

Hebrews 9.23: Cult Inauguration, Yom Kippur and the Cleansing of the Heavenly Tabernacle

R. B. JAMIESON

Selwyn College, University of Cambridge, 36 Selwyn Gardens, Cambridge CB3 9BA, United Kingdom. Email: rjb25@cam.ac.uk

The *prima facie* sense of the assertion of Hebrews 9.23 that the heavenly things themselves needed to be cleansed is often rejected as fantastic or preposterous. Consequently, the verse is often read as describing the cleansing of conscience or the inauguration, not purification, of the heavenly tabernacle. Both interpretations are critiqued here. Positively, this essay argues that in Heb 9.23 Christ's sacrifice cleanses the tabernacle in heaven from antecedent defilement in order to inaugurate the new covenant cult. I argue that the structure of 9.23–8 and the manner in which Hebrews appropriates both cult inauguration and Yom Kippur support this conclusion.

Keywords: Hebrews, Day of Atonement, sacrifice, purity, heavenly tabernacle

In the eyes of modern commentators, the assertion of Hebrews 9.23 that 'the heavenly things themselves' needed to be cleansed 'by better sacrifices than these' is one of the strangest, most intractable statements in this elusive epistle. This assertion, taken at face value, has been called 'almost fantastic', 'preposterous', and a 'rather unhappy comparison'.¹ Despite the recent surge of scholarly interest in Hebrews, little sustained attention has been paid to this verse.² Further, Heb 9.23 provides something of a litmus test for how an interpreter handles Hebrews' treatment of the heavenly tabernacle and Christ's priestly

1 J. Moffatt, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (ICC 40; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1924) 132; K. L. Schenck, *Cosmology and Eschatology in Hebrews: The Settings of the Sacrifice* (SNTSMS 143; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) 168; H. Montefiore, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (BNTC; London: Adam & Charles Black, 1964) 160.

2 The most detailed recent treatments are D. J. MacLeod, 'The Cleansing of the True Tabernacle', *BibSac* 152 (1995) 60–71; G. Gäbel, *Die Kulttheologie des Hebräerbriefes: Eine exegetisch-religionsgeschichtliche Studie* (WUNT 11/212; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006) 419–24; B. J. Ribbens, 'Levitical Sacrifice and Heavenly Cult in Hebrews' (Ph.D. diss., Wheaton College, 2013) 161–6.

self-offering. This article, therefore, will offer a fresh defence of the idea that Heb 9.23 does indeed portray Christ's sacrifice as purifying the heavenly tabernacle. After noting the most common readings this verse has provoked, I will read Heb 9.23 in light of the structure of 9.23–8 and the manner in which Heb 9.23 appropriates the ritual logic of both cultic inauguration and Yom Kippur. Second, I will critically interact with exponents of the alternate views detailed below.

For present purposes we can group the most common readings of Heb 9.23 into three clusters.³ First, many assign an anthropological or ecclesiological referent to 'the heavenly things themselves'.⁴ On this reading what is ultimately cleansed is not a structure in heaven but people, usually their consciences. Second, some argue that 9.23 describes not the purification of the heavenly sanctuary but its inauguration or consecration.⁵ Both of these readings abjure any implication of the antecedent defilement of the heavenly tabernacle. Third, some argue, as will I, that 9.23 does indeed assert that the tabernacle in heaven was cleansed from antecedent defilement.⁶ Within this cluster are some who argue that this purification is a constituent element in the heavenly sanctuary's inauguration.⁷ In what follows I will broadly concur with those who see 'purification for inauguration' in Heb 9.23, though for somewhat different reasons, and with different emphases, from many of its exponents.

3 Cf. the nine views identified by MacLeod, 'Cleansing,' 63–70.

4 A. Vanhoye, *Prêtres anciens, prêtre nouveau selon le Nouveau Testament* (Parole de Dieu; Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1980) 231 ('l'évangile chrétien et de l'Église'); W. R. G. Loader, *Sohn und Hoherpriester: Eine traditions-geschichtliche Untersuchung zur Christologie des Hebräerbriefes* (WMANT 53; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1981) 169–70; H. W. Attridge, *Hebrews: A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989) 260–2; F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (rev. edn; NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990) 228–9; Schenck, *Cosmology*, 168; K. Backhaus, *Der Hebräerbrief* (RNT; Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 2009) 335–6.

5 G. Lünemann, *Kritisch exegetisches Handbuch über den Hebräerbrief* (KEK 13⁴; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1878) 301–3; C. Spicq, *L'Épître aux Hébreux: II. Commentaire* (EBib; Paris: Gabalda, 1953) 266–7; L. D. Hurst, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: Its Background of Thought* (SNTSMS 65; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) 38–9.

6 H. Braun, *An die Hebräer* (HNT 14; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1984) 281; W. L. Lane, *Hebrews* (WBC 47A–B; Dallas: Word, 1991) 246–7; C. R. Koester, *Hebrews: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 36; New York: Doubleday, 2001) 421, 427; M. Karrer, *Der Brief an die Hebräer: Kapitel 5,11–13,25* (ÖTK 20/2; Gütersloh: Gütersloher, 2008) 166–7.

7 W. Kraus, *Der Tod Jesu als Heiligtumsweihe: Eine Untersuchung zum Umfeld der Sühnevorstellung in Römer 3,25–26a* (WMANT 66; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1991) 238–45; Gäbel, *Kulttheologie*, 418–24; D. M. Moffitt, *Atonement and the Logic of Resurrection in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (NovTSup 141; Leiden: Brill, 2011) 225–6; Ribbens, 'Heavenly Cult', 161–6.

1. Reading Hebrews 9.23

After a few introductory exegetical comments, our reading of Heb 9.23 will proceed in four steps. First, I will discuss the structure of 9.23–8, especially 9.23–6, arguing that 9.23 is tied to 9.24–6 more closely than many scholars perceive. Second, since Heb 9.23 draws an inference from what precedes, we will consider how Hebrews 9.18–22 configures covenant inauguration as cult inauguration and cult inauguration as purification. Third, we will explore how 9.23 draws on the Yom Kippur framework that governs 9.23–6. Fourth, I will argue that making sense of Heb 9.23 requires us not only to acknowledge that both cultic inauguration and Yom Kippur inform it, but also to trace the ways in which the author distinctively construes each in what precedes and follows.

Heb 9.23 reads:

Ἀνάγκη οὖν τὰ μὲν ὑποδείγματα τῶν ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς τούτοις καθαρίζεσθαι, αὐτὰ δὲ τὰ ἐπουράνια κρείττοσιν θυσίαις παρὰ ταύτας.

Therefore it was necessary for the copies of what is in heaven to be purified by these [rites], but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.⁸

Heb 9.23 draws an inference from the discussion of the inauguration of the Mosaic covenant in 9.18–22. The book and the people required cleansing with blood, water, scarlet yarn and hyssop, and the tent and all its vessels with blood, but, according to 9.23, this tent and its furniture constitute a mere replica of the true sacred space in heaven. The sense of ὑπόδειγμα here is disputed, but I would suggest that the best rendering is ‘copy’, in the sense of a crafted, mimetic representation.⁹ That ὑπόδειγμα has this sense in 9.23 is confirmed by its use in Heb 8.5. There, the assertion that the earthly priests serve ὑπόδειγματι καὶ σκιᾷ τῶν ἐπουρανίων (‘a copy and shadow of the heavenly things’) is correlated with Exod 25.40, where Moses is instructed to make the tabernacle and all its furnishings according to the pattern shown to him on the

8 Since Hebrews emphatically insists on the singularity of Christ’s sacrifice, the plural θυσίαις is surprising. Most scholars explain it as either generic, a ‘plural of category’, or as attraction to τούτοις. For generic, see Spicq, *Hébreux*, II.266; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 261; E. Grässer, *An die Hebräer: 2. Teilband, Hebr 7,1–10,18* (EKK 17/2; Zurich: Benziger, 1993) 188. Attraction: N. H. Young, ‘The Gospel according to Hebrews 9’, *NTS* 27 (1981) 206; Lane, *Hebrews*, 247.

9 The term has this sense in Aquila’s translation of Deut 4.17 and Ezek 8.10. In the former, ὑπόδειγμα refers to idols as the ‘likeness’ of animals and birds; in the latter, Ezekiel sees the likenesses of ‘creeping things and loathsome beasts’ engraved on the sanctuary walls. These references are noted by Attridge, *Hebrews*, 219 n. 41; Gäbel, *Kulttheologie*, 241 n. 122. Hence, although Hurst, *Background*, 13 may be technically correct that there is no instance in Hellenistic literature in which ὑπόδειγμα has the precise sense of ‘copy’, his broader point is undermined by these two instances that depict a mimetic likeness between a crafted object and that on which it is patterned.

- (I.A) ²³ Ἀνάγκη οὖν τὰ μὲν ὑποδείγματα τῶν ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς τούτοις καθαρίζεσθαι,
 (I.B) αὐτὰ δὲ τὰ ἐπουράνια κρείττοσιν θυσίαις παρὰ ταύτας.
- ┌ (II.A) ²⁴ οὐ γὰρ εἰς χειροποίητα εἰσηλθεν ἅγια Χριστός, ἀντίτυπα τῶν ἀληθινῶν,
 └ (II.B) ἀλλ' εἰς αὐτὸν τὸν οὐρανόν,
 (II.B.1) νῦν ἐφανισθῆναι τῷ προσώπῳ τοῦ θεοῦ ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν·
- ┌ (II.C) ²⁵ οὐδ' ἵνα πολλάκις προσφέρῃ ἑαυτόν,
 └ (II.C.1) ὥσπερ ὁ ἀρχιερεὺς εἰσέρχεται εἰς τὰ ἅγια κατ' ἐνιαυτὸν ἐν αἵματι ἄλλοτριῷ,
 (II.C.2) ²⁶ ἐπεὶ ἔδει αὐτὸν πολλάκις παθεῖν ἀπὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου·
 (II.D) νυνὶ δὲ ἅπαξ ἐπὶ συντελείᾳ τῶν αἰῶνων εἰς ἀθέτησιν [τῆς] ἁμαρτίας διὰ τῆς θυσίας αὐτοῦ πεφανέρωται.
- (III.A) ²⁷ Καὶ καθ' ὅσον ἀπόκειται τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἅπαξ ἀποθανεῖν,
 μετὰ δὲ τοῦτο κρίσις,
 (III.B.1) ²⁸ οὕτως καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς ἅπαξ προσενεχθεὶς
 (III.B.2) εἰς τὸ πολλῶν ἀνενεγκεῖν ἁμαρτίας
 (III.B.3) ἐκ δευτέρου χωρὶς ἁμαρτίας ὀφθήσεται τοῖς αὐτὸν ἀπεκδεχομένοις εἰς σωτηρίαν.

Figure 1. Structure of Hebrews 9.23–8

mountain. Thus ὑπόδειγμα in 8.5 invokes a mimetic correspondence between the earthly and heavenly sanctuaries.¹⁰ By using the same term in the same context, 9.23 compares what was necessary to cleanse both the earthly replica and the original extant in heaven.¹¹ With these introductory details in place, we turn to the structure of Heb 9.23–8.

1.1 Structure of Heb 9.23–8

I will argue here that the internal structure of 9.23–8, especially 9.23–6, crucially informs how we should understand 9.23; see Fig. 1.¹²

¹⁰ In support of the idea that the use of Exod 25.40 in Heb 8.5 evidences a conception of a tabernacle extant in heaven, see e.g. H. Löhr, “Umriss” und “Schatten”: Bemerkungen zur Zitierung von Ex 25,40 in Hebr 8’, ZNW 84 (1993) 221–4; Gäbel, *Kulttheologie*, 241–4; N. J. Moore, *Repetition in Hebrews: Plurality and Singularity in the Letter to the Hebrews, its Ancient Context, and the Early Church* (WUNT 11/388; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015) 152–3; contra e.g. F. Laub, ‘Ein für allemal hineingegangen in das Allerheiligste’ (Hebr 9,12) – Zum Verständnis des Kreuzestodes im Hebraërbrief’, *BZ* 35 (1991) 72.

¹¹ Given that 9.23b consists of a verbless clause, καθαρίζεσθαι should be understood as implied from 9.23a. So e.g. Braun, *Hebräer*, 280; Kraus, *Heiligtumsweihe*, 243; Gäbel, *Kulttheologie*, 420.

¹² This structural analysis attempts to fill a gap noted by Gäbel, *Kulttheologie*, 297: ‘Eine begründete Kompositionanalyse zu v. 24–28 liegt bisher nicht vor.’ In Fig. 1, indentation represents either conceptual or grammatical subordination. For instance, I have indented 9.25–6a (II.C–II.C.2) to match the subordinate infinitival clause of 9.24b (II.B.1), since the clause on

Foundational to my analysis is the way the two ‘not this, but this’ contrasts of 9.24–6 elaborate the assertion of 9.23b (1.B). In 9.24, Christ’s sacrifice is superior to the old covenant’s in that he did not enter a handmade inner sanctum but heaven itself (II.A–II.B.1). In 9.25–6a (II.C–D), Jesus’ sacrifice is superior because he did not enter the heavenly Holy of Holies in order to offer himself many times, as the high priest yearly entered its earthly counterpart ‘with another’s blood’, but instead was manifested once, at the end of the ages, to set aside sin by his sacrifice.

In addition to their formal and material similarities, the parallel nature of the contrasts in 9.24 and 9.25–6 is indicated by the οὐ–οὐδέ pair with which they open. The οὐδέ in 9.25 has the sense of ‘nor’;¹³ 9.25–9.6a both contrasts with 9.26b and correlates with 9.24. As the explanatory γάρ of 9.24 corroborates, the two contrasts of 9.24–6 supply two senses in which Christ’s sacrifice is ‘better’ than its old covenant anticipations.¹⁴ In other words, 9.23 supplies the thematic bud that blossoms in the next three verses. Finally, in 9.27–8, the author introduces a new development of the singularity of Christ’s sacrifice, a prominent theme in 9.25–6, by comparing the sequence ‘offer then return’ to the universal human fate of ‘death then judgement’.

Most scholars treat 9.23–8 as a unit.¹⁵ However, Albert Vanhoye has argued that the unit begins at 9.24, with 9.23 concluding the preceding section as well as introducing the next. Vanhoye sees 9.23 as evoking both 9.15–16 with its mention of necessity (ἀνάγκη, cf. 9.16) and 9.22 with its reference to purification.¹⁶ Yet the assertions that death is necessary to inaugurate a covenant and that blood is necessary to purify the ‘heavenly things themselves’ are less alike than Vanhoye’s analysis presupposes. Further, the inferential particle οὖν in 9.23 points most immediately to the principle stated in 9.22, and more broadly

which the two subsequent subordinate clauses depend is itself a subordinate clause (ἵνα plus the subjunctive προσφέρη) that depends on the main verb εἰσήλθεν in 9.24a.

¹³ BDAG, 743.

¹⁴ Cf. Braun, *Hebräer*, 281, who, grouping 9.27–8 with 9.25–6, calls 9.24–8 the ‘doppelte erläuternde Weiterführung’ of κρείττοσιν in 9.23. Similarly Spicq, *Hébreux*, II.267; Lane, *Hebrews*, 248–9; H.-F. Weiss, *Der Brief an die Hebräer* (KEK 13¹⁵; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991) 485; Grässer, *Hebräer* 2, 190; Gäbel, *Kulttheologie*, 420.

¹⁵ So e.g. Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 131; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 260; S. Bénéteau, *L’Épître aux Hébreux*, vol. II (Commentaire Évangélique de la Bible; Vaux-sur-Seine: Édifac, 1990) 91; Lane, *Hebrews*, 247; Grässer, *Hebräer* 2, 186; D. A. deSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle ‘to the Hebrews’* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000) 311; P. T. O’Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010) 335; and the editors of the NA28.

¹⁶ A. Vanhoye, *La structure littéraire de l’Épître aux Hébreux* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1963) 152, 154. Similarly Weiss, *Hebräer*, 485; Koester, *Hebrews*, 427; Gäbel, *Kulttheologie*, 295, 420. In principle, this obscures the link between the ‘better sacrifice’ of 9.23 and its elaboration in 9.24–6, though Weiss and Gäbel nevertheless perceive the thematic connection.

to 9.18–21, on which 9.22 draws. To posit reference to 9.15–16 is to extend the particle's scope beyond reasonable warrant. And, as we have already seen, 9.23 is a thesis of which 9.24 and 9.25–6 provide twofold elaboration. While οὗν clearly ties 9.23 to what precedes, structurally speaking the verse is tied even more tightly to what follows.¹⁷

1.2 *Looking Backwards: Covenant and Cult Inauguration in Heb 9.18–22*

As we have seen, while Heb 9.23 structurally belongs with what follows, materially it looks both backwards and forward. Since 9.23 draws an inference from the preceding, it depends conceptually on the discussion of covenantal and cultic inauguration in 9.18–22. Since it is followed by γάρ in 9.24 and is elaborated by the two contrasts of 9.24 and 9.25–6, which unequivocally invoke Yom Kippur, 9.23 also fits within the Yom Kippur typology that so strikingly stamps Hebrews' central argument. Somehow, then, this verse stands at a conceptual intersection of covenantal or cultic inauguration and Yom Kippur.

But what role does each concept play in the verse itself? And to what use does the author put these two rites in the verse's context? Some interpreters explicitly disavow the relevance of one or the other. For instance, L. D. Hurst argues that 'the context of 9.23 is not the annual day of atonement ritual'.¹⁸ By contrast, I will argue that rightly interpreting 9.23 depends not only on reckoning with the influence of both cultic inauguration and Yom Kippur, but also on tracing the contours of the author's distinct appropriation of each. Thus, in this section and the next two, I will first look backwards from 9.23 to consider the author's treatment of covenant and cult inauguration in 9.18–22, then look forward to consider the function of Yom Kippur in 9.23–6, before finally considering how both bear on 9.23.

In 9.18–22 the author discusses the inauguration of the Sinai covenant, citing and embellishing Exod 24.8. Two interpretive moves are evident in the author's treatment of this biblical event. First, he depicts the inauguration of the covenant in details borrowed from the inauguration of its cult, that is, the consecration of its tabernacle and priesthood. Second, he casts cultic inauguration as a rite of purification by invoking elements of cleansing rites found elsewhere in the Levitical

¹⁷ This analysis also rules out the structural proposals of G. L. Cockerill, 'Structure and Interpretation in Hebrews 8:1–10:18: A Symphony in Three Movements', *BBR* 11 (2001) 192–4 (cf. id., *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012) 419–20) and R. Ounsworth, *Joshua Typology in the New Testament* (WUNT 11/328; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012) 155–6, who both propose that the new section begins with 9.25. In addition to obscuring the manner in which 9.24–6 elaborates 9.23, their proposals founder on the insurmountable difficulty of beginning a new section in the middle of a sentence, which both writers overlook.

¹⁸ Hurst, *Background*, 38. See §2.3 below.

legislation.¹⁹ Evidence for this first move is found, first, in the use of ἐγκεκαίνισται in 9.18 to describe the inauguration of the Sinai covenant (ἡ πρώτη) narrated in Exod 24.3–8. The verb ἐγκαινίζω is not the usual Greek word for the making of a covenant (cf. ἐποίησα and διαθήσομαι in Heb 8.9–10). Instead, ἐγκαινίζω typically refers to the inauguration, dedication or restoration of something.²⁰ Further, the verb is used in precisely the same form in Heb 10.20 to describe the new means of access to the heavenly Holy of Holies which Christ opened by his blood. Here in 9.18, therefore, the author introduces the making of a covenant with a term that instead suggests the dedication of the cult associated with that covenant.²¹

Confirmation that the author deliberately conflates the inauguration of the Sinai covenant with the institution of the Levitical cult is found in what he says Moses sprinkled. Hebrews depicts Moses as sprinkling not only ‘the book’ and ‘all the people’ (9.19), but also the tent and all its cultic implements (9.21). The tent and its vessels are a striking addition, since, as of Exod 24, the tabernacle has not yet been constructed, as the author of Hebrews knows well (cf. 8.5). With this mention of the sprinkling of the tent and its furnishings, the author evokes a network of biblical passages that describe the consecration of the tabernacle and the ordination of the priesthood (Exod 29; 40; Lev 8; cf. Num 7).

The most likely scriptural sources for the assertion that Moses sprinkled the tent and its furnishings with blood are Exod 40.9–10 and Lev 8.10.²² In both passages the goal is the consecration of the tabernacle and everything in it, yet the medium of consecration is oil, not blood. However, in Lev 8, blood is at least applied to the altar: sin-offering blood is daubed on its horns, and burnt-offering blood is thrown on its sides (8.15, 19; cf. Exod 29.12, 15–16). The blood daubing of Lev 8.15 serves to purify (καθαίρει / ἐκαθάρισε) and consecrate (ἁγιάσει / ἡγίασεν) the altar of burnt offering, cleansing it of impurity and setting it apart for future service. Exod 29.36–7 specifies that this process is to be repeated for seven days; in 29.36 the act narrated in Lev 8.15 is prescribed as follows: ‘And you shall perform decontamination on the altar when you effect purgation for

19 M. R. D’Angelo notes both moves: ‘The most striking element of the revision is that the inauguration of the covenant and the inauguration of the tent and the worship have become a single event’, and, ‘Thus the purpose of the blood in the ceremony is refocused ... in Hebrews the blood of the covenant is a cleansing’ (*Moses in the Letter to the Hebrews* (SBLDS 42; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1979) 244, 246). Similarly Gäbel, *Kulttheologie*, 407: ‘Hebr hat den als Reinigungsritual verstandenen Bundschluss (Ex 24) und die Heiligtumsweihe (Ex 40) zu einem einzigen Kultakt zusammengefasst.’

20 In 1 Kgdms 11.14 the verb describes the renewal of the kingdom, in 3 Kgdms 8.63 and 2 Chr 8.5 the dedication of the temple, and in 1 Macc 4.36, 54, 57 and 5.1 the (re)dedication of the sanctuary.

21 Similarly Koester, *Hebrews*, 418.

22 E.g. Attridge, *Hebrews*, 258; Weiss, *Hebräer*, 481; Koester, *Hebrews*, 420; Backhaus, *Hebräerbrief*, 331.

it.²³ Further, in these texts Aaron and his sons are anointed with both oil (Exod 29.21; 40.12–15; Lev 8.12) and blood (Exod 29.19–21; Lev 8.22–4) as part of their ordination as priests. Since the human recipients of anointing oil also had blood applied to them, it is possible that Hebrews generalises this pattern to include the tent and cultic apparatus as well.²⁴ In any case, in Heb 9.21 the author evokes the dedication of the tabernacle and the ordination of the priesthood in his narration of the inauguration of the Sinai covenant. He figures covenant inauguration as cult inauguration.

The second interpretive move evident in this passage is that the author goes out of his way to depict this cult inauguration as a purification rite. He does this by positing that the people and book were sprinkled not only with ‘the blood of calves and goats’ but also with ‘water and scarlet yarn and hyssop’ (9.19). These three ingredients, though absent from Exod 24.3–8, appear in the biblical instructions for both the purification of a person cured of scale-disease (Lev 14.4–7, cf. 14.49–52) and the purification of someone who had incurred defilement through contact with a corpse (Num 19.6, 12, 18–19). Counting Heb 9.19, these three are the only biblical passages in which all three items appear together. This precise coincidence of cultic elements suggests that the author is not displaying a ‘comparative indifference to secondary detail’,²⁵ but instead deliberately conflates covenant inauguration with these rites in order to depict it as a rite of purification.

For the author of Hebrews, covenant inauguration means cult inauguration, and cult inauguration means purification. That the author figures cult inauguration as purification is corroborated by 9.22, in which the author remarks, in view of the preceding exposition: ‘Under the law almost everything is purified (καθαρίζεταί) with blood.’ This also indicates that the author perceives a parallel between the inaugural cleansing by which the cult was dedicated, and the various ongoing rites by which the cult regularly operated. In 9.22, the covenant’s inauguration becomes a paradigm for the various purifications-with-blood by which it was ritually maintained. How exactly the two interpretive moves evident in

23 My treatment of both passages, including the translation of Exod 29.36–7 given here, is informed by R. Gane, *Cult and Character: Purification Offerings, Day of Atonement, and Theodicy* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005) 130–3, 140–1. For similar analyses of Lev 8.15, see e.g. J. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 3; New York: Doubleday, 1991) 521–2; F. H. Gorman, *The Ideology of Ritual: Space, Time and Status in the Priestly Theology* (JSOTSup 91; Sheffield: JSOT, 1990) 122–3. For similar treatments of Exod 29.36–7, see Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 278–9; N. M. Sarna, *Exodus* (JPSTC; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1991) 191.

24 Cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 3.206, who does precisely this in his narration of the consecration of the tent and the priesthood.

25 P. Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993) 468.

9.18–21 bear on 9.23 will be discussed below when we pursue the precise sense in which 9.23 relates to what precedes. For now it is enough to underscore that, far from treating covenant inauguration as an alternative to purification, the author creatively recasts the biblical narrative of the inauguration of the Sinai covenant precisely in order to characterise it as a rite of cultic inauguration by means of blood purification.

1.3 Looking Forward: Yom Kippur in Heb 9.23–6

Two features of Heb 9.23–6 underscore the decisive significance of Yom Kippur for Heb 9.23. First, 9.23 itself already invokes Yom Kippur with its assertion that God's tabernacle – in this case, the heavenly one – required cleansing by sacrifice. There is a broad scholarly consensus that one of the key goals of Yom Kippur as narrated in Leviticus 16 is the cleansing of the tabernacle, including the Holy of Holies, from the defilement it incurred from the people's sins and impurities.²⁶ Thus the high priest enters the Holy of Holies and sprinkles blood over and in front of the mercy seat (Lev 16.15) to cleanse the Holy of Holies: 'And he shall purge the Holy of Holies of the impurities of the children of Israel, and of their transgressions, all their sins' (וכפר עליהקדש מטמאת בני ישראל ומפשעיהם לכל"– חטאתם, Lev 16.16). That the sanctuary and its furniture are cleansed on Yom Kippur is confirmed by the כפר clauses in which these are direct objects: in the summary statement of 16.20, for instance, the priest is again said to 'purge the Holy of Holies and the tent of meeting and the altar' (מכפר אתהקדש ואתהאהל מועד) (ואתהמזבח, cf. 16.33).²⁷ Heb 9.23 speaks of the cleansing of the heavenly tabernacle and then immediately explains this with reference to the high priest's entry to the Holy of Holies – both the Levitical priest's in the earthly one and Christ's in the heavenly one. Christ cleansed the heavenly tabernacle when he entered the

26 E.g. K. Elliger, *Leviticus* (HAT 4; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1966) 214; J. Milgrom, 'Israel's Sanctuary: The Priestly "Picture of Dorian Gray"', *RB* 83 (1976): 390–99; Gorman, *Ideology*, 51–52, 55, 61–102; Benedikt Jürgens, *Heiligkeit und Versöhnung: Levitikus 16 in seinem literarischen Kontext* (HBS 28; Freiburg: Herder, 2001) 108–9; J. Dennis, 'The Function of the חטאת Sacrifice: An Evaluation of the View of Jacob Milgrom', *ETL* 78 (2002) 115, 125–6; Gane, *Cult*, 133–6, 144–62, 217–41; C. Nihan, *From Priestly Torah to Pentateuch: A Study in the Composition of the Book of Leviticus* (FAT II/25; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007) 370–5.

27 That this understanding was shared by the LXX translator of Leviticus is evident in his rendering of כפר עליהקדש in 16.16 as καὶ ἐξίλασεν αὐτὰ τὸ ἅγιον. Cf. the similar direct object constructions in 16.20 and 16.33, and the comments of J. W. Wevers, *Notes on the Greek Text of Leviticus* (SCS 44; Atlanta: Scholars, 1997) 249, 251. That Hebrews' portrayal of Yom Kippur was influenced by a Greek version of Leviticus in substantial continuity with modern editions is suggested by the near-verbatim quotation of Lev 16.27 in Heb 13.11, as well as by its use of ἅγια to denote the Holy of Holies and σκηνή to denote the tabernacle as a whole (8.2, 5; 9.8, 11, 12, 21, 24, 25; 13.11), which seems influenced by Lev 16.20 LXX. For the latter point, see O. Hofius, *Der Vorhang vor dem Thron Gottes: Eine exegetisch-religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zu Hebräer 6,19f und 10,19f* (WUNT 14; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1972) 57.

heavenly Holy of Holies, just as the earthly priest cleansed the earthly tabernacle when he entered its inner sanctum.

Second, as noted above, the two contrasts of 9.24 and 9.25–6 elaborate two senses in which Christ's sacrifice is 'better' than those of the earthly cult, and these contrasts draw heavily on Yom Kippur. In 9.24, unlike the earthly priest who enters a handmade sanctuary, Christ enters 'heaven itself', now to appear before God for his own. In 9.25–6, Christ is not like the earthly high priests, who yearly enter the Holy of Holies with another's blood in order to offer it there (cf. 9.7, 12); instead, his singular sacrifice sets aside sin.²⁸ What is explicit in the elaboration (9.24–6), therefore, must be at least implicit in the thesis (9.23): the better sacrifice that cleansed the heavenly things themselves is Christ's self-offering *conceived as his eschatological Yom Kippur sacrifice*.²⁹ This explicative link between 9.23 and 9.24–6 underscores that the source of the idea of cleansing the heavenly tabernacle is Leviticus 16, read through the vertical typology by which the author sets the earthly tabernacle, as derivative likeness, over against its heavenly original.

1.4 *Mapping the Intersection: Covenant Inauguration and Yom Kippur in Heb 9.23*

How exactly does the author's configuration of both covenant inauguration and Yom Kippur bear on the sense of 9.23? First, since both the thesis of 9.23b and its elaboration in 9.24–6 evoke Yom Kippur, this rite furnishes an essential cultic frame of reference for 9.23. Yom Kippur is explicit and in the foreground. Since the cleansing of the tabernacle on Yom Kippur effects the removal of antecedent defilement, there is no contextual reason to take the implied καθαρίξεισθαι of 9.23 to denote anything else. The Yom Kippur colouring of the statement confirms that the author understands Christ's sacrifice to purify the sanctuary in heaven from antecedent defilement caused by human sin. There is therefore no sense in which 'cleansed' in 9.23 is a cipher for 'inaugurated'. Nor does covenant/cult inauguration provide the primary or exclusive context within which 9.23 should be read.³⁰

28 For discussion of the ways in which 9.24–8 (esp. 9.24–6) draws on Yom Kippur and intersects with Hebrews' depiction and use of the rite elsewhere, see Gäbel, *Kulttheologie*, 294–309; cf. G. Telscher, *Opfer aus Barmherzigkeit: Hebr 9,11–28 im Kontext biblischer Sühnetheologie* (FB 112; Würzburg: Echter, 2007) 269–72; Moffitt, *Atonement*, 226–7, 280–1; Ribbens, 'Heavenly Cult', 166–71; Moore, *Repetition*, 170–1.

29 That Hebrews 9.24–6 presents Christ's heavenly sacrifice as an eschatological Yom Kippur offering is confirmed by the comparison set up in 9.1–14, which 9.23–6 resumes. While the earthly high priest entered an earthly sanctuary with another's blood, attaining only external cleansing (9.6–10), Christ the high priest entered the heavenly sanctuary by means of his own blood, obtaining an eternal redemption (9.11–12).

30 On these points, see further §2.3 below.

But does covenant/cult inauguration bear at all on the sense of 9.23? Is the verse about purification only, or purification for inauguration – that is, the inauguration of the new covenant and its cult? Three strands of evidence point towards the latter. First, Christ's role as mediator of the new covenant is prominent throughout Hebrews: in 7.22 he is the guarantor (ἔγγυος) of a better covenant; in 8.6, 9.15 and 12.24 he is the mediator (μεσίτης) of the new covenant. In the last of these passages, Christ's mediating of the new covenant is closely correlated with his sprinkled blood (ἀίματι ῥαντίσμου), a summary reference to his self-offering.³¹

Second, in another summary reference to the Christ-event, 10.20 invokes the 'new and living way that he inaugurated (ἐνεκαίνισεν) for us through the curtain'. Here the effect of Christ's self-offering is configured as a new means of access to the most intimate presence of God. Cultic inauguration is clearly integral to Hebrews' construal of the Christ-event.

Third, a chain of logical connectors links the subsections of 9.11–28 to each other. In 9.15, διὰ τοῦτο links covenant inauguration in 9.15–17 to Christ's Yom Kippur offering in 9.11–14. In 9.18, ὅθεν draws the inference, illustrated in 9.18–21, that because death is necessary to inaugurate a covenant, even the first covenant was inaugurated with blood. And in 9.23, οὖν draws the inference, elaborated in 9.23–6, that just as the earthly tent and its furniture required cleansing, so also did the tabernacle in heaven, only with a better sacrifice.³² Since 9.18–21 figures covenant inauguration as cult-inaugural purification, and 9.22 both highlights and generalises the theme of purification by blood, the οὖν of 9.23 should be taken to draw an inference that blood sacrifice is necessary to cleanse sacred space, in heaven as on earth. In other words, the οὖν does not invoke covenant/cult inauguration per se, but rather the idea of purification via blood sacrifice that the author finds in it.³³ However, these logical ties throughout 9.11–28 unite an argument that moves seamlessly from Yom Kippur, to covenant inauguration, back to Yom Kippur. For Hebrews, while Yom Kippur-patterned cleansing is

31 On 12.24 as a summary reference to Christ's self-offering, see Attridge, *Hebrews*, 376; Gäbel, *Kulttheologie*, 384–5.

32 I take τὰ ἐπουράνια in 9.23b to refer to the heavenly tabernacle as a whole and possibly also its cultic implements, which are unspecified in Hebrews. Yet rather than drawing specific attention to particular items in the heavenly tabernacle, it is possible that the plural has a generic sense similar to θυσίαίς. In any case, the vertical typology by which, in both 8.5 and 9.23, the earthly tabernacle and its furnishings are designated 'copies' of their equivalents in heaven indicates that the heavenly 'tabernacle complex' as a whole is in view in 9.23b. Similarly e.g. Spicq, *Hébreux*, II.267; Lane, *Hebrews*, 247; Weiss, *Hebräer*, 484; Gäbel, *Kulttheologie*, 420; Moffitt, *Atonement*, 225–26. Contra Schenck, *Cosmology*, 170–3, who sees the referent as (only) the heavenly Holy of Holies, which he equates with heaven itself.

33 Cf. B. F. Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: The Greek Text with Notes and Essays* (London: Macmillan, 1903³) 272; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 260–1; Lane, *Hebrews*, 247.

distinguishable from covenant/cult inauguration, it is nevertheless integrally linked to it.³⁴

Christ's priestly self-offering is that which brings the new covenant into effect, just as the Sinai covenant came into effect through its own inaugural sacrifices. The idea in 9.23 is not that Christ inaugurates the heavenly tabernacle in order subsequently to offer himself there.³⁵ Instead, Christ's sacrifice at once cleanses the heavenly tabernacle and inaugurates the new covenant cult, which consists first and foremost in believers' access to God in the heavenly Holy of Holies (cf. 4.14–16; 6.19; 10.19–23).³⁶ What is explicit in 9.23 is that Christ's sacrifice purifies the heavenly tabernacle. What is implicit, suggested by the structure of the argument in 9.11–28 and Hebrews' broader treatment of the inauguration of the new covenant, is that this sacrifice also inaugurates the new covenant's heavenly cult.

2. Engaging Alternate Explanations

We now engage alternate explanations of Heb 9.23. In this section I will first respond to a widely invoked objection to the reading of 9.23 proposed above, namely, that it is at best implausible, at worst unthinkable, that Hebrews would represent the heavenly sanctuary as defiled by human sin. After this I will first critique the view that human conscience is the object of cleansing in 9.23, then address the view that 9.23 is about only the inauguration of the heavenly tabernacle, not its purification.

2.1 *How Can the Heavenly Tabernacle Be Defiled?*

The most common objection to the reading of Heb 9.23 proposed here is the idea that it is improbable or even nonsensical to speak of God's dwelling in heaven incurring defilement.³⁷ The theological intuition behind this objection

34 It is suggestive that Lev 16.19b seems to indicate that the blood daubing on the inner altar purified it (וטהרו), and the blood sprinkling on the inner altar consecrated it (ויקדשו). For this interpretation of Lev 16.18–19, see Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 1036–9; W. K. Gilders, *Blood Ritual in the Hebrew Bible: Meaning and Power* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004) 131. This suggests that Yom Kippur both cleansed and reconsecrated the altar. Not only does inaugural cleansing involve purification, but yearly purification seems to entail reconsecration.

35 Contra Moffitt, *Atonement*, 225 n. 20; Ribbens, 'Heavenly Cult', 166.

36 On the importance of access to God in the heavenly Holy of Holies for the new covenant cult, see O. J. Filtvedt, *The Identity of God's People and the Paradox of Hebrews* (WUNT 11/400; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015) 146–53. For discussion of practices associated with new covenant worship in Hebrews, see e.g. *ibid.*, 173–80; Moore, *Repetition*, 188–204.

37 Classically Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (tr. C. Baer; South Bend, IN: St Augustine's Press, 2006) 195, commenting on this verse, 'But on the contrary, in heaven nothing is unclean.' Cf. Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 132; Spicq, *Hébreux*, 11.267; P. E. Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977) 379;

seems to be that, since heaven is where God dwells, and God is perfectly holy, it is impossible for anything impure to ‘come into contact’ with God. Yet no evidence for this theological intuition is present in Hebrews; instead, its conception of heaven seems to differ in key ways from that held by many scholars.

Hebrews describes the heavenly tabernacle as a tent pitched by God (ἔπηξεν, 8.2). The heavenly tabernacle is not of this creation (9.11), but it is not uncreated. Heaven is the place from which God reigns over all (8.1). It is populated by angels, spiritual but nevertheless created beings (1.6–7, 14). Roy Gane describes the wilderness tabernacle as God’s ‘earthly administrative center’.³⁸ The same could be said, *mutatis mutandis*, for Hebrews’ depiction of the heavenly tabernacle. Heaven is a place of commerce between the creator and at least some of his creatures. Is it so unthinkable that the threat sin poses to such commerce could have been conceived, by a first-century Jewish believer in Jesus, as the defilement of the tabernacle in heaven? After all, the very idea of a tabernacle in heaven presents a more concrete, ‘realistic’ conception of heaven than that which many scholars bring to the text.³⁹

Further, a few biblical and early Jewish texts seem to presuppose that heaven, or the sanctuary in heaven, can be defiled by sin. Job 15.15, for instance, declares, ‘Behold, God puts no trust in his holy ones, and the heavens are not pure in his sight’ (NRSV). While the statement is cryptic, it may suggest a connection between the sins of created beings – in this case angels – and the defilement of the heavenly realm.⁴⁰ In Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice, angels guard the purity of the heavenly sanctuary, which seems to presuppose the possibility of its defilement. In 4Q400 1 I, 14, we read of the priestly angels, ‘They do not tolerate any whose way is *perverted*. There is n[o] unclean thing in their holy places (וְאֵין טְמֵאָה בְּקִדּוֹשֵׁיהֶם) ... But they propitiate his good will for all who repent of sin.’⁴¹ This passage displays

Schenck, *Cosmology*, 168, 181; Backhaus, *Hebräerbrief*, 336; T. R. Schreiner, *Commentary on Hebrews* (BTCF; Nashville, TN: B&H, 2015) 283.

38 Gane, *Cult*, 319.

39 So R. B. Hays, “‘Here We Have No Lasting City’: New Covenantalism in Hebrews’, *The Epistle to the Hebrews and Christian Theology* (ed. Richard Bauckham *et al.*; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009) 171: ‘Perhaps the heavenly world is not so non-material as we thought.’ Cf. Moffitt, *Atonement*, 302 on the related issue of how Jesus, as a human being, could enter heaven: ‘It may be difficult for us as modern readers to grasp how mortal bodies could be transformed into incorruptible, glorious bodies with a kind of blood and flesh that could enter heaven ... But this does not mean that such conceptions were not viable and intelligible in the ancient world (cf. Luke 24:39–40, 51; Acts 1:9–11).’

40 Karrer, *Hebräer* 5,11–13,25, 167 considers this the closest extant parallel to our verse. In contrast to my suggestion above, D. J. A. Clines, *Job 1–20* (WBC 17; Dallas: Word, 1989) 353 suggests identifying ‘the heavens’ with the heavenly beings.

41 C. A. Newsom, *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice: A Critical Edition* (HSS 27; Atlanta: Scholars, 1985) 93, cf. 103.

a concern that impurity not defile the heavenly sanctuary in a context wherein the angels' heavenly cultic activity is depicted.⁴² And in the Book of the Watchers, when the angelic watchers defile themselves through intercourse with women (1 *En.* 7.1; 9.8; 10.11; 12.4; 15.3–4), they are banned from the heavenly sanctuary (12.4; 14.5; 15.3), most likely because they either had already defiled it or would do so if they were to remain.⁴³ The defilement of the heavenly sanctuary was apparently not as unthinkable within an apocalyptic early Jewish milieu as it seems to be for many modern scholars.⁴⁴

Finally, in 9.23, it is not that the author, reasoning by analogy from the earthly cult to what Christ achieved in heaven, finds himself forced to draw the awkward inference, as it were against his better judgement, that heaven itself needed cleansing.⁴⁵ Instead, the logic undergirding his inference seems to be that the earthly tabernacle needed to be cleansed precisely because the heavenly one would one day be cleansed by Christ.⁴⁶ Hebrews does not begin with the purportedly non-cultic 'facts' of Christ's death, resurrection and exaltation and then interpret these through metaphorical use of Levitical rites, as some scholars imply.⁴⁷

42 In the highly fragmentary 4Q402 4, 3–10, there is apparently a statute requiring angels not to be unclean. Gäbel, *Kulttheologie*, 423 and J. C. Calaway, *The Sabbath and the Sanctuary: Access to God in the Letter to the Hebrews and its Priestly Context* (WUNT 11/349; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013) 157–8 take this to indicate a concern that the heavenly sanctuary not be defiled. However, it could be, as Newsom, *Songs*, 157 argues, that the statute is specific to the angelic muster for eschatological battle (cf. lines 7–10).

43 Moffitt, *Atonement*, 225–6 n. 20. Cf. M. Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) 22; J. Klawans, *Purity, Sacrifice, and the Temple: Symbolism and Supersessionism in the Study of Ancient Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) 131. Contra Moore, *Repetition*, 169 n. 90, the relevance of the 1 *Enoch* passages to Heb 9.23 does not depend on Hebrews conceiving of heaven as defiled by fallen angels. Instead, the parallel consists in the presupposition of the possibility of the heavenly sanctuary's defilement.

44 Those who highlight significant commonalities between Hebrews' portrayal of the heavenly tabernacle and those of early Jewish apocalyptic literature include T. Eskola, *Messiah and Throne: Jewish Merkabah Mysticism and Early Christian Exaltation Discourse* (WUNT 11/142; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001) 202–11, 251–69; P. Alexander, *Mystical Texts* (CQS 7; London: T&T Clark, 2006) 139–40; S. D. Mackie, 'Heavenly Sanctuary Mysticism in the Epistle to the Hebrews', *JTS* 62 (2011) 77–117; Moffitt, *Atonement*, 203–4, esp. n. 140; J. A. Barnard, *The Mysticism of Hebrews: Exploring the Role of Jewish Apocalyptic Mysticism in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (WUNT 11/331; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012); Ribbens, 'Heavenly Cult', 119–32.

45 As Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 131–2 suggests.

46 So Koester, *Hebrews*, 427: 'Christ did not purify the heavenly sanctuary because he was bound to follow the Levitical pattern; rather, the reverse is true. Levitical practice foreshadows Christ's cleansing of the heavenly tent at the turn of the ages.'

47 So e.g. C. A. Eberhart, 'Characteristics of Sacrificial Metaphors in Hebrews', *Hebrews: Contemporary Methods – New Insights* (ed. G. Gelardini; BIS 75; Leiden: Brill, 2005) 37–64. Cf. the fuller discussion in C. A. Eberhart, *Kultmetaphorik und Christologie: Opfer- und*

Instead, Hebrews' logic is precisely the reverse: Jesus is the true priest and true sacrifice, and the Levitical sacrifices were patterned in advance on Christ's eschatological achievement. As we have seen, in Heb 8.5 the Levitical priests serve a 'copy and shadow' (ὑποδείγματι καὶ σκιᾷ) of the heavenly things. That Moses is instructed to make 'everything' (cf. Exod 25.9) according to the pattern shown to him underscores that the earthly tent is a model of the one in heaven. So, if the earthly tent, including its cultic vessels, is a model of the heavenly one, then there must be some sense in which the cultic *activity* carried out on earth is patterned after that which takes place in heaven.

Corroboration of this may be found in 10.1, which declares that the law had only a shadow of the coming good things (σκιάν ... τῶν μελλόντων ἀγαθῶν), not the very form of them (οὐκ αὐτήν τὴν εἰκόνα τῶν πραγμάτων). The point in 10.1 is to assert the inadequacy of the law, but it is striking that the author does so by saying that the law possesses a shadow of good things *to come*. The shadow in this case is not cast from heaven to earth (as in 8.5), but from the future to the past. Of course, in light of Hebrews' entire argument the two ultimately imply each other: Jesus' heavenly, eschatological sacrifice is prefigured in the earthly Levitical cult. The Christ-event, as it were, cast a shadow backwards, determining the form of the first covenant's cult.⁴⁸ Certainly 9.23 draws an inference from earthly to heavenly, and from what preceded to what followed, but the inference is grounded in a dependence that runs the other way.

2.2 *What Is Cleansed Is Ultimately Not Heaven, but Humans*

As indicated in note 4 above, a number of scholars argue that what is cleansed in 9.23 is ultimately not heaven, but humans. Harold Attridge presents perhaps the most thorough recent exposition of this reading. He argues that the correspondence between heavenly and earthly realities contrasts 'the ideal or spiritual on the one hand and the phenomenal and material on the other'. For Attridge, τὰ ἐπουράνια have 'symbolic value': 'the mythical image of the

Sühnterminologie im Neuen Testament (WUNT 306; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013) 131–56. Those who rightly critique this construal of Hebrews as deploying 'sacrificial metaphors' include E. W. Stegemann and W. Stegemann, 'Does the Cultic Language in Hebrews Represent Sacrificial Metaphors? Reflections on Some Basic Problems', *Hebrews: Contemporary Methods – New Insights*, 13–23; Gäbel, *Kulttheologie*, 20–1; Moore, *Repetition*, 154–5. Vanhoye, *Prêtres*, 235 shrewdly suggests that it is the earthly priesthood and sacrifices that are 'metaphorical', not Christ's, since they derive their meaning from Christ's rather than vice versa.

48 Cf. T. Radcliffe, 'Christ in Hebrews: Cultic Irony', *New Blackfriars* 68 (1987) 501: 'So it is not the case that Christ is merely metaphorically a priest; we all know that he was *really* a layman. It is rather the case that the old cult was merely metaphorically recreative ... It is as if this cultic language had been awaiting its proper application, the act of real transformation to which it pointed but was unable to achieve.'

heavenly sanctuary by this point is obviously being used in a metaphorical or symbolic way'. Thus, as the parallel with 9.14 suggests, 'the heavenly or ideal realities cleansed by Christ's sacrifice are none other than the consciences of the members of the new covenant ... In Hebrews, as in Platonically inspired Jews such as Philo, language of cosmic transcendence is ultimately a way of speaking about human interiority.'⁴⁹ Others suggest that 'heavenly' is a designation more qualitative than spatial, referring either to humans as participants in a heavenly calling (cf. 3.1) or to their conscience, which is oriented to God and hence heavenly.⁵⁰

To address this latter suggestion first, 'heavenly' in 9.23 is clearly a spatial, not merely a qualitative, designation. The plural ὑποδείγματα ('copies') echoes the singular ὑποδείγματι of 8.5, where the earthly tent is a copy of the one in heaven. And 9.23 activates precisely this correspondence between the two tents, since it compares Christ's sacrifice to the inaugural cleansing of the earthly tent. Moreover, nowhere in Hebrews are the earthly tent and its furnishings called 'copies' of people or their conscience. Finally, the corresponding phrase in 9.23a, ὑποδείγματα τῶν ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς, is explicitly spatial: the originals of the earthly copies are located in heaven. This rules out a qualitative understanding of τὰ ἐπουράνια in 9.23b. The 'heavenly things' in 9.23b are specified by their correspondence to the 'copies of what is in heaven', and hence are located in heaven.

Attridge's reading is more subtle. He recognises that the referent of τὰ ἐπουράνια is the heavenly tabernacle, but contends that the heavenly tabernacle is a symbol or metaphor for something else, namely human conscience. Attridge suggests that the author invokes the apocalyptic Jewish motif of a tabernacle in heaven in order, by this stage in the argument, to transform it into a symbol of human interiority. But precisely at this stage in Hebrews' argument, the heavenly tabernacle is not a symbol for something else but the place in heaven wherein Christ offers himself to God. In 9.24, which explains (γάρ) how the cleansing of the heavenly things takes place, Christ is said to 'enter' (εἰσῆλθεν) not a hand-made Holy of Holies, as the high priests yearly enter the earthly one (cf. 9.25), but 'heaven itself (εἰς αὐτὸν τὸν οὐρανόν)'.⁵¹ Christ entered the heavenly tabernacle in order to come into God's presence. Further, 9.28 asserts that, after having been offered once, Christ will appear on earth a second time. Since Christ appears in heaven 'now' (9.24), this implies that throughout the interval between Christ's exaltation and return he remains in the heavenly tabernacle. The heavenly

49 Attridge, *Hebrews*, 261–2.

50 Loader, *Sohn*, 169–70; Backhaus, *Hebräerbrief*, 335–6.

51 Cf. Hughes, *Hebrews*, 381, who points out, against any anthropological reading of 9.23, that all such readings require 'an identification between "the heavenly sanctuary", or, as the next verse defines it, "heaven itself" into which the risen Christ has entered, and the community of the redeemed'.

tabernacle is not a symbol, but a place – a transcendent place, but no less a place for that.⁵²

2.3 *Christ's Sacrifice Effects Inauguration, Not Purification*

As we have seen, another group of scholars argue that 9.23b asserts only that the heavenly sanctuary was consecrated or inaugurated through Christ's sacrifice, not that it was purified from antecedent defilement. As noted above, Hurst argues that 'the context of 9:23 is not the annual day of atonement ritual, but the initial purification of the newly built tabernacle at the inauguration of the first covenant'.⁵³ Further, a number of scholars argue that καθαρίζω can denote 'inaugurate' or 'dedicate' instead of 'purify'. Spicq, for example, treats καθαρίζω, ἐγκαινίζω and ἀγιάζω in 1 Macc 4.36–59 as nearly synonymous ('à peu près synonymes'), and notes that they refer to different elements of the same rite of re-dedication.⁵⁴ Hurst goes further, on the basis of other texts: 'That the term καθαρίζω can be used interchangeably with ἀγιάζω is proved by Ex. 29:36 and Lev. 8:15 LXX, and especially by Josephus' (referring to *Ant.* 3.197).⁵⁵

I have argued above that Yom Kippur is in fact decisively relevant to 9.23, and that the author invokes covenant inauguration precisely in order to configure it as a rite of purification; both considerations contradict the 'inauguration only' view. Yet what should we make of these lexical claims for some type of equivalence between καθαρίζω and ἐγκαινίζω? To offer an answer, I will briefly comment on each of the passages adduced by these authors: Exod 29.36, Lev 8.15, 1 Macc 4.36–59 and Josephus, *Ant.* 3.197, adducing a few other relevant passages along the way. Before examining these texts we must note a pattern that will recur throughout: cultic inauguration or consecration is a multi-stage process in which the cultic implements are first cleansed of impurity, changing their status from impure to pure, and then consecrated, changing their status from common (or profane) to holy. These two steps were both requisite to the inauguration or renewal of tabernacle/temple worship.⁵⁶

Exod 29.36 and Lev 8.15 both evidence this pattern. In Exod 29.36, as discussed above, the Lord commands Moses to purify the altar by performing purgation upon it (הזאת על-המזבח / καθαριεῖς τὸ θυσιαστήριον). This is stage one, the

52 Cf. Barnard, *Mysticism*, 95–109, esp. 97–8.

53 Hurst, *Background*, 38.

54 Spicq, *Hébreux*, II.267.

55 Hurst, *Background*, 39; cf. Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 477.

56 For a concise, illuminating discussion of pure/impure and holy/common as 'distinct pairs of antonyms', and of the relation of these concepts to the cultic inauguration described in 1 Macc 4.36–59, see R. Bauckham, 'The Holiness of Jesus and his Disciples in the Gospel of John', *The Testimony of the Beloved Disciple: Narrative, History, and Theology in the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007) 254–62. My account of 1 Macc 4.36–59 is informed by his; see esp. pp. 257–8.

move from impure to pure. After thus purifying the altar, Moses is commanded to anoint it with oil 'so as to sanctify it' (וַשְׁמַח / ὥστε ἁγιάσαι αὐτό). This is stage two, the move from common to holy. And Lev 8.15, which narrates the carrying out of these instructions, describes the same two-stage process, with the same Greek verbs translating the same Hebrew verbs. This process prepares the altar for its inaugural use, which Lev 9.1–24 describes as the offering of one of each class of sacrifice on the newly consecrated altar.⁵⁷ Further, Jacob Milgrom observes that in Num 7, the tabernacle and the altar are first consecrated through being anointed with oil (7.1), then the tribal heads bring offerings called 'initiation offerings for the altar' (7.10, 11, 84, 88).⁵⁸ Both stages, purification and consecration, prepare for inauguration proper, which is the initial cultic use of the altar.

1 Macc 4.36–59 attests the same two-stage sequence of purification then dedication. In 1 Macc 4.36, Judas exhorts his brothers to go up to cleanse the sanctuary and dedicate it (καθαρίσαι τὰ ἅγια καὶ ἐγκαινίσει). The former is requisite to, and performed for the sake of, the latter. The altar has been profaned (βεβηλόω, 4.38, 44, 54) and defiled (μιάινω, 4.45) by Gentiles. Thus in 4.43, the action described by ἐκαθάρισαν involves removing the defiled stones. And in 4.48 Judas and his brothers consecrate the rebuilt courts (τὰς αὐλάς ἡγίασαν), rendering them holy, devoted to the Lord. The contrast is telling: what was newly built needed only consecration; what had been defiled needed purification. In the cultic reinauguration depicted in 1 Macc 4.36–59, καθαρίζω and ἐγκαινίζω are not synonyms, nor does the author use the former to describe the entire process. Instead, καθαρίζω refers to the purification of that which had been defiled, which was a constituent element in reinaugurating the defiled temple complex.

The Josephus passage, which describes Moses' inauguration of the tabernacle, reads, 'And he sanctified both the tabernacle and the priests in such a manner, accomplishing their purification' (Ἦγνιζε δὲ καὶ τὴν σκηνὴν καὶ τοὺς ἱερέας τρῶπῳ τοιοῦτῳ ποιούμενος αὐτῶν τὴν κάθαρσιν, *Ant.* 3.197).⁵⁹ The context is cultic inauguration, though neither noun nor verb forms of ἐγκαινίζω appear. Given what we have observed so far, it is most probable that Josephus uses ἁγνίζω and the noun κάθαρσις to refer to sanctification and purification as complementary aspects of cultic inauguration. Confirmation of this is found in

57 Cf. Bauckham, 'Holiness', 260.

58 Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 593. See esp. Num 7.84 LXX (cf. 7.88), which translates the construct phrase הַמִּזְבֵּחַ הַנֶּחֱמָד with ὁ ἐγκαινισμὸς τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου. In the words of both the Hebrew and Greek texts, the post-purification, post-consecration inaugural offerings are themselves the altar's inauguration in the strict sense.

59 My translation. Note that Hurst, *Background*, 39 mistakenly identifies the first verb as ἁγιάζω rather than ἁγνίζω.

Josephus' own account of the Maccabean restoration of temple worship.⁶⁰ In *Ant.* 12.316–26, Josephus describes how the temple worship had been turned into something impure and profane (βέβηλον καὶ κοινήν, 12.320), yet Judas and his men purified and sanctified the temple (καθαρίσαι, 12.316; ἀγνίσειε, καθάρως, 12.318), resulting in the renewal of the people's customs (ἀνανέωσιν, ἀνάκτησιν, 12.324), specifically, their temple worship. As in 1 Macc 4.36–59, purification and consecration are prerequisite to the temple's re-inauguration. In neither Josephus passage is καθαρίζω either lexically equivalent to ἐγκαινίζω or used to describe the entire process of inauguration. Therefore, none of the passages surveyed here support the idea that in Heb 9.23, the verb καθαρίζω, used in 9.23a and arguably implied in 9.23b, denotes 'inauguration' or 'consecration'. Instead, as in all these passages, it bears its normal sense of purification from antecedent defilement.

3. Conclusion

To borrow a phrase from a classic essay by G. B. Caird, in the face of a formidable display of learned discouragement I have argued that Heb 9.23 does in fact mean what it appears to mean.⁶¹ The internal structure of 9.23–6 shows that 9.23 is a thesis elaborated by the two contrasts in 9.24–6 between Christ's eschatological Yom Kippur sacrifice and its earthly counterparts. Given that the cleansing of the tabernacle is a major focus of Lev 16, and that the author sees the Levitical cult as in some sense patterned in advance on Christ's offering, perhaps readers of Hebrews should be rather less surprised than we tend to be when we find the author stating that the heavenly tabernacle itself needed to be cleansed. Further, far from being removed from the pressing concerns of its recipients,⁶² the idea that the heavenly tabernacle is cleansed from defilement both agrees with and advances the letter's central hortatory motif. Because the record of human sin has been removed from God's presence, God's people can draw near to him, approaching the very Holy of Holies in heaven with confidence, a true heart, and full assurance of faith (4.16; 10.22).⁶³

60 Bauckham, 'Holiness', 260–1.

61 G. B. Caird, 'The Exegetical Method of the Epistle to the Hebrews', *CJT* 5 (1959) 44.

62 As Attridge, *Hebrews*, 262 n. 23 alleges, but see rightly deSilva, *Perseverance*, 312–13; cf. more broadly Moffitt, *Atonement*, 302.

63 I am very grateful to Simon Gathercole and Peter Gurry for their constructive comments on this essay.