

**CHRIST'S ENTRY "WITHIN THE VEIL"
IN HEBREWS 6:19-20: THE OLD
TESTAMENT BACKGROUND**

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In his article "Where Jesus Has Gone as a Forerunner on Our Behalf (Heb 6:20),"¹ Norman Young is to be commended for insisting that one take seriously the LXX background to the Greek text of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Commentators on Hebrews generally recognize the dependence on the LXX by the author of Hebrews.² Any study which seeks to unlock the meaning of crucial terminology in the book of Hebrews must examine such language in the light of LXX usage.

Based upon LXX usage, Young and Roy Gane³ (whose short article Young expands upon) have made a strong case for interpreting the expression "within the veil" in Heb 6:19 as referring to the second veil, as in the similar but not identical LXX phrase.⁴ The essay that follows assumes for the sake of argument that the veil of this verse is to be identified as the second veil. But I find that such a conclusion becomes almost a moot point in comparison to the larger issue: What OT event provides the background for this passage?

¹Norman H. Young, "Where Jesus Has Gone as a Forerunner on Our Behalf," *AUSS* 39 (2001): 165-173.

²Typical is the statement of Paul Ellingworth: "There is very general agreement that the author drew his quotations, not directly from a Hebrew text, but from the LXX. . . . There is no compelling evidence that the author had access to any Hebrew text" (*The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993], 37). See also William L. Lane, who states: "A virtual consensus has been reached that the writer read his Bible in Greek" (*Hebrews 1-8*, vol. 47 A, WBC [Dallas: Word, 1991], cxviii).

³Roy E. Gane, "Re-Opening *Katapetasma* ('Veil') in Hebrews 6:19," *AUSS* 38 (2000): 5-8.

⁴The case is strong but not watertight. There are several differences between the LXX and Hebrews in wording and syntax for the phrase "within the veil." Note in particular that whereas in the LXX the term *esōteron* is used as a preposition without the article, in Hebrews it appears as a noun with the article. Further, the preposition *eis* is part of a compound verb in the LXX passages, but stands alone in Heb 6:19. Gane has provided plausible explanations for these differences, but the differences remain, and alternative explanations may yet be forthcoming that are significant in distinguishing between LXX and Hebrews usage. Furthermore, Numbers 18:7, which uses the same Hebrew phrase for "within the veil" that is behind the other LXX references that are similar to the phrase in Heb 6:19, is ambiguous (since it mentions both Aaron and his sons and only Aaron went into the Most Holy Place) and leaves open the possibility that the phrase may refer generally to everything behind both the first and second veils or even perhaps to that behind the first veil alone.

*Commonly Assumed Old Testament**Background: Day of Atonement*

Young and most other Hebrews commentators assume that the OT background envisaged here is the Day of Atonement, because only on this day did the Aaronic high priest enter the Most Holy Place behind the second veil, according to Pentateuchal cultic legislation. But underlying this assumption is a further one that usually remains unexamined in discussions of this passage. It is assumed by Young and many others that the “entering” event of Christ the high priest depicted in Heb 6:19-20 is in parallel or continuity with the work of the Aaronic high priest. This assumption is somewhat surprising coming from Young, in light of his statements in an earlier article on Hebrews underscoring the author of Hebrews’s “common manner” of “manipulating the type to fit the antitype” and “forcing of the shadow to fit the substance.”⁵ If discontinuity is to be expected anywhere in the Epistle, it would be at the point where the author of Hebrews explicitly *announces* the discontinuity, based upon an OT reference to the coming “priest after the order of Melchizedek” (Ps 110 [LXX 109]:4) and not after the order of Aaron.

*Another Possible Old Testament**Background: Inauguration*

Melchizedek was not only priest but king, and the equivalent at the time of the Mosaic sanctuary referred to in Hebrews would encompass two persons: the human ruler Moses and Aaron the high priest. Furthermore, before Aaron was anointed as high priest, we find Moses engaging in (high) priestly activity (i.e., offering sacrifices, manipulating blood, mediating between God and the people) as well as his administrative/leadership duties. It would not be surprising, therefore, for the author of Hebrews to see Jesus, the antitypical high priest, fulfilling the roles of Moses as well as Aaron in the Levitical cultus. And this is what the epistle presents. In the author’s very first reference to Christ Jesus as high priest (Heb 3:1-6), the parallel is drawn between Jesus and Moses in being faithful in/over the house of God (see also 10:20, where the motif of “High Priest over the house of God” is continued). In Heb 9, again the work of Jesus the high priest is compared with the (priestly) actions of Moses (offering sacrifices and manipulating the blood) in inaugurating the sanctuary (vv. 16-24).

⁵Norman H. Young, “The Gospel According to Hebrews 9,” *NTJ* 27 (1981): 205, 209. For an alternative view that argues for a basic continuity between Hebrews and the OT cultus (except where the OT has already indicated a continuity and this continuity in Hebrews is based upon OT citation), see Richard M. Davidson, “Typology in the Book of Hebrews,” in *Issues in the Book of Hebrews*, vol. 4, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series, ed. Frank B. Holbrook (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1989), 121-186.

In Heb 6:20, Jesus' high-priestly ministry is specifically emphasized as being "according to the order of Melchizedek," thus going beyond the work of the Aaronic high priest. Hence, in interpreting the "entering" of Jesus "within the veil" in this passage, we must look beyond the entering of the Aaronic high priest and include the entering of Moses for possible OT backgrounds to this passage. Besides the Day of Atonement, the only other occasion in which the Most Holy Place was entered was by Moses in his (priestly) work of anointing/inaugurating the sanctuary before Aaron the high priest was anointed (Exod 40:1-9; Lev 8:10-12; Num 7:1).⁶ That the term "within the veil" can be connected with the complex of inauguration services of the sanctuary is apparent from its usage in Exod 26:33, where it prescribes the setting up of the sanctuary by bringing the Ark "within the veil," an event that was carried out in connection with the inauguration of the sanctuary (Exod 40:3).

Which of these two OT cultic events involving the entry "within the veil" is in view in Heb 6:19-20—Day of Atonement or inauguration? All assumptions of scholars aside, this passage taken in isolation does not provide the necessary information to decide. There is no distinctive terminology or motif in these verses that points decisively to one event and not the other. One hint, not generally noted by commentators, is that Heb 6:20 refers to "Jesus, *having become* [*genomēnos*, aorist participle] High Priest." This seems to allude to a point in time in which Jesus took on the office of high priest, and in the OT system, the initiation of the priesthood (including the high priest) took place at the time of sanctuary inauguration (see Exod 40:9-15). While suggestive, this point is not decisive, especially since Jesus is high priest after the order of Melchizedek and not of Aaron.

However, there are three parallel passages in this cultic section of Hebrews that refer to Christ's entering into the sanctuary, and these may be examined to assist in the identification of the OT background alluded to in Heb 6:19-20.

Hebrews 10:19-20

The first parallel passage to which we turn is Heb 10:19-20. Albert Vanhoye has identified a chiasmic parallel between Heb 6:19-20 and Heb 10:19-20.⁷ The chiasmic linkage between these two passages becomes even

⁶That there was a "kingly" function as well as "priestly" involved in Moses' supervision of the inauguration of the wilderness sanctuary may be supported by the intertextual linkage to the dedication of the Solomonic Temple, in which King Solomon presided over the temple dedication, offering the dedicatory prayer and thousands of sacrifices (2 Chr 6:12-43; 7:5), although the priests brought the ark into the Most Holy Place (2 Chr 5:7).

⁷Albert Vanhoye, *Structure and Message of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, Subsida Biblica,

parallels, these two passages not only speak of the same veil but refer to the same overall content including the background event. We would add that if the LXX is crucial in identifying the veil in the former passage (6:19-20), then any crucial technical LXX terms utilized in this latter passage (10:19-20) to identify the event must also be allowed due weight.

What is the OT event alluded to in Heb 10:19-20? Most commentators have assumed a Day of Atonement background, with little or no regard for possible LXX terminology employed in the passage. Scholars have generally taken Heb 6:19-20 as a key to what event is in view in 10:19-20, but as we have already pointed out, the former passage does not settle this question. I am convinced that the latter passage (10:19-20) is the key to interpreting the former (6:19-20), and not the other way around. In describing Christ's work as he enters "by a new and living way . . . through the veil," the author of Hebrews employs a LXX term, *enkainizō*. This verb means "to bring about the beginning of something, with implication that it is newly established, [to] ratify, inaugurate, dedicate" (original emphasis),¹¹ and with its nominal derivatives is employed frequently as a cultic term throughout the LXX in depicting the inauguration of the sanctuary / temple.¹² In the Pentateuchal materials dealing with the sanctuary cultus, this Greek root is found in the LXX four times, *all of these in one chapter, Num 7, in the context of the inauguration/dedication of the sanctuary*.¹³ This Greek term is *never* used in the LXX to refer to the Day of Atonement rituals.¹⁴

Some commentators have noted the LXX usage denoting sanctuary inauguration in their discussion of Heb 10:19-20,¹⁵ but they have not generally allowed the force of this word to inform their interpretation of the OT background event behind this passage.¹⁶ That the author of

¹¹BDAG, 272.

¹²For Pentateuchal usage, see n. 12 below. Outside the Pentateuch, for the verb, see 1 Kgs 8:63 and 2 Chr 7:5 (the dedication of Solomon's temple), and 2 Chr 15:8 (the rededication of the altar after it was desecrated). The noun *enkainia* is used in reference to the postexilic dedication/inauguration of the temple by Ezra (Ezra 6:16, 17).

¹³The noun *enkainismos* appears in Num 7:10, 11, 84; and the noun *enkainōsis* occurs in Num 7:88. The subject of Num 7 is specifically the inauguration/dedication of the altar, but this is to be seen in the larger context of, and as the climax to, the inauguration of the entire sanctuary and its furnishings (Num 7:1).

¹⁴The only other occurrence of this term in the (LXX) Pentateuch is in Deut 20:5, where it refers to the dedication of a new house (private dwelling of an Israelite).

¹⁵See, e.g., Ellingworth, 518; Erich Grässer, *An die Hebräer*, Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1997), 14-15.

¹⁶A notable exception is the study of N. A. Dahl, "A New and Living Way: The Approach to God According to Hebrews 10:19-25," *Int* 15 (1951): 401-412. Based upon cultic

Hebrews had in mind the cultic LXX meaning of this word, “inaugurated” (as correctly translated in NASB), and not a more general notion of “opened” (as in the translation of the NIV among others), is supported by the only other occurrence of this term in the epistle (or in the NT) in Heb 9:18, where it indisputably has the cultic meaning of “inaugurated/dedicated” (we return to this passage below).¹⁷ Other Greek terms were available to convey the idea of “opened,” but the author’s selection of this particular LXX cultic term for inauguration certainly must be given its proper force. The author of Hebrews here seems to clearly indicate that Christ’s entering by a new and living way through the veil was in order to inaugurate the heavenly sanctuary.

In v. 19, the believers are called to have “boldness to enter *ta bagia* by the blood of Jesus.” The term *ta bagia* is often translated by the “Holiest” or “Most Holy Place” and commentators suggest that this alludes to the Day of Atonement, when the high priest went into the second apartment. Even if *ta bagia* did refer to the Most Holy Place, it would still fit the OT background setting of inauguration equally well as Day of Atonement, inasmuch as the entire sanctuary—including both Holy Place and Most Holy Place—was inaugurated, according to Exod 40.

But if the author of Hebrews is indebted throughout his epistle to LXX usage, as is almost universally recognized by scholars, then the evidence points in a different direction than the Most Holy Place as the correct translation of *ta bagia*. The term *ta bagia* is the regular LXX term for the sanctuary as a whole, not for the Most Holy Place alone. A recent thesis by Carl Cosaert has confirmed my own research that throughout the LXX *ta bagia* is regularly employed to refer to the whole sanctuary in general. Cosaert also shows this to be the case in other early Greek literature of Judaism (Pseudepigrapha, Philo, Josephus). He further demonstrates that in both LXX and other early Jewish literature *ta bagia* is never used to describe the Most Holy Place alone.¹⁸ In light of this

LXX usage of *enkainizō* followed in Hebrews, Dahl, 405, concludes that the opening of the way in Heb 10:20 “is a cultic act of consecration, identical with the ratification of the new covenant.” Dahl’s analysis of fifty years ago anticipates the results of my own research; I did not have access to Dahl’s article until the first draft of this article was completed.

¹⁷See also Dahl, 405, who notes that the term *enkainizō*, both in Heb 6:20 and 9:18, “must be understood as a cultic term: to consecrate and inaugurate and thus render valid and ratify.”

¹⁸Carl Cosaert examines the 109 occurrences of *ta bagia* in the LXX that refer to the sanctuary, and shows that in 106 of these the term has reference to the whole sanctuary, while in three verses it refers to the Holy Place (1 Kgs 8:8; 2 Chr 5:9, 11). Never does it have reference to the Most Holy Place alone (not even in 2 Chr 5:11, contrary to some scholarly claims) (“A Study of *Ta Hagia* in the LXX, Pseudepigrapha, Philo, and Josephus, and Its Implications in Hebrews” [M.A. Thesis, Nazarene Theological Seminary, 2000]).

overwhelmingly consistent evidence of background usage, it would be highly unlikely that the author of the epistle to the Hebrews broke with this LXX and contemporary Jewish usage. Some modern versions, such as NEB, have recognized the force of the LXX usage and (I believe) correctly translated this term consistently as "sanctuary" throughout its occurrences in the Epistle of Hebrews.¹⁹

LXX usage of crucial sanctuary-related terms—both *enkainizō* and *ta bagia*—leads us to consider the OT background of the entire sanctuary and its inauguration. Of course, the final determiner of meaning in any given passage is the immediate context, and Young rightly asks, regarding the LXX use of the term "within the veil," whether the context in Hebrews differs "so radically . . . that we are obliged . . . to ignore the linguistic similarity" between LXX and Hebrews terminology.²⁰ But just as Young confirms the consistency of Hebrews with the LXX regarding the phrase "within the veil," so we also confirm the consistency of Hebrews and the LXX regarding the terminology for the inauguration of the sanctuary as a whole. In fact, the context of Heb 10:19-20 points strongly in the direction of inauguration. Heb 10:1-10 points to a time of transition between the first sacrificial system that is taken away "that he may establish the second" (v. 10). Verse 12 refers to the initiation of Christ's high priestly ministry as he "sat down at the right hand of God" in fulfillment of Ps 110 (LXX 109):1. Verse 16 refers to the making of a new covenant. And v. 20 refers to "a new and living way"—which in light of 9:8 is the way into the heavenly sanctuary. What we have is a context of fourfold initiation—of a sacrificial system, covenant, high priesthood, and sanctuary. Such initiation of all these entities in the OT occurred at the time of inauguration, not the Day of Atonement. The context of the passage thus supports the consistent use of LXX terminology.

Hebrews 10:19-20, therefore, calls for believers to boldly enter the heavenly sanctuary (*ta bagia*) by a new and living way (i.e., the way into the heavenly sanctuary), which Jesus our high priest has inaugurated for us through the veil. The emphasis indeed is upon believers' access, but it is access to the entire heavenly sanctuary, not just the Most Holy Place. This access Jesus has brought about by his blood and by his entering through the veil to inaugurate the heavenly sanctuary.

Hebrews 10:19-20 is also seen to illuminate its chiasmic counterpart passage in Heb 6:19-20. Note that both passages move in the same two stages, with the latter passage further elaborating upon the former in each stage. The first verse of each passage (i.e., 6:19 and 10:19) refers to the

¹⁹See also, e.g., Ellingworth, 517, who points out that the term *ta bagia* here in Heb 6:19, as well as in 9:12 and 9:8, "refers to the heavenly sanctuary without distinction between its parts."

²⁰Young, "Where Jesus Has Gone," 170.

believers' entry into the heavenly sanctuary, while the succeeding verse in each case deals with the entering work of Christ the high priest that makes possible the believers' entry. In the first parallel stage, Heb 6:19 utilizes the more common and general term for the believers' entering, i.e., *eiserchom ai*, to "go in, enter"; while Heb 10:19 employs a less common and more specific parallel term further describing the nature of the entering, i.e., *eisodos* "entrance, access."²¹ The latter passage elaborates on the believers' entering, showing that the issue in both passages is access. Likewise, in the second stage of parallel passages, Heb 6:20 utilizes the more common and general Greek term for Christ's entering, i.e., again *eiserchom ai*, while Heb 10:20 employs a less common and more specific parallel term further describing the nature of the entering, i.e., *enkainizō*, "to inaugurate."²² The latter passage elaborates on the nature of Christ's entering, showing that the event in both passages is that of inauguration.

Hebrews 10:19-20 also underscores the same kind of action (*aktionsart*) as in 6:19-20. In the first pair of verses, dealing with the believers' entering, Heb 6:19 has *eiserchom enēn*, the present participle of *eiserchom ai*, and Heb 10:19 has the nontemporal noun *eisodos* "entrance, access." Both indicate the ongoing access of the believers (hope) into the heavenly sanctuary. In the second pair of verses, dealing with the entering work of Christ, Heb 6:20 has *eisēlthen*, the aorist form of *eiserchom ai*, and Heb 10:20 has *enekainisen*, the aorist of *enkainizō*. The use of the aorists indicates punctiliar action, the specific point in time when Christ entered the heavenly sanctuary to inaugurate it once for all, thus providing the ongoing access to believers through his blood.

Hebrews 9:12

The second "entering" passage that parallels Heb 6:19-20 is Heb 9:12.

In the chiasmic structure of the central section of Hebrews, this passage comes at the climax of the chiasm with its comparison and contrast between the earthly and heavenly sanctuaries. Hebrews 9:12 reads: "Not with the blood of goats [*tragōn*] and calves [*moschōn*], but with his own blood he entered [*eisēlthen*] the sanctuary [*tabagía*] once for all, having obtained eternal redemption." Commentators on this verse generally see

²¹BDAG, 294, and a look at the LXX use of this term reveal that it often has the meaning of "entrance" with an implication of "access." See, e.g., Josh 13:5; Judg 1:24-25; 1 Sam 17:52; 2 Kgs 14:25; 1 Chr 9:19; 2 Chr 16:1; Ezek 27:3; 42:9; 1 Macc 14:5; Wis 7:6. It is also used of entrance into God's house in 2 Kgs (4 Kgdms) 23:11, and of entrance to the Lord's house in the context of the inauguration of the new messianic temple in Ezek 44:5.

²²Young's otherwise careful comparison between Heb 6:19-20 and 10:19-20 overlooks this two-stage movement in these passages, paralleling Jesus' entering in 6:20 with the believers' "entrance/access" in 10:19. No mention at all is made of the crucial term *enkainizō*.

this as a reference to Christ's entry into the heavenly Most Holy Place, paralleling the earthly high priest's entry into the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement. But once again, little or no attention is paid by these commentators to the LXX background of the crucial terms in this verse.

We have already pointed out that the LXX always uses *ta bagia* for the entire sanctuary as a whole, but never for the Most Holy Place in particular, and this usage seems to be followed by the author of Hebrews. Even if the term in Heb 9:12 did refer solely to the Most Holy Place, we noted above that such a reference would fit both the Day of Atonement and the inauguration equally as well, inasmuch as both OT events involved entering the Most Holy Place. But it seems much more likely that this passage is no exception to the general usage in the LXX and Hebrews and refers to the heavenly sanctuary as a whole. Regardless of its meaning in this passage, *ta bagia* does not assist us in deciding between the Day of Atonement and the inauguration as OT background event for this passage.

What about other seemingly clear allusions to the Day of Atonement in Heb 9:12? In particular, the mention of "goats and calves" has been often seen as a clear reference to the calves and goats that were sacrificed on the Day of Atonement. But here again, I suggest that such assertions have neglected to take into account the LXX usage of these terms. A comparison of the Greek terms with LXX usage for these animals (and especially the goats) in Heb 9:12 leads to a startling revelation (at least it was for me). The word for "calf" (*moschos*) appears both in the description of the Day of Atonement and inauguration services.²³ However, the word for "goat" (*tragos*), used here by the author of Hebrews, appears 13 times in the Pentateuch in connection with the sanctuary, *all in the same chapter, Num 7*, which, as we have seen above, contains the nominal form of *enkainizō* and refers to the inauguration rituals of the sanctuary.²⁴ The Hebrew word for "goat" [*'attûd*] translated by the LXX as *tragos* also appears only in Num 7 in

²³With reference to the Day of Atonement, *moschos* appears 7 times in Lev 16 (vv. 3, 6, 11, 14, 15, 18, 27); with reference to the inauguration services, the term appears 17 times in Num 7 and 8 (7:3, 15, 21, 27, 33, 39, 45, 51, 57, 63, 69, 75, 81, 87; 8:8, 8, 12).

²⁴Numbers 7:17, 23, 29, 35, 41, 47, 53, 59, 65, 71, 77, 83, 88. The other (noncultic) Pentateuchal occurrences of the word *tragos* in the LXX are in the list of Jacob's animals (Gen 30:35; 31:10, 12, 32:15) and in the divine promise of plenty in Moses' Song of Deuteronomy (32:14). Ellingworth, 452, notes this phenomenon: "The only reference in the Pentateuch to the sacrifice of goats is in Nu. 7:17-18." But he does not draw out its significance, content with the conclusion that "the author is concerned, not with cultic minutiae, but with the principle of sacrifice itself, and its fulfillment by Christ" (ibid.). I find that the author of Hebrews does indeed remain faithful to the details of the OT services, even as he makes his larger theological points.

the cultic sections of the Pentateuch.

The LXX term for “goat” used in the Day of Atonement context of Lev 16 (also 13 times)²⁵ is *chimaros*, not *tragos*, and this term translates a different Hebrew noun (*šá’ír*). In view of the fact that the word *chimaros* was a well-known and frequently used term for “goat” in the first century, including the Pseudepigrapha, Philo, and Josephus,²⁶ the choice of a specific LXX Pentateuchal term pointing to inauguration, and not to a synonym which could refer to the Day of Atonement, seems to be significant.²⁷

Not only does the word *tragos* refer exclusively to inauguration and never to the Day of Atonement in the LXX sanctuary legislation of the Pentateuch, but even more significantly, the only place where *moschos* and *tragos* appear together in the cultic expressions of the entire LXX OT is in Num 7, with reference to the inauguration of the sanctuary. Young points out with regard to the phrase “within the veil” in Heb 6:19 that it is crucial to see the verbal connections of the phrase and not merely the individual words. So here in Heb 9:12, the conjunction of these two crucial terms, which appears in only a single OT chapter, provides powerful evidence of an intentional reference by the author of Hebrews to the OT background of sanctuary inauguration. By utilizing the word *tragos* (which appears only in an inauguration setting in the Pentateuchal cultic material) and linking it with *moschos* (which link is found only in the same inauguration setting in the entire OT), the author of Hebrews intertextually links with the OT inauguration service and not the Day of Atonement. If it should prove true that this same reference to *tragos* and *moschos* together is also found in the original Greek of Heb 9:19, which

²⁵Leviticus 16:5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 15, 18, 20, 21, 22, 22, 26, 27.

²⁶BDAG, 1085. *Chimaros* does not appear at all in the NT, and *tragos* does not appear in the NT outside of Hebrews. The adjective *aigeios* “of a goat” is found once in Heb 11:37 in the noncultic phrase *en aigeiōis derm asin* “in goat’s skin,” describing the clothing of some of the heroes of faith. The terms for “goat/kid” in the Gospels are *eriphos* (Matt 25:32; Luke 15:29 [variant reading]) and *eriphion* (Matt 25:33; Luke 15:29), but these references are also not in a cultic setting.

²⁷It should be noted that Heb 9:13 and 10:4 broaden the reference from the inauguration to include the whole complex of sacrifices in the OT ritual service that coalesced in the one sacrifice of Christ’s blood. These latter verses link the word *tragos* to the word *tauros* “bull,” referring to the “blood of goats [*tragōn*] and bulls [*taurōn*]” (reversed in the TR). The conjunction of these two terms appears to be a direct allusion to Isa 1:11 (“I delight not in the fat of lambs and the blood of bulls [*taurōn*] and goats [*tragōn*]”) and Ps 49 (LXX; 50 Hebrew and English) (“Will I eat the flesh of bulls [*taurōn*] or drink the blood of goats [*tragōn*]?” [v. 13]). Here, outside the Pentateuch, the term *tragos* is connected with *tauros*, not *moschos*, as part of a comprehensive list summarizing the whole sacrificial system. The author of Hebrews is not listing various sacrificial animals willy-nilly, as some commentators suggest, but clearly follows LXX usage, in order to emphasize inauguration in Heb 9:12 in the context of Christ’s entry into the heavenly sanctuary and to emphasize the whole sacrificial system in v. 13 (and 10:4) in the context of showing the superiority and efficaciousness of Christ’s “better blood” contrasted with all the sacrifices of the OT shadow.

is unquestionably a context of inauguration, then this point stands out with even more forcefulness.²⁸

As with Heb 10:19-20, the context of Heb 9:12 is consistent with the LXX usage of terminology. In Heb 9:1-11, the author of Hebrews is indicating the transition from the first (earthly) covenant and its sanctuary to the new covenant and its (heavenly) sanctuary. I have argued this point elsewhere, following the lead of numerous commentators on Hebrews, and will not repeat the evidence here.²⁹ According to the writer of the epistle, in the inauguration of the heavenly sanctuary, Christ did not enter with the blood of goats and calves as was used in the earthly sanctuary's inauguration, but with his own blood. He entered (*eisēlthen*, aorist punctiliar action) at his ascension to inaugurate the heavenly sanctuary at a specific point in time once for all (*ephapax*). The "way into the heavenly sanctuary [*ta hagia*]" (Heb 9:8) is now made manifest in Jesus!

Hebrews 9:24

The third "entering" passage that parallels Heb 6:19-20 is Heb 9:24: "For Christ did not enter [*eisēlthen*] a sanctuary [*hagia*] made with hands, a copy [*antitypa*] of the true [*alēthinōn*], but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." What is the OT background event in view with regard to Christ's entering into the true (heavenly) sanctuary? This verse must be seen in the context of the preceding verses in the chapter. Of all the

²⁸Many ancient and important NT Greek manuscripts, besides the so-called Byzantine tradition, utilize this same phrase—"blood of goats [*tragōn*] and calves [*moschōn*]"—but in reverse order—in Heb 9:19, where the context is indisputably inauguration. The second edition of the UBS Greek NT omitted the reference to "goats" in the text, but the third edition has brought the reference into the text in brackets. The UBS reading is given a certainty rating of "C," indicating the uncertainty involved and at least a good possibility that the inclusion of "goats" represents the original reading. Inasmuch as the OT event alluded to in Heb 9:19 (inauguration/ratification of the covenant) mentions only the blood of "calves" (LXX *moscharion*, diminutive of *moschos*), and not *tragos*, the addition of *tragos* seems to be the more difficult reading, and therefore may well be the original. On the other hand, if *tragos* is brought together with *moschos* in Heb 9:19 under the influence of Heb 9:12, then this would suggest that the scribe envisioned v. 12 as paralleling the same inauguration event found in v. 19. Either way, the case for inauguration in v. 12 is strengthened. However, the argument of this essay is not dependent upon reading "goats" (*tragōi*) in this verse.

²⁹See Davidson, 179-183, for evidence supporting the contrast between old and new covenants and their respective sanctuaries in Heb 9, concurring with, for instance, F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 194-195; Aelred Cody, *Heavenly Sanctuary and the Liturgy in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (St. Meinrad, IN: Grail, 1960), 147-148; Dahl, 405; Ellingworth, 438; Jean Héring, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (London: Epworth, 1970), 70-75; Ceslaus Spicq, *L'épître aux Hébreux*, vol. 2 (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1953): 253-254; *contra* Young, "The Gospel According to Hebrews 9," *passim*, and others who see a contrast between the two apartments of the sanctuary but not between the two sanctuaries.

possible references to inauguration in the epistle to the Hebrews, Heb 9:16-21 most clearly and explicitly describes the ratification/inauguration of the first covenant and the earthly sanctuary. Here again, the LXX terminology (*enkainizō*, v. 18) points to inauguration, and the detailed portrayal of the OT covenant ratification (vv. 16-20) and sanctuary inauguration (v. 21) is consistent with the LXX ratification/inauguration terminology.

The question arises over how far the discussion of inauguration continues in this chapter. I find it most probable that the inauguration motif is carried forward through vv. 23-24. Verse 22 identifies the inauguration of “both the tabernacle and all the vessels of ministry” as described in the preceding verse as a work of “cleansing” (*katharizetai*), and parenthetically states the general principle that according to the OT ritual law almost all things were cleansed (*katharizetai*) by blood, and “without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.” Verse 23 then returns to the subject of v. 22, referring to cleansing (*katharizesthai*) of the sanctuary (the earthly copy and the heavenly reality). The linkage of both terminology (*katharizō*) and subject (the sanctuary) seems clearly to indicate continuity between v. 21 and v. 23, and a continuation of the inauguration motif.

In v. 23, the writer of the Epistle argues typologically from the OT cultus to the heavenly reality: “Therefore necessity [*anagkē*] for the copies [*hypodeigmata*] of the things in the heavens to be cleansed [*katharizesthai*] with these, but the heavenly things with better sacrifices than these.” Note that in Heb 9:23, the word *anagkē* “necessity” is a noun and *katharizesthai* “to be cleansed” is an infinitive. Neither of these terms gives an indication of time—past, present, or future. In light of the preceding extended discussion of sanctuary/covenant, inauguration/ratification, and terminological linkages as pointed out above, it seems preferable to see the author drawing a parallel between the cleansing or purifying (*katharizesthai*) carried out during the OT rites inaugurating the wilderness sanctuary (cf. Exod 29:12, 36 LXX, *katharismou* and *katharieis*) and the inauguration of the heavenly realities.

The following verse, Heb 9:24, linked by *gar* (“for”) to the preceding verse, then continues the same parallel between earthly and heavenly inauguration. Christ has not entered (to inaugurate) a man-made sanctuary, which is a copy of the real one in heaven, but into heaven (to inaugurate the heavenly sanctuary itself and) to appear in God’s presence (to begin his mediatorial work) in our behalf.³⁰

While Heb 9:23 harks back to the inauguration, and the implications

³⁰Dahl, 404, states: “According to Hebrews the sacral ratification of the first covenant included sprinkling with blood the tent and all the vessels used in worship. . . . The corresponding purification of the true, heavenly sanctuary is achieved by a ‘better’ sacrifice—by Christ, who entered heaven itself, having put away sin by the sacrifice of himself (9:23ff). This heavenly act of consecration should be connected with the opening of the way through the curtain [Heb 10:20].”

of this are drawn in v. 24, at the same time the nontemporal statement of v. 23 ("necessity . . . to be cleansed") appears to be intentionally ambiguous, and the same language could also have reference to the Day of Atonement. Such a double meaning seems likely, inasmuch as the author, building upon this verse, shifts to unmistakable language of the Day of Atonement in vv. 25-28. Two aspects of Day of Atonement typology are apparent in these verses. First, Christ's *sacrifice* is a typological fulfillment of the Day of Atonement sacrifices. The contrast is drawn between Christ's once-for-all sacrifice of himself and the high priest's entering the sanctuary "often"—every year at the time of the Day of Atonement—"with the blood of another." As the next chapter of the epistle (Heb 10:1-18) makes clear, Christ's sacrifice is "better blood" than all the sacrifices of the OT cultus, even better than the blood offered on the Day of Atonement, the high point of the OT sacrificial ritual year. All of the OT sacrifices, even (and especially!) those of the Day of Atonement, coalesce in the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ. Hebrews 10:5-10 gives the justification for this by exegeting the OT announcement in Ps 40:6-8 of such a coalescence of all sacrifices in the Messiah.

Second, Heb 9:27-28 points out the *future* implications of the cleansing sacrifices for the heavenly realities mentioned in v. 23. The nontemporal mention of "necessity . . . to be cleansed" of v. 23 not only points back to the inaugural cleansing of the sanctuary (as we have seen above), but also has reference to a future (from the perspective of Hebrews) work of cleansing connected with the Yom Kippur judgment. Christ's once-for-all sacrifice "to bear the sins of many" (v. 28) makes possible both the believer's assurance in the future (Day of Atonement) judgment (v. 27) and also Christ's Second Coming after this judgment "apart from sin, for salvation" of "those who eagerly wait for him" (v. 28).

The movement from inauguration to future Day of Atonement judgment in the latter half of Heb 9 parallels a similar movement in Heb 10. As we have already pointed out in our discussion of this latter passage, Heb 10:19-24 highlights the inauguration of the heavenly sanctuary and the benefits of believers' access in hope because of this inaugural work of Jesus through his blood. But immediately following upon the inauguration is a recognition of future Day of Atonement judgment. Hebrews 10:25 reads: "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day [*tēn hēm eran*] approaching." The term "The Day" (Aramaic *yōm a*) was a technical term for the Day of Atonement in the Mishnah (see the whole tractate entitled *Yoma* describing the Day of Atonement services of the Second Temple), and very well may be a

reference to the Day of Atonement here in Heb 9:25.

Such a conclusion seems confirmed by the verses that follow, which describe a future judgment (from the time perspective of the author of Hebrews). Verses 26-31 give the contours of this judgment as: (1) future (from the perspective of the epistle), (2) both investigative/judicial (“testimony of two or three witnesses,” v. 28) and (3) executive (“fearful expectation of judgment and fiery indignation,” v. 27), and (4) involving God’s professed people as the object of judgment (“The Lord will judge his people,” v. 30, citing the covenant lawsuit of Deut 32:35).

Just as Heb 10:19-31 involves a movement from inauguration to Day of Atonement judgment, so seems to be the case in Heb 9:16-28. Hebrews 9:23 appears to be intentionally ambiguous, including reference to both inaugural and Yom Kippur cleansing. The heavenly sanctuary “entering” passage (Heb 9:24) seems best interpreted as climaxing the discussion of inauguration, while vv. 25-28 transition to the Day of Atonement typology.

Conclusion

Young’s basic twofold methodology of examining LXX usage of key terms in Hebrews and comparing Heb 6:19-20 with parallel “entering” passages such as Heb 10:19-20 is sound. But the methodology that Young and other commentators have followed in examining the identity of the veil in Heb 6:19-20 has not been consistently applied to determine the identity of the background OT event in this text and parallel passages.

Hebrews 6:19-20 describes Christ’s entering “within the veil,” but does not indicate what OT background event is in view. On two occasions in the OT, there was an entry “within the veil” of the Most Holy Place as well as the Holy Place: the Day of Atonement service and the inauguration of the sanctuary. A comparison with the other three sanctuary “entering” passages of Hebrews provides a consistent picture of the inauguration of the earthly sanctuary as the background OT event-complex, and not the Day of Atonement, as commonly assumed. In each of these three parallel passages, as in Heb 6:19-20, the author’s use of crucial LXX terminology—and especially the conjunction of the three key LXX terms *en kainizō*, *tragos*, and *moschos* in a single chapter dealing with inauguration (Num 7)—proves to be a key to interpretation. The immediate context of each passage is consistent with the LXX terminology pointing to inauguration.

The implications of the author’s faithfulness to LXX usage, while recognized in Heb 6:19-20, have not been given due weight by most commentators on Hebrews in discussing the three parallel passages (Heb 9:12; 9:24; and 10:19-20). I conclude that, according to the unified testimony of the three parallel sanctuary “entering” passages of Hebrews, Christ’s entry into the

heavenly sanctuary was to inaugurate it once for all by his blood, thus initiating his heavenly mediatorial work as high priest and providing ongoing access of believers to the presence of God and to the benefits of Christ's mediation. Just as the OT sanctuary was inaugurated before its services officially began (Exod 40; Lev 8; Num 7), so the heavenly sanctuary was inaugurated as Jesus began his priestly ministry in its precincts.

The intricate "parallel nature" between the "entering" passages implies that the identity of the veil is the same, as Young correctly argues for Heb 6:19-20 and 10:19-20, and also implies that the event is the same, as Vanhoye has recognized with these same two passages. We have seen that inauguration constitutes the OT background event in all three parallel "entering" passages (Heb 9:12; 9:24; and 10:19-20). Thus, I conclude that inauguration should also be seen as the most probable OT background for Heb 6:19-20 as for the other sanctuary "entering" passages. This conclusion is in harmony with the contextual hint in Heb 6:20, describing a point in time of Christ "having become" (*genomēnos*) high priest, paralleling the time of inauguration in the OT when the priesthood was established (Exod 40:9-15).

While the primary background of these passages is not the Day of Atonement, despite the commonly asserted assumption of commentators, this is not to say that the Day of Atonement is ignored in the Epistle.³¹ According to the author, all of the sacrifices of the OT cultus, and especially the ones on the Day of Atonement, the high point of the ritual year, are not ultimately effective to forgive sins. Christ's sacrifice is the typological fulfillment of all the sacrificial system, including the Day of Atonement sacrifices, in harmony with the OT announcement of such in Ps 40:6-8. And further, as we have seen above, the future judgment is cast in Day of Atonement language. The judgment of "The Day [of Atonement, *Yom a*]," with its executive and judicial phases, will come upon the professed people of God. The events of this Day bring a "fearful expectation of judgment" on the part of those who have rejected Jesus (Heb 10:26-29), but for those who have accepted the benefits of Christ's atoning work this future judgment is welcomed, as they "eagerly wait for him" to appear at his Second Coming "apart from sin, for salvation." (Heb 9:27-28).

I also do not want to leave the impression that the inauguration of the sanctuary is the dominant motif in this central cultic section of Hebrews. Neither inauguration nor Day of Atonement take center stage. Rather, I

³¹See William G. Johnsson, "The Significance of the Day of Atonement Allusions in the Epistle to the Hebrews," in *The Sanctuary and the Atonement*, ed. Arnold V. Wallenkampf and W. Richard Leshar (Washington, DC: Biblical Research Institute, 1981), 380-393; reprinted as "Day of Atonement Allusions," in *Issues in the Book of Hebrews*, ed. Frank B. Holbrook (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1989), 105-120.

concur with William Johnsson that there is a complex of motifs revealing the superiority of Jesus (and the gospel realities brought about by him) over the shadows of the OT cultus. This complex includes the better covenant, better high priest, the better sanctuary, and better blood.³² In a word, the author's message to his readers is, "Don't forsake Jesus! He has brought about the reality toward which all the OT cultic shadows pointed." Within this complex, the sanctuary inauguration motif, represented in Heb 6:19-20 and parallel "entering passages," plays a crucial, albeit not dominant, role in highlighting the point of transition (thus the aorist punctiliar "he entered") from the old covenant/sanctuary and its sacrifices and priesthood to the new order. Because he entered the heavenly sanctuary with the blood of his once-for-all sacrifice to inaugurate it once for all, believers in him now have ongoing bold access by faith to the presence of God and the benefits of Christ's high-priestly mediatorial work.

³²Ibid., 118. Johnsson sees the "sacrificial section" of Hebrews (8:1-10:18) as particularly concerned with expounding the motif of "better blood."