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THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO HEBREWS 9

Rudolf Bultmann in his *magnum opus*, *Theology of the New Testament*, tends to dismiss the Epistle to the Hebrews as 'allegorical',[1] 'legalistic',[2] exemplaristic',[3] and 'sacramentalistic'.[4] This is overly negative. The Book of Hebrews may be a unique contribution to New Testament thought, and may possess its own peculiar logic and expression; nevertheless, it is a decidedly Christian document.[5]

In this essay I am limiting my attention to what is clearly one of the major chapters in the argument of the Epistle to the Hebrews, namely chapter 9. Our first task is to ascertain what τὰ ἅγια means as it is used in chapter 9.

I

There are four verses in Heb. 9 which particularly invite our attention in connection with the significance of Hebrews' usage of τὰ ἅγια: *vv.* 8, 12, 24 and 25. Before turning to these some mention should be made of the use of τὸ ἅγιον in *v.* 1, Ἅγια in *v.* 2, and Ἅγια ἁγίων in *v.* 3. In the case of τὸ ἅγιον, though this is the usual term used in Lev. 16 (LXX)[6] for the Holy of Holies, here in Hebrews the neuter singular clearly refers to the whole sanctuary.

Scholars have occasionally accented ἅγια (*v.* 2) as a feminine singular,[7] appealing to the anarthrous form in support of this. However, the anarthrous ἅγια is found in 9. 24 where it is certainly neuter plural. It is best to take *v.* 2 as a neuter plural and allow the use of this form for a description of the outer tent (as in *v.* 2) as exceptional. Ἅγια ἁγίων is likewise unusual, though context leaves no doubt as regards the reference to the Holy of Holies.[8]

Although there is considerable confusion among the translations as to the rendering of ἅγια in Heb. 9. 8, 12, 24 and 25, the commentators are in general agreement concerning its reference to the Holy of Holies. The

[1] Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* I (London, 1952), 111.
[2] *Ibid.* p. 112.
[3] *Ibid.* II, 166–8.
[4] *Ibid.*
[5] Bultmann is questioned at this very point by R. Morgan, *The Nature of New Testament Theology* (London, 1973), p. 61.
[6] See *vv.* 2, 3, 16, 17, 20, 23, 27.
[7] Notably H. W. Montefiore, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (London, 1964), p. 144, and F. C. Synge, *Hebrews and the Scriptures* (London, 1959), p. 26.
[8] Lev. 16. 33 (LXX) has τὸ ἅγιον τοῦ ἁγίου.

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preferred translations are 'holy place' (or 'Holy Place') and 'sanctuary'.[9] These are fairly imprecise terms if, as most commentators affirm, τὰ ἅγια in these verses means specifically the Holy of Holies. The text itself gives incontrovertible indication that this meaning for τὰ ἅγια is correct despite isolated support[10] for the idea that τὰ ἅγια refers to the sanctuary as a whole.

In Heb. 9. 2–7 the writer describes the two divisions of the tabernacle and gives details of the contents of each. He accurately limits the priests' daily service to the Holy Place and then refers to the high priest's annual entrance into the Holy of Holies in these terms: 'but into the second only the high priest goes, and he but once a year, and not without taking blood which he offers for himself and for the errors of the people' (Heb. 9. 7, RSV).

The reference to the Day of Atonement is unmistakable. The high-point of the Day of Atonement ritual was the blood aspersion on the mercy-seat within the Holy of Holies (Lev. 16. 12–15). This is specifically referred to in Heb. 9. 7 ('not without blood, which he offers'), and Hebrews, in harmony with Lev. 16, portrays this act of sprinkling as taking place in the Holy of Holies. This is beyond dispute, for the writer does not employ his more usual term (τὰ ἅγια), but ἡ δευτέρα. Ἡ δευτέρα means the 'second tent' as opposed to the 'first tent' mentioned in *v.* 6.[11] The first and second tent are respectively the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies, as Hebrews itself asserts in verses 2 and 3.

The terms in Heb. 9. 11–12 and in 9. 25 follow an identical pattern to those in 9. 7, as the table below demonstrates:

Heb. 9. 7	Heb. 9. 11–12	Heb. 9. 25
ὁ ἀρχιερεύς	[ὁ] ἀρχιερεύς	ὁ ἀρχιερεύς
[εἴσεισι]	εἰσῆλθεν	εἰσέρχεται
εἰς τὴν δευτέραν	εἰς τὰ ἅγια	εἰς τὰ ἅγια
ἅπαξ τοῦ ἐνιαυτοῦ	ἐφάπαξ	κατ' ἐνιαυτόν
οὐ χωρὶς αἵματος	οὐδὲ δι' αἵματος...διὰ δὲ τοῦ ἰδίου αἵματος	ἐν αἵματι ἀλλοτρίῳ

The above columns indicate beyond question that the parallel to εἰς τὴν δευτέραν (Heb. 9. 7) is in Heb. 9. 12, 25 εἰς τὰ ἅγια. There is no question but that ἡ δευτέρα in Heb. 9. 7 means the Holy of Holies, and thus we must give the same meaning to τὰ ἅγια in Heb. 9. 12, 25[12] and no less certainly also in Heb. 9. 8 and 24.

[9] For a convenient chart of translation variations see A. P. Salom, '*Ta Hagia* in the Epistle to the Hebrews', *Andrews University Seminary Studies* v (1967), 61. For criticisms of the usual translations, see Synge, *Hebrews*, pp. 26 ff.

[10] The most illustrious being B. F. Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (London, ²1892), p. 252.

[11] The μέν...δέ pattern links these two verses tightly, 'on the one hand into the first tent...but on the other hand into the second [tent]'.

[12] Heb. 13. 11 follows a pattern nearly identical with that of Heb. 9. 7, 11–12, 25 and again τὰ ἅγια refers to the Holy of Holies, for Heb. 13. 11 is actually quoting from Lev. 16. 27. Further support is drawn from Heb. 6. 19 where τὸ ἐσώτερον τοῦ καταπετάσματος is a direct quotation from Lev. 16. 2, 12, 15 where the phrase describes the Holy of Holies. Cf. Heb. 10. 19 f.

II

This leads us now to the meaning of Heb. 9. 8–10, for it is in these verses that the writer draws out the theological significance of the two-part sanctuary described in some detail in the previous verses. It is not the writer's purpose to give Philonic expositions of the cult objects which he briefly mentions; indeed he purposely avoids such refinements (περὶ ὧν οὐκ ἔστιν νῦν λέγειν κατὰ μέρος *v.* 5). What attracts the writer's attention is the fact that the Mosaic tabernacle was divided into two tents. Into the first tent the priests went continually (διὰ παντός) fulfilling their duties, but into the second tent the high priest alone was permitted to enter and this only on the Day of Atonement (*v.* 7).

To understand the deeper truth the author draws from these historical details it is necessary rightly to determine his usage of ἡ πρώτη σκηνή in *vv.* 2, 6 and 8. In *v.* 2[13] the reference is undeniably to the outer tent (so RSV), the Holy Place. This is just as clear in *v.* 6. There is, however, some difference of opinion over the meaning in *v.* 8. The opinions divide over whether ἡ πρώτη σκηνή in *v.* 8 refers to the whole of the Mosaic tabernacle (i.e. both the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies) in which case the phrase will be rendered 'former' or 'earlier' tent;[14] or whether it is limited to the first part of the earthly structure, in which case it will be translated 'outer' tent (i.e. the Holy Place alone).[15]

Verses 6 and 8 form part of the one periodic sentence (*vv.* 6–10) and it would be intolerable for the meaning to fluctuate unannounced in such short compass. The spatial reference in *vv.* 2 and 6 is incontestable and a shift to a temporal idea in *v.* 8 would be unnecessarily harsh. To refer to 'the facility with which our author sometimes manipulates expressions', as Héring[16] does, really attributes confusion to the writer. We conclude then that ἡ πρώτη σκηνή means consistently the 'outer tent' or 'fore-tent' in *vv.* 2, 6 and 8.

Yet a temporal significance is drawn from the reference to the outer tent in *v.* 8 as is made clear by the use of ἔτι. While the first or outer tent possessed legitimacy, that is, as long as the cultic ritual of Judaism had validity in the redemptive purpose of God, access[17] into the Holy of Holies was not manifest.[18] The daily ritual by its very functioning and repetition (10. 11) was, according to the author, sure testimony that the way into the Holy of Holies was blocked; it was – to put it another way – proof positive that the day of

[13] In *v.* 2 ἡ πρώτη is used elliptically for ἡ πρώτη σκηνή.

[14] NEB has 'earlier tent'. In support of this see J. Héring, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (ET London, 1970), p. 74; F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (London, 1964), pp. 194 f.; C. Spicq, *L'Épître aux Hébreux* II (Paris, 1953), 253 f.

[15] Thus the RSV and the majority of commentators.

[16] *Hebrews*, p. 74.

[17] W. Michaelis, *T.D.N.T.* v, 76.

[18] This interpretation is strongly defended by Synge (*Hebrews*, p. 27) in a passage where he differs with A. S. Peake.

reformation (9. 9), of hoped-for good things (10. 1), had not yet dawned: the '"first tent", symbolically, designates the place of cultic performances which are not only insufficient for salvation, but also conceal the true way into the inner sanctuary'.[19]

Another of the 'Reihe von Schwierigkeiten' of which Michel speaks in his comments[20] now confronts us. To what antecedent are we to connect the clauses introduced by ἥτις (*v.* 9) and καθ' ἣν respectively? Windisch relates ἥτις to the whole of the preceding context, though he treats ἥτις παραβολὴ... ἐνεστηκότα as a parenthesis and allows καθ' ἣν to link again with τῆς πρώτης σκηνῆς.[21] Michel[22] and Bruce,[23] as far as I can see, refer both ἥτις and καθ' ἣν to the whole situation of *vv.* 6–8.

Hebrews' usage of ἥτις elsewhere tends to run counter to this, for the writer consistently refers back to a specific antecedent and the gender and number are modified accordingly. One may mention Heb. 2. 3; 8. 6; 9. 2 (antecedent is ἡ πρώτη σκηνή); 10. 9, 11, 35; 12. 5. These are then rather strong grammatical reasons for referring ἥτις and καθ' ἣν, and thus *vv.* 9–10, back to τῆς πρώτης σκηνῆς.

Bruce cogently queries this and feels that it is perhaps more likely 'that the whole structure with its appropriate ritual is called a παραβολή'.[24] Scottish sanity may here be missing something of Alexandrian subtlety. The author is attracted to the description of the tabernacle as consisting of a πρώτη σκηνή and a δευτέρα σκηνή[25] because these two numerals also describe the covenants. The fore-tent symbolizes this present age (ὁ καιρὸς ὁ ἐνεστηκώς = עולם הזה), the time when ἡ πρώτη διαθήκη is operative, but once the first is abolished the second takes over (8. 7, 13; 10. 9).[26]

The discussion about the covenant in 9. 15–18 is, then, a very integral part of the argument in chapter 9 and in no way an irrelevant intrusion. The fore-tent as 'ein Gleichnis oder Sinnbild für den alten Äon'[27] embraces, as Westcott[28] noted, the total old (or first) covenant order including the whole sanctuary ritual, both annual and daily. Thus the description of the ὁ καιρὸς ὁ ἐνεστηκώς as the time when δῶρά τε καὶ θυσίαι προσφέρονται which cannot perfect the worshipper's conscience, finds corresponding language used to describe the high priest's annual ritual (5. 1 and 10. 1–3) in the earthly Holy of Holies. The fact that Heb. 7. 27 can speak of this high-priestly activity as a daily event should warn us against dismissing too readily the idea of the fore-tent being a symbol of the whole old order.

[19] H. Koester, '"Outside the camp": Hebrews 13. 9–14', *H.T.R.* LV (1962), 310.
[20] O. Michel, *Der Brief an die Hebräer* (Göttingen, [12]1966), p. 300).
[21] H. Windisch, *Der Hebräerbrief* (Tübingen, [2]1931), p. 77. [22] O. Michel, *Hebräer*[12], p. 307.
[23] F. F. Bruce, *Hebrews*, pp. 195 ff. Bruce explains the feminine gender (ἥτις for ὅτι) as due to attraction to παραβολή.
[24] *Ibid.* [25] Cf. Josephus *BJ* V, 193–4, 208 f., 216.
[26] Synge (*Hebrews*, p. 26) argues strongly for this association between first covenant and first tent.
[27] O. Hofius, 'Das "erste" und das "zweite" Zelt', *Z.N.W.* LXI (1970), 276.
[28] B. F. Westcott, *Hebrews*[2], p. 252.

The language of 'first tent' has a clear eschatological purpose: it means the old covenant order now in process of dissolution by the καιρὸς διορθώσεως (9. 10); and because it pictures the old order it includes the earthly ritual in its entirety. Bruce's[29] objection that παραβολή (9. 9) is hardly likely to be limited to the fore-tent is really beside the point. *It is* the outer tent that is the παραβολή; but in thus using this spatial description the author pronounces the whole of the old ritual order 'impotent and useless' (7. 19 NEB) as regards the expiation of sin and the gaining of access to God.

III

Having thus expounded the serious limitations of the old age (9. 8–10), our author now sets forth his conviction concerning its transitory nature and its abolition by the arrival of the new epoch. The δέ in 9. 11 must accordingly be given maximum force: it announces the author's shift in his argument. With the arrival of the high priesthood of Christ the future good things have become[30] a present reality. The δέ therefore underlines a sharp contrast between the old and the new. The force of Dr Buchanan's[31] arguments against taking εἶχε μὲν οὖν (9. 1) with Χριστὸς δέ (9. 11) (viz. the distance between the μέν and the answering δέ, the inclusion of one μέν...δέ construction (*vv.* 6–7) within another) is not sufficient to deny the relationship between 9. 1–10 and 9. 11–14.[32]

Before addressing the vexed question of what exactly is ἡ μείζων καὶ τελειοτέρα σκηνή, it is vital to decide how to relate the three διά phrases (9. 11–12). Some commentators separate the first διά phrase from the other two, διὰ τῆς...σκηνῆς is then attached to either τῶν γενομένων ἀγαθῶν[33] or Χριστός.[34] The former gives the idea that 'the good things that have come' were procured by the greater and more perfect tent; the latter yields the idea that, through the greater and more perfect tent, Christ became high priest of the 'good things that have come'. Such a division of the διά phrases is vulnerable to Riggenbach's criticism that such isolation of the first διά phrase breaks up the natural unity of these phrases in *vv.* 11–12.[35]

Verses 11–12 form one long periodic sentence and the most natural

[29] *Hebrews*, pp. 195 f.

[30] This remains true even if the reading μελλόντων (ℵ A I) is preferred to γενομένων (𝔓[46] B D*). If μελλόντων is accepted, the reference is descriptive not temporal, i.e., the future good things [now present], cf. Heb. 6. 5. For a contrary view see Montefiore, *Hebrews*, p. 151 and B. Klappert, *Die Eschatologie des Hebräerbriefs* (München, 1969), p. 15.

[31] G. W. Buchanan, *To the Hebrews* (New York, 1972), pp. 139 f.

[32] O. Michel, *Hebräer*[12], p. 309.

[33] A. Nairne, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Cambridge, 1917), p. 89; J. Chr. von Hofmann, *Die heilige Schrift Neuen Testamentes* V (1873), 335.

[34] A. Seeberg, *Der Brief an die Hebräer* (Leipzig, 1912), p. 100.

[35] E. Riggenbach, *Der Brief an die Hebräer* (Leipzig, [3]1922), p. 258. This criticism is also fatal for the position of F. Rendall (*The Epistle to the Hebrews* (London, 1883), pp. 78 f.), who attaches διὰ...σκηνῆς to τῶν γενομένων ἀγαθῶν (see n. 33, above) and οὐδὲ δι' αἵματος...διὰ δὲ τοῦ ἰδίου αἵματος to παραγίνομαι.

connection is to relate all three διά phrases to the one final verb – εἰσῆλθεν.[36] If this is so, how are we to understand the statement that Christ through the greater and more perfect tent entered τὰ ἅγια? It seems tautological to say that he entered the heavenly ἅγια by means of the heavenly σκηνή.[37] One solution is to take the first διά phrase locally rather than instrumentally.

The local interpretation usually interprets 'the greater and more perfect tent' to mean the heavens.[38] The objection[39] that Hebrews does not conceive of the heavens as οὐ χειροποιήτου, τοῦτ' ἔστιν οὐ ταύτης τῆς κτίσεως is met by making the heaven through which Christ travels into τὰ ἅγια an intermediary sphere beyond the heaven of creation.[40] Others who adhere to the local view of the first διά phrase understand the 'greater and more perfect tent' through which Christ proceeded, somewhat allegorically, as the total life of Christ from incarnation to ascension.[41] The opposite extreme to this latter view is the position that construes the 'greater and more perfect tent' as the literal fore-tent of the heavenly sanctuary through which Christ journeyed into the heavenly ἅγια.[42]

Two considerations seem to militate against these local interpretations of διὰ τῆς...σκηνῆς. First, it is extremely difficult, though not impossible, to allow a different meaning for the διά in διὰ...σκηνῆς from οὐδὲ δι' αἵματος and διὰ δὲ τοῦ ἰδίου αἵματος, especially since they are all part of the one sentence and all attach to the same verb (εἰσῆλθεν).[43]

Secondly, the local construction assumes that 'the greater and more perfect tent' refers either metaphorically or literally to some heavenly fore-tent. But Hebrews can use σκηνή for the sanctuary in general, e.g. 8. 2, 5;[44] 9. (2), 21; 13. 10. When referring to the outer or inner tent the writer usually qualifies σκηνή with πρώτη or δευτέρα or by a phrase like μετὰ δὲ τὸ δεύτερον καταπέτασμα. 'The greater and more perfect tent' contrasts

[36] B. F. Westcott, *Hebrews*[2], p. 256. Cf. the comparative table on p. 199 of this essay where the parallels with 9. 7, 25 make it clear that 'blood' refers to the means of access into the Holy of Holies (i.e. αἷμα is used instrumentally with εἰσέρχομαι or an equivalent verb).

[37] Montefiore (*Hebrews*, p. 153) with superb understatement calls this 'slightly clumsy'.

[38] J. Moffatt, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Edinburgh, 1924), pp. 120 f.

[39] Forcefully argued by A. Vanhoye, '"Par la tente plus grande et plus parfaite..." (Hé 9, 11)', *Biblica* XLVI (1965), 1–28.

[40] O. Michel, *Hebräer*[12], pp. 311 f.; P. Andriessen, 'Das größere und vollkommenere Zelt (Hebr 9, 11)', *B.Z.* XV (1971), 76–92.

[41] F. J. Schierse, *Verheißung und Heilsvollendung* (München, 1955), p. 57. See also his commentary, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (London, 1969), *ad loc.* A similar view is found in U. Luck, 'Himmlisches und irdisches im Hebräerbrief', *Nov. Test.* VI (1963), 192–215.

[42] W. Michaelis, *T.D.N.T.* VII, 376 f.

[43] Moffatt's attempt (*Hebrews*, p. 121) to reduce the force of this by referring to verses in Hebrews where διά is used in close proximity with the genitive and accusative is hardly relevant. There is no such change of case in 9. 11–12.

[44] Synge (*Hebrews*, p. 25) appears to limit this reference to the Holy of Holies. O. Hofius (*Der Vorhang vor dem Thron Gottes* (Tübingen, 1972), p. 60), takes τὰ ἅγια in 8. 2 to be the Holy of Holies and ἡ σκηνὴ ἡ ἀληθινή to be the whole heavenly tabernacle. Koester (*H.T.R.* LV (1962), 309), also denies that 8. 2 is a hendiadys but identifies τὰ ἅγια with 'heaven itself' and ἡ σκηνή with 'the heavenly regions'.

with the total structure mentioned in 9. 1;[45] there is no distinction of parts implied. We are not, therefore, to understand Christ making any passage through some preliminary physical (or other) means of access.

Once one takes διὰ τῆς...σκηνῆς instrumentally it forms a strong parallel with διὰ δὲ τοῦ ἰδίου αἵματος. This parallel has tempted some[46] to follow the patristic exegesis and maintain that 'tent' must refer to the body of Christ as a term along with 'blood' signifying the means by which he gained access into the Holy of Holies.

The objection that Christ's body is considered by the epistle as very much part of this creation is overcome by some expositors by saying that it is not only his incarnate body but also his glorified body.[47] One Catholic scholar even goes so far as to suggest that the 'greater and more perfect tent' is the Eucharistic body of Christ.[48]

An equally remote suggestion is to construe the 'greater and more perfect tent' as a reference to the body of believers, i.e. the church.[49] It seems impossible to think of the church being associated with blood as the means by which Christ entered the Holy of Holies.

All such discussions miss the clear eschatological contrast signalled to us right from the beginning of 9. 11. The earthly tent (9. 1), separated into two parts (a first and a second tent), proclaimed by its daily ritual, which limited priestly service to the outer tent, that the old order with its restricted access was still operative. The seeming Platonic vertical contrast in 9. 11 is really a temporal one:[50] 'by means of the greater and more perfect tent' announces the dawning of the καιρὸς διορθώσεως. By means of the new order, not by means of animal sacrifices (as in the old order), but by means of his own blood (as in the new order) he entered into the Holy of Holies (i.e. heaven itself, the presence of God, 9. 24).

This interpretation retains the usual instrumental significance of διά with the genitive and preserves a consistent meaning of the three διά phrases within the one periodic sentence (9. 11–12). It also nicely resolves the awkwardness that Montefiore[51] sensed in speaking of the sanctuary both instrumentally (διὰ τῆς...σκηνῆς) and locally (εἰς τὰ ἅγια). The 'greater and more perfect tent' symbolizes the eschatologically new cultic means of

[45] This is strengthened if it is accepted that εἶχε μὲν οὖν (9. 1) goes with Χριστὸς δέ (9. 11).

[46] E.g. B. F. Westcott, *Hebrews*[2], pp. 257 f.

[47] A. Vanhoye, *Biblica* XLVI, 2.

[48] J. Swetnam, '"The greater and more perfect tent". A contribution to the discussion of Hebrews, 9 11', *Biblica* XLVII (1966), 91–106; *idem*, 'On the imagery and significance of Hebrews 9. 9–10', *C.B.Q.* XXVIII (1966), 155–73. For criticism of such views see R. Williamson, 'The Eucharist and the Epistle to the Hebrews', *N.T.S.* XXI (1974–75), 300–12.

[49] J. Ungeheuer, *Der Große Priester über dem Hause Gottes* (Würzburg, 1939), pp. 118 ff. This appears to be F. F. Bruce's view (*Hebrews*, pp. 199 f.).

[50] R. Williamson (*Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews* [Leiden, 1970], p. 146), speaks of Heb. 9. 11 as 'the perfect illustration of how a Christian eschatologist' speaks. Cf. C. K. Barrett, 'The Eschatology of the Epistle to the Hebrews' in *The Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology*, ed. W. D. Davies and D. Daube (Cambridge, 1956), p. 385.

[51] Montefiore, *Hebrews*, p. 153.

access; the ἅγια is the ultimate goal of that access – the presence of God in heaven.

Christ can be spoken of as having entered the heavenly ἅγια by means of 'the greater and more perfect tent' precisely because the latter stands for the new covenant arrangement by which sin is radically purged and access to God is made universally available. For the new way which the forerunner has blazed is open to his brethren to tread (6. 19 f.; 10. 19 f.).

IV

Whereas the cleansing offered by the old age was merely external (9. 9–10, 13), the new age offers a purification at depth (9. 14). And the new age is ushered in by the very sacrifice that works this purification of conscience. Death makes a covenant (διαθήκη) operative, just as it does a will (διαθήκη) (9. 16–17). The first covenant, accordingly, was inaugurated by blood (*v.* 18):[52] and this is equally true of the new covenant.

Virtually the whole of the old arrangement (ὁ νόμος *v.* 22) was dedicated by blood. This thesis is sustained by amalgamating (9. 19–21) various other Old Testament ritual details with the actual Sinai covenant ritual of Exod. 24. To the calves of Exod. 24. 5, the author adds goats[53] from the Day of Atonement ritual. To the Sinai limitation to blood (Exod. 24. 6 ff.), he introduces from the red heifer ceremony (Num. 19) the elements water, scarlet wool and hyssop. In Exod. 24. 6 ff. the blood is cast against the altar and over the people, in Hebrews the book of the covenant replaces the altar. The writer also includes a sprinkling of blood upon the tent and cultic vessels by adding details from the consecration service of Lev. 8[54] (cf. Exod. 40).

In the Old Testament texts the consecrating substance for the tent and the vessels was oil, not blood; our author is by no means averse to manipulating the type to fit the antitype. He would no doubt appeal to something like the Rabbinic dictum[55] that the oil (water) stands for the blood (though Josephus[56] speaks of oil and blood on the day of dedication), but the real controlling factor is the writer's conviction that 'a death has occurred for redemption' (9. 15).

An admission of the existence of other cleansing substances can be detected in his σχεδόν (9. 22), but his χωρὶς αἱματεκχυσίας quickly reaffirms his real interest. Ἐκχέω is the usual word in the Septuagint for שפך which signified

[52] Our author has clearly never lost sight of his original discussion of the covenant (8. 13–9. 1); indeed his view of the earthly and heavenly sanctuaries and their respective sacrificial atonements portrays his conception of the difference between the old and new covenant. Buchanan (*Hebrews*, pp. 139 f.) is astray in referring 9. 1 not to the first covenant but to the first tent.

[53] I accept this reading.

[54] In Lev. 8. 11 the Septuagint has πάντα τὰ σκεύη, σκηνῆς, ῥαίνω (Heb. 9. 21 = ῥαντίζω); Lev. 8. 15 has αἷμα and ἐκχέω (cf. Heb. 9. 22).

[55] B. Yoma 4a.

[56] *AJ* III, 206.

the final disposal of the sacrificial blood at the base of the burnt-offering altar. It was, as Windisch observed, 'kein besonderer ritueller Akt'.[57] Our author is attracted to it even though it was a cultically minor word because it carries the further nuance of a life poured out in death.[58] The death of Christ literally surrounds this verse.[59]

The phrase 'better sacrifices than these' (*v.* 23) refers then to the death of Christ, the plural (θυσίαις) being attracted to the τούτοις with which it contrasts. τούτοις refers to the blood of the covenant, the blood of calves and goats, the blood (oil) of dedication, and the ashes of the red heifer. The copies (ὑπόδειγμα) are all the items of the old order; book, tent and vessels of worship. Obviously the ἐπουράνια are the counterpart to the ὑπόδειγμα (cf. 8. 5), the heavenly realities of τὸ ἅγιον κοσμικόν (9. 1). The question is why the ἐπουράνια required any catharsis at all.

Some of the Church Fathers related τὰ ἐπουράνια to the church, or life in the church. The need for cleansing is then plain, but this is an unlikely interpretation of the 'heavenly things'. Moffatt takes this heavenly cleansing at face value and, with his typical frankness, calls 'the idea...almost fantastic'.[60] Another understanding is to relate the cleansing to the apocalyptic image of Satan being cast out of heaven.[61] The idea that the sin of mankind had somehow 'cast its shadow even into heaven',[62] or was potentially capable of polluting the heavenly sanctuary,[63] seems to ignore the eschatological symbolism of Hebrews. It seems especially perverse in the face of the theology of Hebrews to conceive of this heavenly defilement being cleansed by sacrifices in heaven.[64]

It is much more faithful to Hebrews to see the ἐπουράνια in the same way as the μείζων καὶ τελειοτέρα σκηνή – viz. eschatologically. If the old order required sacrifices to inaugurate it, the new order requires a better sacrifice, one that really is an act of ἄφεσις (9. 22, 10. 18). His sacrifice ushers in the new age and removes sin at the level of the conscience (this is the mark of the new age);[65] it opens the way to God, for he enters the [ἀ]χειροποίητα ἅγια (*v.* 24) having offered himself, not in order to offer himself. But[66] this last assertion is contested and we must now turn to it.

[57] H. Windisch, *Hebräerbrief*[2], p. 82.

[58] Gen. 37. 22; Lev. 17. 4; Num. 35. 33.

[59] Heb. 9. 15–16, 25–8. T. C. G. Thornton's attempt ('The Meaning of αἱματεκχυσία in Heb. x. 22', *J.T.S.* xv (1964), 63–5) to leave open the possibility that Christ's blood ἔκχυσις was something posterior to his death must be deemed a failure. See my comment in a forthcoming *Expositary Times*.

[60] Moffatt, *Hebrews*, p. 132.

[61] Michel, *Hebräer*[12], pp. 323 f.; Héring, *Hebrews*, p. 82; found as early as F. Bleek, *Der Brief an die Hebräer* II (Berlin, 1836), 588.

[62] A. S. Peake, *The Century Bible: Hebrews* (Edinburgh, 1914), p. 191.

[63] E. Riggenbach, *Hebräer*[3], p. 283.

[64] G. W. Buchanan, *Hebrews*, p. 162.

[65] 'Cleansing' carries ideas of 'inauguration' as well as 'expiation' (Exod. 29. 36; Lev. 8. 15); hence Westcott's objection against ideas of 'dedication' (*Hebrews*[2], p. 270) is not cogent. Cf. Heb. 9. 18; 10. 20.

[66] On Christ's heavenly session, see P. E. Hughes, 'The Blood of Jesus and His Heavenly Priesthood in Hebrews', *Bibliotheca Sacra* cxxx (1973), 99–109; 195–212; 305–14 and cxxxi (1974), 26–33.

V

In an attempt to establish that Christ's atoning work includes some sort of heavenly oblation, appeal is often made to the use of προσφέρω in Hebrews 9. 7 and 25. W. E. Brooks, for example, stresses that 'it is quite clear in light of ix. 7, that, in his mind [i.e. the author of Hebrews], offering was not limited to the death of the victim'.[67] In a similar vein J. H. Davies asserts,

> Jesus' entry into heaven is in some places the critical event, rather than his death; and προσφέρει is sometimes used of the entry into the Holy Place, as though this were the most important part of the Oblation. Thus in 9, 7 προσφέρει must refer to the Levitical High Priest's offering of the blood after his entry into the Holy Place.[68]

There can, indeed, be no gainsaying that in Heb. 9. 7 the Aaronic high priest is said to offer (προσφέρειν) blood in the Holy of Holies of the earthly tabernacle.

The background for the details outlined in Heb. 9. 7 is, as all commentators note, the Day of Atonement ritual of Lev. 16. This was the single day of the year when the high priest entered the Holy of Holies and sprinkled blood upon the mercy-seat on behalf of himself and the ignorances of the people. Wilfred Stott appeals to this background in an endeavour to refute the argument drawn from the use of προσφέρω in the Epistle to the Hebrews that the προσφορά of Christ extends into the heavenly realms. Stott argues that:

> in the ritual of the Day of Atonement the technical word for offering הקריב only occurs before the bullock and the goat were slain, and in the entrance into the Most Holy Place this term was not used, but non-sacrificial terms were used. This suggests that where in Hebrews the word προσφέρω is used of Christ it points quite clearly to what was done on the cross, that Christ's undergoing death was conceived of as the 'offering' (προσφορά).[69]

Stott is quite correct that for the entrance into the Holy of Holies and the actual blood ritual on the mercy-seat words other than הקריב are used in Lev. 16;[70] the Massoretic text uses לקח (*v.* 14, LXX λαμβάνειν); בוא (*v.* 15, LXX εἰσφέρειν); נזה (*vv.* 14, 15, LXX ῥαίνειν). However, Stott moves too easily from הקריב to προσφέρω and gives the impression that he has the authority of the Septuagint for doing so. As a matter of fact προσφέρω occurs only once in the Septuagint translation of the Day of Atonement ritual

[67] W. E. Brooks, 'The Perpetuity of Christ's Sacrifice in the Epistle to the Hebrews', *J.B.L.* LXXXIX (1970), 209 n. 15.

[68] J. H. Davies, 'The Heavenly Work of Christ', in *Texte und Untersuchungen* CII (1968), 387.

[69] W. Stott, 'The Conception of "offering" in the Epistle to the Hebrews', *N.T.S.* IX (1962–63), 65.

[70] *Ibid.* p. 64.

chapter (Lev. 16). In this single example of προσφέρω in the Septuagint rendering of Lev. 16 it translates not הקריב but עשׂה, which, of course, refers to the act of slaughter (see *v.* 9).

The Septuagint of Lev. 16 never translates הקריב by προσφέρω; the four occurrences of הקריב in Lev. 16[71] are consistently translated by προσάγω in the Septuagint. This latter word is not found in the Epistle to the Hebrews. It is therefore quite illegitimate to appeal to the use of הקריב in Lev. 16 as the control datum for the meaning of προσφέρω in Hebrews. Stott has failed to notice that the usual Septuagintal translation of הקריב (i.e. προσφέρειν) is not used in Lev. 16. His argument is therefore groundless.[72]

Above all it is the actual usage of Hebrews itself which is constitutive. And Davies is quite correct that in Heb. 9. 7 προσφέρω is used of the high priest's blood aspersion in the Holy of Holies. There is no parallel to this usage of προσφέρω in the whole of the biblical cultic material.[73] Why has Hebrews used this singular term (προσφέρω) to describe the high priest's sprinkling of blood in the Holy of Holies? Why has he not followed, as he so often does, the Septuagint's language for the ritual in the Holy of Holies, viz. ῥαίνειν and ἐπιτιθέναι?

There are those who think the reason is because the writer wishes his readers to understand that Christ's προσφορά includes just such a προσφέρειν in the heavenly Holy of Holies as he has described as taking place in the earthly inner shrine on the Day of Atonement. This comports rather poorly with the writer's clear limitation of προσφέρω to Christ's death (9. 14; 10. 12).

No, the real reason is more radical than this. It is not the type which dictates our author's exegesis; quite the reverse. He has daringly described the typical annual sprinkling of blood on the earthly mercy-seat as a προσφέρειν to facilitate his application of this zenith of the old order's atoning ritual to the προσφέρειν of Christ on the cross.

That this is the correct inference to be drawn from the singular use of προσφέρειν in Heb. 9. 7 is confirmed by the way the writer applies the Day of Atonement ritual to Christ in 9. 25–8. True, those like Davies[74] who wish to sustain the thesis that Christ's oblation refers to his life, death and entry into heaven, argue otherwise. Davies argues that the antithesis between οὐδ' ἵνα πολλάκις προσφέρῃ ἑαυτόν and ὥσπερ ὁ ἀρχιερεὺς εἰσέρχεται...ἐν αἵματι ἀλλοτρίῳ, 'makes προσφέρῃ and εἰσέρχεται ἐν αἵματι synonymous'.[75]

Davies is quite correct in seeing a close parallel between προσφέρῃ and

[71] Verses 6, 9, 11 and 20.

[72] We might also mention that הביא, which Stott considers a non-sacrificial term, outside of Lev. 16, is translated in the Septuagint by προσφέρειν. Again showing the impossibility of limiting the meaning of προσφέρειν to that of הקריב even if one goes outside Lev. 16.

[73] The Septuagint uses προσφέρειν in Lev. 1. 5; 7. 33; 9. 9 to translate הקריב when the object is 'blood', but there is no reference to any blood application as occurred on the Day of Atonement.

[74] *Texte und Untersuchungen* CII (1968), 387. Cf. F. Schröger, *Der Verfasser des Hebräerbriefes als Schriftausleger* (Regensburg, 1968), p. 237.

[75] *Ibid.*

εἰσέρχεται ἐν αἵματι, but the antitypical fulfilment does not agree with the type at every point. The προσφέρειν of Christ in the context is clearly his death. This is the writer's point in *vv.* 27–8, the καθ' ὅσον ἀπόκειται τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἅπαξ ἀποθανεῖν finds its counter-balance in the writer's οὕτως καὶ ὁ Χριστός, ἅπαξ προσενεχθείς. Here προσφέρω is synonymous with ἀποθνήσκω; and the purpose of Christ's death is stated with an articular infinitive, εἰς τὸ πολλῶν ἀνενεγκεῖν ἁμαρτίας. This last indicates that ἡ ἀθέτησις τῆς ἁμαρτίας διὰ τῆς θυσίας αὐτοῦ, because it so closely parallels the former, also refers to his death, ἅπαξ ἐπὶ συντελείᾳ τῶν αἰώνων (*v.* 26).

Further, we may observe that παθεῖν (*v.* 26) has reference to the death of Christ as is made clear in Heb. 13. 12. As Moffatt observes, 'What is meant precisely by προσφέρειν ἑαυτόν here (as in *v.* 14) is shown by παθεῖν in *v.* 26....προσφέρειν ἑαυτόν is inseparably connected with the suffering of death upon the cross.'[76]

Thus the fulfilment of the Levitical high priest's annual entrance and blood aspersion in the earthly Holy of Holies is Christ's death on the cross. When Davies claims that εἰσέρχεται...ἐν αἵματι ἀλλοτρίῳ is synonymous with προσφέρειν ἑαυτόν (*v.* 25) he implies that this extends Christ's προσφέρειν into the heavenly Holy of Holies (εἰς τὰ ἅγια). To the contrary, however, Hebrews is asserting that the Aaronic high-priestly προσφέρειν with blood in the Holy of Holies (Heb. 9. 7) is fulfilled by Christ's death (προσφορά, 10. 10, 14) on Calvary.

Because his exegesis is controlled by the fact of the Christ-event, the author's contrasting parallel between the repeated blood-bearing entrance of the Levitical high priest and the once-for-all sacrifice on the cross may appear strained. But such forcing of the shadow to fit the substance is the common manner of the writer.[77] Accordingly, he alters the sequence as well as the frequency in the age of fulfilment: the repeated entrance followed by a repeated blood sprinkling in the old order is now in the new age a once-for-all sacrifice-cum-sprinkling followed by a once-for-all entrance.

VI. CONCLUSION

We have reached now a fivefold conclusion. First, that τὰ ἅγια in Heb. 9. 8, 12, 24, 25 refers unequivocally to the Holy of Holies, heaven itself, the presence of God.

Secondly, that the writer's concern in Heb. 9. 1–10 is to assert the impotence of the old Levitical system. A system symbolized by the outer tent where the constant (daily) ritual gave proof that no permanent access to God (τὰ ἅγια) had been achieved.

[76] Moffatt, *Hebrews*, p. 132.

[77] This is the error of those who, like F. C. N. Hicks (*The Fullness of Sacrifice* [London, 1938], p. 241, *passim*), argue constantly from the actual data of the Levitical ritual rather than from the creative way Hebrews uses the Levitical material.

Thirdly, that verses 11–14, in stark contrast to the picture presented in the prior verses, set forth Christ as the great eschatological high priest of a dramatic new order. Just as the division of the old covenant tabernacle into two tents symbolized the inefficacy of the old ritual to cleanse sin and to gain access to God (τὰ ἅγια), so the 'greater and more perfect tabernacle', in contrast, pictures the new eschatological order's ability to cleanse the very conscience from sin and to open the portals of heaven itself.

Fourthly, that in the same way that the old covenant ritual order was inaugurated by blood so the new covenant order, τὰ ἐπουράνια, is consecrated by blood. But the superior new regime requires a likewise superior sacrifice to establish it – the sacrifice of Christ (*v.* 23).

Fifthly, that the sacrifice (προσφορά) of Christ which inaugurates this eschatological new covenant order admits of no extension of his offering into the heavenly realms. The writer, in an absolutely singular way within the Greek Bible, uses προσφέρω of the Levitical sprinkling within the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement (Heb. 9. 7); but this is to inform us that Christ's προσφέρειν on the cross fulfils this typical aspersion, not to indicate some heavenly oblation.

These five conclusions do not make the ninth chapter equal to the theology of a Paul; nevertheless, with its stress on the cross – the accomplished fact of the gospel – and the centrality of Christ, the chapter is not altogether unworthy of a Paul.