the two. From the results of these comparisons, we will be in a position to draw our conclusions. This will be the approach to enable us to interpret theologically the Nefo'o ritual of the Bafut of Cameroon. We hope to establish whether this could contribute to a more meaningful interpretation of the scriptures of the Old Testament on the part of the Bafut people of Cameroon and in other African contexts. Because all ritual performance is considered within time and space, these two aspects will play quite a significant role in this comparative venture.

As we observed above when we examined the ritual process in chapter three, every ritual has a distinct structure that includes such elements as form, order, sequence space and time. Thus time and space are linked together in such a way that one perforce reflects the other too. The two rituals – the ritual of the scapegoat sacrifice of Leviticus 16 and the Nefo'o ritual of the Bafut of Cameroon – are set within a certain timeframe. Our investigation indicated that the two rituals seemingly share remarkable similarities, which we will now examine further. Each of the rituals is related to time (cf. biblical time for festivals such as the New Moon and also the celebration of the fruit harvest, recorded in Exod. 34:22). It was also seen that the time for rituals varies between regular time and ordinary time.

Regular time is fixed within specific periods for the particular ritual. Both the Atonement Day ritual and the Nefo'o ritual of the Bafut of Cameroon fall under this category of ritual time. Their timings are similar in the sense that they are both annual events. The Day of

Atonement was observed each year on the tenth day of the seventh month (cf. Lev. 16:29). As regards the Nefo'o ritual of the Bafut of Cameroon its institutions stipulate that it be held each year in the month of December. The only slight difference between the two is that no specific date is fixed within December in the latter case. It should nonetheless be ensured that there is no clash with the Christian Christmas. This is understood as the most important religious feast of the people, which concludes the religious calendar of traditional Bafut and ushers in the New Year.

Some scholars have provided an explanation for the fixed date of the atonement ritual to be the tenth day of the seventh month. The explanation of Hartley (1992:232) is that the number seven is made up of the sacred numbers, three plus four, the sum of which is seven. In ancient Israel number seven stood for completeness. The Day of Atonement – being the most solemn day in the year – is placed in the seventh month. As concerns the tenth day, Hartley explains that this was chosen because ten is the result of the key numbers three and seven. Such numeration is absent in the Bafut ritual, but it is crucial that the ritual has to take place during the appointed month. Failure to adhere to this prescription would mean that no atonement is possible.

The people need to afflict themselves during this day in the seventh month. Great emphasis is laid on the notion of afflicting the people, which provides the reason why the verb "*to afflict*" has been used instead of the normal verb "*to fast*." What the phrase meant is much more than merely abstaining from food. This emphasised aspect of fasting would certainly have included the wearing of sackcloth, mourning and prayers (cf. Ps. 35:13). This is postulated here because after the post-exilic times fasting was increasingly felt as a sign of repentance and the seeking of God's mercy (Ezra 8:21-23). The Day of Atonement nevertheless continued to be the most solemn religious occasion of the year. According to the Mishna (M. Yoma 8:1) eating, drinking, anointing, putting on sandals and marital intercourse were forbidden at that time. The great holiness of this day led to its being a Sabbath of rest שַׁבָּת. It is to be observed in a stringent and more zealous manner. Levine (1989:109-110) observed in this type of phraseology a kind of supernatural force, which has been translated as being a Sabbath of solemn rest to capture both the complete rest and the devout festive worship that was characteristic of such a day.

Details of such dating and fasting are missing in the Nefo'o ritual of the Bafut of Cameroon. Nevertheless, it remains a yearly event and within a stipulated month of the year. The day of

the Nefo'o ritual is observed more or less as a public holiday, and is awaited with great expectation by the priests. There may be a possibility that at its origin there was a stipulated day, but with time and because of the vicissitudes of oral tradition the exact day must have been forgotten in the mists of history. This assumption arises from the fact that the celebrations may not take place in any other month of the year other than December, and the day may not be later than 22 December of the year of celebration. There is some speculation that fasting in the Nefo'o ritual may have taken place; especially in the ranks of the priests. The basis for such an assertion remains obscure, since all the actions of the priests are performed on behalf of the entire community. From the above it is clear that there are both similarities and dissimilarities between the dating of the two rituals, while the annual nature of the celebrations do not vary.

The notion of appeasement is absent in the biblical ritual, while implicitly present in the Nefo'o ritual of the Bafut of Cameroon. This is because the ancestors could either accept or reject the objects presented to them. Acts of invigoration may sometimes accompany the elimination ritual. Another significant difference is that within the priestly legislation there is an absence of oral incantations that accompany the release of the live animal (Wright 1987:60). We may not be very conclusive on this point, since the high priest always remained alone in the holy of holies. He could have recited certain prayers or incantations before the start of the purging ceremonies.

7.2   THE MATERIAL CONCERNS WITHIN THE TWO RITUALS

7.2.1   Animals

Every ritual sacrifice requires both the community and sacrificial objects. Grime (1983:23-24) referred to these elements as ritual objects. The question arises as to what objects were actually used. How were these objects used? Why were they used? Turning to the Israelite scapegoat sacrifice described in Leviticus 16, one could state that what was being used, was first and foremost "animal victims." These were usually mammals and birds, as also found in other ancient Near Eastern sacrificial rites (De Olmolete 1999:40). However, in the ritual under discussion birds are not used. Sometimes the type of animal is described more precisely, whether it be young male or female. Whereas other terms for animal rituals have no ritual meaning, the real act of sacrifice may refer to specific anatomical parts of the

animal, especially its entrails, in view of the special importance attributed to them in ancient anthropology and other religious obligations.

Although blood plays an important role throughout the rituals of the Day of Atonement, the first element traditionally referred to is the animals to be slaughtered. Burket (in Quaegebeur 1993:12) observed: "Basically all animal sacrifice is slaughter, which is ritually controlled by the community in question." The statement describes not only the essential characteristics of the Hebrew animal sacrifice, but also animal sacrifice in general. Regardless of the methods used, such as the holocaust, the animal first needs to be ritually slaughtered. We have already seen that the section of Leviticus 16:3-10 may be subdivided into parts. The first section (vv.3-5) sets out the preparatory requirements – the animals needed for the expiation of the high priest (v.3) and those for the expiation of the people (v.5). Verse 4 is concerned with the attire of the priests, which we will discuss later.

Some scholars interpreted verse 4 as an intrusion at that point even though the clothing worn by the high priest on this day was very symbolic. In verses 6-10 the liturgical order of the day is discussed. The rest of the section concentrates on the determination of the destiny of the people's two animals. Vriezen (1950:221) referred to the genre of this section as "a liturgical festival agenda." Thus a total of five goats were needed for the rituals of the Day of Atonement. Important elements in this respect would include the animals and the blood of the animals, the people and one could also add the element regarding the furnishings of the tabernacle. Three of the animals were slaughtered, while two remained standing in front of the priest for a choice to be made between them so that one is destined for the Lord and the other for Azazel. The goat for Azazel was soon to be loaded with the sins of the community and be released through a human agent into the wilderness. A central element in the Day of Atonement sacrifice was the blood that had been drained from the slaughtered animal. It was used to sprinkle on the altars and the mercy seat.

A similar procedure takes place as regards the Nefo'o ritual of the Bafut of Cameroon. On the day of the ritual three animals (goats) are identified. The priest slaughters one of the animals. The blood is used to sprinkle on the other shrines in the palace and also the sacrificial objects mentioned in chapter two of this dissertation. The priests usually eat the flesh of the slaughtered animal and the preferred portions are taken to the Nefo'o shrine for presentation to the ancestors of the tribe. The other goat is ritually treated, killed and all the remains are buried under a designated spot in the courtyard of the palace. This particular goat acts as a substitute for human beings who were in times past sacrificed at this shrine. The scapegoat,

which is comparable to the Azazel goat of Leviticus 16, is the third goat which is released into the wilderness after the sins of the entire community have been symbolically transferred to it. This animal is subsequently caught and killed by predators in the woods. The Bafut people use the word "woods" to designate an inaccessible region since they are not used to desert conditions.

Sometimes only portions of the slaughtered goat are used, but during abnormal conditions a live goat would be released. These situations may include severe famine, epidemics, wars, unexplained deaths, ill health and above all in the event of the gods rejecting the other sacrificial elements during the day of the ritual purification. Just as in the scapegoat sacrifice of Leviticus 16, blood is a crucial element and the animals are slaughtered primarily to obtain blood to be sprinkled on the shrine and other altars.

7.2.2   People

The ritual of the Day of Atonement revolves around people for the most part, because it is based on the covenant relationship between Israel and God. Ironically the people –in other words the community of Israel – remain passive *vis-à-vis* this ritual. They only provide the sacrificial animals. One person, Aaron the high priest, has an active role. This is a logical state of affairs as the whole of the population are sinners. The high priest, on the other hand, attained a high degree of purity after his consecration. The people are, therefore, barred from access to the most holy place. Even the high priest needs to clean himself together with his household, who would probably be the rest of the priests. This, however, lies in the realm of speculation, since the text is not explicit in what it regards as a household. Stemming from the second temple period rabbinic tradition has it that seven days prior to the festival, the high priest was to be secluded from his wife and isolated in a special cell that effectively shielded him from outside sources of impurity. During this period he had to rehearse many manipulations required during the rite (Milgrom 1991:1015). While the high priest was busy preparing, the community continued their daily activities until the day when they were required by law to start their annual period of fasting.

As regards the Nefo'o ritual of the Bafut, the people are throughout kept in the background except that they have to provide the animals for the ritual. This is where their role ends. They are nonetheless aware of what is taking place on their behalf but – as already observed – they remain onlookers. They may advance some distance to the shrine, but they are not permitted to even witness from afar what is being performed on their behalf. If the community of the

Israelites were involved in the events of the Day of Atonement, then the community of the Bafut of Cameroon are completely reserved.

A point of similarity in the two rituals is the seclusion of the priests prior to the days of purging, as we saw in the preceding paragraphs. The priests of the Nefo'o ritual of the Bafut of Cameroon are also secluded a few days prior to the commencement of the ritual sacrifice. They have to refrain from sexual intercourse and during this time of seclusion they revise all the activities, the incantations and other prayers to be said at the shrine.

7.2.3   Priests

The priests were the most prominent of the cultic functionaries (Fohrer 1972:114). Their main functions lay in offering sacrifices at the altar, offering incense, instructing the people on cultic, ethical, legal torah and obtaining decisions and oracles from God. They could claim some portions of the sacrificial animals for themselves (Fohrer 1972:115), while some heads of families were also allowed to offer sacrifices (Judges 6:25; 13:15). In all the religions known in the world, priests invariably played the role of mediators between the God/gods and the individual worshippers. (Mill 1990:710).

Throughout history humankind has been preoccupied with the notion of existence itself and with their physical co-existence with the environment. The environment was often threatened by natural catastrophes such as earthquakes, drought, flood, pestilence and diseases, and humans frequently found it very difficult to explain these phenomena. Ways and means thus had to be sought to placate the superior forces believed to be causing these catastrophes. They were often judged to be divine powers to be approached in fear and reverence. Soon the number of deities multiplied to the extent that the problem arose of to whom human beings were to relate. Even if the right god was contacted, how were the people to approach him?

The answer lay in people who started to specialise in thinking about the divine powers and then attempting to approach them directly. These men and women were found in mainly three categories: the miracle workers, *shaman* and the priests (Mill 1990:710). As indicated above we are primarily concerned with the priests. The priests were people who were acceptable and could approach the deities; either by virtue of their training, inherited positions or through some divine appointment. The deities were usually approached through sacrifices of various kinds, and skilled methods were often required to intercede for those who wanted to offer their prayers, but did not dare approach the deity directly for fear that some transgression be perpetrated that could make things worse. These expert men and women

may be found in nearly all religions the world over. They have over ages acquired great skills to the extent that in some cultures they even rivalled the secular powers, such as chiefs, kings and even emperors (Mill 1990:710).

The priests came to prominence after David had chosen Jerusalem to be the capital city and established the main sanctuary there. It would seem as if priesthood in Israel grew stronger during the royal period (1000-587 B.C). The two rituals – the scapegoat ritual of Leviticus 16 and the Nefo'o ritual of the Bafut of Cameroon – function through the mediation of priests and chief priests. While Aaron acted as the intermediary between Israel and *Yahweh*, the priests of the Nefo'o ritual – who may not necessarily be known by any title attached to their office – are the intermediaries between the people and the ancestors and consequently with God. These are men of outstanding morals and high ethical qualities. In the Nefo'o ritual of the Bafut two sanctuaries are visible and completely sealed off from common entry. The first is the sanctuary at the palace where cultic objects may be preserved. The other sanctuary is at the shrine of Nefo'o itself, opened once a year for the priests to perform the ritual worship on behalf of the entire community. These dual sanctuaries are attended each year by the same officiating priests, but the shrine may be visited between sessions by ordinary people for sightseeing, treatment of serious diseases and recently also by a few selected scholars for geological research.

We mentioned before the secondary shrines around or within the reach of the main ones, both at the palace and the site of Nefo'o. The population – on whose behalf the priests act – may approach as far as the limits of these secondary shrines, but they may never approach the main ones. Such restricted places could be equated to the camp environment where the Israelite community was allowed to freely mingle. Communication among the priests, the cultic objects and the community is possible only at the vicinity of the secondary shrines. Once the priests have entered the inner sanctuary communication takes place only between the priests and the deity, and at those times the priests are deemed to be in a complete different world. As regards the high priest of Leviticus 16, there is nowhere any reference to communication taking place between him and *Yahweh*. This may be explained in that most of his instructions have been communicated through Moses to him. The inner section of the Nefo'o shrine of the Bafut of Cameroon could be regarded as comparable to the holy of holies in the Day of Atonement ritual which is entered once a year only by the Hebrew high priest.

The normal attire of the high priest is described in Exodus 28 and 39 respectively. The attire is costly, because it is virtually entirely fashioned from gold. In contrast with this elaborate

and costly custom for officiation duties and the dignity of the priest ("*make sacred garments for your brother Aaron, to give him the dignity and honour*" Exod. 28:2), the attire of the high priest as described in Leviticus (16:4) is simple and less costly. Scholars, such as Milgrom (1991) Hartley (1992) and Gerstenberger (1996) observed that this contrast is a sign of total submission and humility reflected in the priest's dressing on the Day of Atonement. The same applies to the priests of the Nefo'o ritual of the Bafut of Cameroon. They are only partly dressed in quite a peculiar style. They wear what is called "*mann mo'o*," which is made of only half a loincloth around their waists, while the rest of the upper body is left exposed. In addition to this a paste made of cam-wood is applied to specific parts of the body: the forehead and behind the shoulders. They may wear a knife slipped into a sheath over the half-sized loincloth around their waists. The above described attire for the priests of the Nefo'o ritual of the Bafut of Cameroon is different from the one worn on such occasions as the annual dance of the fon of Bafut, at which most of the priests appear in embroidered and multi-coloured expensive clothing. The explanation for the change in clothing for the priest of the Nefo'o ritual of the Bafut of Cameroon has in like manner been given by some of our respondents as being a sign of simplicity and humility. Both days are days of penance for the two communities and the communities, through their respective priests, have to acknowledge their shortcomings before the Lord or deities in a symbolic manner.

As a rule the heads of the priests of the Nefo'o ritual of the Bafut are specially shaven. They may chose to shave off all the hair on their heads, with only a little bit left at the back of the head. This serves to identify them to the rest of the community, especially on the day of the ritual. People are not supposed to engage in any type of conversation with them, and especially women have to keep their distance from the priests. Conversation may resume only after their final bathing after the rituals, which prepares them to be rehabilitated in the community.

It would appear that on their way to the shrine they bear the impurities of the community before they transfer these to the goat, just as is done prior to the release of the Azazel goat into the wilderness. We could, however, not really be conclusive regarding this aspect as the question arises why it would be a priest who would release the sin-laden goat, since such inferior jobs were often undertaken by slaves and other common people. Earlier we observed that at his ordination the high priest of the scapegoat ritual of Leviticus 16 attained a certain degree of purity, which made him immune from further impurities. This is not the same with the priests of the Nefo'o ritual of the Bafut who may never have been ordained or

consecrated, because of their hereditary rights. We have however not forgotten of their initiation rites. Only when these priests have washed themselves and changed into their ordinary clothes, may they engage again in the normal life of the community and of their families. This explains why, prior to the day of the ritual they have to spend that night in the palace away from their family, and after the ritual another day has to be spent in the palace. During this time the priests prepare themselves ritually for their reunion with the normal community and in particular with their family members.

The priests were expected to be role models to society or men of high moral integrity. In most cases they were married people and their children were expected to be exemplary in character. Leviticus (21:7-9) describes the situation of such a family, including wives, children and the priests themselves. This may provide the background to the sudden death of Aaron's children who played a double role as children of the high priest and being priests themselves.

Priesthood was hereditary and at this juncture we may refer to the speculation of Milgrom (1991:55) who believed that Aaron may have been tempted to have one of his sons – Nadab or Abihu – appointed as his successor. The integrity of the priests had to be upheld by their personality that set them apart from commoners, their maturity, and their moral behaviour and speech. In summary we may conclude that the two rituals described above share this statutory category of priesthood with no apparent distinction or difference between the ancient Israelites and the Bafut of Cameroon.

In Leviticus 16 our attention is focused on the innermost part of the sanctuary and particularly on the "*mercy seat*," the golden cover of the Ark of the Covenant. The Hebrew word הַכַּפֹּרֶת which has been translated as "*mercy seat or cover*", comes from the root כפר, *cover, atonement*." This idea functions to identify both the day and the place. The place is the most holy. This is because God appears in the cloud upon the mercy seat (Lev.16: 2). This is also the inner chamber of *Yahweh* who dwells in the midst of His people, the Israelites. Any unauthorised entry and sacrificing would be a heavy risk to the intruder. Early in Leviticus 16 appears the reference to the tragic deaths of Aaron's two sons, Nadab and Abihu, to whom earlier reference was made in chapter 10. According to Hartley (1992:234) the reference to the deaths of Nadab and Abihu is to sternly warn the high priest to conduct himself properly when he enters the holy of holies on the Day of Atonement so that he does not lose his life in doing so. It is on this day that *Yahweh* promised to appear in a cloud over the כַּפֹּרֶת. The

environment around the tent of meeting may be impure because of human sin, unlawful cultic objects or unacceptable sacrificial elements, so that entry into the very presence of *Yahwe* may result in instant death. The high priest, Aaron, took upon himself that risk which would have been attached to the people. He placed both his hands on the live goat and conferred over it all the sins of the people. Aaron acted corporately, thereby reducing the risk of any further impurity entering into God's domain.

In as much as the holy of holies was the inner chamber of God's dwelling in the midst of Israel, so similarly is the Nefo'o shrine the innermost dwelling of the ancestors. On the day of the Nefo'o ritual of the Bafut only the priests are allowed to enter the shrine. Prior to this the priests spent periods of rehearsals on the incantations to be used and the general manipulations of the various cultic objects. It is believed that any misconduct at the shrine would provoke immediate death or soon afterwards as was the case with Nadab and Abihu in Leviticus 10. A long-term risk remains in the refusal of the sacrificial objects, which necessitates a repetition of the rites and a general catastrophe to the entire Bafut community, culminating in the release of the live goat into the wild. The scapegoat in this rite is the ultimate focus of the ritual and once this has been accomplished, the priests would return among shouts of joy announcing a successful mission. The community throughout remains passive. All the manipulations and talking are done by the priests on behalf of the people and thus the priests bear all the risks.

Just as the person who releases the goat to the wilderness must wash himself with water before rejoining the Israelite community, so does the priest who releases the live goat in the Nefo'o ritual needs to bathe himself with water before rejoining his family. The difference between the release of the goat to Azazel described in Leviticus 16, and the live goat of the Nefo'o ritual of the Bafut of Cameroon, lies in the fact that a man is appointed to release the Azazel goat to the wilderness. In the Nefo'o ritual, every act is undertaken from start to finish by the priest on behalf of the people.

7.3   THE RELEVANCE OF ANIMAL SACRIFICE FOR TODAY

In the following paragraphs we will examine whether animal sacrifice is still of any importance to the various traditions, including the Christian and the Jewish religions. As we noticed when we examined sacrifice in West Africa, animal sacrifice still plays an important role in most religions of the African people. Fortunately this has come to replace human sacrifice, which used to be a normal occurrence in some of the African communities and in

particular among the Bafut of Cameroon. The question of the relevance of animal sacrifice for the present time has been triggered by the fact that neither the Jewish nor Christian religions any longer practise these sacrifices.

In a sense the question raised in the previous paragraph alludes to the relevance of the scriptural contents of the book of Leviticus, since the bulk of these sacrifices is described in that book. A careful examination of the book of Leviticus would reveal that this is the Old Testament book that pre-eminently serves as a basis for many books of the Old Testament and even some books in the New Testament. The Bible alludes at various points to the subject of sacrifice. The clearest references to sacrificial offerings and the ceremonies of purification appear in the book of Leviticus and more so this has also been intimated in the New Testament (see the book of Hebrews). From a general religious point of view, and thanks especially to archaeological excavations, we are able to compare the institutions dealt with in the book of Leviticus with those of other societies and institutions, included amongst which are many sacrificial systems.

Jews paid special attention to the institutions in Leviticus where sacrifices play such a vital role. Leviticus is a book of sanctification, and consecration of life in which the burnt offering stands in the fore front. It is the book of avoidance and atonement of sins, the combating and removal of sins among the people of God and this only becomes possible through sacrifice. The Day of Atonement accordingly occupies a central place in the book of Leviticus (Lev. 16). The ceremonies of the two goats prescribed for the day becomes a reminder to us that as far as the east is from the west, so far does He remove our sins (Ps. 103:12). The Day of Atonement exhibits in a superlative manner the significance of sacrifice in the life of the covenant people and at the same time emphasises the unique sacredness of blood because the sacrificial blood is brought on that day into the most holy place. The blood is sprinkled on the Ark of the Covenant to obtain the remission of the sins of all the covenant people (NBC 1970:157). This equally foreshadowed the blood that Jesus shed on the Cross for the remission of all sins.

7.3.1   Sacrificial blood in antiquity

Passover – with its ritual regarding the blood of the lamb – was an important event in the development of Israel's sacrificial system (Fleming 1988:87) and it emphasised the significance of blood. Blood as such was a symbol of life, while shed blood was a symbol of death, especially through killing (Gen. 9:3-6; Num. 35:19, 33). The blood of the lamb was

important because it represented the animal's death by which the first born of Israel was saved from judgement. The blood sprinkled around the door served as a visible sign that it was the life of the animal that had been taken instead of the life of a person (Exod. 12:13). From the Israelite sacrificial system God was seen giving the shed blood of the animals to the people to make atonement for sins (Lev. 17:11). God, therefore, gave the blood of a guiltless animal, a substitute, as a means to total cleansing and perfect release from sin. As such, pardon from the guilt of sin was not within a person's effort, but purely a work of Grace from God. The animal that died in sacrifice suffered the penalty of sin, but setting the sinner free. Forgiveness for such sin could hence only be possible as a result of the shedding of blood.

The biblical sacrificial system thus unveiled human sinfulness and also the means, which God adopted for restoring the sinner to fellowship with Himself (Harrison 1980:31). It needed the sinner to repent so that he/she could be forgiven. Even though all depended upon the work of Grace the sinner was expected to bring an offering, which he/she acquired at some cost. Because no one could be his/her own saviour or mediator, such a sinner was expected to appear before God in penitence to confess his/her sins and to obtain pardon from a merciful God. Thus to obtain forgiveness involved cost and the taking of life. This was the basis for biblical sacrifice, but gradually its focus was directed on the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross.

7.3.2   Animal sacrifice and the New Testament

It is not within the scope of the present dissertation to treat in details the impact of animal sacrifice in the New Testament. Nevertheless and as it concerns the subject of sacrifice and the priests we need to relate to the New Testament to ascertain what is meant by saying that Christ perfected a final sacrifice for the sins of humanity and thereby brought to an end animal sacrifice. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews saw in the cultic ceremonies undertaken in the book of Leviticus much that foreshadowed the atoning work of Christ. In Hebrew chapter 7 Christ is seen as the eternal high priest whose work surpasses that of Aaron and his successors. The Israelite high priest ministered and died in due course, but Christ's atonement brought universal redemption. His eternity, therefore, guarantees an unchanging priesthood. This may be contrasted with the annual offering for sins made on the Day of Atonement. The sacrifices, which the priests presented both in the tent of meeting and the temple, were consequently a precursor of the larger work of Christ for the salvation of humanity. In the same way, though the Bafut yearly offered at the shrine it should be noted that this also is just a shadow of what Christ finally achieved for humanity on the cross. The

practice of sacrifices at the shrine should only remind us that Just as the goat was let out of the village and abandoned in the woods in the same way Christ as the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world was also let out of Jerusalem and crucified once and for all for the sake of the whole world and not only for a limited group. Hence, our attention should be focused only on him who brings salvation once and for all to the whole of Humanity. To say that Christ is the final sacrifice who takes away the sins of the world, reflects the above statement and does not in away constitute a disregard for the other cultic sacrifices undertaken in the priestly code but this should constantly remind us of the eternal work of the Cross of Christ.

7.4   THE ROLE OF THE COMMUNITY IN THE TWO RITUALS

The rituals for the Day of Atonement were meant for the purification of the people of Israel. Strangely enough the community was very passive in most of the activities of the day, as we observed in the previous paragraphs. The people of Israel played no part at the sanctuary and the best they did was to provide the sacrificial animals, which were brought to the altar not by them, but by the priests. The whole ritual procedure was initially conveyed to Moses, who in turn related the same to Aaron, and not directly to the community. The people of Israel were only addressed directly much later – as directed in Leviticus 16:29 – when they had to start fasting. The fate or the survival of the community depended upon the priests. The people were mere onlookers, waiting to receive whatever would come from the priests and it was only by the grace of God that they pursued their lives. There was one aspect of active involvement on the part of the community during the ritual namely that of the release of the sin-laden goat into the wilderness. It was a member of the community who was chosen to release the goat into the unknown.

As concerns the Nefo'o ritual of the Bafut of Cameroon, the community does not participate during the performance of the rite. In a similar fashion to the Israelite scapegoat ritual, the priests on behalf of the Bafut community perform all actions. The Bafut community may provide the goat for the ritual, but they are barred from any other participation. The priests recite all the prayers and incantations and even when it comes to the release of the live goat – unlike the Israelite scapegoat – it is still done by the priest. Meanwhile, the ceremony of the laying on of hands transferring the sins of the people on the goat is usually performed in the palace by the priests on behalf of the people. The vast majority of the people may not be present, but they may be represented by a cross-section of the population, remaining mute

throughout. The return journey of the priests, the anointing of the people and the handing out of the rest of the cam-wood paste are all performed in silence. We were fascinated to see that the people received all the cultic elements with excitement, even though they were given in silence.

In both the Israelite scapegoat ritual and the Nefo'o ritual of the Bafut, the respective religious communities remove all traces of impurity – or sin – from places, objects and persons who are contaminated. These impurities are then transferred to an animal – normally a goat – which is then in a sense expelled from society and prevented from returning. Although there is still much speculation regarding the final destination of the sin-laden goat, it is traditionally held that the goat is eventually killed by predators. In order to be rid of impurity, this element has to be localised, pinpointed and its area and volume be reduced (Girard 1986:127). This ensures that only the impurity is isolated, without harming any other object or person in the process. Although the procedure for selecting the goat during the Nefo'o ritual of the Bafut is conducted in silence, this does not mean that the choice of the goat depends on pure chance. The original way of doing this has become lost in the mists of history, as oral history may have started omitting certain details of the process. In both rituals impurities inhabit the desert or wilderness, which explains the dispatch of the goat to return the impurities whence they originated. The ultimate aim of the two rituals is the future well-being of the respective communities.

Even though one notices some points of difference in both the Israelite scapegoat ritual and that of the Bafut people, many of the items in these rituals appear to be similar to each other. A few of these differences may conceivably be the result of the non-documentation of the Bafut ritual procedure over the years. It was handed down from one generation to the other and it is possible that certain details may have been omitted in the course of history. A close study of the Day of Atonement ritual and the Nefo'o ritual of the Bafut would reveal a number of similarities. The prescribed date for the rituals, the selection and release of the goat to the wilderness, the act of transferability, the inaccessibility of the shrine to the general public, the declaration of a fast and a day of rest are universal aspects to the two rituals.

The Scriptures of the Old Testament seem to strike a resonant note with the Bafut people; more so than those of the New Testament. The Old Testament shares much in common with the culture of the Bafut of Cameroon. Just as the Jews attached great importance to the role of their ancestors – Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – the people of Bafut are no different in this

respect. That is why they are able to trace their genealogies right up to the thirteenth generation (cf. above chapter two).

Given this background knowledge of the Old Testament within the Bafut community, the author would encourage emerging Old Testament scholars from the Bafut community to make use of the worthwhile cultural practices as hermeneutical tools for the interpretation of the Old Testament scriptures. The Nefo'o ritual is a case in point which would relate closely with the scriptural contents of the book of Leviticus and in particular of Leviticus 16.

7.5   A THEOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE NEFO'O RITUAL OF THE BAFUT OF CAMEROON

A theological interpretation of the Nefo'o ritual resides in an attempt to discover what the relevance of the said ritual could be to apply as hermeneutical tools for a better understanding and interpretation of the Scriptures of the Old Testament. In course of tracing such hermeneutical tools it is obvious that certain aspects would be reinterpreted, while others may be explained away.

The Bafut tribe is very religious and they have many and varied shrines and other church houses distributed all across the entire tribe. Because it is easy to fall prey to the practice of syncretism, the author would sound a word of caution against any such temptation. The Nefo'o shrine stands out as the one converging point for the annual veneration of the tribal ancestors who pose as intermediaries between the community and the deity. The ancestors are departed relatives who are believed to continue to live and show interest in the affairs of the surviving family members (Mbiti 1975:16). The act of respect rendered to the departed by the living family members, however, does not amount to worshipping them. Through these acts of respect the departed of up to about five generations may still be remembered.

7.5.1   God and the ancestors

The Bafut people are fully aware that the ancestors they venerate are not God. They have a different name for God, called *Nwingong*, and his abode is located somewhere beyond the blue sky, called *aburu*. The shrines are believed to be the dwellings of the ancestors who are closer to the people than the gods (Thorpe 1991:75). It should be noted that in Bafut the concept of the gods is gradually being incorporated with the ancestors so that at certain moments it is difficult to separate the two. For example, at the Nefo'o shrine the ancestors are

venerated, and not the gods. The gods remain invisible spirits who may not be known by their names. They may also inhabit natural phenomena and other objects such as streams, mountains, rivers, trees, cliffs and rocks.

The Bafut people have many concepts and attributes about God. Some of these would include the God who creates, a God of providence, sustainer of the creation, ruler of the universe, being omnipresent, omniscient, not limited by space and above all he is unknowable. This provides for the African – and in particular for the Bafut person – the purpose for worshipping God and the offerings made to him through the ancestors.

7.5.2   Ancestors and sacrifices

The making of sacrifices to the ancestors is found all over Africa (Mbiti 1975:57). The practice entails that physical or material things are given to God and the other spiritual beings. This provides a meeting point between the visible and the invisible worlds. Through the making of sacrifices the human being shows his/her intention to project him/herself into the invisible world. Such sacrifices and offerings are constituted of almost any animal or object. However, the sacrifices that take place specifically at the shrines involve the shedding of blood of animals, birds and even human beings. The sacrifice of animals has the intention of returning life to God. As the deity remains the ultimate source of life, the purpose of such a sacrifice should be very special, as we described above. It is believed that the sacrificed life of one person or animal would save the lives of many people or of entire communities. "Thus the destruction of one becomes the protection of many" (Mbiti 1975:59). Sacrifices are made for both communal and individual needs and may constitute what one is able to provide. They should consist of those objects and animals that are acceptable to God or the deity. Although African Traditional Religions have been described as religions without altars and temples or churches, the author is of the opinion that such places as the stones, under trees, hills, sacred groves, lakes, waterfalls, etc. indeed serve as converging points and altars. They should be seen equally as dedicated religious sites as would be church houses in the mainstream religions.

The Africans are conscious that God would not literally eat or make use of their physical sacrifices. What is offered is done to show their humbleness, seriousness and their supplication before Him. This understanding may provide a starting point in explaining the Scriptures. Similarly the African has seen that life is more special than any material things. This is equivalent to man being created in the image of God. Life is, therefore, sacred and

imbued with divine functions, which should not be destroyed arbitrarily. This truth becomes a powerful argument in discouraging human sacrifice which has hitherto been practised among some African tribes. Such an explanation should also be related to God's commandment, which prohibits indiscriminate destruction of especially human life (Exod. 20:13).

The notion of an intermediary is crucial to the theological interpretation of the Nefo'o ritual of the Bafut of Cameroon, as it would to any other African tribe. As already observed, this mediation primarily originates from the ancestors and the gods. We wish, however, to make it clear that not all ancestors or departed relatives are deemed to become ancestors (Zulu 1998:17). In some societies, such as the Akan of Ghana, "the man who in life was morally bankrupt is disqualified from being an ancestor; so is the one who dies tragically or through some loathsome disease such as leprosy or madness" (Pobe 1979:8). To this we may add the modern pandemic disease of Aids. Other qualifications of attaining the status of an ancestor are to live up to a ripe old age before dying or to belong to a royalty such as chiefs or kings. Only worthy ancestors are seen to attain to the role of an intermediary. This ancestral role of mediation could be used to explain the divine intermediary offered to the world through God's son, Jesus Christ. This remains an explanation, but in no way does it equate the ancestors having such divine functions as Jesus Christ. It is the belief in African society that no one gains access to the deity or the Supreme Being except through the ancestors. This is very much in line with the quotation from John 14:6, which states that Jesus is the only way to the Father and no one would come to Him except through Jesus. The ancestors play the role of intercessors. They are in a better position to intercede for the living since they recently used to live with them. This may also help to explain the intercessory role offered to believers by Jesus Christ (cf. John 17:20-24).

7.5.3   Blessings and curses

Blessing and curses are prominent features in African society. At old age the head of an African family would call his worthy children to bless them and he may also curse those who may have been unreliable and disobedient. Upon his death the ancestors would continue this role and are believed to influence the affairs of the living members of the family. They maintain the power to either bless or curse the living family members. According to the African understanding of blessing, God does not bless people directly, but does so through other agents. Indeed, no curse originates directly from God. In Africa it is believed that an intermediate ancestor only blesses or curses in the name of God. There is a Zambian proverb,

according to which "one's parents or ancestors are his second God" (Zulu 1998:55). It should be remembered that the notion of ancestors is equally stressed in the Bible. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are the ancestors of the Jewish family. In Genesis 12: 1-4, it is described that Abraham is to be a blessing to the people and will in turn bless them, while Isaac in his old age calls his children – Jacob and Esau – to bless them (Gen. 27:1-40). The notion of the ancestors leads us to consider the aspect of life after death, which plays quite an important role in the philosophy of the life after among the Bafut tribe.

7.5.4   Life after death

Thoughts about life after death are constantly in the minds of the Bafut people. No one who used to live a respectable life style dies and then disappears without trace. Only those who die in mysterious and other violent circumstances die and go to the underworld. Their destinations are comparable to *sheol.* There has been a belief in reincarnation, but this is fast dying out. It was believed that a child who dies quite young could be reincarnated within the family some time afterwards. Deceased children were buried bearing certain marks made on their foreheads or other conspicuous parts of the body, so that they could be shamed to return to this world. According to the Bafut of Cameroon, when good ancestors die they retire to the Nefo'o shrine to live with elderly deceased relatives. After death the Bukari people of Bafut are said to follow those who had earlier been taken there when they were alive. The death of any reasonable person from Bukari is referred to as being mysteriously taken to Nefo'o. Such deaths are often notified by the appearance of certain signs and warnings that indicate that Nefo'o will soon take one person. The messengers bearing such omens range from an owl, two brightly coloured eagles, to invisible persons. The popular belief is that one day all will die to meet with their ancestors. This belief prompts the living not to regret that they will die, especially if they had led moral lives. Death is no longer taken as serious as it is among other societies. The positive aspect of this cultural practice is that the Bafut people already have a notion of the resurrection of the dead at the end of the age. What they now need is the education as to Who affects the resurrection and how.

It is important to stress here that the idea of the resurrection of the dead in traditional Bafut was and is not the same as the Christian understanding of the resurrection. That is why we emphasised the aspect of education on the resurrection as brought about by Jesus Christ. Though similar, the two concepts do not share the same basis. The Bafut concept of the resurrection can only serve as a starting point for the explanation of the resurrection in

Christianity. The Bafut concept of the point of judgement after the resurrection is not well developed. Also absent in this Bafut concept of the resurrection is the newness of life. According to Bafut belief judgement starts here on earth. An ancestor could be judged secretly while still on earth and his/her punishment could commence even during his/her lifetime. Such an individual could for instance become inflicted with a terminal or dreaded disease, which is difficult to cure. A person who dies with a swollen stomach is regarded as being punished already in life by the gods of the land or his ancestors. Such a person, therefore, starts to reap the fruits of the life he/she lived while in his/her youth, and death in such circumstances was and is an abomination to both the individual and the rest of the living family members. At the occasion of the death of such a person, all his/her property – including his/her relatives – become contaminated and need to be cleansed or purified. This leads us to the issue of corpse contamination, which was a serious problem in the narratives and priestly law in the book of Leviticus and other books in the Old Testament.

7.5.5   Corpse contamination

As seen before the problem of corpse contamination was quite serious in Israelite society (cf. Lev. 10) where Nadab and Abihu doubly contaminated the sanctuary with both their deeds and their corpses. Just as in early Israel, corpse contamination plays a crucial role in the cultural and religious life of the Bafut. Among the traditional Bafut people, corpses are feared, as some of them may pollute both the whole environment and the sanctuaries. If someone commits suicide by hanging on a tree, the corpse of such an individual may not be touched by hand. The tree in its entirety is polluted alongside other objects in the vicinity, and even the whole environment. The tree has to be uprooted to the very end of every root and taken to the palace for special disposal by burning. The victim's corpse may not be touched by hand, including his/her family members. Certain *Jujus* or masked persons from the *quifor* society – subsequent to the application of charms and other fetishes, which could protect them from contamination or immediate death – are responsible for the disposal of such a corpse.

The corpse is then thrown face down into a deep grave for the victim to start his/her journey to hell. The whole land area where the incidence took place is abandoned, because it has become polluted and some cleansing is required. It sometimes covers several hectares of land and in the past these were the pieces of land that were allocated to missionaries for the building of their churches and other cultural centres. Some remnants of such lands still exist

in Bafut today. The above manner in disposing of an impure corpse, and the reputed destiny of the soul of such a deceased has gone a long way to curb the crime of committing suicide and other indiscriminate killings within the tribe. The punishment for suicide and people contracting a dreaded disease, which could be attributed to relatives of victims, is so serious that this has caused people to live according to religious prescriptions and other societal norms. The emphasis laid on the disposal of corpses and the purity of the cultic environment should be seen as respect for the gods and the maintenance of purity, which is a requirement from God.

It has been seen that the Nefo'o ritual displays some remarkable similarities with the scapegoat sacrifice described in Leviticus 16 as a part of the liturgy of the Day of Atonement. Although this day may have no direct or practical relevance for Christians, a study of this aspect of the Israelites' religious practice would reveal much about the concept of sin to any Christian. In a similar fashion the many restrictions on corpse contamination and other diseases within the Nefo'o ritual and the Bafut tradition could be used to explain sin and God's relationship with His people. Above all the release of the sin-laden goat into the wilderness could be used as an explanation of the atoning work of Christ who bore the sins of humanity and had to be abandoned on the Cross outside the city of Jerusalem.

7.5.6   Atonement

Atonement is a central concept in biblical theology. Both the Old and the New Testament continually deal with the subject and the concept of "the covenants" or "testaments" is fundamentally bound to the idea of atonement for sin (Bromiley 1979:352-353). It has been interpreted in various ways. The Hebrew term כָּפַר "*to cover*" can be translated in different ways. The Authorised Version of the Bible renders it as "*to reconcile.*" Other passages have also rendered it as "*to purge*" (Prov. 16:6; Ezek. 43:20, 26), and in others (Lev 6:30, 16:20; Ezek. 45:20), the idea is "*reconciliation.*" In the New Encyclopaedia Britannica it means "*to expiate*" or "*expiation.*" The Bible throughout explains the origin of atonement to be in the eternal plan, purpose and Grace of God, which in turn has become an indispensable theme of Christianity. (2 Tim. 1:9f, Eph. 1:4; Jn 17:6f).

In the Old Testament atonement breaks the nexus of sin and its evil consequences by transferring the negative influence of evil into an animal that vicariously suffers or dies for human beings (Janowski 1999:152-153). This provides the basis for the institution of the Day of Atonement. Expiation was seen as being necessary to save the human being. In the Old

Testament the basis of cultic atonement is blood as the bearer of life given by God (Lev. 17:11). In Leviticus 16, the two terms "expiation and forgiveness" apply. From the post-exilic period it became the heart of the *cultus* where we find the expiation of almost all the offerings (sin, guilt and burnt offering). Leviticus later formulated this cultic theology, based on the fundamental elements of purification and making atonement at the temple, (Ezek. 43:20; 45:18-19), by the laying on of hands and sprinkling of blood on the horns of the altar (cf. also Janowski 1999:153). The cultic climax occurred on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16) when the high priest sprinkled blood on the altar, which made atonement possible since God was believed to be present amongst the people (1999:153). Once a year on the Day of Atonement a special sacrifice was offered as a sin offering for the uncleanness and rebellion of the Israelites. "Whatever their sins have been" (Lev. 16:21), no sins were above cleansing by the atoning blood of the sacrificial animals.

The significance of the Day of Atonement became a contemporary symbolism. The name of the Day of Atonement signified that it was designed to effect atonement. The blood of sacrifices, their death by suffering in the place of sinful human beings symbolised the propitiation of God's wrath firstly against Aaron and his priestly family (Lev. 16:6). Though a high priest, he still stood before the Lord as a sinner, which was the reason for the high priest to sanctify himself and the rest of his house. The climactic moment arrived when atonement had to be performed for the transgressions of all the people. Of particular significance was the dispatch of the sin-laden scapegoat into the wilderness. It bears repeating that this was not a sin offering to Azazel, for God's people are forbidden to offer to the demon (Deut. 32:17). This act was in reality aimed at returning the guilt of Israel to its satanic source (Bromiley 1979:361).

The ultimate aim of atonement lay in re-establishing ruptured relations and final salvation with God. Some scholars referred to the Day of Atonement – in which the Israelites were supposed to be purged from all impurity and obtain forgiveness for the sins they have committed – as "the Good Friday of the Old Testament". Salvation required both God's redemptive and the human response of faith and consequently the ritual of atonement would remain ineffective unless it was accompanied by sincere repentance. In Leviticus 16 the goal is to root out evil from the community and not only to receive forgiveness, from which arose the necessity for the goat to be released into the desert. The goat for Azazel also accomplished what could be termed a "transference atonement.

The question of atonement in the Bafut context remains to be explained. The notion of atonement or reconciliation is familiar to the Bafut of Cameroon. It starts from the individual heads of families and radiates outward to the clan itself. The rite described in Leviticus 16 – interpreted in a Bafut context – is primarily an eliminatory rite. The Azazel goat, as we saw above, is the vehicle through which evil and impurities are carried away from human habitation. To Nefo'o the goat is also viewed as eliminatory, but the nature of understanding the role of each of the goats is different. In terms of the Nefo'o ritual the goat has a chance of returning to the community. In this ritual the scapegoat has the mission of carrying away evil and other impurities, but it is usually accompanied by other objects for appeasing the ancestors, and/or the gods, while the scapegoat of Leviticus 16 has no such attributes of appeasement. It would be wrong to see in both traditions the goats as performing a similar function, even though both may be agents of elimination. The importance lies in comparing the aims that these two animals are seen to achieve. There is an underlying element of non-appeasement related to the Azazel goat, and its mission is purely to act as a vehicle to rid the human environment from evil. *Yahweh* was not placated by human sacrifices, as the Bafut ancestors are said to be.

Perhaps it would be appropriate to mention the fact that the seemingly scapegoat ritual (the Nefo'o ritual of the Bafut of Cameroon) is not unique to the Bafut. S.G Onibere of Ile-Ife/ Nigeria has reported similar rituals of the Ugbo and the Yoruba people of Nigeria that have many parallels with the scapegoat sacrifice of Leviticus 16. After tracing the procedures on the biblical ritual and those of Nigeria he came out with both similarities and dissimilarities between the biblical and the African rituals. On the points of resemblance, all two were seen to be transference and disposal rites using animal victims. Both the biblical and the African rituals are out to transfer and symbolically eliminate sin and impurities away from human habitation. The animal victim acts as a carrier of evil burden. Thus the animal was deemed unclean and could not be used as a sacrifice (Onibere 1988:195). Onibere has correctly observed that the controversial name Azazel refers to the goat that was sent to a desolate region far away from human habitation bearing the sins of the community contrary to other scholars who see Azazel to be a demon in the desert that has to be appeased. The edi ritual of the Ugbo of Yoruba was observed annually in the month of October. It was charged with the dual purpose of: 1) to ward off harassment of the Udi people and 2) to re-enact the life – death – resurrection syndrome through the symbolic expulsion of calamities and impurities from the community through a human carrier. The human carrier was not destroyed in the

process but a substitute goat was used, which appears same to the Nefo'o ritual of the Bafut of Cameroon. Onibere had also correctly observed that the biblical ritual and its African parallels possess implicit immolation and this is possible when the victim finally meet its death in one way or the other. This is indicative that immolation was not the central feature of the rites.

The article by S.G Onibere (1988:193-203) and the present dissertation have gone a long way to confirm that the scapegoat ritual had not been limited to the ancient Israelites and the ancient Near East. But it is known among the African communities leading to the idea of reconciliation and atonement. Despite the fact that Onibere has not elaborated on the concept of atonement and how he could use the Udi ritual to communicate it to his people we believed he had this in mind when he writes. "We may neither agree on, nor understand all the intricacies involved in harmonising the scapegoat ritual in both worlds of the OT and Africa. But none of us can fail to recognise the figure of Jesus Christ in the scapegoat ritual. He is the Lamb of God, the scapegoat that takes away the sin of the world." It was necessary for him to take our sinful nature. This is the message to the entire world.

Ambe (1992) on the other hand has traced the root cause for reconciliation to originate from two parties at variance with each other. He is concerned with presenting a theologico/cultural evaluation and appreciation of the ecclesial dimension of the sacrament of reconciliation in an African culture (1992:65). Much stress is laid on the community and its relationship with the individual with the result that it is through this community solidarity that reconciliation with the divine is possible. Our attempt in the present dissertation is to move from this stage of things to suggest how not only forgiveness and reconciliation can be achieved but also how to communicate the concept of atonement to the Bafut community using some of the meaningful cultural symbolism as hermeneutical tools. We hope in future to continue dialogue with the rest of the African scholars especially the scholars of the West African region.

We may suggest a possible explanation of the concept of atonement to a member of the Bafut as follows: In traditional Bafut the idea of reconciliation originates from an action that violatets those areas of life which are explicitly connected with the needs of the community. These areas may include the protection of life and property, respect for the traditional authorities and offences committed towards the ancestors and God. Reconciliation and atonement has usually been accomplished by way of acknowledgement of the offence, accepting the guilt, by the offender and in some cases fines have to be paid.

As concerns the ancestors, ritual shedding of the blood of animals and even liberation of life animal to go and perish in the words has been effected to appease the deity. All these happened to re-establish cordial relationship with each other and the deity. We live today in the time of the New Testament when Christ's sacrifice on the cross gave a new meaning and interpretation to the ritual practices to both the biblical rite and the African ritual. Today the sacrifice of animals to obtain atonement especially in the Nefo'o ritual no longer play such a vital role. The sacrifice of Christ on the cross simplified all these and he paid the price for all humanity. It is our place to focus our attention on him who sacrificed himself once and for all for the salvation of the whole world. No more yearly sacrifices because his was an eternal sacrifice and brought salvation to the entire world.

The Bafut ought to become aware that it does not serve any purpose to send any gifts to the gods. They should rather commit themselves to the One who will forgive and reconcile with them once they refrain from committing more sins. Azazel carried away the sins and the impurities of the Israelites from the city to a location, without any possibility of a return to the human environment. Although the Israelites annually rooted out evil through the animal agent, it should be understood that this ritual in itself did not amount to forgiveness for their sins. It was in fact a case of their forgiveness remaining a work of grace.

Sin creates a barrier between the human and the divine but through acts of atonement – which is purely a work of Grace – the link can nevertheless be established and the community may receive salvation, which is the goal the two communities strive to achieve. The Azazel and the Nefo'o ritual goats remind the people of their commitment to the deity. This provides the reason why some scholars have called the Day of Atonement "the Good Friday" of the Old Testament.

7.6   SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In the last two centuries studies on the Pentateuch have given rise to some interesting debate. From our investigation it was seen that the initial emphasis on the determination of the study of the sources, date of composition and the authorship of the various books in the Pentateuch has since shifted to a concerted effort to study the theologies of the original authors. We would nonetheless maintain that the abandoned approach to studying these aspects, that ultimately take a vital place in the scriptures of the Old Testament, is indeed still of relevance. In describing the debate on the theologies of the original authors of the Pentateuch, we also emphasised the important issue of the determination of the antiquity of the sources of

the Pentateuch. On the basis of the above, we agreed with those who proposed the notion of a Tetrateuch. We, however, differed with them on the books that constitute the so-called Tetrateuch. It would be recalled that Noth and Mowinkel proposed a Tetrateuch, comprising the first four books of the Old Testament, Genesis to Numbers, while we were of the opinion that the composition of such a Tetrateuch should comprise of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. We omitted Genesis on the basis of the arguments advanced in chapter four above.

Although the Pentateuch has received some detailed scholarly attention, African Old Testament scholars have on the contrary not given ritual studies sufficient attention, even though ritual sacrifices remain part and parcel of the African traditional religions. If any work had been done in this regard, then very few of them have related the biblical rituals to the African ritual system. Those authors who have written about rituals concentrated on the historical development of Israelite ritual system proving its existence and antiquity. This exclusive focus may perhaps be ascribed in part to a lack of hermeneutical tools and existing literature. The works by Turner (1969) Wright (1984) and Gorman (1990) are based on the interpretation of ritual performance and processes with special reference to the Israelite ritual sacrifices. These works remain somehow theoretical and philosophical. They are, therefore, not directly compatible with the African experience that has witnessed the practice and first-hand knowledge of the continent's own sacrificial system. In other words such works neglected all aspects relating to contextualisation.

For quite some time now the question of contextualisation has been a point of focus (Carr 1997:83). When the Scriptures were introduced to the African continent some two, and in some cases three centuries ago by European missionaries, the continent was seen as an infant who had not grown in a spiritual sense in terms of the Scriptures. During this pioneer stage the Church in Africa was largely under the supervision of the missionaries who had to teach the Africans to follow in their footsteps. As could be expected, the missionaries' own cultural background determined the way in which they presented the Scriptures to the Africans. This caused a corresponding neglect of the African thought forms and other relevant cultural values.

At the dawn of independence for many of the African nations during the 1960s conditions began to change. Questions regarding an authentic Christian theology began to be discussed, and by the 1970s some passionate debates had taken place in this regard. These discussions centred on the ways and means of presenting the gospel message to the Church in Africa in a

more meaningful and coherent manner so that the African population could readily identify themselves with the Christian message.

Some African scholars of cultural theology made some thought provoking statements in this regard, which contributed significantly to evoke interest in adapting African approaches – rather than Western methods – to the understanding and interpreting the Gospel. Appiah Kubi (1979:vii) rightly observed: "We demand to serve the Lord in our own terms and without being turned into Euro-American or Semitic bastards before we do so. That the gospel has come to remain in Africa cannot be denied but now our theological reflection must be addressed to the real contextual African situation." Such statements are indicative that African theology is sensitive to its cultural context. In his book, Theology of Culture (1959), Paul Tillich (1964) defined theology as the explanation of the content of the Christian faith or God's revelation. In this manner contextualisation has become a crucial issue, since it would enable us to communicate the Scriptures of the Old Testament in an understanding and compelling way and to adjust the message to new contexts. Barr's (1997:84) comment is important, when he commented that African theology should not remain an unexamined clone of Western theology. For his part Ukpong (1995) proposed a re-reading of the Bible through African eyes. Many African scholars, amongst whom Tite Tienou (1982:435-448); Gwinyai H. Muzorewa (1984); Gabriel M Setilõane (1985); Pollard (1995:35-52); Tinyiko Sam Maluleke (1995:1-35); Parratt (1995) are proponents of contextualisation and even inculturation of the gospel in Africa. This becomes vital because if the Old Testament message is to find a home in Africa – especially among the Bafut of Cameroon – then we must take the views of the above-mentioned scholars seriously.

The main issue in the present dissertation has been to examine the ritual of the Day of Atonement, within which is found the controversial scapegoat ritual. We then compared this with an African ritual, the Nefo'o ritual of the Bafut of Cameroon. Although we have not been able to provide a strong case for a novel approach to a hypothesis for the present dissertation for the reasons given above, we would nevertheless like to answer the question about the role of African culture in appropriating the Scriptures of the Old Testament. It is our contention that the Nefo'o ritual of the Bafut of Cameroon could be used to explain the theological features of atonement in the scapegoat sacrifice described in Leviticus 16. Under the heading of methodology we examined the concepts of the scapegoat both in Bafut and in ancient Israel. This was to facilitate the comparison of the two rituals of (Lev.16 and the Nefo'o ritual of the Bafut of Cameroon). In the course of this examination atonement became

a crucial theme, and it became clear that atonement was also present in the religious schemes of the Bafut. This was evident in the Nefo'o ritual of the Bafut, which bears many similarities with the scapegoat of Leviticus 16, contained in the liturgy of the Day of Atonement. Certain clues have emerged from the examination of each concept as to what each of the cultures considers constitutes the scapegoat ritual and its significance.

The dissertation elucidated the relationship between the Old Testament and the African culture and also the modern relevance of sacrifices – especially animal sacrifice – though neither the Jewish nor Christian religions practise them any longer. This led us to compare and contrast some Scriptures of the Old Testament with aspects of African cultural values that may be valuable in the interpretation of the Old Testament in an African context. The outcome of this process was quite encouraging as we observed the close relationship between the Old Testament and African cultures.

By virtue of the need to communicate the scriptures of the Old Testament in a relevant and understanding way to the Bafut of Cameroon, the present dissertation is aiming to interpret the ritual of the scapegoat sacrifice of Leviticus 16 in the light of the Nefo'o ritual of the Bafut of Cameroon. A comparison of the two rituals allowed us to conclude that the ultimate aim of these rituals was that of achieving atonement for sins. The notion of atonement is thus crucial to this stage of the research, which brought us to a theological interpretation of the concept of atonement to the Bafut of Cameroon. The outcome was a contextual study of the above mentioned two rituals.

Let us now return to the state of Christianity and biblical interpretation in Africa. In a recent article Justin (Conradie *et al.* 1995; Ukpong 2000:3-18) outlined three stages in the development of biblical interpretation in Africa between the 1930s and the 1990s. Period one (1930s-1970s), termed as the apologetic period, focused on legitimising African religion. The second period ran from the 1970s to the 1990s and focused on the use of the African context as resource for biblical interpretation. These decades were dominated by liberation and inculturation methodologies. The third phase started during the 1990s, and introduced a decidedly proactive stance, leading to the development of contextual Bible studies and inculturation approaches. This approach recognised the ordinary reader and made the African context the explicit subject of biblical interpretation (Ukpong 2000:3).

The present research finds a resonance between the second and the third periods of Ukpong's studies. By using aspects of the inculturation and contextualisation methodologies we hope to

arrive at a new understanding of the biblical text as influenced by the African situation which would, therefore, be both African and Christian. From this perspective any interpretation of a biblical text or theme is done from a socio-cultural perspective of the interpreter. In order to explain the theological concept of biblical atonement using the Nefo'o ritual of the Bafut of Cameroon we therefore suggest the following scheme:

1) *The African context as a resource in the hermeneutic encounter with the biblical text*

The Nefo'o shrine stands as the religious converging point to the Bafut people. The highest religious act of the community is annually performed here. As we saw above when we discussed the similarities between the biblical rite and the Nefo'o ritual, this is performed during a specific period of the year and in recognition and acknowledgement of the people's sins against the ancestor and eventually God. The ancestors are believed to reside in the shrine and sacrifices are offered at the shrine. The purpose is to appease the ancestors so that they may continue their intermediary role for the tribe. Although *Yahweh*, the God of Israel, is not to be appeased by the offerings made at the tent of meeting the Bafut people understand the significance of the tent of meeting where *Yahweh* dwells and sacrifices are offered at the sanctuary, when this is illustrated by referring to the Nefo'o shrine. The shrine stands as the symbol for the people's need to rid themselves of impurities. The Nefo'o shrine may not be entered by any unauthorised person, nor are unauthorised sacrifices permitted. Any such encroachment runs the risk of death.

2) *The acknowledgement of guilt and the need for reconciliation*

The Bafut people annually recognise and acknowledge the presence of evil and other sins in the community, which create a barrier between the deity and the people. Their sins and other impurities need not only be forgiven but the root cause has to be eradicated. This provides the rationale for the release of the sin-laden goat into the woods which should be seen performing the same eliminatory act as the goat for Azazel , alluded to in Leviticus 16.

3) *The priests as liaison between the gods and the people*

The priests in the Nefo'o ritual create the link between the gods and the community and they should, therefore, comply with the high standards expected of them as holy people. They perform all the ritual sacrifices on behalf of the people, since the latter are barred from coming into contact with either the sacrificial elements or with the shrine. The priests perform the sacrificial work, as would the holy persons, Moses and Aaron, do in the

sanctuary on behalf of the Israelites. They are, as we have seen, the link between *Yahweh* and the Israelites.

4) *The Nefo'o ritual as an eliminatory rite*

Above all the Nefo'o ritual and sacrifice are an eliminatory rite of disposal in which sin is banished from human habitation. The goat, which is eliminated by the priest to go and perish performs the same function of the goat to Azazel that also transports evils from the camp environment. The forgiveness of sins alone is not enough, but it has to be eliminated completely from human habitation, which is only possible through an animal agent. The two rituals indicate that God does not make use of the physical objects that are presented to him, but they represent the recognition of human guilt and the individual's commitment to remain in fellowship with God. It is only from God's grace that the human is rescued from total condemnation and eternal death – thus the work of atonement.

5) *The sense of community and solidarity within the Bafut society*

In the African context and in particular the Bafut of Cameroon, the sense of community belonging is very strong. Each individual is in communion with the others. They regard the successes, failures, joys or sorrows of any one individual in the group as those of the rest of the group or of the whole Bafut tribe (Ambe 1992:1). In the same vein the sin of an individual could bring disaster to the entire tribe, which was why the ritual of atonement became a yearly practice. The incantations led to the cleaning of the slate regarding both innocent and intentional offences, which cleared the way for the people to be in communion with the gods and ultimately with God. The Day of Atonement was a necessary element in the Israelites' religion, as its effects related to individuals and to the nation as a whole. As it also happened *vis-à-vis* the Bafut of Cameroon, the sins of an individual Israelite may have caused disastrous consequences to the Israelites and therefore the necessity of the yearly atonement of the people arose.

The foregoing studies clearly went beyond studying the similarities and dissimilarities between African Traditional Religions and the Bible in interpreting the biblical text on the basis of these similarities and differences. Hopefully this dissertation succeeded in its aim to facilitating the communication of the biblical message within the African milieu and to evolve a new understanding of Christianity that would be African and biblical. The socio-rhetorical method was used for the analysis of the biblical text, while anthropological and

sociological approaches were used to analyse the African situation. Both methods are useful exegetical tools to facilitate the interpretation of the scripture of the Old Testament in Africa.

Our last conclusion is that the accumulative purpose of the sacrificial system in Africa and Israel was to provide among others forgiveness, reconciliation, salvation and harmony between God and people and between people and people. Ultimately all this has been fulfilled in Christ. The community of faith lives in the already of what Christ has done and it looks forward to the not yet of what He will ultimately do in the future.

It is our fervent hope and belief that the present research will awaken emerging African Old Testament scholars to interpret the Scriptures in a contextual approach, using some of the relevant symbols that are to be found in their various communities. Whereas scholars like Onibere (1988:93-103) have followed a socio-cultural approach in the interpretation of the scapegoat ritual in relation to the African perspective, we have in the present dissertation followed a more theological approach, which led us to communicate the features of the concept of atonement in an African perspective. We have only started investigation into this relevant topic in Old Testament studies and it is our wish to continue to do more justice to the New Testament perspective on atonement a crucial theological theme in biblical theology.

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