

Hebrews 9,2: Some Suggestions about Text and Context

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The Problem

The Greek text at Heb 9,2 has long been recognized as containing vexing problems. The text discusses the outer “tent” (*skēnē*) of the desert tabernacle. This is beyond dispute. The difficulty centres on the word *Hagia* at the end of the verse.¹ Normally this is taken as a reference to the outer tent as the “Holies”. But a closer examination reveals difficulties.² Part of the problem involves the text itself. But textual uncertainties are part of a larger challenge constituted by the interpretation of Heb 9,2 in its context.

9,1 *Eiche men oun [kai] hē prōtē dikaiōmata latreias to te hagian kosmikon.*

9,2 *skene gar kateskeuasthe he prote en he, he te lychnia kai he trapeza kai he prothesis ton arton hetis legetai Hagia;*

9,3 *meta de to deuteron katepetasma skene he legomene Hagia Hagion³ . . .*

9,1 Now the first [covenant] had ordinances of worship and the earthly sanctuary.

1. Text after Nestle-Aland²⁷ (Nestle-Aland, *Novam Testamentum Graece* (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft; Stuttgart 1993)
2. Cf. H. Koester, “‘Outside the Camp’: Hebrews 13.9-14”, *Harvard Theological Review* 45 (1962), 309, n. 34: “The remark *hētis legetai Hagia* referring to the ‘first tent’ Hebr. 9.2 is very odd and not consistent with the word usage of the rest of the Epistle. In 9.3 Hebr. calls the inner tent *hagia hagiōn*, but in all other places the simple *Hagia* is the technical term for the ‘inner tent,’ the earthly one (9.25; 13.11) as well as its heavenly prototype (8.2; 9.12; in both passages the inner sanctuary, called *Hagia*, is clearly distinguished from the *skēnē* of the heavens; 9.23; 10.19; 9.9). The use of the term *Hagia* for the outer tent in 9.2 is either to be explained as due to the dependence upon a ‘Vorlage’ in the description of the tabernacle, or, preferably, the sentence *hētis legetai Hagia* is a marginal gloss which later came into the text, that is at a wrong place. . . .’ The view being suggested in this paper is that there is no need to resort to a ‘Vorlage’ or a gloss. The Greek text makes sense as it stands. The problem is that the sense that it makes is not the sense which it would seem to make if one relies only on the obvious fact that v. 2 is speaking about the first tent. That the first part of v. 2 speaks about the first tent is beyond doubt. The question is about what the second part of the verse is speaking.
3. Text after NA²⁷.

- 9,2 For the first tent was fashioned in which were the lamp and the table and the presentation of breads, which is called *Hagia*;
 9,3 And after the second veil, the tent called “Holy of Holies” . . .

There are four principal readings for the end of v. 2:

- 1) The above text, with the reading of *Hagia*, represents the interpretation of the editors of NA²⁷. They understand the word as referring to the “first tent” (*skēnē* ... *hē prōtē*), i.e., the “Holy” of the desert tabernacle, and accordingly supply the capital letter while relying on the readings of D², 0278, 33, 1739, 1881, \mathfrak{M} , \aleph , D¹, I, P (the last four, however, without accents). This understanding of the text is influenced by the presumed parallelism with *Hagia Hagion* in the following verse which is also capitalized courtesy of the editors and which relies on \aleph^* , A, D*, I^{vid}, 33, 1881, \mathfrak{M} .
- 2) B reads *ta hagia* which can be construed as support for the neuter plural and the NA²⁷ interpretation as against the interpretation of *hagia* as a feminine singular (*hagía*).
- 3) Some witnesses take the letters *hagia* as representing a feminine singular *hagia* (365, 629 and others of lesser moment, along with vg^{mss}). This can be understood as a reference to the word *skēnē* so that the meaning is “holy (tabernacle)”.⁴
- 4) Finally some witnesses have *hagia hagion* (\wp ⁴⁶, A, D*, vg^{mss}).⁵ This is a common way of referring to the “Holy of Holies” and is never used of the “Holy” [Place], i.e., the first tent. Hence it is a *lectio difficilior* according to the common understanding of the verse.

Inasmuch as v. 3, with its the designation of the inner “tent” (*skēnē*), is of relevance for the interpretation of v. 2, the various manuscript readings for it are worth noting:

4. Cf. P. Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (The New International Greek Testament Commentary; Eerdmans, Grand Rapids / Paternoster Press, Carlisle 1993) 423.
5. This is the position taken by the present writer in 1970: J. Swetnam, “Hebrews 9,2 and the Uses of Consistency”, *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 32 (1970) 207. The argument used there is based on the Vulgate’s understanding of the Greek text. The present note will attempt a solution based on the Greek text itself.

- 1) *Hagia Hagión* (though not necessarily with capitals): \aleph^* , A, D*, I^{vid}, 33, 1881, \aleph .
- 2) *ta hagia tōn hagiōn*: \aleph^2 , B, D², K, L, 0278, 1241, 1505 and others.
- 3) *hagia tōn hagiōn*: P, 1739 and a few other manuscripts.
- 4) *hagia* \wp ^{46,6}.

No matter how the above readings are construed, they are usually interpreted on the basis of the prevalent opinion that vv. 2 and 3 are giving the two parts of the desert tabernacle.⁷ But while the readings *hagia*, *hagia*, and *ta hagia* are intelligible on the basis of this interpretation, the well-attested reading *hagia hagiōn* definitely is not.⁸ For this is a classic way of referring to the “Holy of Holies” or inner tent, as the variants for v. 3 attest.

The Function of the Relative Clause hētis legetai hagia

It is the contention of the present note that the current prevalent opinion—that the relative clause *hētis legetai Hagia* (?) refers to the words *skēnē ... he prōtē*—is contrary to what the Greek text of Heb 9,2-3 actually says.

Essential to prevalent opinion that the phrase *hētis legetai Hagia* (?) refers to the noun *skēnē ... hē prōtē* at the beginning of the verse is the understanding that the relative pronoun *hētis* is synonymous with the relative pronoun *hē*. This in turn depends on the common view that the distinction in classical Greek between the simple relative *hos* and the qualitative relative *hostis* had disappeared by New Testament times.⁹ As a generalization this is undoubtedly true. But general rules can have particular exceptions. It is essential to see in this regard what is the usage of Hebrews.

6. The reading is *ana*, which seems to be an error for *hagia*. The same mistake (or possibly an attempt at a phonetic transcription) is found at Heb 10,14.
7. Cf., for example, Ellingworth (*Hebrews*, 423): “In any case, however *hagia* here [sc., in Heb 9,2] and *hagia hagiōn* in v. 3 are understood grammatically, they must denote the two parts of the tabernacle”.
8. “The designations of inner and outer portions of the sanctuary in vss 2–3 have caused consternation, both ancient and modern” (H. W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews. A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Hermeneia; Fortress Press; Philadelphia 1989) 230).
9. Cf. Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 422, with regard to Heb 9,2: “The distinction between the relative pronouns *he* here, and *hetis* later in the verse, had disappeared by NT times . . .; the variation is purely stylistic”.

Hebrews uses the qualitative relative *hostis* ten times: 2,3; 8.5.6; 9,2.9; 10,8.11.35; 12,5; 13,7.

- 2,3: *hētis* refers to the immediately preceding word of the same gender and number, *sōtērias*.
- 8,5: *hoitines* refers to the immediately preceding word of the same gender and number, *prospHERONTōn*.
- 8,6: *hētis* refers to the immediately preceding word of the same gender and number, *diathēkēs*.
- 9,9: *hētis* refers not to the immediately preceding word of the same gender and number, *stasin*, but to the word of the same gender and number, *skēnēs*, which governs the immediately preceding word, *stasin*.¹⁰
- 10,8: *haitines* refers to the words of the same gender and number, *thusias kai prosphoras* and the words which are in apposition to them, *holokautomata kai peri hamartias*.
- 10,11: *haitines* refers to the immediately preceding word of the same gender and number, *thusias*.
- 10,35: *hētis* refers to the immediately preceding word of the same gender and number, *parrēsian*.
- 12,5: *hētis* refers to the immediately preceding word of the same gender and number, *paraklēseōs*.
- 13,7: *hoitines* refers not to the immediately preceding word of the same gender and number, *hymōn*, but to the word of the same gender and number which governs it, *hēgoumenōn*.

These examples show how the mind of the author of Hebrews worked with regard to the use of the qualitative relative *hostis*. He links it, if not always with the

10. Cf. Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 439.

word of the same gender and number which immediately precedes (the usual procedure), at least with the word of the same gender and number which governs the immediately preceding word. In all instances, the word or words to which a form of *hostis* refers are in close proximity, with no intervening clause. The clause *hētis legetai Hagia* can easily fall under this usage by interpreting the *hētis* as referring not to the distant *skēnē* but to the proximate *prothesis*.¹¹ This syntactical consideration demands a semantic reconsideration of what the text then means. But first the textual variants should be re-examined in the light of this interpretation.

Possibility #3 above, in which the form *hagia* is interpreted as a feminine singular, *hagia*, does not represent a strong manuscript tradition and is of minimal importance for the understanding of Heb 9,2.

Readings ##1, 2, and 4 (#1: *hagia* [with the capital of Nestle-Aland²⁷ removed]; #2 *ta hagia*; #4: *hagia hagiōn*) represent variations of a neuter plural form, *hagia*, and this convergence indicates that it is among these three possibilities that the best reading is probably to be found. But to make a decision it is necessary to study afresh what the author of Hebrews means by *hagia* by seeing how it is used elsewhere in the epistle. For it is clear that if this word is predicated of the *prothesis tōn artōn* a different set of semantic considerations come into play.

11. An added consideration is the fact that the simple relative *hē* is used in the same verse with reference to *skēnē*: *en hē he te lyknia kai hē trapeza kai hē prothesis tōn artōn ...* The sequence *hē ... hētis* seems unbalanced; and to make *hētis* refer to *hē* not only goes against the usage of the author of Hebrews but posits an confusing antecedent, given the intervening feminines *he lyknia*, *hē trapeza* and *hē prothesis*. E. Gräßer (*An die Hebräer* [Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament, XVII/2; Neukirchen-Vluyn; Neukirchener Verlag 1993], 117) holds that although the relative clause referred to the immediately preceding showbread in the exegesis of the early Church, this position is “far” from the thought of the author of Hebrews, who is thinking of the nature of the two divisions of the tabernacle and uses traditional terminology to designate them. But Gräßer does not examine the function of *hostis* elsewhere in Hebrews, which should be the decisive criterion for how it is used in Heb 9,2. Nor is clear why the contemporary mind should have such a privileged insight into the mind of the author of Hebrews, an insight denied the early Church. That the author of Hebrews is discussing the two tents of the desert tabernacle in Heb 9,2-3 is true, but not necessarily decisive for judging the antecedent of *hētis* in the verse. What is really at stake here is a general view of what *hagia* often means in the Septuagint (“Holy Place”) in the context of the first part of 9,2 (which clearly speaks of the “Holy Place”) and what *hagia* means in Hebrews in the context of the second part of 9,2. For anyone who holds the second position, as is the case in the present paper, part of the problem is to give a plausible suggestion as to why the author of Hebrews does not give a designation for the first tent parallel to the “Holy of Holies” of 9,3. A suggestion in this regard will be made later in this paper (Cf. below, n. 21).

The Function of the Word hagia

The best attested reading for Heb 9,2 has the form *hagia*.¹² This then would seem to be the most obvious place to begin looking for the meaning of the clause beginning *hētis legetai* which refers to the *prothesis tōn artōn*. The author of Hebrews uses the expression [*to*] *hagion* / [*ta*] *hagia* in a number of places, so there is no lack of material for arriving at an understanding of the word *hagia*, just as there was no lack of material for arriving at an understanding of the word *hētis*.

The expression *ta hagia* and variants is found ten times in the Epistle to the Hebrews: 8,2; 9,1.2.3.8.12.24.25; 10,19; 13,11.¹³

8,2: Christ as high priest is *tōn hagiōn leitourgos kai tēs skēnēs tēs alēthinēs, hēn epēxen ho kyrios, ouk anthrōpos*. A common interpretation is to take *tōn hagiōn* and *tēs skēnēs* as synonymous, with the intervening *kai* being understood as epexegetic.¹⁴ But this view does not take into account the other uses of *ta hagia* in Hebrews where the words refer to the inner tent.¹⁵ Further, the distinction between the inner sanctuary of the tent and the entire tent is found in the LXX.¹⁶ The author of Hebrews is using this distinction to show that in his view the Christian inner sanctuary (*ta hagia*) is a part of the heavenly tent which the Lord established.

9,1: The first covenant had ordinances of worship and *to ... hagian kosmikon*. Here the use of the singular is striking, the only such occurrence in Hebrews. It refers to the entire tabernacle. There are biblical precedents for this usage.¹⁷ The adjective “worldly” is pejorative.

9,2.3 are the texts under discussion.

9,8: The Holy Spirit shows by the imagery of the restricted access to “the second tent” that *mēpō pephanerōsthai tēn tōn hagiōn hodon eti tēs prōtēs skēnēs echousēs stasin* Here the expression *tēn tōn hagiōn hodon* refers to the way into the Holy

12. Attridge, *Hebrews*, 230.

13. A. P. Salom, “TA HAGIA in the Epistle to the Hebrews”, *Andrews University Serrunary Studies* 5 (1967) 59-70.

14. Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 399-400.

15. Cf. Attridge, *Hebrews*, 217. Contra: Salom, “TA HAGIA in Hebrews”, 65-66.

16. Cf. Lev 16,16.20.23 (Attridge, *Hebrews*, 218 and 218, n. 23).

17. Cf. Attridge, *Hebrews*, 231-232 and 232, n. 19.

of Holies. The contrast is between *ta hagia* and the “first” or outer tent, i.e., the Holy Place. Here the phrase *hē prōtē skēnē* has the same meaning that it has in 9,2 and 9,6. As long as the first tent had legitimacy as the official cult, the “way” into the Holy of Holies was not yet “revealed” (*phaneroō*).¹⁸ That is to say, as long as the outer tent and all its accompanying ceremonials was legitimate, there was no question of unqualified access to the inner tent, i.e., *ta hagia*.¹⁹

9,12: Christ entered not through the blood of goats and calves but through his own blood once and for all into *ta hagia* after finding an eternal redemption. The contrast is between the “greater and more perfect tent not made with hands, that is, not of this creation” in 9,11 *through which* Christ enters and *ta hagia into which* Christ enters. The “greater and more perfect tent” is plausibly viewed as the risen body of Christ.²⁰ Here the risen body of Christ is viewed as taking the place of the outer tent of the Mosaic tabernacle. The risen body of Christ in 9,11 is paralleled by the blood of Christ in 9,12: the first gives the “physical possibility” of entering into *ta hagia*, whereas the second gives the “cultic justification” for the entrance.²¹

18. Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 437-438. Salom (“TA HAGIA in Hebrews”, 68) interprets *ta hagia* as referring to the entire tabernacle even though he maintains that “the first tent” means the outer tent.
19. Attridge, *Hebrews*, 240.
20. Cf.: A. Vanhoye, “~ar la tente plus grande et plus parfait . . . ‘(Hebr 9,11)”, *Biblica* 46 (1965) 1-28; J. Swetnam, “Christology and the Eucharist in the Epistle to the Hebrews”, *Biblica* 70 (1989) 79-80. This interpretation is contested of course. Cf. Attridge, *Hebrews*, 246-247. Attridge claims that the major objection to such an interpretation is that it ignores or does violence to the basic imagery of the Yom Kippur ritual that Hebrews is using. The objection depends on how one understands the use of the imagery of the risen body of Christ. The risen body of Christ and the Eucharistic body of Christ to which it is ordered (according to the suggestions being presented in this paper) are *sui generis* realities that would fit neatly into no comparison. But that does not mean that a comparison cannot be made.
21. Swetnam, “Christology and the Eucharist”, 80, n. 25. The view of the author of Hebrews that the first “tent” of the Christian fulfilment of the desert tabernacle is the risen body of Christ would seem to be the reason why he refuses to call the first tent of the desert tabernacle “Holy” in 9,2. Such terminology, if pressed, would lead one to the inference that the risen body of Christ was merely “holy” while the Eucharistic species of bread “into which” he enters was “very holy” (i.e., “Holy of Holies”). In other words, given the perspective of the author of Hebrews as to the nature of the Christian “outer tent” and “inner tent” it would be inadvisable to make any predication about the degree of holiness of the outer tent of the first covenant, for this is being taken a prefiguration of the “outer tent” of the new covenant (Cf. above, n. 11.)

9,24: Christ did not enter into *hagia* made by hands, which are the antitype of the true *hagia*,²² but into heaven itself, in order to appear before the face of God for the Christians.²³ Here the point of the passage is that Christ did not enter into the created Holy of Holies of the old dispensation, but into heaven in the new dispensation. It is not stated here that Christ entered into the *hagia* of the new dispensation, though the implication is that the “heaven” into which Christ enters is related to these *hagia*.

9,25: Christ did not enter into *hagia* made by hands in order to offer Himself many times, just as the high priest enters into *ta hagia* every year in the blood of another. Here the expression for the inner tent uses the article: *ta hagia*.²⁴

10,19: The Christians have “authorization”²⁵ for the “entrance into the Holy of Holies” (*eis tēn eisodon tōn hagiōn*) in the blood of Jesus. Here again the article is used: *ta hagia*.²⁶ The following verse, with its mention of the veil (10,20), indicates that the entrance is into the Holy of Holies.

There is ample warrant, then, for saying that the author of Hebrews consistently used the expression [*ta*] *hagia* to refer to the Holy of Holies, despite the fact that when placed against the background of the LXX usage the expression usually refers to the “sanctuary” in general or, to a notably lesser degree, to the outer compartment

22. Ellingworth (*Hebrews*, 480), claims that the adjective *tōn alehthinōn*, used here as a noun, does not refer to individual parts of either sanctuary, but this seems to ignore the emphasis of the image of “entering” stressed in the passage (vv. 24 and 25). Cf. C. Spicq, *L'Épître aux Hébreux*. II. Commentaire (Études Bibliques; Paris; Gabalda 1953), 267.

23. The mention of “heaven” conjures up for Attridge (*Hebrews*, 263) Platonic imagery. But the word is used here in the sense of the “place” of the angels (cf. Heb 1,6) and of Christ who sits at God’s right hand (Heb 1,13—cf. the second half v. 24, which speaks about appearing before God’s “face”), and of God Himself (Heb 1,13). Cf. Spicq, *Hébreux*, 267-268, and F. Zorell, *Lexicon graecum Novi Testamenti* (Cursus Scripturae Sacrae, Pars prior, Libri introductorii, VII; Paris; Lethielleux 1961), col. 959.

24. Salom (“TA HAGIA in Hebrews, 69) says that the service of the high priest was carried on in the inner compartment. But since the whole sanctuary is involved in these services the “basic” meaning is “sanctuary”, i.e., the entire tabernacle. Thus here, as elsewhere, Salom blurs the imagery used by the author of Hebrews and thereby blurs the theology which the imagery is intended to convey. Linguistically speaking, there is no “basic meaning” of *ta hagia* independent of its use in specific contexts.

25. Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 509.

26. Attridge, *Hebrews*, 284.

or “Holy Place”.²⁷ It is because of this Septuagint background that many translations and authors understand the expression in Hebrews as referring to the “sanctuary” in general.²⁸ This view seems all the more justified when placed with the interpretation of the relative clause *hētis legetai hagia* of Heb 9,2.

But if the relative clause *hētis legetai hagia* refers to the immediately preceding *prothesis tōn artōn*, and if the best-attested manuscript reading *hagia* refers to the “Holy of Holies”, the meaning of Heb 9,2 changes radically. The author of Hebrews is talking about the first tent of the desert tabernacle (*skēnē gar kateskeuast hē prōtē*) which he is intent on comparing with the second tent mentioned in 9,3 (*meta de to deuteron katapetasma skēnē hē legomenē Hagia Hagiōn*). But *skēnē ... hē prōtē* and *skēnē hē legomenē Hagia Hagiōn* are the elements of to *hagion kosmikon*, “the worldly tabernacle”. Within this worldly tabernacle, however, is the *prothesis tōn artōn*, and these are called *hagia*.²⁹ The word is chosen deliberately to insinuate that the Holy of Holies of the Christian dispensation is being prefigured in the old dispensation by the *prothesis tōn artōn*. This is a jarring juxtaposition and requires reflection to see what the author of Hebrews is driving at.

In the immediate context of Heb 9,2 the primary meaning of the word *hagia* is “holy things”, and is a standard way to refer to sacred food in the LXX.³⁰ But the implied meaning in the context of Heb 9,2 is the “Holy of Holies” of the true

27. Cf. the table given in Salom, “TA HAGIA in Hebrews”, pp. 62-63 for the data.

28. For example, Salom, “TA HAGIA in Hebrews”, 65: “The general conclusion reached from the study of the LXX use of *ta hagia* and the comparison with the use in Hebrews is that this expression refers basically to the sanctuary in general. The question remaining to be answered is the question of translation. How should it be translated in Hebrews? Should it be left in translation with the emphasis on the basic meaning and thus be translated ‘sanctuary’ each time (as by Goodspeed and Knox)? Or should it be interpreted in the light of its context and the theology of the passage, and translated according to that specific part of the sanctuary which seems to be in the mind of the writer? It is the contention of the present writer that the basic meaning of the word should be uppermost in the mind of the translator and, provided it makes sense in the context, should be used for the translation.” Salom then appeals to “ambiguity in translation” as the relevant principle at hand. But this is a false analysis of the problem in Hebrews: the “ambiguity” is of his own making. A study of the context shows that there is no ambiguity in the use of *ta hagia*, only a refusal to adapt one’s thinking to the thinking of the author of Hebrews.

29. On the use of the word *prothesis* for the showbread rather than for the act of placing the showbread cf. Swetnam, “Hebrews 9,2”, 208.

30. Cf. Lev 24,9 (the most relevant passage) and also Ex 29,32-33; Lev 10,12; 22,6-7.10.14.15-16; 2 Chr 35,6; 1 Sam 21,4; 2 Esdras 2,63; 17,65; 20,34 (Swetnam, “Hebrews 9,2”, 208, n. 14).

tabernacle of which the bread of the Presence of the desert tabernacle is the antitype. Thus, for the author of Hebrews, the true Holy of Holies, the Holy of Holies of the New Covenant into which Christ enters through his risen body (the “tent not made by hands” [9,11]) and of which he is the “cult minister” (8,2), is the bread for which the bread of the presence of the earthly tabernacle was the foreshadowing. That is to say, the Holy of Holies of the Christian dispensation into which the high priest has entered once and for all is the Eucharist bread.

The Variant Readings

If this seems fanciful³¹ there is at least one objective check to go by: the variant readings for 9,2.

The reading *hagía* (#3 in the list given above), in which the adjective *hagios* is taken as a feminine singular, could be understood of the immediately preceding *prothesis tōn artōn*, as well as of the more remote *skēnē ... hē prōtē*. But in either case it represents a rather banal meaning. The weakness of the witnesses which give this reading indicate that it is not a serious contender for the meaning of Heb 9,2.

The reading *hagia*, without the capital (#1 in the list of readings given above) makes excellent sense in the context, with its primary referral to the sacred foods of the old dispensation and its secondary referral to the Holy of Holies of the Christian dispensation. This is probably the original reading.

The reading *ta hagia* (#2 in the list of readings given above) bears the same interpretation as that given above for *hagia* without the article.

Finally, the *lectio difficilior* of *hagia hagiōn* can be explained as a reference to the Holy of Holies of the Christian dispensation, as opposed to the *hagia hagiōn* (#1 in the list of readings given for v. 3 above). It would seem to be not the original meaning³² but a modification of the original reading *hagia* in order to emphasize the secondary meaning in Hebrews.

31. Swetnam, “Hebrews 9,2”, 213; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 233.

32. Attridge, *Hebrews*, 230.

The Latin Witnesses

The Vetus Latina and Vulgate versions of the Latin New Testament have some instructive readings with regard to the suggestion that *hētis legetai Hagia* refers not to the first or outer tent but to the presentation of the bread in the outer tent.³³ The text forms J and D of the Vetus Latina and the Vulgate text read as follows:

- J 9,2: *tabernaculum enim factum est primum in quo inerat candelabrum et mensa*
 D 9,2: *tabernaculum enim factum est primum in quo candelabrum et mensa*
 V 9,2: *tabernaculum enim factum est primum in quo inerant candelabra et mensa*
 J *et propositio panum quod dicitur sanctum.*
 D *et propositio panum que dicitur sancta sanctorum.*
 V *et propositio panum que dicitur sancta.*
 J 9,3 *post velamentum autem secundum quod dicitur sancta sanctorum.*
 D 9,3: *post velamentum autem secundum quod dixit sanctam sanctorum.*
 V 9,3 *post velamentum autem secundum quod dicitur sancta sanctorum.*

From the above it is clear that J represents the tradition which holds that *hētis* in the Greek refers to the outer tent, while D and V represent the tradition which holds that *hētis* refers to the presentation of the bread. Further, D holds for the reading *sancta sanctorum*, which clearly indicates that the bread represents the Holy of Holies, while V holds for the reading *sancta* with reference to the presentation of the bread. The readings of all three traditions for 9,3 have *sancta sanctorum* except that D has the verb in the active, *dixit*, and has the unusual accusative feminine form *sanctam*, which seems to imply some relation to the presentation of bread.

With reference to a variant reading *quo* for *quod* in tradition J at Heb 9,2, manuscripts from Milan in the tenth century (Γ^{A2}) and from Verona in the ninth century (Verona LXXXII [77]) have this to say: *refert hētis ad verba prothesis tōn artōn, quibus traditio christiana panem eucharisticum praefi guratum esse credit.* (“it has *hētis* refer to *prothesis tōn artōn*, by which Christian tradition believes the Eucharistic bread is being prefigured”). This is the tradition which the present paper holds, on evidence from the Greek text itself, was the same tradition, either formally or materially, which the author of Hebrews follows.

33. Material on Latin versions is taken from H. J. Frede (ed.), *Epistulae ad Thessalonicenses, Timotheum, Titum, Phulemonem, Hebraeos* (Vetus Latina, 25/II; Herder; Freiburg 1983) 1371-1375.

The Meaning “Holy Things” for [ta] hagia

Given that the suggestion made above is that the expression [ta] *hagia* has two meanings in Hebrews, and that one meaning, “[the] Holy Place” has already been canvassed, it would seem appropriate to consider briefly the list of places where [to] *hagion* / [ta] *hagia* is found to look for indications of the second meaning.

8,2: Christ as high priest is *tōn hagiōn leitourgōs kai tēs skēnēs tēs alēthinēs, hēn epēxen ho kyrios, ouk anthrōpos*. The expression *tōn hagiōn leitourgōs* is normally translated with reference to the desert tabernacle, as, for example, in the Bible of Jerusalem: “minister of the sanctuary”. But according to the suggestion made above it also means “minister of the Holy Things”, i.e., Christ, as minister of the Christian dispensation, is minister of the Holy Things which constitute the true sanctuary in that dispensation.³⁴ This is the first occurrence of [ta] *hagia* in Hebrews and the use of Christ with explicit reference to *ta hagia* in the sense of both Holy Things and Holy of Holies would be made in the context of reference to the entire desert tabernacle as the “true tent which the Lord established, not man” in the same verse. The contrast, together with the location of the verse in Hebrews, serves to give to the text a thematic significance.

9, 1: The first covenant had regulations of worship and to *hagion ... kosmikon*. Here the use of the singular is striking, the only such occurrence in Hebrews. It refers to the entire tabernacle and, because it is singular, has no suggestion of “Holy Things”. But that seems to be the point: the author of Hebrews goes out of his way to link the singular, *to hagion*, with the first covenant and its way of worship. The designation *kosmikon*, with its pejorative connotation, sums up the tone of the verse nicely.

9,8: The Holy Spirit shows by the imagery of the restricted access to “the second tent” (i.e., the inner tent) that the “way” into the Christian Holy of Holies has not yet been made manifest as long as “the first tent” (i.e., the outer tent) had standing. Here the expression *tēn ... hodon* refers to the “way” into the Holy of Holies. An

34. The expression “minister of the holy things” (*leitourgōs tōn hagiōn*) is found in Philo, *Allegorical Interpretation of Genesis II, III. (Legum Allegoria)*, III.xlvi (F. H. Colson - G. H. Whitaker [eds.], *Philo* (Loeb Classical Library, Philo I; Cambridge, Massachusetts / London; Harvard University Press/William Heinemann 1949) 390. The expression refers to Aaron and his sons.

identification is being made between the “way” into *ta hagia* and the “first” or outer tent, i.e., the Holy Place (the same meaning *hē prōtē skēnē* has in 9,2 and 9,6). In Christian terms, the “way” into “the Holy Things”, i.e., the new and definitive Holy of Holies, is made possible by a different outer tent, which is the risen body of Christ. As long as the outer tent of the tabernacle (and of the temple) had legal status, the real “way” into the Holy of Holies was blocked. Only by the risen body of Christ, the “tent not made by hands”, is entrance into the Holy Things possible.

9,12: This verse constitutes, along with 9,11, a chiastic structure which gives a concise theology of the entrance of Christ into *ta hagia* of the new dispensation:³⁵

9,11 Christ, high priest of the good things which have come about,
through the greater and more perfect tent
not made by hands, that is, not of this creation,

9,12 nor through blood of goats and calves
but through His own proper blood
entered once and for all into *ta hagia* after having found an eternal
redemption.

V. 12 is important because it and v. 11 help establish the deeper meaning of *ta hagia*, which here again indicate on the surface the Christian Holy of Holies in Hebrews. In some way *ta hagia* are correlative with 1) the greater and more perfect tent and 2) Christ’s own blood. The greater and more perfect tent is the risen body of Christ according to the suggestions being made in this paper.³⁶ The meaning of *dia* in v. 11 in connection with the greater and more perfect tent, in accordance with the imagery, is local: the image is of movement into *ta hagia*.³⁷ The meaning of the

35. Cf. Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 451.

36. Cf. above, n. 20.

37. Attridge, *Hebrews*, 245-246. But this image of local movement does not translate neatly into ontological realities. In the view defended in this paper the distinction being suggested in vv. 11-12 is between the risen body of Christ as it exists in “heaven” (“the greater and more perfect tent”) and the risen body of Christ as it exists in the form of the Eucharistic bread (“*ta hagia*”). Obviously the distinction does not imply separation. Hebrews regards them according to the distinction between offerer (Christ as high priest in heaven) and offering (Christ as victim in the Eucharistic bread). The language of Hebrews is *sui generis* to try to account for realities which are *sui generis*.

dia in v. 12 is instrumental: the blood of Christ shed on the cross is that which authorizes His entry.³⁸

The contention of the present paper is that only the Eucharistic body of Christ is truly correlative with the realities of his earthly blood and his risen body in a context such as Hebrews, fraught as it is with profound symbolic undertones: an elaborate build-up demands an elaborate conclusion.

9,24: Christ did not enter into *hagia* made by hands, which are the antitype of the true *hagia*, but into heaven itself, in order to appear before the face of God for the Christians. The language of the verse bears scrutiny. Christ here is not said to have entered into *ta hagia* but into “heaven itself” (*eis auton ton ouranon*). This “heaven” is considered in some way to parallel the *hagia* of the first dispensation which were “made by hands”. The context is the Yom Kippur ceremony of expiation.³⁹ Christ’s blood— His self sacrifice—has achieved definitive expiation (vv. 25-26). The goal of Christ’s entrance in this context is the presence of God (v. 24) in order to make intercession for Christians so that this expiation may be exploited for salvation. “Heaven” here is used in the sense of the “place” where the angels dwell (Heb 1,6), where the risen Christ dwells (Heb 1,13), and where God dwells (Heb 1,13).⁴⁰ This is not to say that “heaven” in this sense has no relation to the old dispensation’s Holy of Holies, or of the new dispensation’s Holy of Holies: the context clearly supposes a relation. Just as the old dispensation *hagia* made by hands were the antitype of the true (*hagia*), so the old dispensation *hagia* are in some way the antitype of heaven itself, for just as the high priest of the old dispensation entered into a Holy of Holies not made by hands, so Christ enters into the new dispensation Holy of Holies and also into heaven itself.⁴¹ The link between the Christian *hagia* and the “heaven” where the angels and God dwell is that Christ

38. Cf. F. Blaß – A. Debrunner, *Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Griechisch* (ed. F. Rehkopf; Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht; Göttingen 1984) §223.4 (p. 180). In Heb 10,19 authorization to enter the Holy of Holies is ‘in’ (*en*) Christ’s blood. But in Heb 9,12 the parallelism with v. 11 suggests that *dia* be used. The earthly blood of Christ offered in a sacrifice which obtains eternal redemption (“having found an eternal redemption”) authorizes His entry which is made ontologically possible by His risen body.

39. Attridge, *Hebrews*, 260.

40. Cf. above, n. 23.

41. On the relation in Jewish tradition between the imagery of the Holy of Holies and “heaveni” cf. Attridge, ‘The Heavenly Temple and its Significance’, *Hebrews*, 222-224.

“entered” into both. In fact, this seems to be the point of the section 9,23 -10,4, that *ta hagia* need to be consecrated by sacrifices superior to their old dispensation foreshadowings because they are “heavenly” (*epourania*), and they are “heavenly” because Christ entered into them as part of an action in which he entered into heaven itself.

9,25: Christ did not enter into *hagia* made by hands (9,24) in order to offer himself many times, i.e., he did not enter as the high priest (of the old dispensation) enters into *ta hagia* every year in the blood of another. Here the expression for the inner tent uses the article: *ta hagia*. Since it is a reference to the tabernacle (temple) of the Sinai dispensation, the expression *ta hagia* refers only to the Holy of Holies, with no direct indication of the Christian “Holy Things”. The high priest of the Sinai dispensation does not enter into “Holy Things”; only Christ does that because only Christ has a glorified body (9,24; cf. 9,11).

10,19: The Christians have “authorization” for the “entrance into the Holy of Holies” (*eis tēn eisodon tōn hagiōn*) in the blood of Jesus. Here again the article is used: *ta hagia*. The following verse, with its mention of the veil, indicates unmistakably that the entrance is into the Holy of Holies. The nature of the Holy of Holies is suggested by the metaphorical language of 10,20. Christ inaugurated a new “entrance way” (*eisodon*) into *ta hagia*, a “way” (*hodon*) which is “new and living” (*prospaton kai zōsan*). This “new and living way” is another manner of speaking of the outer tent, the “way” into the Holy of Holies of the Christian dispensation. In the Christian dispensation this “way” is the risen body of Christ, “the tent not made by hands” (Heb 9,11). This “way” was made “through the veil, that is, [through] His flesh” (10,20).⁴² Here the earthly body of Christ (cf. Heb 5,7), indicated by the word *sarx*,⁴³ is used in a bold image to represent the “veil” which He penetrated to enter into the Christian Holy of Holies, i.e., Holy Things. The flesh of Christ is both an obstacle and an opportunity for entrance: as obstacle, it is overcome by death (the natural fulfilment of *sarx*); as opportunity, it is fulfilled by the risen body of Christ. The risen body of Christ has an intrinsic relation to the Christian Holy of Holies for which it provides the entrance, and that Christian Holy of Holies is the Holy Things prefigured by the setting out of the bread, i.e., the Christian Eucharist. Without the glorified body of Christ the Eucharist is impossible.

42. On the use of the expression “through the veil, that is, of His flesh”, cf. Attridge, *Hebrews*, 285-286.

43. The word *sarx* in Hebrews always has the connotation of the earthly and mortal. Cf.: Heb 2,14; 5,7; 9,10.13; 12,9.

The Underlying Structure

In order to get a clearer idea of the role of *to hagion / ta hagia* in Hebrews it is necessary to situate the above discussions in their macro context, and for this it is necessary to suggest a macro structure for all of the texts which mention *to hagion / ta hagia*.

The present writer understands all of the texts cited above regarding *to hagion / ta hagia* as being part of the following structure:

Hebrews 8.1 - 10.39: The New Covenant

Introduction: 8,1-6

- A. The Frame: The Prophecy from Jeremiah (8,7-13)
- B. The Three Entrances of Christ (9,1-10,14)
 - B. 1. Introduction (9,1-10)
 - B. 2. The Entrance into the Holy of Holies/Holy Things (9,11-23)
 - B. 3. The Entrance into Heaven Itself (9,24-10,4)
 - B. 4. The Entrance into the World (10,5-14)
- A'. The Frame: The Prophecy from Jeremiah (10,15-18)
- C. Paraenesis (10,19-39)⁴⁴
 - C. 1. Negative (10,19-30a)
 - C. 2. Positive (10,30b-39)

Introduction: 8,1-6. Heb 8,1-7 acts as the introduction to the entire passage: Christ is high priest who has taken His seat at the right of God in heaven (v. 1), is cult minister of the Holy of Holies / Holy Things and of the entire true tent which was established by the Lord, i.e., not by human hands (v. 2). He needed an offering as does every priest (v. 3), but the gifts He gives are not according to law because He is not on earth (v. 4). Those who do offer gifts according to law are worshipping at a shadow of the heavenly tent, shown to Moses as he was fashioning the earthly one (v. 5). Christ's is a better liturgy inasmuch as He is mediator of a better covenant established on better promises (v. 6). A need for a second, better covenant was indicated by the fact that the first covenant was not above criticism (v. 7).

44. Cf. J. Swetnam, "Hebrews 10,30-31: A Suggestion", *Biblica* 75 (1994) 388-394.

A. *The Frame: The Prophecy from Jeremiah (8,7-13)*. A new covenant is needed because the old was not blameless. The new one is based on better promises and offers Christ, its mediator, a better liturgy. Hence the following passage is going to be about promises and liturgy in the context of a new covenant of which Christ is mediator. The lengthy citation from Jeremiah involving the new covenant (vv. 8-12), when placed in the context of liturgy by the author of Hebrews in an introduction to the culminating part of the epistle, could hardly avoid suggesting the Eucharist to the Christian familiar with Christian tradition (cf.: Matt 26,28; Luke 22,20; 1 Cor 11,25).

B. *The Three Entrances of Christ (9,1 -10,14)*. B. 1. *Introduction (9,1-10)*. The choice of the image of "entrance" as a principle of structure for the central and culminating section of Hebrews is suggested by the following considerations: There are parallel statements involving "entrance" at 9,11-12 ("Christ entered into the Holy of Holies / Holy Things"), at 9,24 ("Christ ... entered into heaven itself"), and at 10,5 ([He], entering into the world, says ...). These constructions are followed by passages which are roughly equivalent in size (9,11-22; 9,23 - 10,4; 10,5-12). And each mention of "entering" is found at the beginning of the passage, i.e., not only their contents are parallel but their positions in their context as well. Finally, at 10,19, the introduction to the paraenesis which follows the central part begins with the image of entrance while using the distinctive expression *ta hagia* which suggests the Holy of Holies / Holy Things.

The introduction at 9,1-10 prepares the way for the three passages on entrance by describing the desert tabernacle and the ceremonies involved in the rite of expiation of Yom Kippur. At the very beginning are found the verses 9,2-3 which, according to the suggestion being made in this paper, situates the Christian Holy of Holies as involving Holy Things understood with reference to the bread of presentation.

B. 2. *The Entrance into the Holy of Holies / Holy Things (9,11-23)*. Christ enters once and for all into *ta hagia*, i.e., into the Holy Things viewed as the Christian equivalent of the Holy of Holies. He does this through "the greater and more perfect tent not made with hands", i.e., his glorified body. By offering himself through a Holy Spirit he was able to achieve true purification of the consciences of all, and hence becomes the mediator of a new covenant. This covenant is in fact a testament because by its very nature it involves the death of the mediator. By implication the new covenant is inaugurated in blood just as Moses inaugurated the first covenant

at Sinai in blood. (The citation of Ex 24, X at Heb 9,20 seems to have been modified under influence of the words of institution of the Eucharist in Christian liturgical tradition.⁴⁵ This allusion to the Eucharist would be not inappropriate in Hebrews at this point, given the relevance this would have for the meaning of *ta hagia* suggested in this paper.) Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin (v. 22). Hence, just as the “copies” of the heavenly realities needed to be dedicated with blood, so the heavenly things themselves need to be dedicated with blood by better sacrifices still (v. 23).⁴⁶

B. 3. The Entrance into Heaven Itself (9,24 -10,4). The entrance into *Ta Hagia* (9,11-23) involves heavenly realities because Christ entered into heaven itself (v. 24). He did this by the unique offering of himself (vv. 25-26). Thus Christ is being presented here as high priest who offers, whereas in 9,11-23 he is presented as the victim being offered,⁴⁷ a victimhood only alluded to in vv. 25-26.⁴⁸ The entrance into the Holy of Holies / Holy Things is connected with the entrance into heaven as offering is connected with offerer. “Heaven” is the “place” of God and of angels: the entrance into heaven in 9,24 is the mention from a different perspective of the presentation of the risen Christ by God to the angels given in Heb 1,6-9. Christ’s unique priesthood is based on his unique sacrifice, and hence he does not need to act as the high priests of the first dispensation, with yearly entrance and yearly sacrifice and yearly remembrance of sin (v. 25, v. 1, v. 3). Christ will exit only once, to appear to those who await him for their salvation (v. 28).

B. 4. The Entrance into the World (10,5-14). A third entrance is now the subject of attention: the entrance into the world.⁴⁹ The citation of Ps 40,6-8 fixes the centre

45. Cf. Attridge, *Hebrews*, 257-258 and 258, n. 52.

46. The use of the plural, “sacrifices” (*thysiais*) is usually taken as a generic plural, with the plural *nekrois* at 9,17 being at times invoked as a parallel (cf. Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 478). But at 9,17 *nekrois* is part of a generalization involving all testaments, whereas at 9,23 the statement involves only the dedication of the heavenly realities proper to Christ’s sacrifice, which is repeatedly stressed as being singular. What seems to be hinted at by the plural *thysiais* is the plurality of the Eucharistic celebrations based on the one sacrifice and one entrance into the Holy of Holies of Christ. The statement in v. 23 that “heavenly things” need purification is startling, but it is in function of the statement in v. 22 that almost everything is purified in blood. The meaning is that if something is to act in cult as an instrument of purification it itself must be purified in the cult. If this is true of the weak instruments of the old dispensation *a fortiori* it is true of the heavenly instruments of the new.

47. The blood of Christ is explicitly mentioned in 9,12.14 and alluded to in 9,20.

48. There is no mention of Christ’s blood in the section 9,24 - 10,4.

49. No name is attached to the verb “says” in 10,5 because, strictly speaking, Jesus is constituted Jesus by the result of His coming, i.e., His taking flesh, and Christ is constituted Christ by His resurrection.

of attention on the intention of the one who is to make the offering of himself the center of his redemptive act (vv. 5-10). The comments focus on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ viewed as an offering of his body (v. 10) in contrast to the priests who offer daily sacrifices which cannot remove sins (v. 11). There is no mention of the symbolism of the desert tabernacle because the Eucharistic aspect of Christ's sacrifice is not in view; it is his sacrifice on the cross which is. In other words, this passage concerns the earthly priesthood and victimhood of Christ as opposed to the previous two passages which were concerned with the heavenly aspect of that victimhood (9,11-23) and the heavenly aspect of that priesthood (9,24 - 10,4). Thus 9,11 - 10,14 fulfil the promise of the introduction at 8,1 to speak of the priest of the Christians who sat at the right hand of God in the heavens. The theme of this session the right hand of God is taken up again at the end of the presentation of the earthly priesthood (10,12-13). This is the present situation, with Christ at God's right hand, with the earthly unique sacrifice and its heavenly consequences understood as now in place and effective until the enemies of Christ are put under his feet and his redemptive action has its ultimate saving effect.

A'. *The Frame: The Prophecy from Jeremiah (10,15-18)*. A repetition of part of the prophecy of Jeremiah frames the passage. There is no more need of sacrifice for sin, for all sins have been forgiven (v. 18).

C. *Paraenesis (10,19-39)*. C. 1. *Negative (10,19-30a)*. The *paraenesis* begins with mention of the "right" which the Christians have of entrance into the Holy of Holies / Holy Things based on the blood of Christ which he dedicated through the veil of His flesh (vv. 19-20). Here there is allusion to both phases of Christ's priesthood, the earthly (*tout' estin tēs sarkos autou*) and the heavenly (*eis tēn eisodon tōn hagiōn*). Mention of the "community" (*episyntagōgē*) in v. 25 reflects the underlying cultic aspects which have been presumed throughout the previous discourse.⁵⁰ The warning at the end of the passage concerns those who reject the blood of the covenant, i.e., the blood of the heavenly Christ (v. 29) in contrast to the parallel passage at 6,1-8 which warns those who reject the cross, i.e., the sacrifice of the earthly Christ (v. 6).

C. 2. *Positive (10,30b-39)*. The second portion of the *paraenesis* is entirely positive, with stress on the joy with which the Christians should await the return of

50. Cf. Attridge, *Hebrews*, 290, and 290 n. 86.

Christ. There is no mention of sin, for at Christ's return Christ will come "without sin" (9,28).⁵¹

Background Assumptions

The above interpretation of the expression *ta hagia* risks being misunderstood as an ill-advised and fanciful attempt to regard purely metaphorical language as relevant for specifically liturgical realities. But this assessment ignores the place of the expression *to hagian / ta hagia* in the liturgical tradition of Judaism and of the Church.

In Scripture *to hagian / ta hagia* is used in the Septuagint of the animal destined for sacrifice or for the sacrificed flesh.⁵² Already the expression *to hagian* of Matt 7,6 ("Do not give that which is holy to swine ...") is possible interpreted in the *Didache* as referring to the Eucharist.⁵³ Such an interpretation is also advanced on occasion by commentators of Matthew independently of *The Didache*.⁵⁴ In the Greek Fathers the expression and in the Greek liturgy the expression *ta hagia* is used with reference to the Eucharist.⁵⁵ Also relevant for the present discussion is the place of the "presentation of the bread" (*prothesis tōn artōn*) of the cult of the old dispensation with relation to the Christian Eucharist.⁵⁶

Summary and Conclusions

Summary. The present paper was occasioned by the problems inherent in the interpretation of Heb 9,2, especially the unusual textual variants which present themselves as candidates for the ending of the verse. It is obvious that in vv. 2-3 the author of Hebrews is comparing the "first", i.e., outer, tent of the "worldly sanctuary"

51. Attridge, *Hebrews*, 266: "The phrase indicates that Christ's second coming will not have the atoning function of the first; it will be apart from sin in its aims and effects."
52. Cf. above, n. 30, and also O. Michel, art. "kyon, kynarion", *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, III (Kohlhammer; Stuttgart 1938) 1101-1102.
53. Cf. K. Niedervimmer, *Die Didache* (Kommentar zu den Apostolischen Vätern 1; Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht; Göttingen 1989) 176-180, for arguments in favour and against a Eucharistic meaning in *The Didache*.
54. Michel, "kyon, kynarion", 1102.
55. W. Elert, *Abendmahl und Kirchengemeinschaft in der alten Kirche, hauptsächlich des Ostens* (Lutherisches Verlagshaus; Berlin 1954) 178-181 ("Koinonia und ta Hagia").
56. A. Adarn, "Ein vergessener Aspekt des frühchristlichen Herrenmahles. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Abendmahlsverständnisses der Alten Kirche", *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 88(1963) cols. 9-20.

proper to the first covenant (9,1) with the tent which lies beyond the second veil called the “Holy of Holies”. This obvious comparison has led scholars to the almost unanimous view that the expression found at the end of v. 2—*hagia* or variants thereof— must refer to the first tent, i.e., the “Holy Place”. Three of the textual variants for the word (*hagia*, *ta hagia*, and *hagía*) can be adjusted to this interpretation, but the fourth variant (*hagia hagiōn*) cannot except by making it depend on a clumsy and ultimately unintelligible duplication of the same words in v. 3.

The paper addresses this problem by pointing out that the use of the qualitative relative *hostis* elsewhere in Hebrews indicates that in Heb 9,2 the form *hētis* refers not to the distant word *skēnē* at the beginning of the verse but to the immediately preceding expression *prothesis tōn artōn*. If the best attested manuscript reading—*hagia*—is assumed to be original, the focus of the interpretation is changed to the precise meaning of *hagia*. A study of this and related forms in the epistle indicates that [*ta*] *hagia* is the most common way used by the author for referring to the Holy of Holies of both the first covenant dispensation and the Christian dispensation. But this same expression — *hagia* — is used in the sense of “Holy Things” to designate the holy food of the first covenant dispensation, a meaning which fits the immediate context in Heb 9,2 inasmuch as the relative clause in which the word *hagia* is found refers to the “presentation of the bread” in the tabernacle/temple. The primary meaning of the expression *hētis legetai hagia*, then, is that of “Holy Things” to describe the showbread. But the suggested, underlying allusion based on the way *hagia* is used in Hebrews is that these Holy Things are the foreshadowing of the Christian Holy of Holies.⁵⁷ This would explain the otherwise unintelligible fourth variant, *hagia hagiōn*: some early scribe felt it necessary to make the allusion explicit.

Thus the expressions in Hebrews which are based on *hagia* and variations of the same, given the context of the Christian fulfilment of the archetype of the earthly sanctuary, are to be understood as implying that the Holy of Holies of the Christian sanctuary is the fulfilment of the showbread, i.e., the Eucharist. This helps explain the emphasis given by the author to the glorified body of the risen Christ which is viewed as the new first tent through which Christ enters into the new second tent or Eucharist. The text of the *Vetus Latina* and of the *Vulgate* at Heb 9,2 can be adduced to support this interpretation.

57. Part of the crux of 9,2 is that the word *hagia* in Hebrew is used to mean the Christian “Holy of Holies”.

A suggested structure of Heb 8,1 - 10,39 offered in conjunction with this discussion seems to situate the use of *to hagion / ta hagia* in meaningful contexts. The expression is used in connection with Christ's heavenly exercise of His priesthood, i.e., that portion of His priesthood which occurs beginning with His resurrection-exaltation. His earthly priesthood is the intrinsic preparation for this heavenly priesthood and culminates in the sacrifice of the cross.

Conclusion. The author of Hebrews is endeavouring to make several points if the above analysis of Heb 9,2 in its context is correct.

1. He is attempting to show in a way peculiar to the suppositions of the culture in which he writes that the New Testament reality of the Eucharist is foreshadowed in the cult of the Old Testament.
2. He is attempting to explain how the Eucharist is related to the sacrifice of Christ on the cross through Christ's risen body.
3. He is attempting to indicate that in a real but inexplicable way Christ who in one way exists in heaven in his glorified body, in another way exists in the Eucharistic species of bread.
4. He is attempting to bring to the attention of his readers that just as God was present to the desert generation of Israel in the tabernacle as the people wandered in the desert, so Christ is present to the Christian generation in the Eucharist as the new people of God wander toward the promised land of Heaven.

The language used by the author of Hebrews is veiled and indirect, as appropriate for the mysteries he is presenting.⁵⁸ It is this veiled and indirect language which

58. A further aspect of the whole question is the possible relevance of the "Discipline of the Secret" for the entire discussion. This is the practice of deliberately referring to certain aspects of Christian life, especially the liturgy, in a veiled way, to protect them from the profane curiosity of those not initiated in the Christian mystery, but also to assure an appropriate way of referring to what in themselves are worthy of reticence and respect. Cf.: Adam, "Ein vergessener Aspekt der frühchristlichen Herrenmahles", cols. 15-16; Joachim Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (New Testament Library; SCM Press; London 1966) 132: "The deepest *secrets of Christology* ... belong to the esoteric material. The clearest evidence for this is Heb. 5.11-6.8. In this passage elementary Christian instruction, consisting of three parts: (a) repentance from dead works, (b) faith towards God, (c) the doctrine of baptism, of the laying on of hands, and of the last things (Heb. 6.1-2), is distinguished from instruction for those mature in the faith (*teleiōtēs*, 6.1), which is expounded in the Christological passages of Heb. 7.1-10.18."

makes study of Heb 9,2 so challenging and so rewarding: challenging for what it does not say, and rewarding for what it does.

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