

Redemption as a Transformational Cultic-Pneumatological Act: A Thematic Analysis of Hebrews 9:11–14

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Description

This article is a research project that takes the topic of redemption as a transformational cultic-pneumatological act: a thematic analysis of Hebrews 9:11–14.

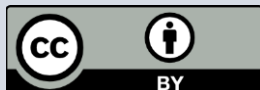
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Abstract

This study addresses the tendency toward fragmentation in the study of Hebrews 9:11–14, where cultic, pneumatological, and existential approaches have been developed separately, resulting in an inadequate explanation of the relationship between Christ's actions and the effect of sanctification. This study aims to formulate an integrative model of atonement through thematic analysis within a systematic theological framework, using exegetical examination as an analytical tool. The novelty of this study lies in the formulation of a relational model that integrates blood, the Spirit, and the purification of the conscience into a single coherent conceptual structure. The results of the study show that redemption in Hebrews 9:11–14 is structured as a cultic-pneumatological act that produces ontological transformation. Its contribution clarifies the reading of the text and provides a conceptual foundation for the development of a soteriology that integrates the legal, cultic, and transformational dimensions.

Keywords: Redemption; Hebrews 9:11–14; Systematic Theology; Thematic Analysis

INTRODUCTION

Hebrews 9:11–14 is situated within a modern scholarly landscape characterized by a tendency toward fragmentation in the understanding of redemption, where cultic, pneumatological, and existential approaches develop in parallel without adequate conceptual integration. In this context, the main issue lies not in a lack of interpretation, but in the absence of an integrative model capable of coherently explaining the relationships between the elements in the text. This passage itself forms a configuration of redemption that is not easily reduced to a single category, as it simultaneously links blood as the medium of action (9:12), the Spirit as the mode of offering (9:14), and the purification of the conscience as an effect that touches the internal dimension of humanity (9:14). When this structure is read through a single lens, other parts of the textual construction remain unexplained.

Lane places this passage within the framework of the Day of Atonement, which understands blood as a means of access to God's presence (Lane, 1991, pp. 224–226), but does not fully explain why the result is described as the cleansing of the conscience, rather than merely the restoration of status. Attridge emphasizes the reconstruction of cultic symbolism, suggesting that the text moves beyond ritual toward a broader theological horizon (Attridge, 1989, pp. 251–253), while Bruce asserts that this cleansing is internal and relates to the human relationship with God (Bruce, 2012, p. 209–210). This tension reveals that the issue is not the validity of each approach, but rather their limitations in explaining the entirety of the conceptual relationships within the text in an integrated manner.

The tendency toward fragmentation in the study of Hebrews 9:11–14 can be traced to several approaches that have developed relatively independently. The cultic approach places this passage in continuity with the Yom Kippur tradition, so that blood is understood primarily as a means of ritual purification and access to God's presence (Jamieson, 2016; McIver, 2016). This approach has historical and textual strengths, particularly in explaining the liturgical and symbolic context, but tends to limit the function of blood to an external horizon and does not fully account for the shift toward the purification of the conscience. On the other hand, the pneumatological approach shifts the focus to the phrase "through the eternal Spirit," so that Christ's action is understood in a divine dimension that transcends the ritual framework (Coetsee, 2022). Although it opens the door to a more theological understanding, this approach often fails to adequately explain how the concrete relationship between the Spirit and the blood operates within the text's structure.

Lukin interprets the category of space as a theological construct that signifies the identity and suffering of Christ (Lukin, 2024). Existential or transformational approaches emphasize the outcome of redemption as a transformation of the human condition, linking Christ's high priestly work to the perseverance of faith and the human relationship with God (Mariano, 2024; Sewakpo, 2016). This perspective captures the text's climactic direction more accurately, particularly in highlighting the purification of the conscience as an internal dimension, which has also been affirmed in the patristic tradition as the primary goal of redemption (New Advent, n.d., p. Homily XV). However, this approach risks detaching the outcome from the underlying structure of action, so that transformation is understood without adequate connection to the medium and mode of action in the text. Meanwhile, more integrative efforts are emerging in studies that examine the theological creativity of the author of Hebrews in reconfiguring the category of sacrifice comprehensively (Eberhart & Schweitzer, 2019), although this approach has not yet explicitly formulated the structural relationship between blood, the Spirit, and the purification of the conscience as a single conceptual unit.

This mapping shows that the differences between approaches are not merely interpretive variations, but rather an indication of methodological fragmentation, in which each model operates on the basis of theological assumptions that are not fully interconnected. When the cultic, pneumatological, and existential approaches are maintained separately, none of them is capable of adequately explaining the entirety of the conceptual relationships within the text. It is the absence of an integrative model that highlights the research gap, while

simultaneously opening space for the formulation of a concept of redemption that is not only theologically comprehensive but also faithful to the internal structure of the passage.

In other words, when these assumptions are not reconciled, the conceptual relationships within the text become fragmented. If blood is understood primarily as a substitution, then the statement about the cleansing of the conscience risks being reduced to a secondary consequence. Conversely, if the emphasis is placed on internal transformation, then the cultic function of blood may lose its theological weight. This tension becomes even more apparent in the phrase “through the eternal Spirit,” which is not easily situated within a model that is purely legal or purely ritual. In this context, Moffitt proposes that Christ’s action appears to be read as an overall process involving self-offering in the presence of God, not merely death, thereby opening the possibility of integration between cultic action and transformational effects (Moffitt, 2013, pp. 215–217). This argument demonstrates that the main problem does not lie in a lack of data, but rather in an interpretive framework that has not yet been able to accommodate the complexity of the relationships between elements.

A research gap arises from the absence of a synthesis that links blood, the Spirit, and purification within a single consistent conceptual framework, leaving the relationships between these elements in the text inadequately explained. Previous studies have successfully explored each of these themes in depth, but have stopped at thematic analysis that fails to develop the structural connections among them. Consequently, redemption tends to be reduced to specific categories, while the reading of the text becomes fragmented and fails to represent the argumentative unity of the passage. Under these conditions, the relationship between Christ’s actions and their transformational effects becomes obscured, as the purification of the conscience is no longer understood as an inherent consequence of those actions, but rather as a standalone implication.

Based on this, the thematic approach in systematic theology gains its relevance because it not only identifies themes but also traces the connections between themes throughout the entire biblical witness. The relationship between the cleansing of the conscience in Hebrews 9:14 and the promise of inner renewal in Jeremiah 31:33, as well as the act of cleansing in Ezekiel 36:25–27, demonstrates that the effect of redemption is not supplementary but inherent in the act itself. This framework affirms a conception of redemption that is not partial but maintains the interconnectedness of the medium, mode, and result within a single, coherent theological unity.

Based on this analysis, this study argues that redemption in Hebrews 9:11–14 should be understood as an integrative construct in which the blood of Christ, the role of the Spirit, and the purification of the conscience function relationally within an inseparable unity. The purpose of this study is to formulate the relationship between the elements in Hebrews 9:11–14 through analysis within a systematic theological framework. This approach does not reject the validity of previous research but highlights its limitations when applied in a partial manner, as it does not fully explain the connection between Christ’s actions and the resulting purifying effect. The need for integration arises from the structure of the text itself, which links blood, the Spirit, and purification within an inseparable narrative flow.

The novelty of this study lies in its conceptual-theological synthesis, which integrates cultic, pneumatological, and transformational dimensions into a single coherent model. This study's contribution operates on two levels. First, in the field of Hebrew studies, this research offers an analysis that preserves the internal relationships of the pericope in their entirety, thereby overcoming the interpretive fragmentation that has long dominated the field. Second, in the realm of systematic theology, this research enriches the construction of soteriology by demonstrating that the legal, cultic, and transformational dimensions do not stand alone but form an interconnected conceptual unity. Within this framework, the integrative approach is not merely methodological but also has direct implications for how redemption is understood theologically.

METHOD

This study employs a thematic approach within the framework of systematic theology, using the biblical text as its primary source, specifically Hebrews 9:11–14 based on the Nestle-Aland Greek edition 28 (NA28). The units of analysis are determined by three key elements that appear explicitly in the text's structure, namely *αἷμα* (blood), *πνεῦμα αἰώνιος* (the eternal Spirit), and *καθαρίζω* (to purify), as these three form a relationship between action, mode, and result within the passage. The selection of themes was not arbitrary but based on lexical distribution and syntactic function, which indicate a direct connection within the text's argumentative flow.

Based on the results of this analysis, the analytical procedure begins with a historical-grammatical exegesis to trace the lexical meaning and syntactic relationships of each element within its literary and historical context, thereby ensuring that the interpretation remains consistent with the text's structure. At this stage, the analysis does not stop at identifying meaning but is directed toward examining the relationships between elements, particularly how Christ's act of offering "through the eternal Spirit" (Heb. 9:14) correlates with the result of the purification of the conscience. This principle aligns with the assertion that theological understanding must be grounded in adequate textual analysis (Fee, 2011, pp. 27–29; Hayes & Holladay, 2007, pp. 19–21).

Next, a thematic synthesis is conducted by integrating the results of this analysis into a systematic theological framework through an exploration of the connections between themes in the biblical witness, particularly by examining the relationship between the purification of the conscience (Heb. 9:14), the renewal of the heart (Jer. 31:33), and cleansing as a divine act (Ezek. 36:25–27). A synthesis is considered coherent if it can consistently explain the relationship between the medium, mode, and result without isolating any one element from the textual structure. Within this framework, purification is not understood as an additional effect but as an inherent consequence of the act of redemption. The limitation of this study lies in its focus on Hebrews 9:11–14 as a textual unit, so that theological generalizations are constructed within the limited framework of that passage.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A Historical Analysis of the Epistle to the Hebrews

The Letter to the Hebrews reflects the situation of the early Christian community, which faced significant socio-religious pressure, as seen in the warnings against apostasy (Heb. 2:1–3; 3:12–14) and the descriptions of collective suffering, such as public humiliation and the confiscation of property (Heb. 10:32–34). This textual evidence suggests that the primary problem was not merely theological ignorance, but rather a crisis of faith perseverance under conditions of marginalization. Johnson interprets this pressure as a form of existential exhaustion arising from communal identity conflict (Johnson, 2006, pp. 23–25), while deSilva emphasizes the honor-shame dimensions in the Mediterranean world, explaining why social pressure has serious theological implications (deSilva, 2000, pp. 36–40). However, this socio-rhetorical approach has been criticized for risking the reduction of theological dimensions to mere reflections of social conditions. Westfall asserts that the author of Hebrews actually constructs an autonomous theological argument, not merely a pragmatic response to external pressures (Westfall, 2005, pp. 12–15). Thus, the historical context must be understood as a backdrop that triggers theological articulation, not as the sole determinant of the letter's content.

The question of the audience's identity also reveals significant interpretive tension. The classical reading regards the audience as a Christian community with a Jewish background due to the dominance of cultic categories such as the high priest and sacrifice (Heb. 4:14–16; 9:1–10). Bruce supports this view by emphasizing the depth of the argument regarding the sacrificial system, which presupposes an understanding of Jewish tradition (Bruce, 2012, pp. 3–5). However, Attridge and Koester reject this ethnic reduction by pointing out that cultic language can function as a rhetorical strategy to shape the theological identity of a broader community (Attridge, 1989, pp. 12–14; Koester, 2001, pp. 52–55). On the other hand, Lane continues to emphasize that the proximity to Jewish liturgical practices cannot simply be ignored (Lane, 1991, pp. 55–59). This tension indicates that the audience's identity is better understood as a community situated within the orbit of Jewish tradition, without being confined to a specific ethnic category, thereby allowing for a more flexible interpretation of the use of cultic symbolism in this letter.

The chronological debate regarding the date of composition also highlights the complexity of historical reconstruction. The pre-70 CE argument is often based on the use of the present tense in the description of the sacrificial system (Heb. 9:6–9), which is seen as indicating that the Temple was still in use. Guthrie views this indication as a fairly strong temporal clue (Guthrie, 1998, pp. 28–30), while O'Brien is more cautious, noting that such grammatical forms can be rhetorical (O'Brien, 2010, pp. 20–22). Criticism of this chronological approach was developed by Moffitt, who emphasizes that the author's primary focus is not on the historical status of the Temple, but on the superiority of Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary (Moffitt, 2013, pp. 45–47). Therefore, the use of cultic language should not be read as a direct reflection of historical conditions, but rather as part of an argumentative strategy that directs the reader toward a higher theological reality.

Within this framework, the primary function of the Letter to the Hebrews becomes clearer as an effort to build up the perseverance of faith through a radical theological reconstruction. The author does not merely repeat tradition, but transforms it by positioning Christ as the High Priest who transcends the old system (Heb. 9:11–12) and as the mediator of the new covenant (Heb. 8:6). deSilva views this strategy as a form of rhetorical persuasion to maintain the community's loyalty (deSilva, 2004, pp. 807–810), while Johnson emphasizes that this theological argument fundamentally reshapes the community's identity (Johnson, 2006, pp. 30–32). This approach is more adequate than a reading that views Hebrews merely as a doctrinal treatise, as it explains the integration of theological exposition and ethical exhortation within the letter. Therefore, the historical context of the Letter to the Hebrews not only provides a backdrop but also explains why the concept of redemption in Hebrews 9:11–14 is constructed in a complex manner—namely, as a theological response to a community caught in the tension between social pressures and the need for assurance of salvation.

The Structure of Hebrews 9:11–14

The structure of Hebrews 9:11–14 reveals a rigorous argumentative progression, not merely a series of theological motifs. Verse 11 opens with a Christological construction that sets the direction for the entire passage, namely, Christ as High Priest over the realities that have come to pass (*τῶν γενομένων ἀγαθῶν*), marking a shift from the symbolic system toward eschatological reality (cf. Heb. 8:1–2). Attridge views this section as a programmatic statement affirming the superiority of the heavenly ministry (Attridge, 1989, pp. 248–249), while Koester argues that the language of “a greater and more perfect tabernacle” contains a symbolic dimension that need not be understood in a literal ontological sense (Koester, 2001, pp. 405–407). However, a purely symbolic reading faces difficulties when linked to the subsequent clauses that demand the actual effectiveness of Christ's actions. Lane emphasizes that the identity of the High Priest in this verse serves as the causal basis for the subsequent actions (Lane, 1991, pp. 230–231), so that a symbolic reduction weakens the argumentative relationship within the text. Therefore, a more adequate position views verse 11 as both an ontological and functional foundation that binds the entire flow of the passage.

The argument becomes more incisive in verse 12 through an explicit contrast between the blood of animals and the blood of Christ himself. This contrast does not stop at a difference in objects, but points to a theological difference in quality that determines the outcome. Bruce understands the blood of Christ as an affirmation of the finality of the sacrifice (Bruce, 2012, pp. 213–214), while Moffitt criticizes an approach focused solely on death by emphasizing that this text points to the act of offering in the presence of God (Moffitt, 2013, pp. 218–220). On the other hand, cultic readings, such as those developed in Yom Kippur-based studies, tend to place the blood within a framework of repetitive ritual, thereby leaving little room for the dimension of finality affirmed by the phrase “once and for all” (*ἐφάπαξ*). This tension demonstrates that both cultic and forensic approaches face limitations when separated from the structural relationships within the text. A more robust reading must acknowledge that

Christ's blood functions as a medium of effective action precisely because it is linked to the previously established identity of the High Priest.

The phrase "receive eternal redemption" in verse 12 serves as a transitional point linking action to outcome, while also opening the door to interpretive debate. Guthrie views it as a rhetorical focal point affirming the effectiveness of Christ's action (Guthrie, 1998, pp. 300–301), while O'Brien emphasizes the temporal dimension of "eternal" as a contrast to the temporary nature of the old system (O'Brien, 2010, pp. 323–324). However, a reading that limits redemption to a change in status faces a problem when confronted with verse 14, which speaks of the cleansing of the conscience. deSilva points out that the language of redemption in Hebrew has a relational dimension that transcends legal categories (deSilva, 2000, pp. 304–305), making it more appropriately understood as a process that produces genuine access to God. This argument is more consistent with the flow of the text, as it does not sever the connection between the action (verse 12) and the internal effect (verse 14), but rather views both as part of a single argumentative movement.

The climax of the passage occurs in verse 14, where the purification of the conscience is presented as the ultimate goal of the entire sequence. Koester interprets this purification as an internal transformation that enables participation in service to God (Koester, 2001, pp. 416–417), while Moffitt associates it with the efficacy of Christ's actions in the heavenly presence (Moffitt, 2013, pp. 222–224). On the other hand, readings that emphasize the moral aspect alone, as found in some patristic traditions, tend to overlook the structural relationship between blood, the Spirit, and purification. When these elements are separated, the text's argumentative flow becomes fragmented and loses its coherence. A more adequate reading must maintain a progressive relationship: Christ's identity as High Priest (verse 11) enables the act of entering with His own blood (verse 12), that act produces eternal redemption, and the entire sequence reaches its climax in the purification of the conscience that enables a living relationship with God (cf. Jer. 31:33). By maintaining this connection, the structure of Hebrews 9:11–14 can be understood as an integrated theological argument, not a collection of isolated motifs.

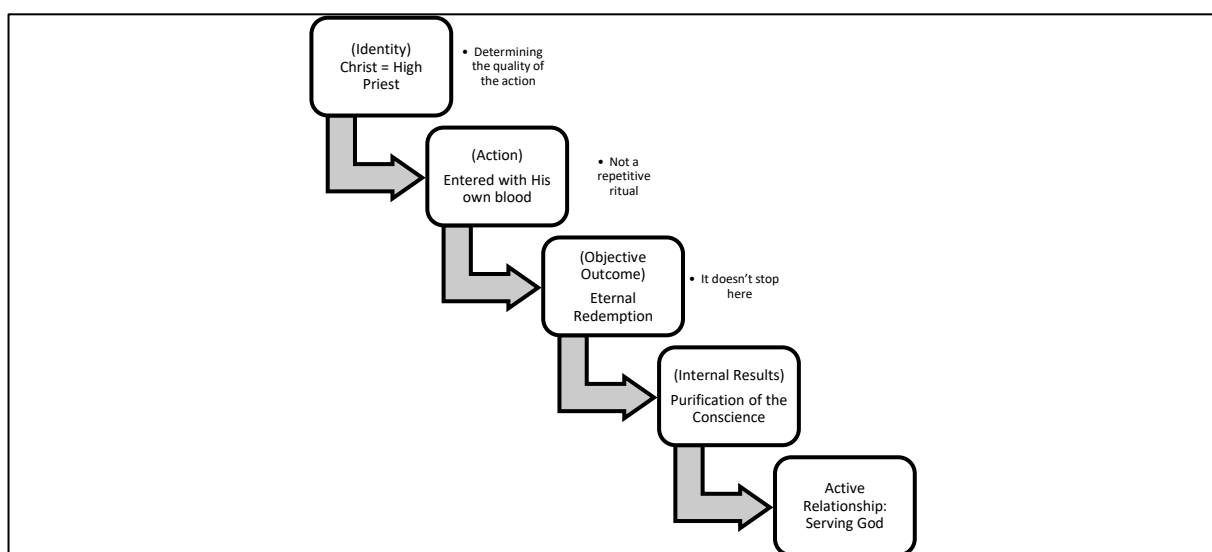


Figure 1. The Argumentative Structure of Hebrews 9:11–14

Lexical and Syntactic Analysis

A lexical analysis of αἷμα in Hebrews 9:12 calls for an interpretation that rejects a symbolic reduction of death, since the construction διὰ δὲ τοῦ ἰδίου αἵματος syntactically positions the blood as the means by which one enters into God's presence. In the LXX tradition, blood is associated with life offered as a sacrifice (cf. Lev. 17:11), so the instrumental function of διὰ indicates an operative movement, not merely a representation of an event (Bauer's & Danker, 2000, pp. 27–28). An interpretation emphasizing cultic parallels with the Day of Atonement does explain the ritual context, but tends to confine the meaning to the analogy without explaining why Christ's blood produces a definitive effect (McIver, 2016). On the other hand, an approach that understands blood as life presented in the presence of God can explain the relationship between the act of entering (Heb. 9:12) and its result, because blood does not stand as a symbol but as a relational medium connecting Christ's action with divine reality (Moffitt, 2013, pp. 218–220). A forensic reading that emphasizes substitutionary death faces similar difficulties, as it leaves no room for the instrumental function of blood within the sentence structure.

The interpretive tension in the phrase διὰ πνεύματος αἰωνίου (Heb. 9:14) stems from its grammatical form and function. The preposition διὰ, followed by the genitive singular form πνεύματος of the word πνεῦμα, generally indicates the means or manner in which an action occurs (Wallace, 1996, pp. 372–375). Therefore, syntactically, this phrase is more accurately understood as explaining how Christ offered Himself, rather than merely as an additional condition. However, the word πνεῦμα itself has a broad range of meanings; it can refer to the divine Spirit, but it can also refer to the inner dimension or non-material existence (Bauer's & Danker, 2000, pp. 832–835). This is where the tension arises. If understood as an inner dimension of Christ, then its relationship to the act of sacrifice becomes tenuous. Conversely, if understood as the divine Spirit at work in that act, then this phrase functions as an operative mode that explains how the sacrifice is effective. In other words, a reading that separates the Spirit from the act of sacrifice results in a fragmented relationship, since the blood must then operate without a clear mode (Attridge, 1989, pp. 251–252). Conversely, a reading that treats the Spirit as merely a complement is also inadequate, as it overlooks the function of διὰ as a marker of means. A consistent syntactic analysis requires that the Spirit be understood as the operative mode of the act of offering, so that the blood and the Spirit do not stand in parallel, but rather function as a unified act (Ellingworth, 1993, pp. 456–458). This reading is better able to maintain the text's internal coherence while explaining why the act possesses an efficacy that transcends the old sacrificial system.

This relationship between the blood and the Spirit determines how we understand the phrase “offering Himself without blemish to God.” The category “without blemish” does indeed have continuity with the Old Testament sacrificial tradition (cf. Lev. 1:3; 22:21), but in this context that quality is not merely ritualistic; rather, it is related to a mode of action mediated by the Spirit (Cockerill, 2012, pp. 420–422). This is evidenced by the fact that the term “without blemish” derives from the accusative singular form ἄμωμον of the root ἄμωμος. However, the semantic development of this word indicates that it speaks not only of physical

perfection but also of complete integrity before God (Silva, 2014, pp. 412–414). Therefore, an interpretation that limits this term to ritual standards is insufficient to explain its role in the sentence. When linked to the preceding phrase, the quality of “without blemish” is more accurately understood as a characteristic of an action mediated through the Spirit, such that it not only meets cultic requirements but also reflects the divine quality of that action. An approach emphasizing ritual continuity tends to remain within typological categories, while an approach emphasizing the existential dimension often detaches the action from its ritual structure (Johnson, 2006, pp. 235–237). When these two approaches are not integrated, the efficacy of Christ’s action becomes difficult to explain. The blood-Spirit relationship allows the act of sacrifice to be understood as an event that is both cultic and divine, so that the quality of “without blemish” is not merely an external standard, but a reality actualized within the act itself.

This structure points to the objective result of “eternal redemption” (Heb. 9:12), where the word *λύτρωσιν*—derived from the root *λύτρωσις* in the nominative singular—refers to a final and non-recurring liberation (Lane, 1991, pp. 233–235). Lexically, this term conveys the idea of release from a condition through a decisive act, not through a repetitive process (Bauer’s & Danker, 2000, pp. 605–606). The addition of the adjective *αἰώνιον* in the accusative singular form emphasizes that this redemption is not temporary like the previous sacrificial system (cf. Heb. 9:12). A reading that positions redemption as the climax tends to overlook the continuation of the argument in verse 14, resulting in an understanding that stops at the level of status (Guthrie, 1998, pp. 300–301). Conversely, if redemption is understood as a stage in the argumentative flow, its relationship with the cleansing of the conscience becomes clearer. This approach is more consistent with the text’s structure, which moves from action toward increasingly profound effects, rather than stopping at a declaration of the result.

This progression reaches its climax in the phrase *καθαριεῖ τὴν συνείδησιν*, where the verb *καθαριεῖ* is the third-person singular active future indicative form of the root word *καθαρίζω*, which lexically refers to an internal cleansing related to moral consciousness and one’s relationship with God (cf. Heb. 10:2; 10:22) (Bauer’s & Danker, 2000, pp. 489–490; Koester, 2001, pp. 416–417). This verb is not only used for ritual cleansing but also for purification in a moral and inner sense. Its object, *συνείδησιν* in the singular accusative, refers to human moral conscience—that is, the ability to assess oneself before God (Bauer’s & Danker, 2000, pp. 967–968). An interpretation that reduces purification to a ritual metaphor fails to explain why the text links it to the purpose of “serving the living God” (deSilva, 2000, pp. 304–305). Conversely, a reading that views sanctification as an ontological transformation can explain the relationship between redemption and the life of faith, since internal change is a prerequisite for a living relationship with God (Westfall, 2005, pp. 290–292). In this context, sanctification is not an additional effect, but rather the goal that fulfills the entire sequence of redemptive actions.

The overall analysis shows that the lexical and syntactic structure of Hebrews 9:11–14 offers a relational reading that rejects interpretive fragmentation. Blood as the medium of action, the Spirit as the operative mode, redemption as the objective result, and purification

as the internal effect form an inseparable unity. Stand-alone cultic, forensic, or existential approaches fail to explain the coherence of this structure. An interpretation that maintains the internal relationships between these elements is better able to explain the text's argumentative flow while demonstrating that redemption in Hebrews is integrative, encompassing action, outcome, and transformation within a single, coherent theological construct.

A Critical Interpretation of Hebrews 9:11–14

The cultic emphasis in the interpretation of Hebrews 9:11–14 stems from an explicit correlation with the Day of Atonement rite, such that blood is understood as a means of access to God's presence through the actions of the high priest (cf. Lev. 16; Heb. 9:12–13). This approach gains legitimacy because the text indeed constructs a contrast between the blood of animals and the blood of Christ. However, when the argumentative structure is examined, an unresolved tension emerges, in which the old sacrificial system is explicitly limited to external purification (Heb. 9:9–10), whereas verse 14 emphasizes the purification of the conscience. Studies examining the details of sacrificial rites even show that blood in the old system was never directed toward internal transformation directly, but rather toward the restoration of cultic status (McIver, 2016). At this point, the cultic approach loses its explanatory power, as ritual analogies cannot bridge the shift from the external to the internal. That is, while the cultic context is important, it is insufficient to explain the theological climax of the passage.

In response, the pneumatological emphasis seeks to explain this effectiveness through the phrase *διὰ πνεύματος αἰωνίου* (Heb. 9:14). This approach positions the Spirit as the divine agent or mode that enables Christ's action to possess a value that transcends the old system (COETSEE, 2022). This argument is compelling because it explains the unique quality of Christ's sacrifice, particularly in relation to the category of "without blemish." However, when considered in isolation, this approach faces a serious problem: the relationship between the Spirit and the blood remains poorly articulated. Studies focusing on this phrase often stop at identifying the reference to the Spirit, without explaining how the Spirit functions within the structure of the action involving blood (Ellingworth, 1993, pp. 456–458). Yet, syntactically, blood remains positioned as the means of the action (Heb. 9:12). When the Spirit is prioritized without integration with the blood, the text's structure becomes lopsided, as these two main elements no longer function as a unified whole.

Existential or theological approaches then shift the focus to the purification of the conscience as the center of meaning, emphasizing internal transformation as the primary goal (Heb. 9:14; 10:22). This approach successfully captures the text's climactic direction, while explaining why redemption does not stop at the level of status. Indeed, research linking Christ's high priestly ministry to the perseverance of faith shows that this internal dimension has strong existential implications for the community (Mariano, 2024). However, this strength is also its weakness. When the purification of the conscience is made the primary starting point, the relationship with cultic and pneumatological structures is often neglected. Consequently, internal transformation is understood directly without explaining how Christ's actions produce

such effects. Such a reading tends to bypass the text's argumentative process and ends in theological generalizations.

All three approaches ultimately reveal the same pattern: each highlights a single aspect but fails to integrate it into a coherent framework. The cultic emphasis stops at the action, the pneumatological emphasis stops at the mode, and the existential emphasis stops at the result. Meanwhile, the structure of Hebrews 9:11–14 actually reveals an inseparable hierarchical relationship, in which blood serves as the medium of action (Heb. 9:12), the Spirit as the operative mode (Heb. 9:14), redemption as the objective result, and the purification of the conscience as the internal effect that constitutes the ultimate goal (cf. Jer. 31:33; Ezek. 36:25–27). Mullins, who discusses typology and the history of interpretation, even demonstrates that this fragmentation has long persisted within the interpretive tradition, so the problem lies not in a lack of data but in how that data is organized (Mullins, 2016, pp. 45–52). Therefore, a more robust analytical outcome is not to choose one approach, but to integrate all three within a single structural framework that follows the flow of the text. Within this framework, the concept of redemption is no longer understood in a fragmented manner, but as a unified act that directly connects worship, divine mode, and internal transformation.

A Thematic Reconstruction of the Concept of Redemption Based on Hebrews 9:11–14

Blood as a Theological Medium

The phrase “blood” in Hebrews 9:11–14 is more accurately understood as a relational theological medium, since the construction *διὰ δὲ τοῦ ἰδίου αἵματος* (Heb. 9:12) positions it as the means of entering God's presence, not merely as a consequence of death. A cultic observation emphasizing parallels with the Day of Atonement successfully explains the ritual background, but does not sufficiently account for the shift toward an internal purification of the conscience. A study of sacrificial practices shows that blood in the old system was associated with the restoration of external status, not inner transformation (McIver, 2016). At the same time, an approach that focuses solely on the meaning of death is also inadequate, as it overlooks the instrumental function of blood within the sentence structure. An interpretation that views blood as life presented in the presence of God offers a more coherent explanation of the relationship between the act of entering (Heb. 9:12) and access to God (Heb. 10:19–20), while maintaining continuity with the cultic context without getting trapped in its reduction.

The Spirit as a Form of Worship

The phrase *διὰ πνεύματος αἰωνίου* in Hebrews 9:14 draws attention to the pneumatological dimension as the mode of Christ's action, not merely as an additional element. Syntactically, the use of “*dīa*” indicates that the act of self-offering takes place through a specific means, thus directly linking the Spirit to how the act occurs (Heb. 9:14). An approach emphasizing the Spirit as a divine agent makes a significant contribution, particularly in explaining the quality of Christ's action that transcends the old system (COETSEE, 2022). However, when this approach stands alone, its relationship with the blood becomes less clear,

since the two elements are no longer situated within a single framework of action. An interpretation that maintains the relationship between the blood and the Spirit within a unified act is better able to explain the effectiveness of Christ's offering: the blood functions as the medium of the act, while the Spirit signifies the divine quality that renders the act effective (cf. Heb. 7:16).

Purification as Ontological Transformation

The purification mentioned in Hebrews 9:14 refers to a transformation that touches the deepest dimensions of the human being, as seen in the phrase *καθαριεῖ τὴν συνείδησιν*. Its object is the conscience, that is, the center of human moral awareness before God, so its effect cannot be understood as merely an external act (cf. Heb. 10:2; 10:22). The existential approach captures this direction accurately, as it emphasizes internal change as the goal of redemption (Mariano, 2024). However, if detached from its relationship with blood and the Spirit, purification loses its structural foundation in the text. When situated within the argumentative flow of the passage, purification emerges as a consequence of Christ's action mediated by blood and the Spirit, thereby coherently linking the cultic dimension with existential transformation.

This thematic reconstruction demonstrates that the cultic, pneumatological, and existential approaches each offer valuable contributions, but become limited when treated in isolation. Studies on the typology and history of interpretation show that these three approaches often run parallel without integration, resulting in a fragmented reading (Mullins, 2016, pp. 45–52). Meanwhile, the structure of Hebrews 9:11–14 reveals a hierarchical, interrelated relationship, in which blood serves as the medium of action (Heb. 9:12), the Spirit as the operative mode (Heb. 9:14), redemption as the objective result, and purification as the internal effect that constitutes the ultimate goal (cf. Jer. 31:33; Ezek. 36:25–27). An analysis that integrates these relationships provides a more comprehensive explanation of the text, as it follows its argumentative flow without separating elements that are actually interrelated.

Within this framework, the concept of redemption in Hebrews 9:11–14 emerges as an integrated act that unites the medium, the mode, and the effect into a single theological unity. Blood is not understood solely in relation to death, the Spirit is not treated as an additional element, and purification is not limited to a change in status. All of these elements function within a single structure that demonstrates that redemption encompasses both Christ's action before God and the resulting transformation of humanity. This perspective offers a more coherent interpretation because it explains all elements of the text in an integrated manner, without reducing any of the existing dimensions.

Systematic Synthesis

The concept of atonement in Hebrews 9:11–14 is formulated in this study as a relational model that integrates cultic, pneumatological, and transformational dimensions into a coherent structure. This model does not merely combine themes identified in previous studies but reorganizes the relationships among textual elements into three interrelated

functional categories: blood as the medium of action, the Spirit as the mode of operation, and the cleansing of the conscience as an internal outcome. Within this framework, blood does not merely signify a symbol of death or a ritual function, but points to an effective act of presentation in the presence of God (cf. Heb. 9:12; 10:19–20). However, this effectiveness is not explained by the medium alone, because the phrase *διὰ πνεύματος αἰωνίου* (Heb. 9:14) indicates that the act of offering takes place through a divine dimension that determines its quality.

This model rejects the separation between medium and mode by placing blood and the Spirit within a single, inseparable act, such that the structure of redemption is understood not linearly, but relationally. Consequently, the outcome of redemption does not stop at an objective status, but extends to the purification of the conscience as a transformation of the human inner condition (cf. Heb. 9:14; 10:22). Based on this, the proposed model not only summarizes previous findings but reconfigures the relationship between action, divine efficacy, and transformational results into a single conceptual framework capable of explaining the text's entire argumentative flow in an integrated manner.

Theological Implications

The theological implications of this framework highlight the limitations of a reductionist approach that isolates redemption into forensic or cultic categories. A forensic emphasis tends to stop at a change in legal status before God, while a cultic emphasis focuses on the mechanism of access through ritual acts; thus, neither is sufficient to explain the connection between Christ's action and the purification of the conscience explicitly stated in the text (Heb. 9:14). An integrative approach grounded in the internal structure of the passage offers a more coherent systematic contribution, as it does not import theological categories from outside but rather reorganizes them based on the relationships indicated by the text itself (Heb. 9:11–14). Within this framework, soteriology is understood as a reality that transcends the declarative dimension, since salvation encompasses an actual transformation of the human condition, involving both the restoration of the relationship with God and inner renewal (cf. Jer. 31:33; Ezek. 36:25–27). Therefore, the legal and cultic categories retain their significance, but attain their fullness only when placed within a broader framework that includes the transformational dimension as an inherent consequence of the act of redemption.

CONCLUSION

Based on a thematic analysis of Hebrews 9:11–14, this study demonstrates that the interpretive tension surrounding the concept of redemption stems from a fragmented approach, not from textual ambiguity. The structure of the passage affirms a relational construction that connects Christ's action, the divine mode, and the transformational effect into an inseparable unity. Therefore, redemption cannot be adequately understood within a partial framework, but rather as an integrated act that is simultaneously cultic, pneumatological, and transformational.

The scholarly contribution of this research lies in the formulation of a conceptual model that reconfigures the relationship between action, divine efficacy, and the outcome of purification into a coherent theological framework. This model not only clarifies the interpretation of Hebrews 9:11–14 but also provides a foundation for the development of a soteriology that integrates legal, cultic, and transformational dimensions in a unified manner.

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