

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

REST, RHETORIC, AND SUFFERING IN THE LETTER TO THE HEBREWS:
HOW THE AUTHOR OF HEBREWS USES CLASSICAL RHETORIC TO RESOLVE
TENSION BETWEEN INVITATION TO GOD'S REST AND PRESENT SUFFERING

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APPROVAL SHEET

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To Ngai Mwathani, Jesu Kristu Muthinjiri Ngai Munene, Roho Mutheru, my wife Margaret,
family, and friends:

This dissertation was possible because of your support, without which I could not have made
it.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
AOTC	Apollos Old Testament Commentary
<i>ATJ</i>	<i>Asbury Theological Journal</i>
<i>AusBR</i>	<i>Australian Biblical Review</i>
BAS	Biblical Archaeological Society
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
<i>Bsac</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
BTCPC	Biblical Theology for Christian Proclamation Commentary
CBC	Cornerstone Biblical Commentary
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
CEB	Common English Bible
EBS	Encountering Biblical Studies
EBTC	Evangelical Biblical Theology Commentary
Herm	Hermeneia
HOTC	Holman Old Testament Commentary
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>HTS</i>	<i>Hervormde Teologiese Studies</i>
IBC	Interpretation Bible Commentary
<i>IESS</i>	<i>International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences</i>
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
ITC	International Theological Commentary
<i>ITQ</i>	<i>Irish Theologica Quarterly</i>
JPS	Jewish Publication Society
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
<i>Jub</i>	<i>Jubilees</i>
LNTS	Library of New Testament Studies
<i>Magn.</i>	<i>To the Magnesians</i>

NAC	New American Commentary
NEB	New English Bible
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NLCNT	New London Commentary on the New Testament
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NRSVUE	New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition
NT	New Testament
NTS	New Testament Library
OT	Old Testament
PAI	Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament
<i>Phld.</i>	<i>To the Philadelphians</i>
PNTC	Pillar New Testament Commentary
<i>Rom</i>	<i>To the Romans</i>
<i>RSR</i>	<i>Recherches de Science Religieuse</i>
<i>SBJT</i>	<i>The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology</i>
SBLSCC	Society of Biblical Literature Septuagint and Cognate Studies
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SCS	Septuagint Commentary Series
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SP	Sacra Pagina
<i>SR</i>	<i>Studies in Religion/ Sciences Religieuses</i>
SRC	Social-Rhetorical Commentary
<i>TB</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
TOTC	Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries
UBCS	Understanding the Bible Commentary Series
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary

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ABSTRACT

The Epistle to the Hebrews invites the followers of Jesus to enter God's promised rest. Unlike the Israelites of the wilderness generation who failed to enter God's promised rest, the followers of Jesus can enter that rest now and more fully in the future by obedience to God. This is possible because of God's most recent intervention. God has sent his own son to become a sacrifice for their sins and a high priest for their intercession. Because the way to God is now open, the followers of Jesus can boldly approach God in prayer, gather regularly in worship, and serve one another in love.

The recipients of Hebrews have suffered persecution in the past and may be experiencing more trouble because of their identification with Jesus Christ. The author encourages them to stay the course and he warns them of dire consequences if they fall away. His rhetorical strategy is to explain to them God's provision for their salvation and help in times of need and to exhort or warn them in view of what he has just explained. He moves constantly between exposition and exhortation.

The goal of this dissertation is to explore how the author of Hebrews uses classical rhetoric to demonstrate that the promised rest of God and the suffering of God's people are compatible, in view of God's great salvation through Jesus Christ who is both the sacrifice and the high priest.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The Epistle to the Hebrews is a fascinating book, full of riddles and paradoxes. Its author, place of origin, audience, and destination are constantly debated. It is wonderfully written in an impressive *Koine* Greek style, yet its literary structure is not easy to determine. Its literary genre and purpose continue to cause scholarly disagreement. It warns the listeners of the danger of falling away from God but encourages them to be steadfast in their faith, hope, and confession, and to strive to enter God's promised rest. It acknowledges that those same followers are experiencing unrest, rejection, and suffering because of identifying with Jesus.

Need for Study

How can the followers of Jesus enter and enjoy God's promised rest and yet continue to experience rejection and suffering which cause restlessness? This is a paradox worthy of study. It is a perennial paradox in the life of the church that those who desire a blessed life and draw close to God invite ridicule, abuse, and persecution. Jesus taught his disciples to consider themselves blessed when persecuted:

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you" (Matt. 5:10-12).¹

As Paul puts it, "Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2Tim. 3:12). James counsels the church to rejoice in suffering: "Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and

¹ Biblical citations are from the ESV unless noted otherwise.

complete, lacking in nothing” (James 1:2-4). Peter says, “If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you” (1 Pet. 4:14).

In this study, I will investigate how the author of Hebrews uses classical Greco-Roman rhetoric to resolve the tension between experiencing suffering and entering God’s rest. This resolution will prove useful to those who find themselves unsettled by the troubles that result from faithfulness to Jesus yet wish to find rest in God.

Thesis Statement

Entering God’s rest (κατάπαυσις, Heb. 3:7-4:13) and enduring suffering (παθεῖν, πάθημα, παθήματα, Heb. 10:32-36; 12:3-11) are important themes in Hebrews. There seems to be a contradiction between entering rest and experiencing suffering. My claim or thesis statement in this dissertation is that the author uses classical rhetoric (ῥητορική) to persuade his audience to enter God’s rest (κατάπαυσις) by enduring suffering (παθεῖν, πάθημα, παθήματα) as divine discipline (παιδεία).

Main Topics: Rest, Suffering, and Rhetoric

God’s rest

The surrounding context of Heb. 3:7-4:13, namely Heb. 3:1-6 and Heb. 4:14-16, helps us to understand what rest means for the author of Hebrews. After introducing Jesus as Son of God, Christ, their brother, and high priest (Hebrews 1-2), the author exhorts his listeners to pay heed to Jesus and to confidently hold on to their confession and boasting:

Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession, who was faithful to him who appointed him, just as Moses also was faithful in all God's house. For Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses—as much more glory as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself. (For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.) Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, but Christ is faithful over God's house as a son. And we are his house, if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope (Heb. 3:1-6).

After warning his listeners of the dire consequences of not entering God's rest, he again urges them to hold tightly to their confession of Jesus as Son of God and their high priest. He also encourages them to pray confidently knowing that God will help them:

Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need (Heb. 4: 14-16).

In Hebrews, rest is connected intimately with knowing who Jesus is and what he has done and is doing for his followers. With that knowledge, they can approach God's throne instead of neglecting God's salvation or falling away from him (Heb. 2:1-3). This understanding of God's rest has a background in the Old Testament.

Rest in the Old Testament took place once a week on the Sabbath, on the day of the New Moon, and during the annual festivals. The idea of rest is found in Gen. 2:2-3 when God rested after six days of creative activity. He sanctified the seventh day and commanded that it be celebrated in perpetuity. In fact, it is one of the ten commandments (Ex. 20:8-11). But rest was also promised to the Israelites in the desert as the land of Canaan, a land the wilderness generation were meant to conquer and settle. However, because of their unbelief, disobedience, and rebellion, God swore that they would never enter his rest. They died in the wilderness, except for Joshua and Caleb. These two spies believed in God and were ready to obey his command to conquer the land and settle it. The next generation entered, conquered, and settled the Promised Land (the land of Canaan) under Joshua. God had finally given them rest (Josh. 21:43-45). But even Joshua was aware that rest in the land of Canaan was dependent on ongoing covenant faithfulness (Joshua 23-24). If the people turned away from God, he would take away their rest (Josh. 24:19-28). The struggle for rest continued, as is evident in the books of Judges,

Samuel, and Kings. Indeed, Solomon was only able to build the temple because God had finally given the kingdom rest after the wars of David against his enemies (1 Kgs. 5:1-4). Solomon experienced a period of rest. After the reign of Solomon, Israel entered the period of the divided kingdom, then the exile of the northern kingdom, and finally the exile of Judah to Babylon. After the Babylonian exile, the Jewish people were under the authority of the Persians, the Greeks, and the Romans. If the people of God were to enjoy rest, it had to be a rest independent of their political circumstances.

The New Testament has teachings on rest. In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus invites people to come to him so that he can give them rest (ἀναπαύω, Matt. 11:28-29). Paul urges believers to approach God in prayer with thanksgiving in order to receive peace (εἰρήνη) of God (Phil. 4:4-7). Peace is comparable to rest. In Hebrews, the author interprets God's promised rest (κατάπαυσις) of Ps. 95:11 as a relationship of faith and obedience in God through Jesus Christ.² Faith (πίστις), as opposed to unbelief (ἀπιστία), and obedience (παίθω), as opposed to disobedience (ἀπειθέω), are the means by which followers of Jesus enter God's promised rest (Hebrews 3-4). The opposite of rest is drifting (παραρρέω) or falling away (ἀφίστημι) from the living God (Heb. 2:1; 3:12). In Heb. 3:7-11 the author cites Ps. 95:7-11. Ps. 95:11 recalls God's wrathful judgment in the wilderness when he said, "As I swore in my wrath, 'They shall not enter my rest.'" God declared this judgment in Numbers 14, when Israel refused to enter Canaan due to a discouraging report by ten spies:

Nevertheless, as surely as I live and as surely as the glory of the Lord fills the whole earth, not one of the men who saw my glory and the miraculous signs I performed in

² Rest in the LXX can mean "state of rest" or "resting place." Sabbath rest recalls God's rest (Gen. 2:2) after creation. Hebrews 3-4 explains that rest in the land of Canaan did not exhaust God's rest since Psalm 95 teaches that there remains a rest for the people of God. The audience of Hebrews is invited to enter that divine rest through their relationship with Jesus. The invitation is to draw daily and communally close to God in faith and hope in order to enter that rest. Rest has several meanings and nuances depending on conceptual backgrounds. For meanings of rest in ancient texts, see Appendix 1.

Egypt and in the desert but who disobeyed me and tested me ten times—not one of them will ever see the land I promised on oath to their forefathers. No one who has treated me with contempt will ever see it (Num. 14:21-23, NIV).

The land of Canaan is therefore the rest that God had promised the wilderness generation but which they forfeited by their disobedience. Once the next generation entered Canaan with Joshua and Caleb, they were to observe the Sabbath, new moons, and the feasts of the Lord as periods of rest. The Sabbath, new moons, and the feasts of Israel were also times when the Israelites approached God in worship by prayer and often with sacrifices and offerings. The people also enjoyed fellowship with each other during those periods. These times of rest become types (τύποι) of the relationship between God and the followers of Christ in Hebrews. The followers of Jesus are exhorted to approach (προσέρχομαι) God continually and communally in order to enjoy the promised rest of God. This is compatible with Psalm 95 which urges worshipers “today” (σήμερον) not to be like the wilderness generation who were denied the rest (κατάπαυσις) God had intended for them.

For the audience of Hebrews living outside the land of Israel, rest as living securely in one’s own land (the promise made to the wilderness generation, the next generation with Joshua, or the generations after when Israel was a free nation with its own kingdom and laws) was no longer an option. As 1st century Jews, they were under the rule of foreigners, namely the Romans. They could enjoy times of rest on the Sabbath and the New Moon wherever they dwelt. They could celebrate the annual festivals while the temple stood whenever they went to Jerusalem on pilgrimage. Other than that, beyond times and place, rest meant a state of being that resulted from their covenantal relationship with God through Jesus. Any follower of Jesus could approach the throne of God individually or in the company of others in prayer and worship. Eventually, when followers of Jesus died, they entered their final rest in the heavenly city or homeland where Jesus was already serving as the high priest in the heavenly tabernacle. Their

daily life could therefore be considered an opportunity to enter and enjoy God's rest and also a journey to the ultimate time, place, and state of rest.³

Rest in Hebrews, therefore, can be defined as follows: It is the state of tranquility that is a consequence of having forgiveness of sins, a cleansed conscience, and boldness to approach God individually or in fellowship with others. This tranquility is only possible through Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who became a man in order to die as the perfect sacrifice for sins, to be the mediator of the new covenant, and to be the sympathetic high priest who continually intercedes for his followers. Followers of Christ can enjoy this tranquility partially in this life and fully in the life to come.

Enduring suffering

In Heb. 10:32-36 and Heb. 12:3-11, the author of Hebrews reminds the audience of their past suffering and their present need for endurance. Their past responses to suffering were exemplary but they are currently in need of encouragement. He repeatedly presents to them the example of Jesus, the Son of God, their brother, and high priest, who suffered and is therefore able to sympathize with their weaknesses, to help them, and to intercede for them (Heb. 2:17-18; 5:7-8; 9:26; 13:12). After demonstrating the advantages of having Jesus, the Son of God, as their brother and high priest, and showing them the benefits of the new covenant (1:1-14; 2:10-16; 4:14-10:18), he warns them against falling and drifting away (2:1-2; 3:12; 6:4-6). He encourages them to approach God with confidence (παρρησία), to hold on to their confession (ὁμολογία),

³ Sigurd Grindheim, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, PNTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2023), 202, defines rest as "a comprehensive metaphor, representing the gift of salvation." He further says that rest "should be understood in light of the author's eschatology, combining an emphasis on realized eschatology with a clear expectation of future fulfillment. To enter into rest means to enter into fellowship with God himself and to share in the restful state he enjoys. Believers are already in the process of entering into this rest, while they are awaiting the full manifestation of God's resting place in the future."

and to keep meeting for mutual exhortation (παρακαλέω) (3:6; 4:16; 10:19-25, 35). He also warns them of the dangers of continuing in sin (10: 26-31). He gives them an encouraging list of biblical and extra-biblical examples of people who lived by faith (πίστις, Hebrews 11:1-12:2) to motivate them to similar faith and faithfulness. He urges them to follow Jesus, who is the supreme example of faith, faithfulness, and endurance (Heb. 12:3-4). He counsels them to treat their current suffering as fatherly and divine training (Heb. 12:5-11). He sets before them the goal of their faith, which is transformation to the kind of people who can enjoy fellowship with God in the heavenly Jerusalem (Heb. 12:12-29). With a fuller understanding of Jesus and of their own need for transformation, they can live in the present serving each other in love, praising God, and living in a vibrant community of believers in Jesus (Hebrews 13).

Rhetorical strategy

In this dissertation, I will investigate how the author of Hebrews uses classical rhetoric to demonstrate a connection between God's rest and the audience's suffering. I will study the themes of rest and suffering in the Epistle to the Hebrews in light of Greco-Roman classical rhetoric (informed by philosophy and mythology) and against the background of the Greek Old Testament (Septuagint) and Second Temple Jewish literature (especially Josephus and Philo). In the process, I hope to better understand why and how the author of Hebrews exhorts his listeners to enter God's rest, and why he considers suffering to be beneficial to the children of God.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore how the author of Hebrews uses a rhetorical strategy to demonstrate that the promised rest of God (Hebrews 3-4) and the suffering of God's people (Hebrews 10-12) are related, in view of God's great salvation through Jesus Christ his Son (Hebrews 1-2), who is both their sacrifice and their high priest (Hebrews 5-9). I will treat

Hebrews as a speech (a word of exhortation, Hebrews 13) in written form. In this speech, I will investigate the speaker's use of classical rhetoric not only to exhort his audience to enter God's rest, but also to answer the audience's possible objections. While the invitation to enter God's rest is attractive, the audience is liable to anxiety, fear, and temptation to draw back from confessing Jesus due to their external circumstances. They are experiencing rejection and persecution from people who do not follow Jesus.

Review of Literature

Entering God's Rest

On recent research concerning God's rest, good resources can be found in Susan Docherty's "Recent Interpretations of Hebrews Chapters 3-4."⁴ With respect to God's rest,

⁴ Susan Docherty, "Recent Interpretations of Hebrews Chapters 3-4: Critical Issues and Scholarly Trends," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 81, no. 4 (2016): 385-396, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0021140016659715> (accessed August 31, 2023). Docherty discusses the contributions of the following scholars: Harold W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, Hermeneia; (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 129; Harold W. Attridge, "Let Us Strive to Enter That Rest": The Logic of Hebrews 4:1-11,' *Harvard Theological Review* 73 (1980): 273-88, 283; Jared Calaway, *The Sabbath and the Sanctuary: Access to God in the Letter to the Hebrews and its Priestly Context*, WUNT II/349 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013); Jon Laansma, "I Will Give You Rest": The Rest Motif in the New Testament with Special Reference to Mt 11 and Heb 3-4, WUNT II/98 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997); Scott D. Mackie, *Eschatology and Exhortation in the Epistle to the Hebrews*, WUNT II/223 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007); Judith H. Wray, *Rest as a Theological Metaphor in the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Gospel of Truth: Early Christian Homiletics of Rest*, SBLDS 166 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1998); Andrew T. Lincoln, 'From Sabbath to Lord's Day: A Biblical and Theological Perspective,' in Donald A. Carson, ed., *From Sabbath to Lord's Day: A Biblical, Historical and Theological Investigation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 343-412; Nicholas J. Moore, 'Jesus as "The One who Entered His Rest": The Christological Reading of Hebrews 4:10,' *JSNT* 36 (2014): 383-400; Richard Ounsworth, *Joshua Typology*, 78-97; Charles Kingsley Barrett, 'The Eschatology of the Epistle to the Hebrews,' in William D. Davies and David Daube, eds, *The Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956), 363-93; cf. L. D. Hurst, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: Its Background of Thought*, SNTSMS 65 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Ceslas Spicq, *L'Épître aux Hébreux*, 2 vols, 3rd ed. (Paris: Gabalda, 1952-53); Ronald Williamson, *Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Leiden: Brill, 1970); Scott Mackie, *Eschatology and Exhortation*; Jody A. Barnard, *The Mysticism of Hebrews: Exploring the Role of Jewish Apocalyptic Mysticism in the Epistle to the Hebrews*, WUNT 2/331 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012); Stefan Nordgaard Svendsen, *Allegory Transformed: The Appropriation of Philonic Hermeneutics in the Letter to the Hebrews*, WUNT II/269 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009).

Docherty discusses the contributions of such scholars as Harold W. Attridge, Jared Calaway, Jon Laansma, Scott D. Mackie, Judith H. Wray, Andrew T. Lincoln, Nicholas J. Moore, Richard Ounsworth, Charles Kingsley Barrett, L. D. Hurst, Ceslas Spicq, Ronald Williamson, Jody A. Barnard, and Stefan Nordgaard Svendsen. These works discuss whether God's rest is present or future, whether it is an actual place on earth or in heaven, and whether it is a state believers can enjoy with God through Jesus. They also discuss the framework of the author of Hebrews. Is the background Greek philosophy, the Old Testament, or Jewish apocalyptic thought world? Does the author of Hebrews use typology or Philo's allegorical method? What is the relationship between Sabbath and rest? How does the high priesthood of Jesus play into all this?

Harold W. Attridge, in his commentary on Hebrews, notes that the Jews had different understandings about rest. Rest could mean a day (the Sabbath), a place on earth (land or temple), a place in the future (new land, new city, new creation), or a state of being (joyous celebration in heaven). He refers to ancient texts that discuss rest: Deut. 12:9; 29:9; Josh 21:44; 3 Kgdms 8:54-56; *T. Dan.* 5:12; *4 Ezra* 7:75, 91, 95, 98; 8:52; *2 Bar.* 78-86; *1 Enoch* 39:4-9; 45:3-6; *T. Levi* 18:9; *4QFlor* 1:7-8; *Ps Philo Lib. ant. bib.* 28:6-10; *T. Abr.* 7:9-16; 9:1; *T. Isaac* 2:10-16; *Paralip. Jer.* 5:32; *2 Enoch* 42:3; *Apoc. Sedrach* 16:3; *2 Bar.* 51:10; *Exod.* 35:2; *2 Macc.* 15:1; *Josephus Ant.* 17:2 § 43; *Isa.* 66:1; *Jdt.* 9:8; *Ps.* 131 [132]:14; *2 Chron.* 6:41; *1 Chron.* 6:16; *Jos. Asen.* 8:9; 22:13; *Philo Cher.* 87; *Philo Poster. C.* 23, 128-29; *Philo Fug.* 173-76; *Philo Deus imm.* 12-13; *Philo Migr. Abr.* 30; *Philo Rer. div. her.* 75-76; 313-15; *Matt.* 11:28. Such is the wealth of meaning for the term "rest."⁵

⁵ Attridge, *Hebrews*, 126-127. Attridge (*Hebrews*, 128) sees rest as a process: "the imagery of rest is understood as a complex symbol for the whole soteriological process that Hebrews never fully articulates, but which involves both personal and corporate dimensions. It is the process of entry into God's presence, the heavenly homeland (11:6), the unshakeable kingdom (12:28), begun at baptism (10:22) and consummated as a whole eschatologically. In the image of the divine rest, as in Hebrews'

Jared Calaway discusses the concept of rest in his revised dissertation. The title of his third chapter is “Entering God’s Sabbath Rest and the Heavenly Homeland in the Letter of Hebrews.”⁶ According to Calaway, the author of Hebrews “created a sophisticated exposition on rest that transformed spatial expectations into temporal realities, which extended into eternal heavenly existences for those who are faithful to enter.”⁷ There is a movement from “promised rest” in “the land” to “the Sabbath, and the heavenly realm.”⁸ The author of Hebrews manages to reinterpret the Sabbath:

Hebrews shifts the understanding of the Sabbath from a weekly observance to access sacred and heavenly realities, to a permanent inhering quality of those realities themselves: The Sabbath is the world to come, the eternal existence the faithful enter or are entering. It is also a part of the structure of heaven itself, just as the heavenly tabernacle is.⁹

Jon Laansma contends that Canaan was to be a place of rest and security in the presence of God. Sabbath was to be a continual reminder to the people of God’s redemption from slavery and the people’s dependence on God. Matt. 11:28-29 and Hebrews 3-4 are the main passages in the New Testament that discuss God’s rest and Sabbath. Laansma studies the two passages without conflating them or even subsuming them under New Testament Christology or theology. He concludes that there are similarities and differences in the two texts. He also concludes that Sabbath and rest stand for the fulfilment of salvation promises made by God to his people.¹⁰

soteriological imagery generally, there is the same tension between personal and corporate, between “realized” and “future” eschatology that characterizes much early Christian literature.”

⁶ Calaway, *The Sabbath and the Sanctuary*, 59-97.

⁷ Ibid., 95.

⁸ Ibid., 95.

⁹ Ibid., 97.

¹⁰ Jon Laansma, *“I Will Give You Rest.”* See especially his concluding chapter, pp. 359-366.

Scott D. Mackie is critical of those who suggest that rest in Hebrews 4:1-11 is either present or future. His own suggestion is that it is both present and future:

Like 3:6 and 3:14, these exhortations are also shaped by an eschatological, ‘now, not yet’ tension. Although those ‘who believe’ are already ‘entering’ (εἰσερχόμεθα; present tense) the divine rest (4:3), Hebrews nevertheless encourages the community to ‘make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one may fall through disobedience’ (4:11). Therefore, the rest is ‘both present and future: men enter it, and must strive to enter it.’¹¹

In Hebrews, the eschatological experience of the audience involves the now and the not yet.

They are enjoying present rest while expecting to enter ultimate rest:

Thus the community is said to be presently enjoying key eschatological blessings, such as divine rest, an intimate connection with Jesus, and membership in the family of God, though their continued, and ultimate enjoyment of these blessings is dependent upon faithful perseverance ‘until the end’ (3:6, 14; 4:1, 3, 11; 12:5-17). The primary experiential motif found in these exhortations pertains to the community’s relatedness to Jesus, and their identity as the family of God (3:6, 14; 4:14-16; 10:19-23; 12:5-17). The author places great rhetorical weight on the power of the community’s sense of belonging in God’s family. Presumably he expects this unparalleled experience would instill a commensurate awareness of the expectations and obligations that attend membership in that family.¹²

Mackie’s interpretation makes sense of the urgency with which the author of Hebrews exhorts and warns his audience. The audience can now enter God’s rest even as a promise of God’s ultimate rest still remains.

¹¹ Scott D. Mackie, “Early Christian Eschatological Experience in the Warnings and Exhortations of the Epistle to the Hebrews,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 63.1 (2012): 93-114 (here, p. 106).

¹² Mackie, “Early Christian Eschatological Experience,” 112. Sigurd Grindheim (*Letter to the Hebrews*) also considers rest to be both a future and a present reality. Concerning the audience of Hebrews, he says the following: “To the audience, however, “rest” refers to the future salvation of God’s people” (p.196). In the meantime: “The audience is already in the process of entering” (p.197). Again, he says, “The eschatological rest is not exclusively future; the audience is in the process of entering it. As Hebrews combines elements of realized and future eschatology, however, the rest may be viewed as from both perspectives. While the audience is in the process of entering the rest, they need to make every effort to enter it (4:11). See his excursus on rest, where he traces the meaning of rest in the OT and Apocrypha, Second Temple Judaism, and Hebrews (pp. 198-203).

Nicholas J. Moore interprets Heb. 4:10 (ὁ γὰρ εἰσελθὼν εἰς τὴν κατάπαυσιν αὐτοῦ καὶ αὐτὸς κατέπαυσεν ἀπὸ τῶν ἔργων αὐτοῦ ὥσπερ ἀπὸ τῶν ἰδίων ὁ Θεός, for the one who entered God’s rest has himself also rested from his works, just as God did from his) to be a reference to Jesus.¹³ Jesus is the one who has entered into God’s rest and also rested from his own works just as God rested from his own. In the article’s abstract, Moore writes:

In Heb. 4.10 the substantival aorist participle ὁ εἰσελθὼν should be translated ‘the one who entered’, and that its implied subject is Christ; it further suggests that, understood this way, this verse coheres with Hebrews’ strong emphasis on the completed nature of Christ’s salvific work, expressed in particular with the image of Christ’s enthronement or session using Ps. 110.1. The article thus challenges the view that the rest motif in Heb. 3–4 is purely a ‘sermon illustration’ with no connection to the strong Christology pervading the rest of the letter; additionally it underscores the creativity with which the author expresses the sufficiency of the Christ event, and strengthens the proximity of the motifs of entering rest and entering the heavenly sanctuary.¹⁴

Just as God rested after his work of creation but continues to sustain the universe, so did Jesus rest from his work of salvation but continues to intercede for his followers. To rest from one activity does not imply passivity.

Richard Ounsworth compares Joshua with Jesus. Just as Joshua led the Israelites into the Promised Land of Canaan, so does Jesus lead his followers into the heavenly sanctuary. Also, just as God rested after his work of creation, so followers of Jesus can enjoy a Sabbath rest that points back to God’s Sabbath rest and forward to an eternal rest.¹⁵

¹³ Nicholas J. Moore, “Jesus as ‘The One who Entered His Rest’: The Christological Reading of Hebrews 4:10,” *JJSNT* 36, no. 4 (April 2014), <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0142064X14528442> (accessed November 8, 2023). The English translation of Heb. 4:10 was suggested by Moore.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ounsworth, *Joshua Typology*, 95-96.

Jody Barnard is convinced that Heb. 3-4 is not “tangential” to Hebrews’ “main point” (Heb. 8:1-2). Hebrews’ “principal point” is that the audience of Hebrews has access to “heavenly realities” because Jesus, their high priest, is in heaven interceding for them. Hebrews 3-4 is connected to this main point in the following way:

On closer inspection, however, it becomes clear that the purpose of Hebrews 3-4 is to establish that the opportunity of entry into God’s rest is available ‘today’, and God’s rest is in fact the eternal Sabbath that exists in the immediate presence of God in the heavenly realm (cf. 12:22-23).¹⁶

Jesus is in heaven interceding, yet he is also seated and therefore resting on a heavenly throne:

In Heb. 1:3 and 10:12 Christ’s session is specifically linked to his sacrificial act of atonement making it apparent that Christ can take a seat because his sacrificial work is complete. It is because of the unique nature of Christ’s atonement (i.e. as the final and definitive sacrifice) that he is allowed to sit down and rest from his work, just as God rested from his work of creation on the seventh day (4:4). This would have been unthinkable for the Levitical priests, who must stand daily and repeatedly offer the same sacrifices (10:11-14; cf. 7:26-28; 9:25-26; 12:2).¹⁷

Followers of Jesus are invited to enjoy the rest that God and Jesus enjoy, namely the “eternal Sabbatical state which exists in the heavenly realm” or the “divine Sabbath” (Heb. 4:3). This Sabbath “is not simply a past experience and a future expectation, but also a present reality (although perhaps recently eroded).”¹⁸ This Sabbath or “divine rest” which is both present and future, may be considered a “mystical experience.” Barnard calls it mystical in that:

It is not referring to the definitive and final experience of divine rest, but it may be referring to a temporary and partial experience of the divine through mystical vision and liturgical communion with the angels, perhaps as part of their Sabbath worship, as in the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*.¹⁹

¹⁶ Barnard, *Mysticism*, 85.

¹⁷ Ibid., 148.

¹⁸ Ibid., 178-179.

¹⁹ Ibid., 183-184.

The suggestion here is that entering God's rest is a present possibility for the community in convocation and worship.

Stefan Nordgaard Svendsen considers the author of Hebrews and Philo to use allegorical interpretation though not quite in the same way:

I recognize that there are important differences between what we find in Hebrews and in Philo, but these differences should not be conceptualized in terms of a dichotomy between typology and allegory. The hermeneutics of Hebrews should rather be seen as a *variation* of Philo's allegorical method.²⁰

Abraham and Moses participated in God's rest because they drew near to God. Noah, whose name means rest, was also just and therefore enjoyed stability or rest.²¹ Hebrews, in like manner, takes the celebration of the Sabbath and the entrance into Canaan as entrance into God's rest.²² While Joshua failed to bring the Israelites into divine rest, even though he brought them into the Promised Land, Jesus has entered heaven and thereby opened the way for believers to follow him.²³

Enduring Suffering

Bryan Dyer helpfully discusses recent studies on suffering and death in Hebrews.²⁴ In his first chapter, Dyer reviews the works of N. Clayton Croy, Charles H. Talbert, Alan D. Bulley,

²⁰ Svendsen, *Allegory Transformed*, 57.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 112-113.

²² *Ibid.*, 117.

²³ *Ibid.*, 119.

²⁴ Bryan R. Dyer, *Suffering in the Face of Death: The Epistle to the Hebrews and Its Context of Situation* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017), 5-20, LNTS. Bloomsbury Collections, <https://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9780567672377> (accessed September 1, 2023). In his first chapter (pp. 5-20), Dyer reviews the following works: N. Clayton Croy, *Endurance in Suffering: Hebrews 12.1-13 in Its Rhetorical, Religious, and Philosophical Context*, SNTSMS 98 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Charles H. Talbert, *Learning through Suffering: The Educational Value of Suffering in the New Testament and in Its Milieu* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1991); Alan D. Bulley, "Death and Rhetoric in the Hebrews 'Hymn to Faith,'" *Studies in Religion/ Sciences Religieuses* 25 (1996): 409-23;

Craig R. Koester, Jean Costé, Knut Backhaus, Pamela Eisenbaum, Jeanne Stevenson-Moessner, Norman H. Young and Luke Timothy Johnson.

Croy considers the suffering of believers as educational and non-punitive. Talbert sees Jesus' suffering as personal, vocational, and a model for believers. Believers' suffering is divine discipline and education, an opportunity to show faithfulness while anticipating the return of Christ, to identify with Jesus, and to set an example of perseverance. Bulley stresses that faith in Hebrews 11 is about faithfulness and action in times of trouble. Koester sees three phases in the experience of the audience: 1) "proclamation and conversion"; 2) "persecution and Solidarity"; 3) "friction and malaise." The author of Hebrews addresses the third phase. Costé investigates the Greek connection between suffering (παθεῖν) and learning (μαθεῖν) and investigates educational suffering in the Old Testament and in Philo. Backhaus is interested in the fear of death in Hebrews and how the author deals with the terror of death by speaking of Jesus the liberator and by placing the fear of death in a larger story. Eisenbaum considers the relationship between ascetism and such topics as suffering, discipline, and perfection. She seems to think that suffering should be desired for its benefits while the author of Hebrews emphasizes endurance of suffering. Stevenson-Moessner is concerned about suffering and abuse and connects suffering in Hebrews with 21st century concerns. She advocates for resistance and not just endurance. Young pays attention to the historical context of Hebrews and sees the audience as Jewish Christians

Craig R. Koester, "Conversion, Persecution, and Malaise: Life in the Community for Which Hebrews Was Written," *HTS* 61 (2005): 231-51; idem, *Hebrews*, AB 36 (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 64-72; Jean Costé, "Notion grecque et notion biblique de la 'souffrance éducatrice,'" *RSR* 43 (1955): 481-523; Knut Backhaus, "Zwei harte Knoten: Todes-und Gerichtsangst im Hebräerbrief," *NTS* 55 (2009): 198-217; Pamela Eisenbaum, "The Virtue of Suffering, the Necessity of Discipline, and the Pursuit of Perfection in Hebrews," in *Asceticism and the New Testament*, ed. L. E. Vaage and V. L. Wimbush (New York: Routledge, 1999), 331-53; Jeanne Stevenson-Moessner, "The Road to Perfection: An Interpretation of Suffering in Hebrews," *Int* 57 (2003): 280-90; Norman H. Young, "Suffering: A Key to the Epistle to the Hebrews," *AusBR* 51 (2003), pp. 47-59; Luke Timothy Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary*, NTL (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 53-4, 149-52, 317-19.

who are still connected to synagogue worship and are being verbally abused by their fellow Jews. They should place their hope in a future with Jesus who is now securely seated at God's right hand. Johnson goes beyond physical suffering to mental and emotional suffering that is caused by disturbed desires. He sees evidence of mental and emotional suffering in such passages as Heb. 2:9-10; 5:7-8; 12:2-3. Dyer cautions that there is need to also emphasize physical suffering as documented in 10:33; 11:35-37; 13:2. Dyer studies suffering and death in all of Hebrews and the author's rhetorical and theological strategy in dealing with these topics.

Rhetorical Strategy

Aristotle gives us the basics of classical rhetoric as the art of persuasion in three books.²⁵ In *Rhetoric* Book 1, part 2, Aristotle defines rhetoric and gives the reason why rhetoric is necessary:

Rhetoric may be defined as the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion. This is not a function of any other art. Every other art can instruct or persuade about its own particular subject-matter; for instance, medicine about what is healthy and unhealthy, geometry about the properties of magnitudes, arithmetic about numbers, and the same is true of the other arts and sciences. But rhetoric we look upon as the power of observing the means of persuasion on almost any subject presented to us; and that is why we say that, in its technical character, it is not concerned with any special or definite class of subjects.²⁶

Edward P. J. Corbett wrote a book for students of classical rhetoric which introduces the topics of rhetoric but also gives many examples (ancient and modern) and exercises. He defines rhetoric as follows:

²⁵ See the Greek text of Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, Perseus Digital Library, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0059> (accessed September 3, 2023). For an English translation, see The Internet Classical Archive, <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/rhetoric.html> (accessed September 03, 2020).

²⁶ English translation by W. Rhys Roberts, in The Internet Classical Archive, <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/rhetoric.html> (accessed November 9, 2023).

Rhetoric is the art or discipline that deals with the use of discourse, either spoken or written, to inform or persuade or move an audience, whether that audience is made up of a single person or of a group of persons. Broadly defined in that way, rhetoric would seem to comprehend every kind of verbal expression that man engages in. . . . The classical rhetoricians seem to have narrowed the particular effect of rhetorical discourse to that of persuasion. Aristotle, for instance, defined rhetoric as “the faculty of discovering all the available means of persuasion in any given situation.”²⁷

Corbett’s introduction to classical rhetoric explains the different types of rhetoric (deliberative, epideictic, and judicial).

George A. Kennedy applies classical rhetoric to the New Testament and thereby demonstrates that the authors of the New Testament aimed at persuasion. He intends his book to become a tool for New Testament study in addition to those that already exist:

The object of this book is to provide readers of the New Testament with an additional tool of interpretation to complement form criticism, redaction criticism, historical and literary criticism, and other approaches practiced in the twentieth century.²⁸

Ben Witherington and Jason A. Myers recently wrote an introduction to classical rhetoric.²⁹ The book is very helpful for research in that it has an extensive and annotated bibliography on rhetoric in the New Testament. The book’s purpose is stated as follows:

This guidebook is intended to provide the reader with an entrance into understanding the rhetorical analysis of various parts of the NT, the value such studies bring for understanding what is being proclaimed and defended in the NT, and how Christ is presented in ways that would be considered persuasive in antiquity.³⁰

²⁷ Edward P. J. Corbett, *Classical Rhetoric for Modern Students*, 2nd edition (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1971), 3.

²⁸ George Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation Through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 3.

²⁹ Ben Witherington III and Jason A. Myers, *New Testament Rhetoric: An Introductory Guide to the Art of Persuasion in and of the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2022).

³⁰ *Ibid.*, xi.

With regard to Hebrews, Witherington and Myers have a good discussion of the author's rhetorical strategy. Hebrews is not judicial rhetoric but either epideictic or deliberative. It may also be a mixture of both. They discuss the kind of rhetorical education available in major cities of the Roman empire.³¹ Witherington has also demonstrated the benefits of a rhetorical approach to study Hebrews in a socio-rhetorical commentary.³²

Method and Approach

I will treat Hebrews as a written speech with an epistolary ending. It was a speech that the author would have given had he been present with the audience. Classical rhetoric held that there were three types of speeches (Judicial, deliberative, and epideictic rhetoric). I will try to determine what type of rhetoric is found in Hebrews. Classical rhetoric also considered persuasive speech to involve *ethos*, *logos*, and *pathos*. I will look for these elements in Hebrews. I will use other categories of classical rhetoric to better understand how the author of Hebrews uses his Jewish and Greco-Roman resources to persuade his audience to enter God's rest and to persevere in suffering. Since a persuasive speaker must reckon with potential objections from his audience, I will consider two main objections. The objections are why a new covenant is needed for God's people to enter God's rest and how one is to reconcile the invitation to enter God's rest with present suffering. Finally, I will attempt to apply the lessons learnt to the church today, a church that includes both Jews and Gentiles.

³¹ Ibid., 221-235.

³² Ben Witherington, *Letters and Homilies for Jewish Christians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on Hebrews, James, and Jude* (Downers Grove, ILL: InterVarsity, 2007).

Summary of Chapters

In chapter one, I have introduced a thesis statement, the main topics (God's rest, enduring suffering, and use of classical rhetoric), purpose of study, an overview of the literature, method, and approach. God's rest is the goal, the audience's suffering causes objections, and the author's method of using classical rhetoric aims to connect God's promised rest with present suffering.

In chapter two, I will discuss the author, audience, destination, date, structure, authority of OT, and divine Speech. This will be an attempt to establish the speech situation, the speech itself, and its assumed authority. I will attempt to demonstrate that Hebrews is a well-crafted written speech which treats the written word of God as the present authoritative voice of God, and Jesus as the final word of God. The author's own voice is a "word of exhortation" (Heb. 13:22) that echoes the word of God.

In chapter three, I will investigate the author's exceptional education and rhetorical skills which he deploys to persuade his audience to strive to enter God's rest so as to avoid falling away from the living God. In the Greco-Roman world, a speaker needed to demonstrate authenticity, empathy, knowledgeable, and skill in order to persuade his audience to believe him and to act on the basis of his speech.

In chapter four, I will address a potential objection from the audience: Since the old covenant (with its sacrifices and festivals) was from God, why the need for a new covenant, with its new way of approaching and worshiping God? The answer the author of Hebrews gives is that the old covenant failed because the people violated its requirements, its priests were subject to sin, and its sacrifices were unable to cleanse the people's consciences. I will discuss the sacrifices and festivals of the old covenant as means of approaching God and participating in his

rest. I will also illustrate the failure of the people to keep the covenant from the Old Testament and Jewish history. The author of Hebrews contrast the failure of Israel to keep the old covenant with the success of Jesus, who as the Son of God, mediator of the new covenant, perfect sacrifice, and high priest enables believers to approach God and enjoy God's rest.

In chapter five, I will address another possible objection from the audience: If Jesus is the Son of God, our brother and heavenly high priest, why are we experiencing dishonor, rejection, pain, and suffering? If Jesus overcame death and the enemy who held us in slavery by the fear of death, why do we face persecution? I will demonstrate that the author of Hebrews and his audience had plenty of evidence of innocent suffering and suffering as education in their Scriptures, history, traditions, and Greco-Roman environment. In view of the evidence and especially the traditions about Jesus' suffering, they ought to understand suffering as divine discipline and not as a hindrance to entering God's rest.

In chapter six I will consider how the lessons learned from the previous chapters can be applied in our time to different kinds of followers of Jesus who may be experiencing similar suffering and are at risk of failing to enter or remain in God's rest by drifting away or falling away from their commitment to God through Jesus and avoiding the Christian fellowship.

CHAPTER 2: BACKGROUND

In this chapter, I will argue the following: 1) The author of Hebrews is a Hellenistic Jew with an exceptional command of the Greek language and Greco-Roman rhetoric. Even though the author of Hebrews remains anonymous, Apollos fits this profile. 2) The audience is a Jewish-Christian congregation in Rome in the early 60s of the first century A.D. 3) The structure of Hebrews reveals an alternating pattern of exposition and exhortation. 4) The author assumes the authority of the Old Testament. 5) The Old Testament contains divine speeches which are relevant and urgent for his audience.

These topics are important if we are to understand the message and purpose of the Epistle to the Hebrews. The author seems to be writing an urgent word of exhortation to a group of believers who have experience persecution and are in danger of falling away. His work is well structured. He uses the Old Testament frequently as current and urgent divine speeches that call for immediate action. He is confident that his listeners can enter the rest promised by God if they will accept his explanations and obey his instructions.

Author

The author is unknown. According to Eusebius Pamphili of Caesaria, Clement of Alexandria (ca. A.D. 150-215) claimed that Hebrews was written by Paul:

About the Letter to the Hebrews, though, he says that it is clearly the apostle Paul's, but that it was written in Hebrew as being for the Hebrews, and translated into Greek by Luke, who was Paul's disciple. That is why, he says, the style is quite similar to the short work which Luke wrote about the acts of the apostles. The reason why it does not have the usual superscription of the apostle Paul is, as he shows, that it had been decided in advance concerning Paul's name by the Hebrews that they would not accept what he said, and therefore it prudently avoided it, lest they should refuse to read it when they found Paul's name right at the beginning. And shortly thereafter he adds the following: "And since, as the blessed presbyter used to say, the Lord is said to be the apostle of the Almighty sent to the Hebrews, Paul, who had been assigned to the gentiles, did not, out of humility, style himself apostle to the Hebrews, from deference to the Lord, who had

said of himself that he was sent to the sheep of Israel, and also because he was seen to be the apostle of the gentiles.³³

Origen Adamantius of Alexandria (ca. A.D. 185-253) is said to have attributed the ideas of

Hebrews to Paul but the actual writing to someone else:

A number of people though, are uncertain about the one written to the Hebrews, inasmuch as it does not seem to verify what he says about himself, namely that he is unskilled in speech. What I say, though, is what my elders have handed down to me, that it is quite clearly Paul's, and all of our elders accepted it as Paul's letter. But if you ask me from whom its wording comes, God knows for sure; the opinion which we have heard, though, is as follows: some used to say that it was from Clement, the disciple of the apostles and bishop of Rome, that the letter received the elegance of its Greek, but not its thought; others attributed this to Luke, who wrote the gospel and Acts of the Apostles.³⁴

Eusebius (ca. A.D. 260-339) himself thought that Paul was the author of Hebrews while

acknowledging that this opinion was not held by all:

There are also clearly fourteen letters of Paul which are regarded as authoritative, even though I realize that the Latin are unsure about the letter written to the Hebrews. In due time, however, I will explain what each of the writers of old thought about it.³⁵

Eusebius counts Hebrews among Paul's other epistles:

Clement, by the way, in the letter which he wrote to the Corinthians, mentions the letter of Paul to the Hebrews and uses its testimonies. Thus it is clear that the apostle wrote it in his native language since it was to be sent to the Hebrews, and, as some say, Luke the evangelist translated it, while others say it was Clement himself who did so. The latter is more likely, since the very style of Clement's letter is in harmony with it, and the thought in both writings is strikingly similar.³⁶

³³ *Historia ecclesiastica*, 6.14.2-4. See Rufinus of Aquileia and Philip R. Amidon, *History of the Church*, (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2016), 250-251.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 263.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 99.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 136-137.

Tertullian (Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullianus) of Carthage (ca. A.D. 155-220) believed that Barnabas, the companion of Paul, wrote Hebrews:

I wish, however, redundantly to superadd the testimony likewise of one particular comrade of the apostles – (a testimony) aptly suited for confirming, by most proximate right, the discipline of his masters. For there is extant withal an Epistle to the Hebrews under the name of Barnabas – a man sufficiently accredited by God, as being one whom Paul has stationed next to himself in the uninterrupted observance of abstinence: “Or else, I alone and Barnabas, have not we the power of working?”³⁷

Jerome of Stridon (Eusebius Sophronius Hieronymus) (A.D. 340-420), in his letter of A.D. 394 (*On Modesty*) to Paulinus, bishop of Nola, acknowledges that Hebrews is not counted among Paul’s epistles:

The apostle Paul writes to seven churches (for the eighth epistle—that to the Hebrews—is not generally counted in with the others). He instructs Timothy and Titus; he intercedes with Philemon for his runaway slave. Of him I think it better to say nothing than to write inadequately.³⁸

Jerome, in his letter of A.D. 414 to Dardanus the prefect of Gaul, accepts Hebrews as Pauline, even though he acknowledges that some consider it as written by Barnabas or Clement.

Interestingly, he says that it really does not matter who the author is so long as it is read in church as canonical scriptures:

This must be said to our people, that the epistle which is entitled "To the Hebrews" is accepted as the apostle Paul's not only by the churches of the east but by all church writers in the Greek language of earlier times, although many judge it to be by Barnabas or by Clement. It is of no great moment who the author is, since it is the work of a churchman and receives recognition day by day in the public reading of the churches. If the custom of the Latins does not receive it among the canonical scriptures, neither, by the same liberty, do the churches of the Greeks accept John's Apocalypse. Yet we accept them both, not following the custom of the present time but the precedent of early writers, who generally make free use of testimonies from both works. And this they do,

³⁷ Tertullian, *On Modesty* 20; Alexander Robert and James Donaldson, eds., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325*, Vol. 4 (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1913), 97.

³⁸ Jerome, *Ad Paulinum* 53.8. <http://www.bible-researcher.com/jerome.html#dardanus> (accessed September 16, 2020).

not as they are wont on occasion to quote from apocryphal writings, as indeed they use examples from pagan literature, but treating them as canonical and churchly works.³⁹

Jerome (*Lives of Illustrious Men*) considers Hebrews to have been written by Paul in Hebrew and translated into Greek by someone else:

The epistle which is called the *Epistle to the Hebrews* is not considered his, on account of its difference from the others in style and language, but it is reckoned, either according to Tertullian to be the work of Barnabas, or according to others, to be by Luke the Evangelist or Clement afterwards bishop of the church at Rome, who, they say, arranged and adorned the ideas of Paul in his own language, though to be sure, since Paul was writing to Hebrews and was in disrepute among them he may have omitted his name from the salutation on this account. He being a Hebrew wrote Hebrew, that is his own tongue and most fluently while the things which were eloquently written in Hebrew were more eloquently turned into Greek and this is the reason why it seems to differ from other epistles of Paul.⁴⁰

Augustine of Hippo (Aurelius Augustinus Hipponensis, A.D. 354-430), in his discussion of canonical books in *On Christian Doctrine* (*De doctrina Christiana*), accepted Pauline authorship of Hebrews since he included it as one of the fourteen epistles:

That of the New Testament, again, is contained within the following:— Four books of the Gospel, according to Matthew, according to Mark, according to Luke, according to John; fourteen epistles of the Apostle Paul— one to the Romans, two to the Corinthians, one to the Galatians, to the Ephesians, to the Philippians, two to the Thessalonians, one to the Colossians, two to Timothy, one to Titus, to Philemon, to the Hebrews: two of Peter; three of John; one of Jude; and one of James; one book of the Acts of the Apostles; and one of the Revelation of John.⁴¹

³⁹ Jerome, *Ad Dardanum* 129.3. <http://www.bible-researcher.com/jerome.html#dardanus> (accessed September 16, 2020).

⁴⁰ Jerome, *De viris illustribus* 5.

⁴¹ Augustine, *De doctrina Christiana* 2.8.13. See Timothy George, ed., *Augustine: On Christian Doctrine and Selected Introductory Works* (B&H Publishing Group, 2022), 54, *ProQuest Ebook Central*, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/liberty/detail.action?docID=29786446> (accessed November 17, 2023).

While speaking of the encounter between Abraham and Melchizedek in Hebrews, Augustine (*City of God*) is aware that some do not accept the Pauline authorship of Hebrews:

Moreover, at that time he was notably blessed by Melchisedech, who was a priest of the most high God. Of him many great things are written in the Epistle to the Hebrews, which the majority ascribe to the apostle Paul, though some deny his authorship.⁴²

John Chrysostom (Χρυσόστομος or “golden-mouthed”) (c. A. D. 347-407), at the beginning of *Homilies on Hebrews* 1 (Heb. 1:1-2), discusses Hebrews as Pauline: “This at least the blessed Paul intimates here also, in the very beginning of his Epistle to the Hebrews.”⁴³

It seems then that first in the East, and later in the West, Hebrews came to be accepted as Pauline even though lingering doubts remained. This doubt is apparent in the place of Hebrews in early lists of canonical books. It migrated from within the Pauline letters to the end of the list of Pauline letters. Ben Witherington has the following to say concerning the migration of Hebrews in the Pauline corpus:

In P⁴⁶ (ca. 200), our earliest witness to this document, Hebrews is placed between Romans and 1 Corinthians; in the Sahidic translation Hebrews is placed after Romans and 1-2 Corinthians; and in the Boharic translation it is placed after all the so-called church letters and prior to the Pastorals and Philemon. In the archetype of the capitulation system of B it seems to have stood between Galatians and Ephesians, a placement attested in Athanasius’s famous Festal Letter. Theodore of Mopsuestia knows the order Romans, 1-2 Corinthians, Hebrews, Galatians and says: “Et hoc in epistola illa quae ad Hebraeos est interpretantes ostendimus euidenti.” In the great uncials (Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, Alexandrinus) Hebrews is placed after the Pauline Letters to churches and before the personal letters (the pastoral and Philemon). Hebrews is conspicuous by its absence from the Muratorian Canon but is included in Codex Claromontanus (sixth century), which contains all the Pauline Letters plus Hebrews at the end, in both Greek and Latin.⁴⁴

⁴² Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 16.22. See Augustine, *The City of God against Pagans* in Loeb Classical Library, LCL 415: 104-105.

⁴³ John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Hebrews*; Philip Schaff, ed., *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 14 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 366.

⁴⁴ Witherington, *Letters and Homilies*, 18 n5.

David Alan Black suggests that Paul may have used Luke as his amanuensis, with Luke having freedom of expression.⁴⁵ Thomas R. Schreiner gives reasons why Pauline authorship of Hebrews should be rejected:

Pauline authorship should be rejected despite the attempts, both ancient and modern, to mount a defense. First, in Paul's 13 letters he identifies himself by name, thus the absence of a name in Hebrews renders it doubtful that Paul wrote the letter. Second, stylistic arguments should not be relied on too heavily since the Pauline corpus is so limited. Still, the polished Greek style of Hebrews doesn't accord with what we find in the Pauline letters. Third, the writer separates himself from the original eyewitnesses in Heb. 2:3. Paul, by way of contrast, emphasizes repeatedly his authority as an apostle of Jesus Christ and refuses to put himself in a subordinate position to the apostles and eyewitnesses. This last reason, in particular, rules out the notion that Paul was the author.⁴⁶

Other than Paul, various possible writers have been suggested. David Allen defends Lucan authorship.⁴⁷ According to George H. Guthrie, Martin Luther opted for Apollos as the author of Hebrews.⁴⁸ Luke informs us that Apollos was an Alexandrian Jew who came to Ephesus (Acts 18:24-25):

He was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord. And being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John.

Luke portrays him as bold, teachable, powerful in public debate, and highly recommended by the church (Acts 18:26-28). Paul recognized him as one of the leaders whom the Corinthians claimed for themselves (1 Cor. 1:12; 3:4-6; 4:6). Paul Ellingworth says the following about Apollos: "The most that can be said is that nothing we know of Apollos excludes him from the

⁴⁵ David Alan Black, "Who Wrote Hebrews? The Internal and External Evidence Reexamined," *Faith and Mission* 18/2 (2001).

⁴⁶ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Commentary on Hebrews*, BTCP (Nashville TN: B&H, 2015), 4.

⁴⁷ David Allen, "The Authorship of Hebrews: The Lucan Proposal," *Faith and Mission* 18/2 (2001).

⁴⁸ George H. Guthrie, "The Case for Apollos as the Author of Hebrews," *Faith and Mission* 18/2 (2001).

authorship of Hebrews. His name is perhaps the least unlikely of the conjectures which have been put forward.”⁴⁹ Priscilla has been suggested as author of Hebrews by Adolf von Harnack.⁵⁰ Priscilla is also defended by Ruth Hoppin who finds personal qualities that betray a female writer.⁵¹ These same qualities, however, can be found in a male author. Concerning the female qualities that Hoppin finds in Hebrews, Stephen David Fahrig says the following:

Mitchell (*Hebrews*, 5) takes issue with Hoppin’s hypothesis on the grounds that it is rooted in stereotypical assumptions about what distinguishes the female mindset from the male: “Hoppin identifies things like empathy, compassion, an interest in human weakness, and gentle tact and diplomacy as feminine, as if men were incapable of such emotions and conduct.”⁵²

Another problem with Hoppin’s suggestion is that the author refers to himself as male according to Heb. 11:32:

Καὶ τί ἔτι λέγω ἐπιλείψει με γὰρ **διηγούμενον** ὁ χρόνος περὶ Γεδεών Βαράκ Σαμψών
Ἰεφθάε Δαυὶδ τε καὶ Σαμουὴλ καὶ τῶν προφητῶν
And what more shall I say? Time will not allow me **to tell** of Gideon, Barak, Samson,
Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the prophets,⁵³

The Greek word διηγούμενον “**to tell**” is a present participle middle/passive-accusative masculine singular form. This indicates that the speaker/writer is male. Hoppin explains this male participle as an alteration to hide the female author by a change of one letter. She thinks the

⁴⁹ Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 21.

⁵⁰ Adolf von Harnack, “Probabilia über die Adresse und den Verfasser des Hebräerbriefes,” *ZNW* (1990): 16-41.

⁵¹ Ruth Hoppin, *Priscilla’s Letter: Finding the Author of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Fort Bragg, CA: Lost Coast Press, 1997).

⁵² Stephen David Fahrig, “The Context of the Text: Reading Hebrews as a Eucharistic Homily Author,” PhD diss., Boston College, 2014, 92, n206, <http://hdl.handle.net/2345/bc-ir:107586> (accessed September 17, 2020). See Alan C. Mitchell, *Hebrews*, Sacra Pagina 13 (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2009), 5.

⁵³ Bible Hub, <https://biblehub.com/psb/hebrews/11.htm> (accessed September 18, 2020).

original read διηγούμενην. Without manuscript evidence, her suggestion remains mere speculation. Alan Mitchell concludes, “In the end Hoppin has presented an imaginative and creative attempt to vindicate Harnack’s hypothesis, but her proposal is unconvincing.”⁵⁴

I do not know the author of Hebrews even though Apollos best fits the profile. Alan Mitchell may be right when he says that “In the end, one can legitimately question the need to identify the author precisely. The consensus of contemporary commentators indicates correctly that Hebrews is non-Pauline and anonymous.”⁵⁵ The anonymous author’s profile can be derived from the book itself. He was a Hellenistic Jew, educated in Greco-Roman philosophical arguments, and steeped in the Greek Old Testament. He, like Stephen, Paul, and Apollos, became a zealous defender of Jesus as Israel’s Messiah. He loved his Jewish background but was critical of its institutions as viable means of approaching God after the death and resurrection of Jesus. He exhorted believers in Jesus to persevere in their confession of Jesus, the son of God, as High Priest.

Destination and Audience

According to Barnard Lindars, destinations such as Corinth, Jerusalem, and Alexandria have been suggested:

Other possibilities tend to be connected with theories of authorship (for instance Montefiore’s proposal of Corinth) or characteristic features of Hebrews. Thus the concentration on sacrifice has suggested Jerusalem (Wm Ramsay, C. H. Turner), but the consistent reference to the tent in the wilderness rather than the temple makes this unlikely. Alexandria (C. J. Cadoux, S. G. F. Brandon and others) suit the thought of

⁵⁴ Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 5.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.

Hebrews, as we shall see, but it is really excluded by the fact that it was in Alexandria that it was first attributed to Paul.⁵⁶

Lindars concludes that “The best that can be said is that nothing forbids the view that Hebrews is addressed to comparatively well-educated Jewish Christians somewhere in the Mediterranean Dispersion.”⁵⁷ For those who wish to be more specific, Jerusalem and Rome tend to be the prime candidates. John Chrysostom and authors in the medieval period favored Jerusalem because of the interest in Jewish cultic activity found in the book.⁵⁸ Rome is more likely if one interprets Heb. 13:24 (Ἀσπάζονται ὑμᾶς οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς Ἰταλίας, “those from Italy send you greetings”) as an indication that the greetings were sent from outside Italy to those back home. Also, *1 Clement*, written by Clement of Rome, cites the book of Hebrews. This is evidence that the book was well known in Rome in the “late first or early second century.”⁵⁹ Clement cites Hebrews:

This is the way, dearly beloved, wherein we found our salvation, even Jesus Christ the High priest of our offerings, the Guardian and Helper of our weakness. Through Him let us look steadfastly unto the heights of the heavens; through Him we behold as in a mirror His faultless and most excellent visage; through Him the eyes of our hearts were opened; through Him our foolish and darkened mind springeth up unto the light; through Him the Master willed that we should taste of the immortal knowledge *Who being the brightness of His majesty is so much greater than angels, as He hath inherited a more excellent name.* For so it is written *Who maketh His angels spirits and His ministers aflame of fire* but of His Son the Master said thus, *Thou art My Son, I this day have begotten thee. Ask of Me, and I will give Thee the Gentiles for Thine inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Thy possession.* And again He saith unto Him *Sit Thou on My right hand, until I make Thine enemies a footstool for Thy feet.* Who then are these enemies? They that are wicked and resist His will.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ Barnard Lindars, *The Theology of the Letter to the Hebrews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 18-19.

⁵⁷ Ibid., *Theology*, 18-19.

⁵⁸ Koester, *Hebrews*, 48-49.

⁵⁹ Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 6.

⁶⁰ *1 Clement* 36:1-6. This translation is by J.B. Lightfoot.
<http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/1clement-lightfoot.html> (accessed September 23, 2020).

John Chrysostom, in the argument and summary of his *Homilies on Hebrews*, asks and answers why Paul wrote to Jews in Jerusalem:

Why, then, not being a teacher of the Jews, does he send an Epistle to them? And where were those to whom he sent it? It seems to me in Jerusalem and Palestine. Just as he baptized, though he was not commanded to baptize. For, he says, "I was not sent to baptize": not, however, that he was forbidden, but he does it as a subordinate matter. And how could he fail to write to those, for whom he was willing even to become accursed? Accordingly he said, "Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty; with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you."⁶¹

deSilva is not persuaded that the destination is in Palestine:

A destination in Palestine is often advanced on the assumption that the addressees must be a house church exclusively of Jewish Christians, which would tend to be found mainly in Palestine, and that the author writes as if the audience has firsthand knowledge of (an attachment to) the temple cult. The author's purely textual interaction with the cult (i.e., his reliance entirely on LXX descriptions of the tabernacle and its rites) renders the latter "indication" irrelevant, and we have already explored how the former assumption is unwarranted.⁶²

Raymond Brown and John Meier support a Roman destination.⁶³ William Lane also supports Rome as the destination. He gives the following four reasons: (1) the generosity of the audience of Hebrews (6:10-22; 10:33-34) is consistent with Roman Christian generosity. (2) Claudius expelled Jews from Rome in A.D. 49 and this could be what is referred to in 10:32-34. (3) The term used for Christian leaders (ἡγούμενοι) in Rome is the same as that used in Hebrews 13:7, 17, 24. (4) Clement of Rome is dependent on Hebrews in *1 Clement* 36:1-6, indicating that

⁶¹ John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Hebrews*. Translated by Frederic Gardiner. From *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, First Series, Vol. 14. Edited by Philip Schaff (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 364.

⁶² David A. deSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude, A Social-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle "to the Hebrews,"* SRC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 21-22.

⁶³ Raymond E. Brown and John P. Meier, *Antioch and Rome: New Testament Cradle of Catholic Christianity* (New York: Paulist, 1984), 140-151.

Hebrews was known in Rome at an early period.⁶⁴ Lindars also gives reasons for his support of Rome as the destination:

A connection with Rome is suggested by several factors. People from Italy are mentioned in 13:24, but we do not know how they relate to the readers. They may be members of the readers' own group, in which case the readers live in Italy, possibly in Rome (though one would expect Rome to be mentioned explicitly if this is the case). Alternatively they may be the people among whom the author is staying who join him in sending greetings from Italy. Or they could be a group from Italy known to both the author and the readers who happen to be where the author is staying (Montefiore thinks of Priscilla and Aquila). Rome had a 'synagogue of the Hebrews', but that just means a Jewish meeting-place, and tells us nothing. More weight attaches to the fact that Hebrews was known in Rome to Clement of Rome at an early date, but was not falsely attributed to Paul there until much later.⁶⁵

Lindars, though supporting Rome, admits that problems remain:

Rome is favoured as the destination by a number of scholars, but it is not without difficulties. If we are right in thinking that the readers are Jewish Christians, they can scarcely be the same group as the mixed, but predominantly Gentile, congregation presupposed in Romans. In any event the situation is entirely different. However, it is not impossible that there are several independent Christian groups in Rome, which had at least eleven Jewish synagogues. The congregations tended to be separate because of Roman laws prohibiting large associations. But two events in Rome would be likely to leave a mark on Hebrews if it were sent to Rome. One is the expulsion of Jews from Rome by the emperor Claudius in AD 49 (Acts 18.2), which was not revoked until the accession of Nero in 54. The other is the persecution of Christians following the great fire of Rome (which Nero blamed on the Christians) in 64. We hear of suffering among the Hebrew Christians in the early days after their conversion (10:32-4), but these might have been due to breaking away from the Jewish community rather than state persecution or mob violence. The Neronian persecution seems to be excluded by 12.4, though the verse could refer to this as a dire warning if the letter was sent elsewhere at about this time.⁶⁶

Cockerill discusses the date and concludes that "Both its early citation by *1 Clement* and mention of "those from Italy" (13:24) are in accord with a Roman destination."⁶⁷ Koester says,

⁶⁴ William L. Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, WBC 47A (Waco, TX: Word, 1991), lviii.

⁶⁵ Lindars, *Theology*, 17-18.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 18.

“Speculation about the location of the addressees has produced many proposals. Jerusalem and Rome are the most common, with Rome currently deemed the most plausible.”⁶⁸ Jerusalem, even if it is the more ancient proposal (from the fourth century to the medieval period), seems less probable for various reasons:

Objections are that it seems unlikely that the author would have written to people in Jerusalem in an elegant Greek style, basing his arguments on the LXX, even when the LXX differs from the MT. The group addressed by Hebrews apparently did not include any who heard Jesus preach (2:3), and the author chided them for not being teachers (5:11-14), neither of which seems apt for the Jerusalem congregation. The entire discussion of Levitical institutions is done with reference to the ancient Tabernacle; no reference is made to the Jerusalem Temple. Finally, it is not clear that the persecutions mentioned in 10:32-34 included death, although persecutions in Jerusalem led to the death of Stephen and James the apostle (Acts 7:58-8:3; 12:1-2).⁶⁹

Schreiner discusses the ending of the epistle as helpful for determining its destination:

The most important clue for determining the location of the recipients comes from the letter itself, for the author closes the letter with the words, “Those who are from Italy greet you” (13:24). It is possible, of course, that he wrote *from* Italy, and those with the author in Italy sent their greetings. But it seems more probable that he wrote to Italy (cf. Acts 18:2), i.e., to Rome itself, so that those absent from Italy sent their greetings back to Rome. If this is the case, then Hebrews was written to Jewish Christians in Rome.⁷⁰

After considering various arguments, the reasons given in favor of Rome by Lane, Lindars, Koester, Schreiner and Cockerill seem more persuasive than those in favor of Jerusalem. The two factors that I find most persuasive are the greetings by “those who come from Italy” (Heb. 13:24) and the fact that the earliest known citations of or allusions to Hebrews are by Clement of

⁶⁷ Gareth Lee Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 41. See pp. 34-41 for the discussion.

⁶⁸ Koester, *Hebrews*, 48.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 49.

⁷⁰ Schreiner, *Hebrews*, 8-9.

Rome in his letter to Corinth (*1 Clement*). Even though unprovable, Rome has not been disproved nor shown to be untenable.

Date

The period I find most probable for the writing of Hebrews is the 60s A.D. before Emperor Nero's persecution of Christians. Other periods have been suggested, such as Emperor Domitian's troubles in 80s A.D. Hebrews is applicable to that later period, but that does not mean it was written at that time.

Cockerill says that "The evidence is insufficient, however, to narrow the time of Hebrews' composition with certainty beyond a range of A.D. 50 to 90."⁷¹ Koester discusses the date of Hebrews. He states, "Hebrews was probably written between about A.D. 60 and about A.D. 90. A more precise date is difficult to determine."⁷² Koester reasons as follows:

Many recent scholars find that a pre-70 date best accounts for the reference to persecution (10:32-34) and the absence of any reference to the destruction of the Temple. Others prefer a date in the 80s or 90s, understanding the text to be dealing with the fatigue of second-generation Christians' sense of loss over the destruction of Jerusalem. Given existing evidence, a date between A.D. 60 and 90 is plausible, but greater specificity is tenuous. Interpreters cannot assume or preclude the existence of the Temple, or rely on connections with persecution known from other sources.⁷³

Lane narrows that range to between A.D. 64 and A.D. 68:

It is reasonable to assign tentatively a date of composition of Hebrews to the insecure interval between the aftermath of the great fire of Rome (A.D. 64) and Nero's suicide in June, A.D. 68. Incidental features of the text, like the writer's imminent expectation of the Parousia (10:25, 36-39) or the reference to Timothy's release from prison (13:23), are congruent with this relatively early dating."⁷⁴

⁷¹ Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 41,

⁷² Koester, *Hebrews*, 50.

⁷³ Ibid., 54.

⁷⁴ Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, lxvi.

Witherington favors the late 60s for the date of composition:

Written in the late 60s after the death of Peter and Paul, and even after the Pastoral Letters, which found Timothy in Ephesus, this document was probably produced at about the time the Gospel of Mark was written in the church of Rome, right at the end of Nero's reign of terror.⁷⁵

Witherington defends his choice of the date as follows:

Weighing all the social factors cumulatively, we need a social situation where some local leaders have lost their lives in the recent past but where the current audience being addressed has not yet suffered unto death. That no authorities are addressed or even mentioned by name in this document is perhaps a sign that the community had lost its greatest and most well-known leaders. No time better suits all these factors than the late 60s near the end of Nero's reign.⁷⁶

Ellingworth considers indications in the epistle that may help with the date of writing but concludes that uncertainty remains: "All these considerations, separately and even together, fall short of proof; yet the balance of probabilities has led many writers to prefer a date before the fall of Jerusalem." He further adds,

The apparent threat of renewed, possibly more severe persecution may suggest a date not too long before AD 70; if Hebrews was written in (or to) Rome, a date not long before 64 is possible. It is difficult to be more precise. In any case an open question how far the war that led to the destruction of the temple could have been foreseen, especially by anyone living outside Palestine.⁷⁷

Thompson claims that our ignorance of the date of composition is not of much consequence:

"The date remains unknown and of only marginal importance for understanding the book, for our interpretation requires that we know not the location or the date of the composition of this work but the issues that the author confronts."⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Witherington, *Letters and Homilies*, 28.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 29.

⁷⁷ Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 33. Ellingworth gives a list of suggestions for the date of Hebrews on p. 33, note 105.

Structure

The book of Hebrews begins with an exposition of the divine status of Jesus (chapter 1) and ends with exhortation to live as a follower of Jesus (chapter 13). Between these two chapters we find alternations between exposition and exhortation that have made the structure of the book a puzzle. Some scholars have emphasized the exposition and others the exhortation. Those who emphasize the exposition tend to regard the exhortation as a digression. Those who emphasize the exhortation find the exposition to be the basis and the motivation for the exhortation. Léon Vaganay, for example, worked out the following thematic structure, which illustrates how exposition can be in the foreground and exhortation in the background:⁷⁹

Introduction (1:1-4)

First Theme in Only One Section: Jesus Superior to the Angels (1:5-2:18)

Second Theme in Two Sections: Jesus, Compassionate and Faithful High Priest (3:1 - 5:10)

§1: Jesus, faithful high priest (3:1-4:16)

§2: Jesus, compassionate high priest (5:1-10)

Third Theme in Three Sections: Jesus, Source of Eternal Salvation, Perfected Priest, High Priest like Melchizedek (5:11-10:39)

Exhortation (5:11-6:20)

§1: Jesus, high priest like Melchizedek (7:1-28)

§2: Jesus, perfected priest (8:1-9:28)

§3: Jesus, source of an eternal salvation (10:1-39)

Fourth Theme in Two Sections: Perseverance in the Faith (11:1-12:13)

§1: Faith (11:1-12:2)

§2: Perseverance (12:3-13)

Fifth Theme in Only One Section: The Need to be Holy (12:14-13:21)

Conclusion: Final Recommendations (13:22-25)

⁷⁸ James W. Thompson, *Hebrews*, Paideia: Commentaries on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academics, 2008), 7.

⁷⁹ This structure is found in Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, lxxxvi. The original is found in Léon Vaganay, “Le Plan de l’Épître aux Hébreux,” in *Mémorial Langrange* (Paris: Gabalda, 1940), 260-77.

James Swetnam compares his structure of Hebrews with Albert Vanhoye's structure:⁸⁰

Vanhoye		Swetnam	
a.	1,1-4 Exordium	1:1-4 Exordium	
I.	1,5 – 2:18 <i>Eschatology</i> : "A name so different from the name of the angels" 1,5-14 Son of God 2,1-4 Paraenesis 2,5-18 Brother of men	I.	1,5 – 2,18 <i>Exposition</i> : Christ as divine and human A. 1,5 – 2,4 Christ as superior to the angels, i.e., divine B. 2,5-18 Christ as brother to men, i.e., as human
II.	3,1-5,10 <i>Ecclesiology</i> A. 3,1 – 4,14 Jesus faithful B. 4,15-5,10 Jesus, compassionate high-priest	II.	3,1-6,20 <i>Exhortation</i> : to faith and hope A. 3,1-4,13 To faith (based on divinity of Christ) B. 4,14 – 6,20 To hope (based on humanity of Christ)
III.	5,11-10,39 <i>Sacrifice</i> - 5,11 – 6,20 Preliminary exhortation A. 7,1-28 Jesus, high priest according to the order of Melchizedek B. 8,1-9,28 Come to fulfilment C. 10,1-18 Cause of an eternal salvation - 10,19-39 Final exhortation	III.	7,1 - 10,18 <i>Exposition</i> : who Jesus was and what he did A. 7,1-28 Who Jesus was (high priest according to the order of Melchizedek, human and divine) B. 8,1 – 10,18 What Jesus did: enter the Holy of Holies and sit at right hand of God
		IV.	10,19-39 <i>Exhortation</i> : response to what Christ did: love and good works
IV.	11,1 – 12,13 <i>Ecclesiology</i> A. 11,1-40 The faith of the men of old B. 12,1-13 The endurance required	V.	11,1 – 13,21 <i>Exposition-Exhortation</i> : faith, hope, and charity in salvation history
V.	12,14 - 13,18 <i>Eschatology</i> : the peaceful fruit of justice 12,14-29 An eschatological warning 13,1-6 Christian attitudes 13,7-19 Dietary observances and authentic Christian fidelity	A.	11,1 – 12,2 Faith as an objective reality pointing to the unseen
		B.	12,3-29 Endurance (hope) based on example of Jesus for obtaining unshakeable kingdom
		C.	13,1-21 Response to God's act in Christ: Christian life as an act of thanksgiving (love)
z.	13,26-21 Peroration		

⁸⁰ Swetnam, "Form and Content in Hebrews 7-13," *Biblica* 55, no.3 (1974), 344-345.

Swetnam considers his own structure an improvement in that he considers both literary form and content important for structure. His criticism of Vanhoye is that Vanhoye gives too much attention to form and not enough to content:

But worthy as this attention to form is, there is a concomitant danger which should not be overlooked: if form is too much divorced from content it can lead to a distortion of content, not a clarification. That is to say, the discovery of form is an arduous undertaking, and if this undertaking is attempted in complete independence of content, it can well result in error as to the form. And any subsequent use of this alleged form to interpret the content is of necessity conducive to error about the content. Rather than establish form on purely formal principles it would seem preferable to establish form on formal principles but in the light of content, just as content should be studied on the basis of content but in the light of form.⁸¹

Cynthia Long Westfall has identified several approaches that have suggested structures for Hebrews: 1. Content Analysis. 2. Rhetorical Criticism. 3. Albert Vanhoye's Literary Analysis. 4. Tripartite Structure. 5. Agnostic Approach. 6. Discourse Analysis. Westfall finds strengths and weaknesses in each of the approaches before offering her own version of discourse analysis based on a tripartite structure.⁸²

Content analysis focuses on "theological and apologetic topics" as exemplified for example by P. Hughes in the following structure:

- I. Christ Superior to Prophets, 1:1-3
- II. Christ Superior to Angels, 1:4-2:18
- III. Christ Superior to Moses, 3:1-4:13
- IV. Christ Superior to Aaron, 4:14-10:18
- V. Christ Superior as a New and Living Way, 10:19-12:29
- VI. Concluding Exhortations, Requests and Greetings, 13:1-25

⁸¹ Swetnam, "Form and Content in Hebrews 1-6," *Biblica* (Pontificio Istituto Biblico), 369.

⁸² Cynthia Long Westfall, *Discourse Analysis of the Letter to the Hebrews: The Relationship Between Form and Meaning* (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 1-21.

A major problem with such a structure is that it tends to treat exhortation in Hebrews as a side issue.⁸³

Rhetorical criticism shows appreciation for “artistry and argument of human discourse.”⁸⁴ For example, ancient Greek and Roman orators distinguished judicial rhetoric in the courts, deliberative rhetoric in promoting behavioral choices, and epideictic rhetoric in praising or blaming depending on shared values in a society. Craig R. Koester has a rhetorically sensitive structure:⁸⁵

- I. EXODIUM (1:1-2:4)
- II. PROPOSITION (2:5-9)
- III. ARGUMENT (2:10-12:27)
 - A. First Series (2:10-6:20)
 - 1. Argument: Jesus received glory through faithful suffering—a way that others are called to follow (2:10-5:10)
 - 2. Transitional Digression: Warning and Encouragement (5:11-6:20)
 - B. Second Series (7:1-10:39)
 - 1. Argument: Jesus’ suffering is the sacrifice that enables others to approach God (7:1-10:25)
 - 2. Transitional Digression: Warning and Encouragement (10:26-39)
 - C. Third Series (11:1-12:24)
 - 1. Argument: God’s people persevere through suffering to glory by faith (11:1-12:24)
 - 2. Transitional Digression: Warning and Encouragement (12:25-27)
- IV. PERORATION (12:28-13:21)
- V. EPISTOLARY POSTSCRIPT (13:22-25)

Koester’s structure rightly highlights the theme of suffering. Unfortunately, he treats exhortatory sections as digressions. Westfall finds a serious weakness in this approach in that it imposes on

⁸³ Ibid., 1-2.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 4.

⁸⁵ Koester, *Hebrews*, 84-85.

Hebrews an already predetermined structure.⁸⁶ Albert Vanhoye's literary analysis discovers chiastic structures in Hebrews by means of several criteria:

- (1) Announcement of subject
- (2) Inclusions that indicate the boundaries of the units or developments
- (3) The variation of genre between exposition and exhortation
- (4) Characteristic words in a development
- (5) Transitions by immediate repetition of an expression or a word which is labelled 'hook words'
- (6) Symmetric arrangements

A considerable difficulty with Vanhoye's structure is a listener's ability to detect the intricate structure that is more easily seen than heard. Also, the symmetry of the structure may be more than the text of Hebrews allows.⁸⁷

Wolfgang Nauck provides a good example of Tripartite Structure that divides Hebrews as follows: 1:1-4:13; 4:14-10:31; 10:32-13:17. In the first section he finds a hymn to wisdom (1:2b-3) and a hymn to the word (4:12-13). In the second section he finds similar exhortations (4:14-14; 10:19-23). In the third section he finds commands at the start and at the end (10:32-13:17). This structure has the advantage of giving prominence to exhortation. Its weakness is the "lack of development."⁸⁸

The Agnostic approach, such as proposed by Paul Ellingworth, refrains from offering a definite structure for Hebrews. The weakness of this approach is that it despairs of finding unity of form and content.⁸⁹ Discourse analysis, such as practiced by George H. Guthrie, begins with

⁸⁶ Westfall, *Discourse Analysis*, 4-6.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 7-11.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 12-13.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 14-16.

identifying discourse units, then moves to how the units relate, and ends with an attempt at the logic of the whole. A weakness that needs attention is Guthrie's "confusion of central and support material" which ends in "a lack of coherence and cohesion."⁹⁰

Westfall's own discourse analysis has a tripartite division that gives prominence to a series of hortatory subjunctives which belong to sections that went before and those that come after. The two main series of hortatory subjunctives are Hebrew 4:11-16 and 10:19-25. She finds the message (or themes) of Hebrews in the hortatory subjunctives: Let's hold on (2:1; 4:14; 10:23); let's draw near (4:16; 10:22; 12:28; 13:12; 13:15); let's go forward (4:1, 11; 6:1; 10:24; 12:1). Below is a simplified form of her structure of Hebrews:

- I. Consider Jesus as the apostle of our confession (1:1-4:16)
- II. Consider Jesus as the High Priest of our confession (4:11-10:25)
- III. We are partners in Jesus' heavenly calling (10:19-13:16)

Closing - Draw strength from relationships with your leaders and community (13:17-25).

This simple structure is expanded with hortatory subjunctives as follows:

- I. Consider Jesus as the apostle of our confession (1:1-4:16)
 - A. Let's hold on to the message that our apostle gave us (1:1-3:1)
 - B. Let's respond to Jesus' voice today and enter rest (3:1-4:13)

Thematic peak (4:11-16)

Let's make every effort to enter rest

Let's hold on to the confession

Let's draw near to the throne of God

- II. Consider Jesus as the High Priest of our confession (4:11-10:25)
 - A. Let's press on to maturity with new teaching about Jesus's priesthood (4:11-7:3)
 - B. The new teaching results in access to God (6:1-7:3)
 - C. Let's draw near to God (7:4-10:25)

Thematic peak (10:19-25)

Let's draw near to God in the Holy of Holies and serve as priests

Let's hold on to the confession

Let's consider how to motivate one another to love and good works

⁹⁰ Ibid., 18-20.

III. We are partners in Jesus' heavenly calling (10:19-13:16)

- A. Let's run the race (10:19-12:2)
- B. Let's serve God as priests in heavenly Jerusalem (12:1-29)
- C. Conclusion: Let's go to Jesus and offer sacrifices of love, good works and sharing (12:28-13:16)

Closing - Draw strength from relationships with your leaders and community (13:17-25).⁹¹

Westfall's expanded structure provides a detailed analysis and has the advantage of showing how exposition and exhortation are integrated in Hebrews. It is both detailed and sensitive to exhortation. In the past, exhortation has been treated as a side issue in Hebrews, almost as an interruption of theological, eschatological, or Christological themes. Westfall's discourse analysis helps readers to realize that the book of Hebrews was written primarily to encourage believers. I find Westfall's structure useful in that it combines structural simplicity with a recognition of the back and forth of exposition and exhortation as the speaker moves forward in his word of exhortation.

Authority of the Old Testament in Hebrews.

Roger Nicole describes the authority of the Old Testament as follows:

From beginning to end, the New Testament authors ascribe unqualified authority to the Old Testament Scriptures. Whenever advanced, a quotation is viewed as normative. Nowhere do we find a tendency to question, argue, or repudiate the truth of any Scripture utterance. Passages sometimes alleged to prove that the Lord and his apostles challenged at times the authority of the Old Testament, when carefully examined, turn out to bolster rather than to impair the evidence for their acceptance of Scripture as the Word of God. In Matthew 5:21-43 and 19:3-9, our Lord, far from setting aside the commandments of the Old Testament, really engages in a searching analysis of the spiritual meaning and original intent of the divine precepts, and from this vantage point he applies it in a deeper and broader way than has been done before him. In some passages in which comparison is made between the revelation of the Old Testament and that of the New (John 1:17; 2 Cor. 3:6; Gal 3:19ff; Heb. 1:1-2, and so forth), the superior glory of the New Testament is

⁹¹ Ibid., 297-301.

emphasized, not in conflict with the Old, but as the perfect fulfillment of a revelation still incomplete yet sanctioned by divine authority.⁹²

Jesus and his followers used Scripture as authority all the time to defend a point, to strengthen an argument, to recall past events, and to pray. Jesus cited Scripture to Satan, to debate partners, to crowds, and to God in prayer. He quoted Scripture when dying and after rising from the dead. The assumption was that the words of Scripture were the words of God, and the words of God were always relevant.⁹³

The author of Hebrews, like the rest of the New Testament authors, assumes the authority of the Old Testament.⁹⁴ In Hebrews, which is a “word of exhortation” (λόγος τῆς παρακλήσεως, Heb. 13:22), that the author has briefly written (βραχέων ἐπέστειλα, 13:22), we notice that he constantly uses or refers to the Old Testament (OT) as that which is spoken rather than that which is written. The author of Hebrews presents the written word of God as the authoritative voice of God. From the repeated use of terms of speaking and hearing, it seems that the author of Hebrews would have preferred to speak directly to his audience, but, due to the physical distance between himself and his audience, he had to settle for writing with the expectation that his words would be read out loud, much like a written sermon. This raises the question of whether a written word has the same weight as a spoken word. Could it be that, in the first

⁹² Roger Nicole, “The New Testament Use of the Old Testament,” in *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Text? Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New*, edited by G.K. Beale (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1994), 13-14.

⁹³ Ibid., 15-17.

⁹⁴ New Testament authors cite the Old Testament as authoritative. The Gospels uses the language of fulfillment (Matt. 1:22; 2:6, 17; 3:3; 4:4, 10, 14; 5:17; Mark 1:2; 3:13; 7:6; 12:10; Luke 3:4; 4:18; 7:27; 20:17; John 12:14, 38, 39; 19:24). Disciples in Acts continually cite Scripture in support of their arguments (Acts 1:20; 2:16, 25; 4:25; 7:42, 48; 8:32; 13:33, 34, 35, 41, 47; 15:15). Paul cites the Old Testament as that which is written (Ro. 3:10; 8:36; 9:33; 11:26; 15:9). Paul declares the authority of Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16-17). 2 Peter insists that prophet were inspired by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:21).

century A.D. Greco-Roman world, the spoken word carried more urgency and conviction than the written word?

In this section, I will look at the words for “speaking” and “hearing” that the author of Hebrews uses. I will also consider what his sources were. Did he refer to Hebrew sources or Greek sources? Did he have access to both Hebrew and Greek sources? What books of our current Bible did he cite and for what purposes? My assertion is that the author considers the written word of God in the past (OT) to be a source for the spoken word of God in the present (citations of OT in Hebrews). After all, the OT is a record of what God originally spoke through spokesmen to the audience’s ancestors (1:1). The OT is the authoritative record of divine speech. Nevertheless, God has recently spoken and is still speaking a final word through his Son, who is superior to all previous spokesmen (1:2). The author of Hebrews, by referring to recent and current speaking, intends to persuade his audience to some actions. He also uses divine speech to dissuade his audience from some other actions.

Divine Speech in Hebrews

Madison Pierce has considered how the author of Hebrews uses Old Testament citations as divine speech in order to characterize God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit).⁹⁵ She uses the following tripartite structure:

In the first section, the Father speaks (1:5-13); then the Son (2:12-12), then the Spirit (3:7-4:11). The speeches conclude with a significant exhortation on the powerful word of God and the high priest Jesus (4:11-16). In the second section, the cycle of the Father

⁹⁵ Madison N. Pierce, *Divine Discourse in the Epistle to the Hebrews: The Recontextualization of Spoken Quotations of Scripture*, SNTSMS 178 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020). While Madison Pierce speaks of characterization, Nicholas Moore calls the speech of God “performative” speech directed to the Son; that of the Son “an affirmative response” to the Father; and that of the Spirit “communicative” speech aimed “only to people.” See Nicholas J. Moore, *Repetition in Hebrews*, WUNT II/388 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 103.

(5:5-6; 7:17, 21; 8:7-12), Son (10:5-7), and Spirit (10:16-17) speaking repeats. This section also concludes with a major hortatory turn (10:19-25). . . . As with a number of themes, after the major turn of discourse in 10:19-25, the author's divine discourse become more fluid, and the patterns established in the prior sections appear no more.⁹⁶

In these divine speeches, the author of Hebrews has taken Old Testament passages and clarified who the speakers and the audiences are. This approach to the use of Old Testament is known as “prosopological exegesis”:

The ancient exegetical technique known as “prosopological exegesis” interprets texts by assigning “faces” (πρόσωπα), or characters, to ambiguous or unspecified personal (or personified) entities represented in the text in question. In other words, interpreters identify participants for the clarity of understanding.⁹⁷

The author of Hebrews has specific purposes for using Old Testament quotations to represent the speeches of God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit). In the Father's speeches, He addresses the Son as one who is greater than angels (Hebrews 1). This Son is appointed high priest (Hebrews 5:1-10; 7:1-28). The Father also speaks of a new covenant that replaces the old (Hebrews 8).

He “confirms the Son's identity and calling and announces his plans for the rest of his children.”⁹⁸

The Son is portrayed as “a resolutely faithful and trustworthy son and brother”:

He is gracious in his acceptance of his siblings (2:11-12), despite their frailty (2:14), and he even empathizes with their plight (2:17-18; cf. 4:15). When the relationship between the Father and his other children is strained (8:7-12), Jesus accepts his role in the mission (10:5-7) in order to offer his siblings something far more than restoration (10:10-14).⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Pierce, *Divine Discourse*, 2-3.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 4.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 35. For more on the Father's speeches, see pp. 35-90.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 134. For more on the Son's speeches, see pp. 91-134.

When the Spirit speaks (Heb. 3:7-4:11; 10:15-18), He is represented as “the speaker who addresses the community.”¹⁰⁰ The Spirit’s speeches are derived from Psalm 95 and Jeremiah 31 (Ps. 94:7-11; Jer. 38: 33-34 in the Septuagint). The author of Hebrews uses prosopological exegesis in the following way:

The author’s first quotation by the Spirit grounds his extended discourse on the connection of the present audience to the first wilderness generation – the “ancestors.” This reading of Psalm 94 warns and encourages the addressees while also placing them within the wilderness on their own spiritual journey. The second quotation testifies to the community that God’s new covenant is indeed gospel – “good news” – because it will effectively rid them of guilt and their need to offer sacrifices year after year. When the Holy Spirit testifies and speaks, it is “for us” “today.”¹⁰¹

Not only does the author of Hebrews use speech to characterize God but he also uses it to characterize himself and his audience. This is the role played by the last chapter of Hebrews (Hebrews 13). After hearing the divine promise (“I will never leave you nor forsake you” Heb. 13:5), the audience confidently responds: “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?” (Heb. 13:5). Pierce considers this human response as significant in the argument of Hebrews:

Most striking is the placement of this speech. When each individual responds, as the author suggests, that voice is the last to be heard in Hebrews. The Epistle has not come to a close, but its speech, divine and human, has now ended. Having been invited to listen to a conversation between Father and Son for several chapters, being spoken only by the Holy Spirit, when God speaks to the community at last, they speak back. Their confident participation in the divine conversation is the culmination. If they are “not afraid,” then they truly are among those who do not “shrink back” (10:38).¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 173. For more on the Spirit’s speeches, see pp. 135-174.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 175.

¹⁰² Ibid., 194.

Nicholas Moore has also observed Hebrews' extensive use of verbs of speaking to introduce OT citations:

A widely recognized feature of the author's method of citation is his total eschewal of citation formulae of the kind found in other NT texts in favour of *Redeeinleitungen*, formulae which usually indicate a subject and use of a verb of speech (mostly λέγω, but also, e.g., λαλεῖν, μαρτυρέω). That is to say, Hebrews treats OT citations not as textual quotations but as oral phenomena, and thus deploys them as speech acts.¹⁰³

In the remainder of this section, I will trace terminology relating to speech in Hebrews to further illustrate the significance of speaking in Hebrews. The author of Hebrews adds a sense of urgency to his message by use of divine speech.

God spoke (λαλήσας, from λαλέω) by means of prophets to Israel in the past (1:1).¹⁰⁴ Recently, he has spoken (ἐλάλησεν, from λαλέω) by (his) Son (1:2). There is no indication that the author is demeaning previous divine speech, only that God is still speaking. And since the audience is in the last days, this has to be the final form of speaking.¹⁰⁵ Since God is consistent, his previous speaking has to agree with his current speaking. Logically then, the Son is the culmination of all that God has said in the past. This sets up a way of reading the OT. God's previous revelation must now be read in light of his most recent and final revelation. Since God is all-knowing and consistent, his previous speaking must have had the final speaking in view. The OT looked forward to the speech through the Son and the speaking through the Son fulfills

¹⁰³ Moore, *Repetition in Hebrews*, 102.

¹⁰⁴ Translation of Greek words for hearing and speaking accomplished with the help of Bible Hub, <https://biblehub.com>.

¹⁰⁵ That God spoke variously through the prophets and now finally through the Son does not imply that variety or repetition of speech is to be considered in a negative light. Nicholas Moore (*Repetition in Hebrews*) has demonstrated that repetition is not a bad thing per se. Svendsen reminds us that according to Philo, earthly reality is marked by variety "while God's logos is undivided." "Even though the divine itself is without mixture or infusion or parts, it has become to the whole world a cause of mixture, infusion, division and multiplicity of parts." Svendsen, *Allegory Transformed*, 85.

the expectations of the previous speaking. The Son is no ordinary spokesman but the co-creator with God, the heir of the universe, the very radiance or reflection of the glory and character of God, the purifier of mankind from sin, and the sharer of God's throne (1:2-3). At the very beginning, the author of Hebrews makes it clear that God's unique Son is God's final message to the audience.¹⁰⁶

The author moves on to demonstrate the superiority of the Son over angels, who are also called "sons of God" in the OT (Gen. 6:4; Job 1:6; 38:7).¹⁰⁷ In ancient Israel, angels were God's messengers. If God did not speak directly to a human being, he would send an angel. What then is the relationship between God's unique Son and the angels, who are also sons of God? Is he one of them? Is he one step removed from God, a creature like the angels? God never said (εἶπέν, from ἔπω) that he had begotten angels or that he would be a father to angels (1:5; Ps. 2:7; 2 Sam. 7:14). Indeed, to distinguish his Son from angels, he says (λέγει, from λέγω), that angels are to worship the Son and that the angels are mutable servants who can take the form of wind or fire (1:6-7; Deut. 32:43; Ps. 104:4). The implication is that the Son, not being a mutable creature like an angel, is worthy of worship.

God addresses the Son as one who shares God's eternal throne and reign, one who shares God's attributes of uprightness and righteousness, and one whom God has anointed (1:8-9; Ps.

¹⁰⁶ "This declaration prepares the reader for the central argument of the letter, in which the contrast between God's prior and present revelations will be carefully discussed. It is unclear at this point to what these revelations refer, but 2:1-4 will clarify that the writer has the old and the new covenant in mind." Svendsen, *Allegory Transformed*, 84.

¹⁰⁷ In the Hebrew Bible angels are called "sons of God" in Gen 6:4; Job 1:6; 38:7. The Septuagint calls them "sons of God" (υἱοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ) in Gen. 6:4, "the angels of God" (οἱ ἄγγελοι τοῦ θεοῦ) in Job 1:6, and "my angels" (ἄγγελοί μου) in Job 38:7. According to Jody Barnard, "sons of God" is synonymous with "angels of God" during the Hellenistic period. Barnard, *Mysticism*, 160. Cf. pp. 72, 161, 167-68, 205, 244-45.

45:6-7). According to the OT, God is the eternal and changeless creator of the universe, but the universe is neither eternal nor changeless (1:10-12; Ps. 102:25-27). Here, God addresses the Son with words only applicable to God Himself thereby attributing to the Son the divine qualities of immutability and eternity. God also told (εἰρηκέν, from ἐρεῶ) the Son to share his throne by sitting at God's right hand (1:13; cf. 1:3; Ps. 110:1), something he never told any angel.¹⁰⁸ In this comparison with angels, God shares divinity with the Son while the angels are declared to be part of creation even though they are elevated servants. God and the Son are on one side as eternal and unchangeable. Creation and angelic creatures are on the other side as temporal and mutable. All this is said in support of the initial assertion that God has spoken in and through his Son in a final way. This prepares the listeners to hear the current message of God through the Son so that they may take the right action or abstain from the wrong action.

The listeners are urged to heed what they have heard (ἀκουσθεῖσιν, from ἀκούω) to avoid drifting away (2:1). The message was first spoken (λαλεῖσθαι, from λαλέω) by the Lord (2:3). In this case the Lord is a reference to the Son of God.¹⁰⁹ The apostles heard (ἀκουσάντων, from ἀκούω) the message and passed it on. God confirmed the message supernaturally. The Holy Spirit supported the message with spiritual gifts (2:3-4). This message of salvation is superior to the earlier message brought by angels (2:2). Both messages were accompanied by punishment

¹⁰⁸ Barnard, *Mysticism*, 146-147: "The author of Hebrews emphasizes Jesus' privileged position by noting his right-hand location. The association between the right hand and superior honour or greatness was widespread throughout the Ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean cultures, and is no doubt intended to emphasize the unique honour of Jesus. Not only does he share the heavenly throne of Glory, but he resides in the most honoured position, second only to God himself."

¹⁰⁹ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Hebrews*, EBTC (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020), 82: "The 'Lord' here refers to Jesus himself; he is the Son by whom God has spoken his final word (1:2). The Creator and Sustainer of the world, the heir of all things, has himself entered history and spoken to human beings through word and deed. Jesus Christ has revealed finally and definitively who God is to human beings."

for transgressors. The greater the message and messenger, the greater the punishment for transgressors. This means that the listeners of Hebrews have a greater responsibility than the listeners of the OT. Here, the speech of God is declared to not only bring salvation but also to warn of retribution. The speech of God persuades and dissuades.

Interestingly, the author of Hebrews is also among those who speak (λαλοῦμεν, from λαλέω) a message about a coming world (2:5).¹¹⁰ He tells his audience that somewhere it has been testified (διεμαρτύρατο, from διαμαρτύρομαι) saying (λέγων, from λέγω) that man, who was inferior to angels for some time, was to be ruler over everything (2:6-8; Ps. 8:4-6). The author interprets the OT passage as a reference not to man in general, but to Jesus who became man (lower than angels) for a brief period of time. The incarnation, suffering and death of Jesus were for the benefit of everyone (all human beings). The promised glory of man is now to be found in and through Jesus.¹¹¹ Those who take advantage of this offer become siblings of Jesus with the result that he calls (καλεῖν, from καλέω) them brothers and says (λέγων, from λέγω): “I will tell (Ἀπαγγεῶ, from ἀπαγγέλλω) of your name to my brothers ... I will sing (ὕμνήσω from ὕμνέω) (2:12; Ps. 22:22). Not only will Jesus sing praises (2:12), again (he says), “I will trust in him,” and again “Behold I and the children whom God has given to me” (2:13; cf. 2 Sam. 22:3, LXX). He considers his followers to also be God’s children when he says, “I and the children God has given me” (2:13; Isa. 8:18). In Hebrews chapter 2, the author speaks, someone else

¹¹⁰ Is the coming world earthly or heavenly? Madison Pierce (*Divine Discourse*, 47) says that οἰκουμένη usually means “inhabited earthly realm” in the New Testament. It can also mean “inhabitants” of that world. But in Heb. 2:5, the meaning is “inhabited heavenly realm.” Evidence for this meaning can be found in the Greek Psalter (Ps. 92:1; 95:9-10).

¹¹¹ Donald A. Hagner, *Hebrews*, UBCS (Grand Rapids, MI: BakerBooks, 2011), 48: “It is especially appropriate that the son of man be understood as the representative of humanity.” Jesus was made “for a little while” lower than angels, for the benefit of mankind (see Heb. 2:9).

testifies (2:6-8), and Jesus speaks (2:12-13). All this speaking provides an explanation for how Jesus, the Son of God, came into a relationship with human beings, especially those who heard his message and responded. Those who responded became members of God's family.

The author calls his listeners, those who have responded to the message of salvation, sharers of a heavenly calling (κλήσεως, from κλησις, related to καλέω) (3:1). He contrasts Moses with Jesus. Moses was a household servant who testified (μαρτύριον, related to μαρτυρέω) of things to be spoken about (λαληθησομένων, from λαλέω) later (3:5). Jesus, however, was a Son over the same household, and Jesus' followers are that house.¹¹² The audience is to rejoice or boast (καύχημα, related to καυχάομαι) of their hope with confidence (3:6). It seems then, what Moses looked forward to is what followers of Jesus are to boast about as a means to perseverance (holding fast). Boasting in confidence is opposed to being stubbornly obstinate. That is why the Holy Spirit says (λέγει, from λέγω) that the listeners should not be obstinate when they hear (ἀκούσητε, from ἀκούω) God's voice (3:7). They should not imitate the wilderness generation of whom God said (εἶπον, from ἔπω), "They always go astray" (3:9) and concerning whom he swore (ᾧμοσα, from ὀμνύω) "They shall not enter my rest" (3:11, 18; Ps. 95:11). The listeners should exhort (παρακαλεῖτε, from παρακαλέω) each other daily, so long as each day is called (καλεῖται, from καλέω) "today" (3:13).¹¹³ It seems then that the listeners have

¹¹² A son is considerably higher than a servant in ancient households. E. Randolph Richards and Richard James, *Misreading Scriptures with Individualist Eyes: Patronage, Honor, and Shame in the Biblical World* (Downers Grove, ILL: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 40: "In the ancient world, kinship was a crucial factor in one's identity: 'Kinship formed the basic building block of communities all across the ancient world. People's identity, actions, decisions, and loyalties were shaped by family.'" See <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/liberty/detail.action?docID=6350691> (accessed November 24, 2023).

¹¹³ Hagner, *Hebrews*, 65: "**Encouragement** is needed **daily** because the call to faithful discipleship is a constant challenge. The Christian life can only be lived on a daily basis, and therefore every day is a new "today when God calls and we must respond in obedience." (Emphasis in the original).

something to say in order to remain confident and to avoid falling away (3:12, 14). They must remind each other not to be rebellious when, as it is said (λέγεσθαι), they are to “hear his voice” (τῆς φωνῆς αὐτοῦ ἀκούσητε) (3:15) today. The author is concerned that the voice of God is not met with rebellion but with belief. This loyalty is a matter of hearing the voice of God and encouraging one another to hear and heed it on a daily basis. There is to be a fruitful interaction between what God, or the Holy Spirit, says to the listeners, and what the listeners say to each other.

The wilderness generation failed to enter God’s rest because they did not combine what the message of the gospel (εὐηγγελισμένοι, from εὐαγγελίζω) which they heard (ὁ λόγος τῆς ἀκοῆς) with faith (or they did not combine in faith with those who heard) (4:1 -2).¹¹⁴ The author and others who have believed are entering the promised rest, unlike those who disbelieved in the wilderness and God said (εἶρηκεν, from ἐρεῶ), “they shall not enter my rest” (4:3). This rest is not just the Promised Land of Canaan, but the rest God entered after creating the world. After he completed his work of creation, God spoke (εἶρηκεν, from ἐρεῶ) about the seventh day of rest: “And God rested ...” (4:4; Gen. 2:2). This is again to be contrasted with what he said elsewhere, “They shall never enter my rest” (4:5; Ps. 95:11). That God rested is an amazing fact. Did he rest out of exhaustion, or did he just stop creating in order to review his work and take pleasure in it? Tired people needs their rest, and it is a pleasure to take a break from tiresome work. There is, however, a rest for God who never gets tired of and from his work.¹¹⁵ This is the rest the wilderness generation missed. God, however, continued to offer his rest to Israel, as is obvious

¹¹⁴ Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 92: “they did not share the faith of those who listened.” For the textual difficulties involved, see Lane, *Hebrews*, 93, note h.

¹¹⁵ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 106: “the “rest” which God promises to his people is a share in that rest which he himself enjoys.”

from what he said (λέγων, from λέγω) through David, that is what has just been said (προείρηται, from προλέγω): “Today, if you hear (ἀκούσητε, from ἀκούω) his voice (φωνῆς), do not harden your heart” (4:7; Ps. 95:7, 8). The listeners were urged to enter God’s rest and to avoid disobedience through unbelief. The listeners needed to heed God’s word (λόγος) because it is “living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword” (4:12). In other words, there is nothing hidden from this piercing word, and no place to hide from this probing word (4:13).¹¹⁶ This word is likened to the eyes of God before whom we all must give a report (λόγος). This report will be our word concerning what the word of God has revealed about us. We see that there will be a confrontation of words, God’s word against our word.

What are the listeners to do in view of what is being exposed about them by the word of God? They certainly need help. Jesus, God’s Son is the answer to their need. He is their “great high priest,” who is in heaven on their behalf. He understands their situation because he has experienced their troubles, except that he did not sin. They are urged to grasp their confession (ὁμολογίας, related to λέγω), what they say about him, tightly and approach the very God who knows them so well. This God is ready to shower them with mercy and grace because of the intervention and intercession of Jesus (4:14-16). The word of God, which is so threatening in its exposure of the listeners, drives them to the Son of God, where they receive all the help they need. Their word must be, like Job’s word: “Though he slays me, yet will I hope in him” (Job 13:15, NIV).

Jesus, now identified as Christ, was made a high priest when God said (λαλήσας, from λαλέω) to him, “You are my Son ...” (5:5; Ps. 2:7). God also says (λέγει, from λέγω) to him,

¹¹⁶ Donald Guthrie, *Hebrews*, TNTC (Downers Grove, ILL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2008), 123: “It is as if God ensures that no-one can hide his face from the eyes of God: his head is pushed back so as to be in full view of God.”

“You are a priest forever ...” (5:6; Ps. 110:4). The Son of God is now a high priest by appointment. Jesus, even though the Son of God, had to be perfected to become a high priest.¹¹⁷ This process involved suffering and death, and his response was to offer “prayers and supplication.” He was heard (εἰσακουσθεῖς, from ἰσακούω) and saved from death through death. The resurrection was his vindication (5:7-8). Jesus’ prayers and supplications were his speech back to God who spoke to him and appointed him by speech. The author of Hebrews has much more he wishes to say (λόγος, related to λέγω) and hard (things) to explain (δυσερμήνευτος, related to ἐρμηνεύω), but he is concerned about the audience’s hearing (ἀκοαῖς, related to ἀκούω) abilities (5:11). The listeners have heard much in the past so that they ought to be teachers (διδάσκαλοι, related to διδάσκω) by now. However, they are still children, who must take time to mature in order to develop skills of discernment (5:12-14). Apparently, hearing is not enough if the listeners do not put into action what they hear.

All is not lost because, with God’s permission, they may still move from elementary to mature teaching (λόγον, related to λέγω) and instruction (διδασκῆν, related to διδάσκω) (6:1-3). The author has some harsh words for the listeners (6:4-8).¹¹⁸ However, though he speaks (λαλοῦμεν, from λαλέω) in this way, he is hopeful about the listeners. His confidence is based on the listeners’ observable practices of love toward each other. He only wishes them to experience more benefits of their salvation, such as assurance, hope, faith, and patience (6:9-12). His words of warning are meant to stir them to action and not to discourage them.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 134-135: “It is through a path of suffering that perfection is achieved. . . . This expression must not be understood to suggest that there was a time when he was not perfect. In the course of his human life the perfection which Jesus possessed was put to the test. That perfection remained unsullied through all that he suffered.”

¹¹⁸ There is an ongoing debate about the danger and nature of apostasy in Heb. 6:4-8 and like passages. See Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 267-279; Herbert W. Bateman IV, ed., *Four Views on the Warning Passages in Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2007).

God made a promise (ἐπαγγειλάμενος, from ἐπαγγέλλομαι) to Abraham, swore an oath (ὥμοσεν, from ὁμνύω), and said (λέγων, from λέγω), “Surely I will bless you ...” (6:13-14; Gen. 22:17). A sworn oath was considered a serious commitment and a guarantee among human beings. God, who is always truthful and never lies (ψεύσασθαι, from ψεύδομαι) (6:18), swore an oath, accommodating himself to a human practice for the sake of Abraham.¹¹⁹ But what is the connection between God’s promise (and a sworn oath) to Abraham and God’s promises to the listeners? As Abraham waited and received the promise, so must the listeners because they are dealing with the same unchanging God. Further, the listeners have extra assurance in that they have a representative in the presence of God, Jesus who is their high priest (6:19-20). In these instances, the speech of God to Abraham and to the listeners is used to make and guarantee promises.

In his discussion about Melchizedek, the author compares two types of priests. The Levitical priests, who inherited their roles because of their descent from Aaron, and Melchizedek who was a kingly priest without a stated genealogy. Of Jesus, it is witnessed (μαρτυρεῖται, from μαρτυρέω, Ps. 110:4), “You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek” (7:17; Ps. 110:4). By this statement, God indicated a change in the priesthood, and he guaranteed the change with an oath. He said (λέγοντος, from λέγω) to the new king-priest, “The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, ‘You are a priest forever’” (7:20).¹²⁰ God was responsible for the

¹¹⁹ Bruce, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, 153-154: “When human beings swear an oath in order to underline the certainty or solemnity of their words, they swear by someone or something greater than themselves.” When God swears, since there is nothing or no one greater than himself, “He swears by himself.”

¹²⁰ God has sworn an oath as he did in Heb. 3:11, 18; 6:13-17. God swears for the benefit of human beings to assure them that “he will be faithful to it. God’s character offers listeners a second reason for confidence. See Koester, *Hebrews*, 369.

law of succession among the Levitical priests. He was also responsible for the change of priesthood. With this change also came a change of covenants (7:22).

God gave Moses instructions for the building of the tabernacle in the wilderness, warning (κεχρημάτισται, from χρηματίζω) him to carefully follow the pattern revealed to him (8:5). The earthly tabernacle was only a copy of the heavenly.¹²¹ The system of worship associated with the earthly tabernacle was also temporary. It was to be replaced by a better system. The new system or covenant was announced by God when he said (λέγει, from λέγω), “The day is coming, says (λέγει, from λέγω) the Lord, when I will make a new covenant ...” (8:8-12; Jer. 31:31-34). This saying of the Lord indicated that the old covenant was time-bounded and would one day be replaced by a new one (8:13). Here we see that God can, with a word, replace a system he had previously authorized with a new system that serves him and his people better.¹²²

Moses built the tabernacle which had two sections, each section with its equipment, the details about which the author of Hebrew cannot now speak (λέγειν, from λέγω, 9:5). After everything was ready, Moses first declared (λαληθείσης, from λαλέω) the tabernacle’s regulations to his generation, and then he sprinkled with blood all the people, the book he had written, the tabernacle and its equipment, saying (λέγων, from λέγω) “This is the blood of the covenant that God commanded (ἐνετείλατο, from ἐντέλλομαι) for you” (9:20). Moses thereby consecrated the people and the tabernacle with an action and a statement. The author of Hebrews

¹²¹ Concerning the earthly tabernacle, its servants and equipment, Heb. 8:5 states: “They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things. For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, “See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain.””

¹²² Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 180: “As all people grow old and die, so illustrating their transient character, the old covenant is equally seen to be transient.” Guthrie references James 4:14 for the transience of human life.

compares and contrasts the earthly consecration with animal blood with the heavenly one which Christ performed with his own blood (9:11-28).¹²³

The sacrifices of the old covenant are declared to be ineffective in cleansing the conscience and perfecting the worshipers. For that reason, Christ said (λέγει, from λέγω), “Sacrifices and offering you have not desired, but a body you prepared for me ... Then I said (εἶπον, from ἔπω), ‘Behold I have come to do your will, O God’” (10:5-7; Ps. 40:6-7). Jesus is now the speaker of these words from Psalm 40. His speech and sacrifice are the means by which he replaces the first and ineffective system with a second and effective one (10:8-13). Not only God the Father and Jesus the Son speak, but also the Holy Spirit testifies (μαρτυρεῖ from μαρτυρέω) concerning the new covenant by saying the same words as the Father (10:15-17; Jer. 31:33-34).¹²⁴ The author of Hebrews leaves no doubt that God no longer expects the sacrifices of the old covenant since Jesus has offered the final sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins (10:18).

Followers of Jesus are encouraged to hold onto their confession (ὁμολογίαν, related to ὁμοῦ and λέγω), to continue congregating and encouraging each other to remain faithful to Jesus (10:23-25).¹²⁵ To those who reject God’s salvation, the Lord says (εἰπόντα, from ἔπω), he will

¹²³ William Lane recognizes the liturgical role of Christ in Heb. 9:11-28: “The Conception of Christ’s death as a liturgical high priestly action is developed as a major argument in 9:11-28. Prior to this point in the homily, the high priesthood tended to be linked with Christ’s present activity as heavenly intercessor (cf. 2:18; 4:15-16; 7:25; 8:1-2). William L. Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, WBC 47B (Waco, TX: Word, 1991), 235.

¹²⁴ Here we see that the Holy Spirit, like the Father and the Son, is a divine speaker. Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, 268: “The present tense of the verb in the introductory formula Μαρτυρεῖ . . . καὶ τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ Ἅγιον, “the Holy Spirit also bears witness,” is significant; it indicates that through the quotation of the prophetic oracle the Holy Spirit is speaking now.”

¹²⁵ Having heard the speeches of God, the people of God have an opportunity to respond. Their speech is one of confession, which implies speech in agreement with divine speech. This response will require endurance, as Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 477 n. 50, notes: “The pastor strengthens the theme of endurance. Compare the following “If we hold (κατέχω) the boldness and boasting of our hope” (3:6); “If we hold (κατέχω) the beginning of our reality firm until the end” (3:14); “Let us hold (κρατέω) to the

avenge, repay and judge (10:26-30; Deut. 32:35-36). The listener should continue to be faithful, as they had been in the past. Their waiting will not be long. Meantime, they are to persist and live by faith (10:37-38; Hab. 2:3-4).

To encourage the listeners to live by faith, the author gives a long list of ancient people who lived by faith, concerning whom God is not ashamed to be called (ἐπικαλεῖσθαι, from ἐπικαλέω) their God (11:1-16).¹²⁶ One of them was Abraham, whom God called (καλούμενος, from καλέω) to leave his home, and he obeyed (ὕπήκουσεν from ὑπακούω), and “to whom it was said” (ἐλάλήθη, from λαλέω), “Through Isaac shall your offspring be named” (11:8, 18). Abraham believed two things that God said to him. The first was that Isaac would live to have offspring to carry on the promise of descendants. The second was that God wanted him to sacrifice Isaac. The only way God could remain true to his promise was to raise Isaac from the dead (11:17-19). The list of ancient people who lived by faith carries on. The author, after speaking about Rahab, says, “And what more shall I say (λέγω)?” He indicates he could go on speaking, but he chooses to summarize details on the remaining faithful (11:32-39).

By rehearsing a list of the ancient faithful, the author has created a cloud of witnesses for his listeners in order to encourage them to stay in the race (12:2). While the witnesses watch and encourage the runners, the runners are to focus their gaze on Jesus who ran a perfect race and has been honored by sitting next to God on his throne (12:2). The picture of a race is augmented with that of a household. If suffering can be compared with exhaustion from a race, it can also be

confession of” (4:14; cf. 6:18); and “Let us continue to hold (κατέχω) the confession of the hope firm (10:23).”

¹²⁶ Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 237: “No greater commendation could be given than that *God is not ashamed to be called their God*.” This recalls Jesus who was not ashamed to call them brothers “οὐκ ἐπαισχύνεται ἀδελφοὺς αὐτοὺς καλεῖν,” (2:11). Since God the Father and Jesus the Son are not ashamed of believers, they should hold on to their faith with boldness and persist in their confession of Jesus.

compared with discipline at home. God treats the sufferer as a legitimate son by saying, “My son, ...the Lord disciplines the one he loves...” (12:5-6). This is a citation from Prov. 3:11-12, which the author of Hebrews calls an exhortation (παρακλήσεως, related to παρακαλέω) that addresses (διαλέγεται, from διαλέγομαι) the audience. The author also compares the destination of the faithful, namely Mount Zion, to Mount Sinai where God gave the law to Moses. Mount Sinai produced fear and severe warnings, such as, “If even an animal touches the mountain, it shall be stoned” (12:20; Exod. 19:12-13). Even Moses was afraid because he said (εἶπεν, from ἔπω), “I tremble with fear” (12:21; Deut. 9:19). Mount Zion, however, is a place of rejoicing and festivity. Mount Zion has the blood of Jesus which “speaks (λαλοῦντι, from λαλέω) a better word than the blood of Abel” (12:24). The listeners are warned not to reject the one who is speaking (λαλοῦντα, from λαλέω) to them now. They should recall that those who refused God in the wilderness did not escape. His voice (φωνή, possibly related to φημί) previously shook the earth, and he will yet shake the earth and the heavens. He promised (ἐπήγγελλται, from ἐπαγγέλλομαι) saying (λέγων, from λέγω) “Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens” (12:26; Hag. 2:6).¹²⁷

The author is now ready to conclude his exhortation. He encourages the listeners, among other things, to be content because God has said (εἶρηκεν, from ἔρεω), “I will never leave you nor forsake you” (13:5; Josh. 1:5). In response, the author and the listeners can say (λέγειν, from λέγω) with confidence, “The Lord is my helper, I will not fear; what can man do to me?” (13:6; Ps. 118:6). The promise of God calls forth a confident rejoinder. Because of their benefits in identifying with Jesus, that the listeners should “continually offer up a sacrifice of praise

¹²⁷ In Hag. 2:6-8, God shook the heavens and the earth for the benefit of his earthly temple. Now he will shake the heavens and the earth for the benefit of his heavenly kingdom (Heb. 12:25-29). For various “shakings” (Ps. 68:7f; Isa. 2:19, 21; 13:13; Rev. 20:11; 21:1), see Bruce, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, 363-364.

(αἰνέσεως, related to αἰνέω) to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge (ὁμολογούντων, from ὁμολογέω) his name” (13:15). Further, he urges them to obey (πείθεσθε, from πείθω) their leaders who will be required to give a report (λόγον, related to λέγω) about them (13:17). The author exhorts (παρακαλῶ) them to pray (προσεύχεσθε, from προσεύχομαι) and he describes what he has written as a “word of exhortation” (λόγος τῆς παρακλήσεως, 13:22). His final request is that they greet (ἀσπάσασθε, from ἀσπάζομαι) one another. He tells them that those from Italy greet (ἀσπάζονται, from ἀσπάζομαι) them (13:23).

I conclude this section by noting that speaking and hearing play a big role in Hebrews. God speaks by means of OT citations. Jesus and the Holy Spirit also speak. These are the authoritative speakers. The author and the listeners speak in response to what God has said. The author brings all these speakers and listeners together to form a major part of his speech which he calls the “word of exhortation” (λόγος τῆς παρακλήσεως). This word not only explains, but it also urges certain actions and seeks to discourage certain other actions. It seeks to instruct, persuade, and dissuade.

Sources of Divine Speech

G. K. Beale has helpfully provided a “ninefold approach to interpreting the use of the OT in the NT”:¹²⁸

1. Identify the OT reference. Is it a quotation or an allusion? If it is an allusion, then there must be validation that it is an allusion, judging by the criteria discussed in the preceding chapter.¹²⁹

¹²⁸ G. K. Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament: Exegesis and Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 42-43.

¹²⁹ On pp. 32-33, Beale lists the following criteria for discovering allusions: 1. Availability. 2. Volume. 3. Recurrence. 4. Thematic Coherence. 5. Historical Plausibility. History of Interpretation. 7. Satisfaction. These criteria come Richard Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in Paul* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 29-32 and idem, *The conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel's Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 34-44.

2. Analyze the broad context where the OT reference occurs.
3. Analyze the OT context both broadly and immediately, especially thoroughly interpreting the paragraph in which the quotation or allusion occurs.
4. Survey the use of the OT text in early and late Judaism that might be of relevance to the NT appropriation of the OT text.
5. Compare the texts (including their textual variants); NT, LXX, MT, and Targums, early Jewish citations (DSS, Pseudepigrapha, Josephus, Philo). Underline or color-code the various differences.
6. Analyze the author's textual use of the OT. (Which texts does the author rely on, or is the author making his own rendering, and how does this bear on the interpretation of the OT text?)
7. Analyze the author's interpretative (hermeneutical) use of the OT.
8. Analyze the author's theological use of the OT.
9. Analyze the author's rhetorical use of the OT.

These steps are a guide to a thorough investigation of citations of the OT in the NT. George Guthrie has studied Hebrews using similar steps: a) The immediate NT context. b) The original context. c) Relevant uses of the OT reference in Jewish Sources. d) The textual background. e) How the OT passage is understood in the passage it appears in Hebrews. f) The theological use of the OT material.¹³⁰

For the author of Hebrews to persuade listeners who know the OT sources he uses for divine speech, he needs to present the citations in a way that is credible and consistent with the original context. If he interprets the sources, then he needs to justify the interpretation in a way that his audience will find persuasive.

John Walters considers the author of Hebrews as both “a brilliant theologian” and “a masterful orator.” He notes how the author of Hebrews uses OT citations as God’s “past and present” speech:

Hebrews is the clearest New Testament example of rhetorical composition. The writer is not only a brilliant theologian but also a masterful orator. One rhetorical device employed is the emphasis on God speaking both in past and present via the Scriptures. The entire introduction (1:1-2:4) focuses not on the superiority of Christ to angels but on the eschatological communication of God. Psalm 95 is introduced as the present

¹³⁰ George Guthrie, “Hebrews,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 923-995, G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, eds. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academics, 2007).

(eschatological) communication of the Holy Spirit to the target community (3:7-14). Psalm 2:7 and 110:4 are the statements of God conferring upon Jesus the glory of high priesthood (5:5-6). Indeed, the author refers to Psalm 110:4 as the very oath of God sworn to Jesus (7:20-21). The new covenant prophecy of Jeremiah 31 is the performative pronouncement of God relegating the Mosaic dispensation to obsolescence (8:8-13). In quoting Jeremiah 31 again later on, the author introduces it as the present eschatological witness of the Holy Spirit to the target community (10: 15-19). Habakkuk 2:3-4 is cited as the eschatological promise of God yet outstanding to those who do not shrink back but move forward in faith (10:37-38). The emotive climax of the whole work is the passage recalling the Sinai theophany (12:18-29). More precisely, it is a theophany because God is not seen but heard in trumpet blast and oracular voice. The warning is given not to refuse to hear the voice presently speaking from heaven. God is speaking, and the audience is called to respond in faith. Briefly put, that is the argument of Hebrews.¹³¹

In this section I will go back to the OT passages cited in Hebrews using some of Beale's criteria.

I wish to discover how the author of Hebrews interacts with the original context of his citations as he uses the citations for divine speech. Does he both honor the original context and interpret the OT in a way that is persuasive to his audience? Is his rhetorical device (God speaking through Scripture) consistent with the sources of the citations?

Heb. 1:5; Ps. 2:7; 2 Sam. 7:14

Psalm 2 asks why the nations are plotting rebellion against God and his anointed, that is, the king who reigns in Zion. The king in Zion comforts himself with a previous divine decree which stated that God is his father, and he is God's son. As God's son, he was confident that God would help him subdue the nations. 2 Samuel 7 concerns David's desire to build a house (temple) for God. God, however, told David that he would build him a house (a dynasty). The building of a temple would be assigned to David's son whom God would adopt as a son. When Psalm 2 is read with 2 Samuel in mind, then it becomes clear that Psalm 2 recalls the promise of God to David. This promise belonged to every Davidic king. Jesus, a descendant of David, was

¹³¹ John R. Walters, "The Rhetorical Arrangement of Hebrews," *ATJ* 51, no. 3 (Fall 1996), 64, <https://place.asburyseminary.edu/asburyjournal/vol51/iss2/5> (August 1, 2022).

the ultimate claimant to the throne in Zion. The author of Hebrews has used Ps. 2:7 and 2 Sam. 7:14 messianically and to “reinforce the central proclamation of the chain quotation: the Son of God is superior to angels.”¹³²

Heb. 1:6-7; Deut. 32:43; Ps. 104:4

Deuteronomy 32 is the song of Moses that contrasts the faithfulness of God with the unfaithfulness of Israel. God would have utterly rejected them but then he considered how the nations would take credit for Israel’s demise (v.27). God, for his own reasons, vindicates his people. The song ends with Moses calling upon the heavens and the gods to rejoice with God and bow down to God (v.43). The LXX is longer in v.43 and has angels of God instead of gods. Heb. 1:6 follows the Greek. The author of Hebrews portrays God as the speaker telling the angels to worship Jesus. The worship Moses reserved only for God is now directed to Jesus by God. When did that happen? That depends on where the inhabitable world into which God brought Jesus is. Is this the world of Jesus’ incarnation when Jesus was worshipped as a baby in Bethlehem? Is this the world of Jesus’ exaltation when he returned to heaven?¹³³

Psalms 104 celebrates the majesty of God and his many works of providence. One of his mighty acts is to “make winds his messengers, flames of fire his servants” (v.4, NIV). Another way to put it is, “make his messengers winds, his ministers a flaming fire” (ESV). At any rate, the messengers and ministers, wind and fire are at God’s command. The Greek clarifies that the messengers are angels. But is Hebrews interested in the mutability of angels? Are angels

¹³² Ibid.,” 927, 929.

¹³³ “Ὅταν δὲ πάλιν εἰσαγάγῃ τὸν πρωτότοκον εἰς τὴν οἰκουμένην, and again when he brings the first born into the world (Heb. 1:6a). God brought the Son into this world at the incarnation and at his birth. He brought him into the heavenly world at his exaltation. He will bring him back to this world at the Parousia. It is not obvious which of these comings is intended by the author of Hebrews. See debate in Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 117-118.

changed into winds? Hebrews follows the LXX, demonstrating the inferiority of angels in contrast to the Son of God.¹³⁴

Heb. 1:8-9; Ps. 45:6-7

Psalm 45 celebrates a royal wedding. The psalmist praises the king and his bride. In this praise, the psalmist makes this statement: “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever” (v. 6). That is an extreme form of praise because the king is obviously a human being: “You are the most handsome of the sons of men” (v. 2).¹³⁵ Further, the king is blessed by God (v. 2), and he is to have sons who will take the place of his fathers (v.16). This extreme form of praise is applied realistically to the Son of God by the author of Hebrews. The author of Hebrews, however, follows the psalm in recognizing that the one addressed as God is anointed by God (Heb. 1:9; Ps. 45:7).

Heb. 1:10-12; Ps. 102:25-27

Psalm 102 mixes personal prayer, lament, and recognition of the greatness of God. God is praiseworthy because, even though he is the eternal king, he listens to the prayers of the lowly. He is also contrasted with his creation which wears out while he remains the same (vv.25-27). The author of Hebrews takes the words of a lament to and about God and uses them as statements made by God about his son (Heb.1:10-12). This raises the question of how a person’s prayer, lament, and praise of God can also be God’s own word. Did the Israelites treat the Psalms

¹³⁴ Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 120: “The point of the quotation in Hebrews is to show that the angels are (only) λειτουργοὶ—as v.14 will confirm. The context in Hebrews therefore calls for the translation “he makes winds his angels, and a flame of fire his servants.” Verse14 shows that angels, though supernatural beings, are at God’s disposal and used by him.

¹³⁵ Witherington, *Letters and Homilies*, 130, calls Psalm 45:6-7 “a wedding ode” whose praise of an earthly king is hyperbolic since the king is “God’s representative.”

as divine speech? Was the author of Hebrews assuming that what is true about God was the same as God's word about his Son?¹³⁶

Heb. 1:13; cf. 1:3; Ps. 110:1

Psalms 110 is a psalm of David which tells of a time when the Lord speaks to "my Lord." Since David then has two persons in mind, one is God and the other (my Lord) sits next to him. The author of Hebrews identifies "my Lord" as Jesus. The one who sits next to God is superior to angels who stand before God awaiting their instructions (Heb. 1:14). Jesus sits down at God's right hand awaiting the subjugation of his enemies. The identity of "my Lord" was brought up by Jesus in his teaching (Mark 11:35) and debates (Matt. 22:41-46).¹³⁷

Heb. 2:6-8; Ps. 8:4-6

In Psalm 8, the Psalmist is amazed by the glory and majesty of God and surprised that God has deemed it appropriate to consider man as worthy of glory, honor, and rule over other creatures. The author of Hebrews interprets man to mean one man, that is, Jesus.¹³⁸ The task then

¹³⁶ Edward Adams, "The Cosmology of Hebrews," in *The Epistle to the Hebrews and Christian Theology*, ed. Richard Bauckham, Daniel R. Driver, Trevor A. Hart, and Nathan MacDonald (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 125: "The author of Hebrews applies these verses to Christ, as "Lord." This application makes the Son directly responsible for the establishment of the earth and the formation of the heavens."

¹³⁷ Richard Bauckham calls Hebrews' use of Ps. 110:1 a Christology of divine identity. "Jesus, seated on the divine throne in heaven as the one who will achieve the eschatological lordship of God and in whom the unique sovereignty of the one God will be acknowledged by all, is included in the unique rule of God over all things, and thus placed unambiguously on the divine side of the absolute distinction that separates the only sovereign from all creation." Richard Bauckham, "The Divinity of Jesus Christ in the Epistle to the Hebrews," in *The Epistle to the Hebrews and Christian Theology*, 17.

¹³⁸ While in Hebrews 1 the focus is Jesus as God, the focus in chapter 2 is Jesus as man. Christopher A. Richardson, *Pioneer and Perfector of Faith*, WUNT 2/338 (Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 17: "In the discourse unit of Heb. 2.5-18, there is a shift in focus. Having emphasized the present reign and dominion of the exalted Son in 1.3b-13, the author transitions to elaborating on the humiliated and incarnate Son. In making the transition, the author quotes Ps. 8.5-7 (cf. Heb. 2.6-8). Psalm 8, in its original Old Testament context, describes humanity in general as being the crowning achievement and glory of God's creation; however, in Heb. 2.6-8, it is used to establish that all things, including the world

becomes how to explain the psalm in light of the fact that even Jesus does not seem to have dominion over everything as yet. For the author of Hebrews, mankind's dominion is now Jesus' dominion. Jesus will have total dominion but first he must, for a period of time, be made lower than the angels in order to taste death for mankind.

Heb. 2:12; Ps. 22:22

Psalm 22 is a psalm of an afflicted person who laments that God has forsaken him (vv. 1-21). For some reason, the psalmist turns from lamenting and resolves to praise God, even urging other Israelites to do the same (vv. 22-31). The author of Hebrews has captured those first words of resolve to praise God.¹³⁹ These words of the psalmist are now the words of Jesus who calls his followers "brothers" thereby making them members of God's family.

Heb. 2:13: Isa. 8:18

Isaiah 8 records a time in the 8th century B.C. when the king of Assyria was on a path of conquest in the Levant, with Judah as one of his targets. The people of Judah and their king were considering their options for survival but not trusting in God. Isaiah was sent by God to rebuke them but to no avail. God then instructed him to focus on a faithful group of disciples, to wait patiently, and to recall the symbolic meaning of his children which was prophetic of coming events. The words of Isaiah concerning his children are taken by the author of Hebrews to be the

to come (2.5), were subjected to the Son, i.e., the 'son of man,' who was crowned with glory and honor (vv. 7b-8)."

¹³⁹ Hebrews has altered the citation slightly. Attridge, *Hebrews*, 90: "The text differs from the LXX in one respect, the substitution for "I shall tell of" (δηγήσομαι) of "I shall proclaim (Ἀπαγγελῶ), a term better suited to emphasize Christ's mission." Psalm 22 is cited often with regard to the passion of Christ (Matt. 27:35, 39, 43, 46; Luke 23:35; John 19:24). The author of Hebrews is using it to emphasize Jesus' praise of God in the presence of his brothers (cf. Attridge, *Hebrews*, 90 n. 127).

words of Jesus concerning his disciples.¹⁴⁰ By calling his disciples his or God's children, he fully identifies with human beings for the purpose of delivering them from death by his death and destroying the devil who held the power of death (2:14).

Heb. 3:7-11, 18; Ps. 95:11

Psalms 95 is a call to worship and a mutual exhortation not to be like the wilderness generation that failed to enter God's rest because of their hardness of heart. The day of worship and proper response to God is called "today" (vv. 7-8). Today becomes a new opportunity to worship and thereby enter God's rest.¹⁴¹ It seems that the rest is not entry into the Promised Land but entry into God's presence by means of worship. The author of Hebrews takes the mutual call to worship by worshipers in the psalm as the words of the Holy Spirit for mutual encouragement among believers "today" (3:7, 13, 15).

Heb. 4:4; Gen. 2:2

In Genesis 1, God was busy creating day after day for six days. He evaluated his work and declared it good (vv. 3, 9, 12, 18, 21, 25). However, on the sixth day, after he made human beings, he evaluated his week of work and declared it very good. Gen. 2:1 summarizes the week of creation and introduces the seventh day. God blessed the seventh day and made it holy (2:2-3). Presumably, God made the seventh day holy by calling it so. His announcement was the means by which he accomplished the action of consecration.¹⁴² The author of Hebrews takes a comment by the narrator of Genesis about the seventh day and treats it as a speech of God.

¹⁴⁰ Only here in the NT is Isa. 8:17-18 interpreted messianically, according to Koester, *Hebrews*, 231.

¹⁴¹ Guthrie, "Hebrews," 955: "the author of Hebrews understood Ps. 95 as a perennially pertinent word from God to people. Rather than being primarily concerned with the wilderness generation, the author uses that generation as an exemplar on how people should not respond to God and his revelation.

¹⁴² Guthrie, "Hebrews," 957: "In the first six days "space was subdued; on the seventh, time is sanctified." It may be that evening and morning are not mentioned because from the beginning humans

Heb. 4:5, 7; Ps. 95:7, 8, 11

That the wilderness generation failed to enter God's rest due to unbelief is found in Ps. 95:7-11. The psalmist invites his generation to do better by coming together to worship. The call to worship is what must not be rejected. The author of Hebrews acknowledges David as the speaker but not as the primary speaker. God spoke through David and God is speaking "today" using the same words. The fact that God is still speaking of rest means that entering the Promised Land with Joshua did not exhaust the meaning of rest. "Today" in David's time is extended to "today" in the listeners' time, and God is still offering his rest to his people.¹⁴³

Heb. 5:5; Ps. 2:7

In Psalm 2, God's decree about the king in Zion is revealed by the psalmist. The king is but a recipient of God's choice and favor. Indeed, God fights for the king and subdues nations under him. The nations are well advised to do homage to the king or God will come upon them with wrath. The author of Hebrews says that Jesus is a beneficiary of the decree. Jesus, like Aaron, is appointed to his position by God. While Psalm 2 emphasizes the reign of the king, Heb. 5:5 is concerned with the appointment of God's Son as high priest.¹⁴⁴

were intended to take part in the rest of Sabbath, as Hebrews argues. The seventh day is made holy—the first thing of God's creation made so."

¹⁴³ Mackie, *Eschatology and Exhortation*, 210-211: "Today" is the "the eschatological moment." The "eschatological place/rest" is presently accessible. "Therefore the common construction of Christian existence as pilgrimage fails because it suggests long-term seeking and searching, whereas the entry exhortations clearly stress and commend immediate entry and present access."

¹⁴⁴ In Heb. 1:5, where Jesus was declared superior to angels, God called Jesus his Son, citing Ps. 2:7. Now God calls Jesus his Son and high priest by appointment. The connection between Son and high priest is facilitated by the repetition of "you" in Ps. 2:7 and Ps. 110:4. deSilva, *Hebrews*, 188, says that the "author achieves this through something resembling an application of *gezera shawa*."

Heb. 5:6; Ps. 110:4

Psalms 110 declares the invitation of the king to sit beside God, thereby sharing his throne. Not only is the king given a special place at the right hand of God, but he is also appointed high priest like Melchizedek (v.4). The author of Hebrews identifies this high priest as Jesus.¹⁴⁵ Jesus did not presume to be a high priest but was appointed by God. Even though Jesus was a son, he had to be made perfect by suffering and death. His prayers for deliverance from death were answered after he died, and he now lives forever. He is now, as a high priest like Melchizedek, able to grant eternal salvation to his followers (Heb. 4:7-10). A point to be noted is that Ps. 110:4 speaks of an eternal priest like Melchizedek while Heb. 5:5, 10 designate Jesus a high priest like Melchizedek.

Heb. 6:13-14; Gen. 22:17

Genesis 22 has the story of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac. It was a close call for Isaac, but the angel of the Lord rescued him (v.11). Abraham had passed the test of obedience and God had provided a ram in a thicket in place of Isaac. The angel of the Lord then spoke to Abraham in God's name and spoke in the first person, reiterating the promises of multiple offspring and victory over enemies (v.17). He also reiterated the promise to bless nations (v.18). The author of Hebrews recalls this occasion as a time when God swore to bless Abraham and multiply him.

¹⁴⁵ Lane, *Hebrews* 1-8, 118: "A correlation between Christ's sonship and priesthood was implied in the exordium to the sermon, when the priestly function of making 'purification for sins' is ascribed to the transcendent Son (1:3), but here it is asserted explicitly. 'Son' and 'priest' are the primary models for the writer's Christology. In 1:1-4:14 the representation of Jesus as the Son of God predominates; in 4:15-10:22 the primary focus is upon the titles 'priest' or 'high priest.'"

The involvement of the angel is left out and so is the mention of victory over enemies. The focus in Hebrews is on hope, assurance, faith, patience, promises, and oaths (Heb. 6:11-17).¹⁴⁶

Heb. 7:17, 21; Ps. 110:4

Psalms 110 is mostly about God's help for the king against his enemies. The mention of the king's appointment as a priest like Melchizedek is not a big theme in the psalm. However, in Hebrews 7, it becomes a theme worth exploring. The author of Hebrews contrasts the Levitical priesthood with the kingly priesthood of Melchizedek. Since Jesus was from the tribe of Judah, he did not qualify to be a priest because all priests had to be descendants of Levi. If Jesus was to be a high priest, he had to be made one on a totally different basis. That is why Ps. 110:4 is so crucial in Hebrews. Jesus is not only a new and a better high priest in Israel, but he is also the guarantor of a new and a better covenant with Israel.¹⁴⁷

Heb. 8:8-12; Jer. 31:31-34

Jeremiah 30 and 31 contain prophecies of restoration after exile. God will punish Israel but not destroy her (30:10-11). A remnant will return and be multiplied (30:19). The land of Judah will thrive again (31:3-6) and the people of Judah will rejoice (31:12-14). God who uprooted and scattered them is the same one who will regather and sow them (31:27-28). In this context he also promised them a new covenant (31:31-34). But why not renew the old covenant? God will give them a new one because they broke the old one after he gave them his laws (v.32). In the new covenant, he will write the laws on their heart (v.33). It will be an internal law. Each person will know the Lord in such a way that no one will instruct another saying, "know the

¹⁴⁶ Guthrie, "Hebrews," 965: "That Abraham, who waited patiently, received what was promised made him a fitting model for our author's hearers, who were in great need of reassessing the rewards of perseverance."

¹⁴⁷ Jesus is a guarantor of a better covenant because his priesthood is not based on ancestry, but it is based on "a life that cannot be destroyed." See Guthrie, "Hebrews," 968.

Lord” (v.34). From the least to the greatest, they shall all know the Lord. In other words, there will be no hierarchy with reference to knowing the Lord. Also, in the new covenant, there will be forgiveness of sin in a way that there was not in the old covenant. The author of Hebrews first discusses the new covenant as superior to the old (Heb. 8:6-7) before he cites Jer. 31:31-34 fully without a break or explanation (Heb. 8:8-12). He concludes with the comment that the new covenant makes the old obsolete and ready to disappear (Heb. 8:13). This conclusion was a strong statement, especially if Hebrews was written while the temple in Jerusalem stood. It was a declaration of an end to the way Israel worshipped. Could the Jewish way survive without the temple, the priests, and the sacrificial system?¹⁴⁸ In Hebrews 9 the author will discuss the earthly tabernacle, the priestly service, and the sacrificial system in order to reveal their temporally and preparatory status for the coming sacrifice and priestly service of Jesus in a heavenly tabernacle. In that way, he will relegate Israel’s old covenant mediated by Moses to irrelevancy because it had served its purpose as a shadowy pointer to Israel’s new covenant mediated by Jesus.

Heb. 10:5-7; Ps. 40:6-7

Psalm 40 is in part a song of deliverance (vv.1-3, 9-10). The psalmist seeks even more deliverance (vv. 11-15, 17). He promotes trust in God and promises to declare God’s works for his people (vv. 4-5, 16). In this mixture of praise and prayer, he declares that an open ear and doing of God’s will are more desirable to God than sacrifices and offerings (vv. 6-8). The author of Hebrews concentrates on Ps. 40:6-8. The Hebrew of this passage mentions “an open ear,” but the Greek translation (LXX) mentions “a prepared body.” From the LXX, Jesus’ body was what

¹⁴⁸ deSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude*, 284, n. 42: “Christians were alone in reading Jer. 31:31-34 in this way. The concept of a “new covenant” plays a strikingly small role in the vast body of literature that has been preserved from the intertestamental and early rabbinic periods. Only the community at Qumran seems to share the early Church’s interest in this oracle, but there, of course, the “new covenant” was not discontinuous with the old but rather its perfecting.”

God prepared so that Jesus could do God's will (Heb. 10:5-7). Jesus is the speaker of these words (cf. vv.8-9).¹⁴⁹ Whereas in the psalm God desires obedience and doing of his will more than sacrifices and offerings, in Hebrews God rejects sacrifices and offerings and only accepts the willing sacrifice of the body of Jesus. The old form of worship is no longer acceptable. It has been replaced by a new one. The many and repeated sacrifices of Israel are not effective to remove sins, but the one sacrifice of Jesus is effective to remove sin (vv. 10-14).

Heb. 10:15-17; Jer. 31:33-34

Jeremiah 31 speaks of a new covenant in which God's laws will be internalized and the sins of the people will be forgiven and forgotten (vv. 33-34). Hebrews 10:11-14 contrasts the repetitive sacrifices by priests and the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ. While priests must continue to stand while serving, Jesus has sat down at God's right hand, having completed his service by one sacrifice of himself. He does not repeat any sacrifices but waits for God to subjugate his enemies. The Holy Spirit confirms this finished work of Christ with the words of Jeremiah (31:33-34). God's words through Jeremiah long ago are now the words of the Holy Spirit to the listeners.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ The author "appeals to Ps. 40:6-8 (39:7-9 LXX) to demonstrate that it had been prophesied in Scripture that God would accord superior status to a human body as the instrument for accomplishing his will over sacrificial offerings prescribed by the law. The text of the prophecy implied the discontinuance of the old cultus because of the arrival of the new." Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, 262.

¹⁵⁰ The Holy Spirit is the divine agent and speaker in this passage. He speaks the same words as God spoke in Jeremiah. Koester, *Hebrews*, 441: "The voice that now addresses the listeners is that of the Spirit (10:15). Earlier the author recalled how the listeners received a message of salvation that was validated by gifts of the Spirit (2:3-4; 6:4-5). The author assumes that the Spirit that brought them to faith is the Spirit that continues to speak through the Scriptures."

Heb. 10:26-30; Deut. 32:35-36

The song of Moses is not only about the greatness and faithfulness of God but also about the failures and unfaithfulness of Israel. God punishes Israel but also spares her (vv. 23-27). He reserves the right to vindicate his people and take vengeance on his enemies (vv. 35-36, 41-42). Hebrews 10:26-30 is concerned with deliberate sin and expectation of Judgment. Since capital punishment was allowed for certain sins in the old covenant, how much more will people be judged for a high-handed sin against Jesus' sacrifice and the Holy Spirit's grace in the new covenant? The argument is as follows: If a lesser covenant has death as a punishment, what kind of punishment should people expect if they defy a greater covenant? The God of both covenants reserves the right to avenge and judge (Hebrews 10:30-31).¹⁵¹

Heb. 10:37-38; Hab. 2:3-4

Habakkuk had a complaint against God concerning injustice in the land and God's seeming indifference (Hab. 1:1-4). God responded that he was raising the Chaldeans to punish the unjust (1:5-11). However, the Chaldeans were known to be very cruel and therefore Habakkuk wondered how just it would be to judge injustice with worse injustice (1:12-2:1). God answered with a vision which Habakkuk was to record. Habakkuk was to be patient for the vision might not be for some time. From God's perspective, the fulfillment of the vision would

¹⁵¹ Attridge, *Hebrews*, 296, considers the use of Deut. 32:35-36 in Heb. 10: 26-30 as tendentious: "As usual in Hebrews, the original context does not determine the application of the text, since it now serves as a warning to God's own new people. . . . A similar tendentious application of Scripture is involved in the second citation, from Deut. 32:36, also found in Ps. 135 (134):14, "The Lord will judge his people" (κρινεῖ κύριος τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ). In both of its occurrences in the Old Testament, the "judgment" refers to the justice or vindication that Yahweh will render on behalf of his people. Here the people are warned that they will stand under judgment." David Allen disagrees. He argues that the Song of Moses has both warning and vindication, depending on whether Israel behaves the same way as or differently from the nations. See David M. Allen, *Deuteronomy and Exhortation in Hebrews*, WUNT 2/238 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 60-62.

come soon enough but from Habakkuk's point of view, the vision might seem to delay. In the meantime, the righteous person was to live "by his faith" (or by his faithfulness) (2:2-4). The Greek Bible has "by my faith/faithfulness." One way to look at the difference is to say that the righteous one shall live by having faith in God's faithfulness. In the context of injustice, the just will live by patiently trusting in the faithfulness of God. The author of Hebrews deals with the context of persecution. His listeners have courageously endured persecution in the recent past. But it seems that they are weary and in danger of losing confidence (Heb. 10:32-36). The author encourages them to persevere, just as God had encouraged Habakkuk to be patient. The author, unlike Habakkuk, does not promise that a vision is to be fulfilled but rather that "the coming one" will not delay. The vision has been replaced by a person. While the listeners wait for the coming one, they are to live by faith.¹⁵²

Heb. 11:18; Gen. 21:12

Genesis 21 narrates the birth, circumcision, and weaning of Isaac (vv. 1-8), events that brought great joy to his aged parents. However, Sarah was unhappy with Hagar's son Ishmael because he mocked Isaac. Sarah demanded that Abraham send Hagar and her son away, a demand that made Abraham sad (vv. 9-11). God comforted Abraham by promising to raise descendants for him through Isaac (v.12). God also promised to make Ishmael into a nation because he was also a son of Abraham (v.13). The author of Hebrews focuses on the testing of

¹⁵² Mackie, *Eschatology and Exhortation*, 124: Hab. 2:3-4 mentions a "coming vision." In Heb. 10:37, the "coming one" is the "Messianic judge and savior, Jesus." Mackie (*Eschatology and Exhortation*, 132-134) compares and contrasts Hab. 2:3b-4 (LXX) and Heb. 10:37-38 and notes that Hebrews has modified Habakkuk. By highlighting what the two passages have in common, we can see the modification in wording and arrangement. Hab. 2:3b-4 (LXX): "ὅτι ἐρχόμενος ἥξει καὶ οὐ μὴ χρονίσει. ἐὰν ὑποστείληται, οὐκ εὐδοκεῖ ἡ ψυχὴ μου ἐν αὐτῷ· ὁ δὲ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεώς μου ζήσεται." Heb. 10:36-37: "ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἥξει καὶ οὐ χρονίσει· ὁ δὲ δίκαιός μου ἐκ πίστεως ζήσεται, καὶ ἐὰν ὑποστείληται, οὐκ εὐδοκεῖ ἡ ψυχὴ μου ἐν αὐτῷ."

Abraham (Heb. 11:17-19; Genesis 22) to sacrifice Isaac and mentions the promise of descendants through Isaac in that context.¹⁵³

Heb. 12:5-6; Prov. 3:11, 12

The book of Proverbs contains wisdom from a father to a son. Wisdom is based on the fear of God (Prov. 1:7). The father warns against the adulterous and brazen woman (Proverbs 5; 7; 8:13-18), yet wisdom is represented as a wise woman (Proverbs 8, 9). An example of a wise woman is King Lemuel's mother who warns him about women and wine (Prov. 31:1-8). In contrast, she recommends a wise wife (Prov. 31:10-31). The book constantly compares and contrasts the righteous and the wicked, the foolish and the wise. In this context, the discipline of the father is viewed as means to instruction and wisdom (Prov. 3:11-12). The author of Hebrews, in encouraging his listeners to endure opposition and suffering, uses a metaphor from athletics. They are to endure in their race (Heb. 12:1-4). He also uses a metaphor from the home to encourage endurance. A father disciplines the son he loves (Heb. 12:5-6). The listeners are sons who need to remember that the opposition and the suffering they are experiencing are proofs of their legitimacy as sons of God (12:7-11).¹⁵⁴ That which is painful and wearisome is shown to be beneficial and affirming.

Heb. 12:20; Exod. 19:12-13

Three months after the Israelites left Egypt, they came to Mount Sinai (Exodus 19). They camped near the mountain but were not permitted to climb the mountain. Only Moses and Aaron

¹⁵³ Richardson, *Pioneer and Perfector of Faith*, 194, notes that while Gen. 22:2, 12, 16 calls Isaac beloved (ἀγαπητός), Heb. 11:17 calls him the only begotten son (μονογενής). Since Abraham had other sons, the description of Isaac as the only son reflects the status of Isaac as the son of promise.

¹⁵⁴ Training/discipline (γυμνάζω/παιδεία), both of which require endurance and patience, result in peace and holiness (Heb. 12:1-14). For how the metaphors of athletic training and fatherly discipline cohere, see Richardson, *Pioneer and Perfector of Faith*, 130.

were allowed to meet with God on the mountain. Everybody else remained at a distance, with repeated warnings against approaching the mountain. The penalty for trespass was death for any one or any animal that came too close (19:12-13). From the mountain came thunder and lightning and trumpet sound. Even though the people had washed and consecrated themselves, they were not fit to come close to God. Yet God had invited them to be a special and sacred people (19:6). They could therefore maintain that status, not by coming into close contact with the presence of God, but by listening and obeying the voice and commands of God. The author of Hebrews contrasts the encounter between God and Israel near Mount Sinai with the invitation of all his listeners to come directly into God's presence on Mount Zion. They all have the same privilege with Moses and Aaron to approach God. Furthermore, they do not come in fear and trepidation but with confidence and jubilation. They do not see flashes of lightning and hear frightening sounds of thunder and loud trumpets. Rather, they see a festive gathering of saints and angels, in the presence of God and Jesus (Heb. 12:18-24).¹⁵⁵

Heb. 12:21; Deut. 9:19

In Deuteronomy 9 Moses reminds the Israelites of their unrighteousness and stubbornness just before they enter Canaan. He recalls how they worshipped a golden calf while he was on the mountain receiving God's commandments. God had told him to go down and see how they were behaving. In anger and frustration, Moses broke the tablets on which God had inscribed the commandments. He destroyed the golden calf, ground it to dust and threw the dust

¹⁵⁵ Calaway, *The Sabbath and the Sanctuary*, 161, notes that the "obedient followers" of Jesus have access to God's presence. They have come "(προσεληλύθατε) to the heavenly Jerusalem. . . . Drawing near to the throne of grace and coming to the heavenly Jerusalem are ways of expressing drawing near to God and proximity to God's presence. The implication is that the hearers have not come to the earthly, material mountain where Moses had his vision of the heavenly type, but into the heavenly type itself – the heavenly Sabbath, the heavenly tent, the heavenly city – the reality that Moses saw, but never entered himself."

into a brook (vv.13-21). Moses was afraid of what God might do to Israel and he pleaded with God not to destroy his people (vv. 19-20). Here we have a picture of a holy and angry God with Moses as the selfless mediator interceding for an idolatrous nation. The author of Hebrews reflects on Moses' fear at what he saw on Mount Sinai (Heb. 12:21) while Deuteronomy focuses on Moses' intercessory role and fear for Israel. Hebrews is about the phenomena that make Moses say, "I tremble with fear" whereas Moses in Deuteronomy is fearful for the survival of his people.¹⁵⁶

Heb. 12:26; Hag. 2:6

The prophet Haggai received and delivered the word of the Lord to the governor of Judah and the high priest in Jerusalem (1:1). They were to rebuild the temple. After the temple was rebuilt, some Israelites were not impressed because it was not as glorious as Solomon's temple had been before the exile (2:3). God encouraged the people by assuring them of his presence with them (2:4-5). He further promised to shake the heavens, the earth, the sea, the dry land, and all the nations with the result that gold and silver would flow to Judah for the temple (2:6-7). That shaking was for the benefit of Judah and the temple in Zion. It is not obvious that the shaking was meant to be destructive.¹⁵⁷ In Hebrews, the shaking results from the anger of the

¹⁵⁶ Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 282: "Fear is not associated with Moses in the Exodus account of the Sinai theophany. Rather, one finds it mentioned in Deut. 9:19, where he recounts to the Israelites how he discovered the golden calf on his descent from Mount Sinai. He says there, "and I am afraid (*ekphobos*) of the anger and fear" (LXX), referring to God's anger over the calf. "Trembling," *entromos*, is used to describe Moses' fear in Acts 7:32."

¹⁵⁷ Mignon R. Jacobs, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017), 86-87: "The earth and mountains shake for various reasons, including the defeat of nations (Jer 50:46; 49:21; cf. Ezek 26:10, 15; 27:28); as a result of God's presence (Ezek 38:20; Joel 3:6 [MT 4:16]; Nah 1:5; Ps 18:7 [MT 8], or as a result of God's anger (Pss 68:8 [MT9]; 77:18 [MT 19]). In addition to the shaking, the divine presence has the effect of destroying elements that appeared to be durable or even permanent, such as mountains melting (Ps 97:5; Mic 1:4; Nah 1:5). The imagery portrays a God who is capable of altering the basic structure of the universe. The merisms—heaven and earth, sea and dry land—also depict the extent of Yahweh's action."

Lord with the result that heaven and earth are removed. Only the kingdom of God will be left standing (Heb. 12:26-27).¹⁵⁸ In view of this final shaking, the listeners are well advised to focus on the grace of God, on acceptable service to God, and on reverent worship of God (12:28).

Heb. 13:5; Josh. 1:5

Joshua, in stepping into the big shoes of Moses, needed encouragement to lead the nation into the Promised Land (1:1-4). God gave him the scope of the land to conquer and promised to be with him and to help him (1:5-6). He only needed to be strong and courageous and to follow the law of Moses (1:7-9). That was the context of God's promise, "I will not leave you or forsake you" (1:5). The author of Hebrews uses this same promise "I will never leave you nor forsake you" to encourage his listeners to trust God for provision (Heb. 13:5). They should be contented and avoid the love of money. A promise given to Joshua for victory over the Canaanites is now a promise given to the followers of Jesus for victory over covetousness.

Heb. 13:6; Ps. 118:6

Psalms 118 begins with call and response in the context of worship (118:1-4). Someone continues to speak in the first person expressing his confidence in the Lord, "The Lord is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?" (v. 6). The psalm alternates between personal and national concerns, between short cries for help and long expressions of trust in God, and between "I" and "us". The individual may be a representative of a bigger group of people (vv. 5-22, 23-27, 28-29) because the psalm appears structured for liturgical use. The author of Hebrews cites one statement of confidence (Ps. 118:6) from the psalm as his and his listeners' response to

¹⁵⁸ Does the "removal" (μετάθεσις) of earth and heaven mean destruction? The meaning of μετάθεσις is discussed in Mackie, *Eschatology and Exhortation*, 66-72. In Platonism, the earthly realm is shakable while the heavenly realm is stable. Against Platonic thought are those who argue that the removal refers to a judgment in "human history." After all, what survives the removal is still a "better creation."

God's promise of help in the previous verse: "The Lord is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?" (Heb. 13:6). In Psalm 118, the speaker is responding to help he has received after prayer (vv. 6-7) while in Hebrews 13 the author and his listeners are to respond to a promise of help (Heb. 13:5-6).¹⁵⁹

Books of the OT Cited for Divine Speech

Hebrews cites OT passages in the following order: Ps. 2:7; 2 Sam. 7:4; Deut. 32:43; Ps. 104:4; Ps. 45:6-7; Ps. 102:25-27; Ps. 110:1; Ps. 8:4-6; Ps. 22:22; Isa. 8:18; Ps. 95:11; Gen. 2:2; Ps. 95:7, 8, 11; Ps. 2:7; Ps. 110:4; Gen. 22:17; Ps. 110:4; Jer. 31:31-34; Ps. 40:6-7; Jer. 31:33-34; Deut. 32:35-36; Hab. 2:3-4; Gen. 21:12; Prov. 3:11; Prov. 3:11-12; Exod. 19:12-13; Deut. 9:19; Hag. 2:6; Josh. 1:5; Ps. 118:6.

The Psalms are cited the most times (x14). Some psalms are cited more than once: Ps. 2:7 (x2); Ps. 95 (x2); Ps. 110 (x3). Deuteronomy is cited thrice (Deuteronomy 32 (x2) and Deuteronomy 9). Genesis is cited thrice (Gen. 2:2; 21:12; 22:17). Exodus, Joshua, 2 Samuel, Proverbs, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Haggai, and Habakkuk are cited once. Jeremiah is special in that although it is cited once, it has the longest citation. We see then that the three sections of the Tanakh, namely, the Torah (Pentateuch), the Nebiim (both earlier and later prophets), and the Kethubim (writings such as Psalms and Proverbs) are represented.

Purpose of Using the OT for Divine Speech

In Hebrews, unlike what we find in Paul and other New Testament writers who use the formula "it is written," to introduce biblical citations, the voice of God is primary. In the Old Testament God spoke personally to individuals like Adam and Eve (Gen.1:28), Cain (Gen. 4:6-

¹⁵⁹ That God continually offered help to his people is a common theme in the OT, especially in the Psalms (Exod. 15:2; Deut. 33:29; Ps. 9:9; 18:2; 27:9; 28:7; 30:10; 33:20; 40:17; 59:17; 62:8; 63:7; 70:5). See Guthrie, "Hebrews," 992.

15), Noah (Gen. 6:13), Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3), and Isaac (Gen. 26:3-5). He spoke to some Israelites in dreams and visions (Gen. 28:12-15; 37:6-8). Moses spoke to God face to face (Exod. 33:11). The angel of the Lord visited some Israelites and delivered God's message (Judg. 13:3-5). Prophets claimed that the word of the Lord came to them (Jer. 1:4-8; Ezek. 6:1-7; Hos. 1:1). The Old Testament records divine speeches and human responses.

The authority of Scripture comes from what God has personally spoken or communicated in the past and what he is speaking and communicating in the present. The three sections of the Tanakh, that is, the Torah, the Neviim, and the Kethubim record instances of the voice of God. According to the author of Hebrews, the voice of God is not limited to a past record but is active in the present. It is true that the Tanakh is represented as what God spoke to the ancestors through his spokesmen the prophets in various ways and at various times (1:1). It is also true that recently God has spoken in a fuller and final way through his Son (1:2). However, when he presently speaks through the Son, his speaking is still in the words of the Tanakh. Jesus and the Holy Spirit speak, and their words are also words found in the Tanakh. The voice of God is heard in narratives, prophecies, prayers, songs, and wisdom sayings. The Tanakh is never superseded by the new speaking of God but rather taken up or fulfilled in a new way. As Jesus himself said concerning the Law and the Prophets, "I have not come to abolish but to fulfill" (Matt. 5:17).

The purpose of the author of Hebrews is to persuade his listeners to remain faithful to Jesus and to dissuade them from deserting him. By using passages from different books of the Old Testament, he appeals to already accepted sources of authority. The appeal is made even stronger in that those passages are not just what was written in the past but what God is saying in the present. There is a sense of urgency and an expectation of immediate response to what God is saying now.

In using Old Testament citations as divine speech, the rhetorical strategy of the author of Hebrews is to show that God is still speaking to his people. However, his current speech is through his Son who is the fulfillment of the many expectations and promises to Israel. Jesus is the divine Son and Messiah who fulfils promises to David. Jesus is the representative man and brother of mankind who fulfils promises made to humanity. Jesus is the high priest who proves to have a more effective priesthood than that of Aaron. Jesus offers a better sacrifice than all the animal sacrifices offered at the temple. Jesus is the mediator of a new covenant that is superior to the old covenant. The heroes of faith in Israel's history looked forward to the faith of Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith. Jesus is the supreme example of endurance that the listeners should imitate.

If the addressees in Hebrews accept the author's Christological and eschatological interpretation of the citations of the Old Testament presented to them as divine speech, then they will appreciate what God has accomplished for them in Jesus Christ. They can now approach God confidently, enter and enjoy God's rest. Further, they now have the resources necessary to endure suffering in faith and hope, as they worship together, confess Jesus together, and serve each other in love.

CHAPTER 3: RHETORICAL STRATEGY AND TYPOLOGY IN HEBREWS

In the Greco-Roman world, philosophy and rhetoric were important subjects of higher education. The author of Hebrews appears to be well educated in the Greek language, philosophy, and rhetoric. He also knows how to use typology effectively. In this chapter, I will investigate the author's exceptional education and skills which he deploys to persuade his audience to strive to enter God's rest so as to avoid falling away from the living God.

Hebrews and the Greek Language

The author of Hebrews had formal Greek language education as is evident in his use of the language. He uses 154 words that are not found in the rest of the New Testament.¹⁶⁰ Some of these words are not found in Greek literature prior to Hebrews. Other words are not found in the Greek Old Testament (LXX). Some words, though, are found in the Greek Old Testament (LXX) passages that he cites.¹⁶¹ It was not enough that a speaker was "competent in grammar." He had

¹⁶⁰ A speaker's choice of words may affect the argument (*logos*), the perception of the speaker (*ethos*), and the emotions of listeners (*pathos*). Choice of words was a crucial element of style in classical rhetoric. According to Corbett, *Classical Rhetoric*, 414: "Once arguments had been discovered, selected, and arranged, they had to be put into words. . . . *Elocutio*, the Latin word for style, carried the notion of "speaking out." *Lexis*, the usual Greek word for style, carried the triple notion of "thought" and "word" (both of these notions contained in the Greek word *logos*) and "speaking" (*legein*). The threefold implication of *lexis* indicates that the Greek rhetoricians conceived of style as that part of rhetoric in which we take *thoughts* collected by invention and put them into *words* for the speaking out in delivery." The third book of Aristotle's *Art of Rhetoric* is concerned with style. See Aristotle, *Art of Rhetoric* III, Loeb Classical Library, 193: 347: "We have therefore next to speak of style; for it is not sufficient to know what one ought to say, but one must also know how one ought to say it, and this largely contributes to making the speech appear of a certain character." Cicero's fourth book in *Rhetorica ad Herennium* deals with style. Cicero discusses three types of style: "the first we call the Grand; the second, the Middle; the third, the Simple. The Grand type consists of a smooth and ornate arrangement of impressive words. The Middle type consists of words of a lower, yet not of the lowest and most colloquial, class of words. The Simple type is brought down even to the most current idiom of standard speech" (*ad Herennium*, IV, 8). See Cicero, *Rhetorica ad Herennium* IV, Loeb Classical Library, 403: 253. The author of Hebrews uses an impressive choice of words.

¹⁶¹ The full list can be found in Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 12-13. The meanings are found in Bill Mounce's Greek Dictionary, <https://www.billmounce.com/greek-dictionary> (accessed September 18, 2022).

to demonstrate that he had “ample vocabulary” in his “choice of diction.”¹⁶² The author of Hebrews used rare vocabulary and that use was likely to impress the listeners, heighten their sense of the speaker’s *ethos*, and render his speech more persuasive. Here I will only illustrate the author’s rare vocabulary with a few words.

Words Not Found in Other NT Books

ἀγιότης (holiness, a characteristic of God),¹⁶³ ἀκατακάλυπτος (uncovered), ἀκλινής (unswerving, without wavering), ἀλυσιτελής (unadvantageous, without special benefit), δέος (awe, fear, reverence), ἔξις (constant use, practice), ἔπος (word), κοπή (defeat, cutting down), Λευιτικός (Levitical), νέφος (cloud), πολυτρόπως (in various ways), πρόδρομος (going before, forerunner), συμπαθέω (sympathize with), τιμωρία (punishment), τρίμηνος (a period of three months), τυμπανίζω (to be tortured, tormented), ὑπέικω (to submit, yield), χαρακτήρ (exact representation, reproduction),¹⁶⁴ χερουβίν (cherubim).

Words Not Found in NT or LXX:

ἄθλησις (contest, struggle), αἰσθητήριον (sense, faculty), ἀμήτωρ (without a mother), ἀνασταυρώω (to crucify again), ἀπαράβατος (permanent, unchangeable), ἀπάτωρ (fatherless), διηνεκές (forever, endless, for all time), δυσερμήνευτος (hard to explain), , ἐκδοχή

¹⁶² On grammatical competence and choice of diction, see Corbett, *Classical Rhetoric*, 416-419.

¹⁶³ Believers have the privilege of sharing this characteristic of God (Heb. 12:10) if they accept suffering as divine discipline.

¹⁶⁴ In Hebrews, Jesus is the “exact representation” of God. Philo (*Quod deterius potiori insidari soleat*, That the Worse Attacks the Better, 83) considers the soul as the “image” of God, and I Clem. 33:4 the human being as “a reproduction” of God’s “identity.” See Walter Bauer and Frederick William Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd. ed. (Chicago, ILL: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 1078.

(expectation), ἐπισυναγωγή (gathering, meeting, assembling), θεατρίζω (to publicly expose),¹⁶⁵ καθόσπερ (just as), καταγωνίζομαι (to conquer, defeat, overcome), κατασκιάζω (to overshadow), κριτικός (able to discern or judge), μεσιτεύω (to confirm, guarantee), ὄγκος (hinderance, impediment), πολυμερῶς (at many times, in many ways), πρωτοτόκια (inheritance right [of the first born]), σαββατισμός (Sabbath-rest, Sabbath observance),¹⁶⁶ συνεπιμαρτυρέω (to testify at the same time), τομός (cutting, sharp), ὑποστολή (shrinking back).

Words Not Found in NT or in Greek Literature before Hebrews:¹⁶⁷

ἀγενεαλόγητος (without genealogy), αἵματεκχυσία (shedding, pouring out of blood), εὐπερίστατος (easily entangling, constricting), εὐποιία (doing good), μετριοπαθέω (to deal gently), μισθαποδοσία (reward, punishment), μισθαποδότης (rewarder), πρόσχυσις (sprinkling), συγκακουχέομαι (to be mistreated with), τελείωσις (perfection, accomplishment).

Words Not Found in NT but Found in OT Citations:

ἄκροθίνιον (plunder, booty, fine spoils), καταναλίσκω (to consume), κεφαλίς (section of a scroll), μὴν (surely), τροχία (path, course).

Words not Found in NT but in OT Allusions in Exposition:

ἄγνῶμα (sin committed in ignorance), αἶνεσις (praise, speaking of the excellence), ἀπαύγασμα (radiance, brilliance), γνόφος (darkness), δάμαλις (heifer, young cow), δέρμα (skin, leather), διάταγμα (edict, command), θεράπων (servant, a person who renders service), θύελλα

¹⁶⁵ See θέατρον in 1 Cor. 4:9, where the apostles are publicly paraded in a humiliating way. BDAG, 446.

¹⁶⁶ This word is related to “Sabbath.” BDAG, 909: “a special period of rest for God’s people modeled after the traditional sabbath.”

¹⁶⁷ Could it be that the author of Hebrews coined these words? If so, this would enhance his ethos as an intelligent and creative speaker.

(storm), θυμιατήριον (incense altar), κῶλον (dead body, corpse), μετάθεσις (removal, taking up, change), μηδέπω (not yet), μηλωτή (sheepskin), ὀλοθρεύω (to destroy), ὀρκωμοσία (taking an oath), παραπικραίνω (to rebel, disobey), πείρα (to try to do, to attempt, to face), προσαγορεύω (to designate), στάμνος (jar), τράγος (male goat), φοβερός (fearful, dreadful, terrible).

A speaker with such a treasury of rare words was bound to impress his audience as an intelligent and educated person with a speech worth listening to.

Hebrews and Typology

The author of Hebrews has been compared to Philo Judaeus of Alexandria (c. 20 B.C. - c. 50 A.D.), who was a Jew of the diaspora, statesman, and philosopher. Philo sought to explain Jewish religious traditions by means of a Platonic thought system. As a religious Jew, he believed that the Jewish Scriptures were inspired even in their Greek translation (Septuagint or LXX). He was either trained in or was conversant with Greek philosophy (Platonism and Stoicism). By means of an allegorical method of exegesis, he was able to derive elevated principles from passages of Scripture, especially from those that appeared to be “offensive” or “unacceptable” on the surface.¹⁶⁸ Philo was a genius, not in producing allegories, but in allegorical exegesis. He was an expert in “turning what others had written - narratives, genealogies, numbers, people, place-names, and almost everything else in Scripture - into allegories which he interpreted in such a way as to yield truths, moral, spiritual and metaphysical, of a most elevated kind.”¹⁶⁹ An example of such creative interpretation is his explanation of Deut. 21:15-17 (NKJV):

If a man has two wives, one loved and the other unloved, and they have borne him children, both the loved and the unloved, then it shall be, on the day he bequeaths his

¹⁶⁸ Ronald Williamson, *Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Leiden: Brill, 1970), 144-146.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 147.

possessions to his sons, that he must not bestow firstborn status on the son of the loved wife in preference to the son of the unloved, the true firstborn. But he shall acknowledge the son of the unloved wife as the firstborn by giving him a double portion of all that he has, for he is the beginning of his strength; the right of the firstborn is his.

According to Philo, the loved wife is virtue, and the unloved wife is pleasure. Pleasure is a harlot who has many vices to offer. Virtue offers hard labor and pain which lead to good.¹⁷⁰

Like Philo, the author of Hebrews is an interpreter of the Jewish Scriptures. However, he uses typological exegesis, which is different from allegorical interpretation. While an allegorical interpretation seeks a deeper meaning from a text, typology seeks correspondence between earlier and later historical persons, event, places, and institutions, and also between earthly and heavenly realities.¹⁷¹ In Hebrews, for example, the land of Canaan is a type of God's promised rest (Hebrews 3, 4). Melchizedek, a priestly king, is a type of Jesus the ultimate high priest (Hebrews 7). The tabernacle is a type of the heavenly dwelling of God (Hebrews 9). The earthly Jerusalem is a type of the heavenly Jerusalem (Hebrews 12).

Scholars debate the extent of the use or influence of Middle Platonism in Hebrews.¹⁷² Whether or not the author of Hebrews was a Platonist, or whether he was conversant with Philo, is worth pursuing. However, there is no doubt that he was trained in that way of thinking and

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 146. For a long list of the vices of pleasure, and the advantages of virtue, see Philo, *De sacrificiis Abelis et Caini*, 19-33, 34-42, <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/yonge/book6.html> (accessed August 29, 2023).

¹⁷¹ G. R. Osborne, "Type, Typology," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Daniel J. Treier and Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017), 903-904. Osborne (p.904) explains the difference between allegory and typology as follows: "an allegory compares two distinct entities and involves a story or extended development of figurative expressions while a type is a specific parallel between two historical entities; the former is indirect and implicit, the latter direct and explicit. Therefore, biblical typology involves analogical correspondence in which earlier events, persons, and places in salvation history become patterns by which later events and the like are interpreted."

¹⁷² For the distinctions among Platonism, Middle Platonism, and Neo-Platonism, see the *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* on Plato, <https://iep.utm.edu/plato/#SH6b> (accessed August 20, 2023); Middle Platonism, <https://iep.utm.edu/midplato/>, (accessed August 20, 2023); and Neo-Platonism, <https://iep.utm.edu/neoplato/> (accessed August 20, 2023).

arguing. He shares with Philo the Platonic idea of two worlds (the immaterial and the material).¹⁷³ He also utilizes the Jewish apocalyptic idea of the present and the future world. In Hebrews, it is made clear that what Jesus achieved in his earthly life was part of a heavenly mission. Because Jesus was now ascended to heaven and was sitting beside God in a heavenly sanctuary, his followers had present access to the heavenly throne. They were also on a journey to the heavenly Jerusalem which would be revealed in a future time. The return of Jesus the Messiah and son of David in the future assured his followers that the kingdom promised to David and his sons would be visibly established. The author of Hebrews does not show the kind of depreciation of the earthly as is found in Platonism. He insists that the eternal Son of God became a human being so that he could qualify as a priest for God's people Israel. He shows the value of human experience and suffering for Jesus. He also shows that Jesus was raised bodily and would continue to have a human body in the heavenly sanctuary. He, however, argues that the future is better than the present just as the heavenly is superior to the earthly. For the listeners

¹⁷³ James W. Thompson, *The Beginnings of Christian Philosophy: The Epistle to the Hebrews*, CBQMS 13 (Washington DC: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1982), stresses the similarities between Philo and the author of Hebrews in their metaphysical assumptions. Both hold Moses and other Israelite ancient worthies in high honor, but the author of Hebrews declares the superiority of Jesus over them. Both of them contrast a shadowy early realm with a heavenly realm. Both believe in education as progress in knowledge and in training unto maturity through suffering. Just as the author of Hebrews connects rest with approach to God, Philo connects stability with approach to God since God enjoys stability while creation experiences change and mutability. Philo believed that, since God is immutable and perfectly stable, faith consists in becoming like God who is faithful (trustworthy). In Hebrews, faith means action and endurance in response to God's promises and faithfulness. Philo and the author of Hebrews are critical of the earthly tabernacle (or temple) and its sacrificial system. For Philo, though the temple is beautiful, it is still an earthly building. After all, the cosmos is the better temple, and even it is inadequate for the true God. Both Philo and the author of Hebrews distinguish between earthly purification of the body and a higher purification of the soul or conscience. However, Philo does not go as far as the author of Hebrews in declaring the end of the old covenant, its priesthood, and its sacrifices.

of Hebrews, evidence that the author was philosophically trained contributed to their high regard of him. That very evidence would enhance his *ethos*.

Hebrews and Greco-Roman Rhetoric

The author of Hebrews seems to have been well trained in Greco-Roman rhetoric. It is worth investigating his use of rhetoric for a religious purpose. But what is rhetoric?

Classical Rhetoric

According to Aristotle, rhetoric is the art of persuasion:

Rhetoric may be defined as the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion. This is not a function of any other art. Every other art can instruct or persuade about its own particular subject-matter; for instance, medicine about what is healthy and unhealthy, geometry about the properties of magnitudes, arithmetic about numbers, and the same is true of the other arts and sciences. But rhetoric we look upon as the power of observing the means of persuasion on almost any subject presented to us; and that is why we say that, in its technical character, it is not concerned with any special or definite class of subjects.¹⁷⁴

The skillful speaker, as an artist, creatively uses “available means of persuasion.” The speaker takes material that already exists and crafts it in order to persuade an audience. The raw material is called “inartistic proofs” while the speaker’s contribution is called “artistic proofs.” The artful speaker finds in existence such material as texts, facts, oaths, witnesses, contracts, and constitutions. To persuade others, the speaker needs to take available material and combine it with three kinds of appeals: *ethos* (credibility), *logos* (reasonableness), and *pathos* (emotions).¹⁷⁵

For Hebrews, the “inartistic proofs” or material in existence consist of the Greek Old Testament, Second Temple documents, Jewish interpretive traditions, traditions about the life of

¹⁷⁴ Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, Book I, Part 2 (Written 350 B.C.E. Translated by W. Rhys Roberts), <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/rhetoric.1.i.html> (accessed August 17, 2022).

¹⁷⁵ “Aristotle’s Rhetoric,” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-rhetoric> (accessed August 20, 2023).

Jesus, early traditions of Jesus' followers, and liturgical traditions, whether Jewish or of believers in Jesus. The author of Hebrews needs this material to work with as the basis for his rhetoric. He will need to contribute the "artistic proofs" of *ethos*, *logos*, and *pathos* to be persuasive in a classical sense. I will investigate Hebrews to find out whether the author used the available material in a persuasive way. My assumption is that the author's use of "artistic proofs" is evidence of his concern for rhetorical success. Since we do not have records of the response of the first audience, we can only depend on internal evidence, that is, what we find in the text of Hebrews.

Marcus Tullius Cicero gives us five canons of rhetoric: *inventio*, *dispositio*, *elocutio*, *memoria*, and *actio*.¹⁷⁶ When we consider Cicero's canons, and if we assume that the writer of Hebrews, like other speakers, wished to be successful in persuading his audience according to acceptable means of persuasion in a Greco-Roman environment, then we can conclude that some effort went into the production of Hebrews. In short, successful speeches were not random but carefully crafted pieces of art.

Marcus Fabius Quintilianus (better known as Quintilian) speaks of rhetoric as follows:

To resume, then, rhetoric (for I shall now use the name without fear of captious criticism) is in my opinion best treated under the three following heads, the art, the artist and the work. The art is that which we should acquire by study, and is the art of speaking well. The artist is he who has acquired the art, that is to say, he is the orator whose task it is to speak well. The work is the achievement of the artist, namely good speaking. Each of these three *general* divisions is in its turn divided into *species*. Of the two latter divisions I shall speak in their proper place. For the present I shall proceed to a discussion of the first.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁶ According to Corbett (*Classical Rhetoric*, 33-39), the five canons are discovery, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery.

¹⁷⁷ Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, Book II, Chapter 14, Section 5, https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Quintilian/Institutio_Oratoria/2C*.html#14, (accessed August 17, 2022).

George Kennedy defines rhetoric as follows:

Rhetoric is that quality in discourse by which a speaker or writer seeks to accomplish his purposes. Choice and arrangement of words are one of the techniques employed, but what is known in rhetorical theory as “invention”—the treatment of the subject matter, the use of evidence, the argumentation, and the control of emotion—is often of greater importance and is central to rhetorical theory as understood by Greeks and Romans.¹⁷⁸

Is classical rhetoric of any use to the study of the New Testament? Kennedy is positive:

The writers of the books of the New Testament had a message to convey and sought to persuade an audience to believe it or to believe it more profoundly. As such they are rhetorical, and their methods can be studied by the discipline of rhetoric.¹⁷⁹

The cultural background of the New Testament permits us to use Greco-Roman rhetorical analysis:

By the time of Christ the culture of the Near East had been undergoing a gradual process of Hellenization for three hundred years. Jewish thought absorbed some features of Greek culture, of which the works of Josephus and Philo give striking evidence, and the books of the New Testament were written in Greek to be read by or to speakers of Greek, many of them with some experience of Greek education. Rhetoric was a systematic academic discipline universally taught throughout the Roman empire. It represented approximately the level of high-school education today and was, indeed, the exclusive subject of secondary education.¹⁸⁰

Kennedy gives examples of educated and famous Jews of the diaspora such as Theodorus, “a native of Gadara” and “the teacher of emperor Tiberius,” and Caecilius of Calacte in Sicily who was the “most famous rhetorician of the reign of Augustus.”¹⁸¹

Species of Greco-Roman Rhetoric

¹⁷⁸ Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation*, 3.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 8-9.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 9.

Every generation has ways of expressing itself that are considered persuasive. Educated first century Jews in the diaspora were conversant with Greek and Roman rhetoric. Here is the place to discuss the three species of rhetoric, namely, judicial, deliberative, and epideictic rhetoric in Hebrews and to determine how the “word of exhortation” (Heb. 13:22) uses these to persuade or dissuade. Deliberative rhetoric had to do with “*political, hortative, and advisory*” speeches. Forensic rhetoric concerned itself with “*legal or judicial oratory.*” Epideictic rhetoric consisted of “*demonstrative, declamatory, panegyric, ceremonial*” speeches. Each of these forms of oratory had its specific situation. The judicial was for the law-courts in which matters of “justice and injustice” were debated by use of “accusation and defense.” The deliberative speech was for the political and public realms where matters of “the *expedient* and the *inexpedient*” were presented by use of “*exhortation* and *dehortation.*” Epideictic speeches were delivered in ceremonial occasions that focused on “*honor and shame*” by use of “*praise and blame.*”¹⁸² This division of oratory into three forms is helpful in studying Hebrews because an ancient listener could be expected to use the occasion or situation to form an expectation of what is appropriate.

The problem, though, is that a congregation of Jesus’ followers in a house meeting for worship was not a court of law, a public gathering, or a ceremonial occasion. The preacher or teacher in such a meeting may use elements of any of the three forms of oratory. The preacher may use epideictic oratory to focus on the praise of God, someone else, or some aspect of the faith. He may exploit judicial oratory to make a defense of his own ministry or that of his fellow ministers who were under attack from some quarters. He may assume a deliberative stance and try to encourage or discourage some action. His audience would know what to expect in each situation.

¹⁸² Corbett, *Classical Rhetoric*, 39-40.

But what about the reader of Hebrews almost two thousand years later who knows neither the speaker nor the congregation? Today's reader has to listen to the text and decide from its content what the situation was. It would be inappropriate to come to a text with a predetermined form of speech and attempt to force the text to fit the reader's expectation. At the same time, the educated reader will be ready to detect elements of any of the three forms of oratory in any speech. Also, a study of other sermons in the Bible might be of use if the reader suspects that Hebrews is a sermon.

Acts 13:13-42 as an Example of Oratory in a Synagogue

For example, Paul and Barnabas visit a synagogue in Antioch of Pisidia and are asked to give a "word of exhortation" after the reading of Scripture (the Law and the Prophets) (Acts. 13:13-16). Paul's speech turns out to be a sermon, an epideictic speech, that has the following form: Proem (v. 16b); Narration (vv. 17-25); Proposition (v. 26); Proof (vv. 27-37); Epilogue (vv. 38-39).¹⁸³

When the leaders of the synagogue requested for a "word of exhortation," maybe there was an expectation on the part of the congregation of a homily or an exposition of something from the passages of Scripture that had been read. Paul extended his hand and called for attention. He addressed the listeners as "men of Israel and you who fear God" (vv. 16-17). The listeners are Jews and God-fearing Gentiles. The audience, we presume, was acquainted with Jewish Scriptures.

Paul narrated the history of Israel briefly, from the Egyptian captivity to David's time. None of what he said was controversial and the narration solidified his identification with the audience because they all recognize this history as their own. He used the promise to David of a

¹⁸³ Ibid., 124-125. I think Kennedy meant vv. 39-41 for the epilogue.

savior (v. 23) to skip to the time of John the Baptist and Jesus. John pointed Jesus out as the fulfillment of the promise to David (vv. 24-25). That part may have been considered controversial because not all Jews accepted the testimony of John concerning Jesus. John, though acknowledged as an Israelite prophet by those who encountered him, was not yet part of the revered and ancient Jewish history.

In the proposition (v. 26), Paul identified himself with the congregation as a brother and a member of the family of Israel. This identification worked emotionally on the audience, for the speaker and the audience had a stake in this message. In the proof (vv. 27-37), Paul accused the leaders of Jerusalem of ignorantly killing the savior sent to Israel by God. This accusation was not vicious since Paul spoke of an action done in ignorance (there was no need for Paul to antagonize an audience he had only met that day). God vindicated Jesus by raising him from the dead. That Jesus was physically raised from the dead was a matter of fact because he appeared bodily to living witnesses (v.31). The resurrection of Jesus was predicted in the Scriptures (Ps. 2:7; Isa. 55:3; Ps. 16:10). These citations were Paul's additional witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus. For anyone who thought that David spoke of himself, Paul dispelled that notion by reminding them that David died, was buried, and his body saw corruption (v. 36). In the epilogue (vv. 38-41), Paul extended the benefits of salvation through Jesus. A good orator constantly thought of what would benefit the audience and this epilogue is both emotionally provocative and effective in calling forth belief in Jesus. It also has a warning for those who are yet unmoved. The speech had immediate effect in that the people followed Paul and Barnabas after the meeting and desired to hear more from Paul on the following Sabbath (vv.42-43).

We can conclude that Paul, in this instance, proved to be a good and successful orator. As Aristotle might put it, Paul had used rhetoric, namely, all available means to persuade his

audience about the truth of his message. As Quintilian might describe him, he was a “good man speaking well.”¹⁸⁴ He was good in that his *ethos* was recognized and admired by his audience, who knew him from only one speech. He spoke well in that he used the witness of Scripture and of living Jews to make his case. He identified with his audience thereby increasing empathy, and he offered them something of value (salvation and the forgiveness of sin). Paul, in this speech, demonstrated a use of classical rhetoric to present the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Acts 26:2-32 as an Example of Oratory in Court

Kennedy has the following form for this judicial speech: Proem (vv. 2-3); Narration (vv. 4-18, though Kennedy does not clarify which verses belong here); Proof (vv. 19-23).¹⁸⁵ Paul is making his defense before King Agrippa, who has been invited as a competent judge by Festus, a new governor who is at a loss as to what to say about Paul (25:13-21). Paul is a prisoner left by Felix, the former governor, for Festus to deal with (25:12). Because Paul had appealed to Caesar, Festus is under obligation to write a brief for the imperial court (25:21). Agrippa accepts to hear Paul’s defense after he is briefed of the accusation made by the Jewish leaders (25:22). The hearing starts after the ceremonial entry of Agrippa, Bernice, the military leaders, and the civic leaders in Caesarea Maritima (25:23). Festus informs the audience of the essential facts concerning the case against Paul. In Paul’s favor, Festus admits that there is no compelling case for a death sentence, as the Jewish leaders had demanded. The issue at hand is what to write to the imperial court since Paul refused to be judged in Jerusalem and appealed to Caesar (25:24-27). Agrippa gives Paul permission to defend himself (26:1a).

¹⁸⁴ Quintilian, *Institution Oratoria*, Book II, Chapters 14-21.

¹⁸⁵ Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation*, 137.

As in Acts 13:16, Paul begins his speech with a gesture, namely, the stretching out of his hand (Acts 26:1b). In the proem (vv. 2-3), Paul praises King Agrippa as an expert in all matters Jewish. Since King Agrippa was a Herodian king under the Romans, this works in Paul's favor since not all Jews were happy to recognize the Herodian dynasty as moral or legitimate, and especially this Herodian king with his dubious relationship with Bernice, another Herodian known for her moral impropriety. It always helps to praise the judges in judicial rhetoric. Paul is, in other words, recognizing the *ethos* (intelligence, wisdom, fairness, and good will) of his judge and thereby ensuring the *pathos* (empathy) that is needed as he presents his *logos* (argument). All three aspects of rhetorical persuasion are in play in the very first words Paul utters. Paul also begs for patience, showing that he does not presume on the good will of his judge. By this request, he puts the judge at ease as a man capable of justice even under provocation.

In his narration (vv. 4-18), he begins with what is known about himself by the Jews (vv.4-5). Paul is a Jew, raised and educated in Jerusalem. Perhaps he is suggesting that some of his accusers may be his former fellow students, teachers, or neighbors. He is not a stranger to Jerusalem, and he has a reputation of being a strict observer of the religious customs of the Jews. Here Paul is enhancing his own *ethos*. He is a good man, a Jew, a student of the Jewish way of life, and a Pharisee. It is worth noticing that he does not bring up the fact that he is a Roman citizen, a native of Tarsus, as he had done before the Roman tribune in Jerusalem. At that time, he needed to say so in order to save himself from a flogging (22:25-29).

Paul now needs his accusers to be considered witnesses on his behalf. What then is the problem if Paul and the accusers are fellow Jews and fellow believers in the religious customs of the Jews? Paul states that his supposed crime is belief in God's promise to Israel, a promise the accusers eagerly expected to be fulfilled (26:6-7). What promise is this? Paul hints at it by asking

a rhetorical question: “Why is it thought incredible that God raises the dead?” (26:8). Here is the crux of the matter. Paul claims that something has happened which all Israelites in the past and all good Jews in the present expected to happen someday. God has raised someone from the dead. The problem is that proclaiming the truth has been criminalized by the very people who expected it to happen. The contradiction is palpable. Paul himself had been party to the criminalization of that proclamation. Indeed, he was so zealous that he prosecuted those in Jerusalem and travelled from Jerusalem to foreign cities to arrest and prosecute those who proclaimed a resurrection from the dead. This resurrection was that of Jesus of Nazareth (vv. 9-11). Paul, in this part of the narrative, has introduced the message of the gospel in the context of his own defense. He shows that he, like his accusers, was a mistaken zealot against the declaration of what God had done.

At this point, the judge may sympathize with any Jew who is persecuted for telling the truth about a recent action of God. The judge would be interested to know how Paul turned from being a zealous persecutor. Paul begins to tell his story of conversion. He was on his way to Damascus to ferret out followers of Jesus when Jesus himself appeared to him in a vision (vv. 12-18). This is great drama at high noon. This is stuff for the poets and the prophets. The man whom the Romans and the Jewish leaders had crucified personally confronted Paul and knocked him off his high horse (vv. 12-14). The man Jesus spoke in Aramaic, asked Paul why he was so bent on persecuting him (v.15). Jesus then ordered Paul to get up and continue his journey to Damascus, no longer as a persecutor, but as a proclaimer of the very message he was attempting to stop. In short, Jesus recruited a persecutor to be a follower, a servant, and a witness. Jesus promised to protect Paul from those who would oppose him and to continue appearing to him. His mission would involve turning people from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to

God, the forgiveness of sin, and the inclusion in the favored group of those who were close to Jesus (vv. 16-18). Here Paul is saying to the judge that he did not just change his mind all by himself. He was divinely appointed and redirected. He is not guilty of a crime. What would you do if the resurrected Jesus came to you in a similar manner? Indeed, Paul had just passed on the “blame” to Jesus and to God. Who is on trial now? Will Agrippa judge the risen Jesus? Will God be condemned?

As a judge, Agrippa is in a fix because Paul the accused is now Paul the witness to an encounter with God. The Jewish leaders of Jerusalem are now seen to be in the wrong. There is a major reversal taking place in court. An innocent man is on trial for a good deed, and the accusers are in danger of the judgment of God. Paul, in a move to bring Agrippa to attention, calls him by name (v.19). It is a rhetorical move to speak personally to one’s listeners to sustain their sympathy and attention. The only thing Paul is “guilty” of is obedience to the heavenly vision (v. 19). He elaborates (rhetorically, he amplifies) what that involved. He travelled to Damascus, to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel of repentance and forgiveness (v. 20). The consequence was that his former co-religionists turned against him and attempted to kill him but unsuccessfully because God protected him. In their attempt to stop Paul from declaring the salvation that comes in Jesus, they were in opposition to God, to Moses, and to the prophets who had declared in the past about the coming, suffering, death, resurrection, and proclamation of the Messiah (the Christ) (vv. 21-23).

Paul’s defense is working so well that Festus interrupts loudly, declaring Paul to be out of his mind from too much study (v. 24). Festus has concluded that Paul has an overheated brain but Paul is not offended. Indeed, he addresses Festus with utmost respect, by calling him “most excellent Festus” and defending his defense as rational and truthful (v. 25). Here Paul enhances

the governor's *ethos* while defending his own. He then turns to his judge, king Agrippa. He first speaks of the king in the third person as competent to judge, and then addresses him directly with a rhetorical question: "King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you believe" (vv. 26-27). Now the king is on trial. He cannot deny that he believes the prophets for that would make him incompetent to judge this Jewish case. He therefore changes the topic and digresses, a rhetorical tactic to avoid dealing with the issue raised, namely, his own Jewish faith. He asks his own question: "In a short time would you persuade me to be a Christian?" Agrippa is quite aware that Paul the accused has gently turned into an interrogator. Paul is subtly taking control of the court session. It is no longer about him but about Jesus and the expectation of the Jews as predicted in the prophets. Paul does not draw back but answers the king telling him that he wishes all in court to be Christians. The only exception is that he does not wish them to be in chains as he is (v. 29). By drawing attention to his chains, he reminds the court of the injustice done to him by the leaders of the Jews. Paul has managed to change a case against himself into a case for God, Moses, the prophets, and Jesus. In a sense, those gathered must now answer to a heavenly court. How will they respond?

The court session is over. The king and his retinue leave in order to decide on the case. The unanimous decision is that Paul is innocent. They have the details they need about his situation. They wish to release him, but he has already made an appeal to Caesar. They can now write a brief to the imperial court. We can only speculate on how they framed it (vv. 30-31). Here we see how a judicial situation was turned into a preaching occasion by an effective Christ-believing orator.

From the above two examples in the book of Acts, one can observe how a Christian preacher or teacher may adapt classical rhetoric to serve the Christian message. The author of

Hebrews calls his own written speech a “word of exhortation” (13:22). Perhaps Hebrews can be analyzed rhetorically as George Kennedy has done with Paul’s speeches.

Form of Rhetoric in Hebrews

The sermons in Acts suggest that Hebrews may also be studied as a sermon.

Significantly, Paul’s sermon in Acts 13 is called “a word of exhortation” just like Hebrews (Acts 13:15; Heb. 13:22). Hebrews sounds more like a sermon than a letter even though it ends like a letter. James Swetnam considers it a homily:

Inasmuch as the author of Hebrews himself says that his work is a λόγος τῆς παρακλήσεως (xiii, 22), and inasmuch as this phrase denotes a homily in Acts xiii 15, the conclusion would seem to be that the "Epistle" to the Hebrews is basically a homily, with a few words attached at the end after the manner of a letter.¹⁸⁶

F. F. Bruce compares Hebrews with Acts 13:15 and calls the “word of exhortation” “a homily in written form.”¹⁸⁷ Thomas Long sees it as a “good sermon” that has a “monological format” but is a “dialogical event”:

The Preacher of Hebrews has produced a written sermon, but one with the marks of an oral event. As such, he does not address discrete individuals, but rather “brothers and sisters, holy partners in a heavenly calling” (3:1).¹⁸⁸

Donald Hagner calls it a homily.¹⁸⁹ Daniel Harrington calls it a sermon:

¹⁸⁶ James Swetnam, “On Literary Genre of the ‘Epistle’ to the Hebrews” *Novum Testamentum* 11 (1969), 261, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1560111> (accessed August 23, 2023).

¹⁸⁷ F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, The New London Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977), p. 413.

¹⁸⁸ Thomas G. Long, *Hebrews*, Interpretation (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 6.

Hebrews is not a letter, nor does it address the Hebrews. It is a sermon in written form (see 13:22), and it originally addressed early Christians (most likely Jewish Christians)... it is arguably the greatest sermon ever written down. It is a combination of biblical exposition and exhortation, which is exactly what a good sermon should be.¹⁹⁰

Ben Witherington calls Hebrews “perhaps the finest example of rhetoric in the NT, which is epideictic in character and elegant as well.”¹⁹¹

Ethos in Hebrews

A sermon is a speech, and it can be investigated for how the speaker uses classical rhetoric to persuade his audience. In studying a classical speech, one needs to consider three elements of a persuasive speech, namely, *ethos*, *logos*, and *pathos*. The author’s own *ethos* or that of another plays a role in an effort to persuade his audience.

Author’s Ethos

The author of Hebrews is known to his audience and is eager to visit them, as personal notes towards the end show (13:22). He says little about himself choosing to include others as speakers (5:11; 6:9; 9:5; 13:18). We do not know whether he had an imposing figure, a pleasant disposition, or a charismatic personality. His personal appeal has to be derived from the message he wrote.

¹⁸⁹ Donald A. Hagner, *Encountering the Book of Hebrews: An Exposition* (Encountering Biblical Studies (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002), 29.

¹⁹⁰ Daniel J. Harrington, *What Are They Saying about the Letter to The Hebrews?* (New York, NY: Paulist, 2005), 1.

¹⁹¹ Ben Witherington (*New Testament Rhetoric: An Introductory Guide to the Art of Persuasion in and of the New Testament* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2009), 195. Witherington and Myers (*New Testament Rhetoric*, 221-225) have taken note of disagreements among scholars concerning the species of rhetoric found in Hebrews. Hebrews as forensic rhetoric is argued by Hermann von Soden. Hebrews as epideictic rhetoric is argued by William L. Lane, Harold W. Attridge, and Thomas H. O’Brien. Hebrews as deliberative rhetoric is defended by Walter G. Ubelacker and Barnabas Lindars. Hebrews as a mixture of deliberative and epideictic rhetoric is defended by Craig R. Koester, Lauri Thurén, Luke Timothy Johnson, and Andrew T. Lincoln.

His message reveals an educated writer of Greek whose vocabulary is very extensive. He uses certain words, phrases, and clauses repeatedly (son, you, suffering, rest, today, blood, sacrifice, high priest, covenant, by faith). He will introduce a theme in passing and develop it later. He alternates exposition with exhortation instead of doing all his exposition first followed by all his exhortation. This makes his message seem like a combination of several messages. This helps his listeners to immediately grasp the significance of each exposition for their lives.

Others' Ethos

Ancient speakers could also exploit the *ethos* of others in their speeches. In the case of Hebrews, the author uses several characters, whom he relates to or compares with Jesus. The most important characters are God, the Holy Spirit, and Jesus. He borrows mostly from Jesus's *ethos* because Jesus is not only an exemplary character but also the person he wishes to promote in his exhortation. He also introduces angels and exemplary human characters in order to compare and contrast them with Jesus. Human characters of exemplary character are Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Aaron, Melchizedek, and the heroes of faith (Hebrews 11). The *ethos* of authentic believers who pleased God and endured much for him and for his people's sake makes them worthy of emulation. The author of Hebrews uses their *ethos* to enhance his appeal to his listeners that they may be encouraged to keep faith and to have endurance. The author is asking the audience to be like the heroes of faith in their generation as they follow Jesus (12:1-2).

Logos in Hebrews

Logos is concerned with the content of a speech. The author of Hebrews uses several arguments to make his case that the listeners should remain loyal to Jesus and not desert him. He had available to him Jewish (Rabbinic) and Greco-Roman types of argumentations at his

disposal. He uses his evidence, reasoning, illustrations, comparisons, rhetorical and real questions to inform, persuade, motivate, and engage his audience.

Indicators of the Use of Reasoning in Hebrews

The use of certain words indicates a sense of logic in the arguments of Hebrews:

“therefore, for this reason, because of this” (διὰ): (1:9 (in a citation); (2:1, 11; 4:6; 5:3; 7:23, 24; 10:2); “because, so when” (ἐν ᾧ) (2:18; 6:17); “therefore, then, so” (οὖν) (2:14; 4:1, 6, 11, 14; 10:19, 35); “therefore, for which reason, from whence” (ὅθεν) (2:17; 3:1; 7:25; 8:3; 9:18; 11:19); “therefore, so” (διό) (3:7; 6:1; 10:5; 11:12, 16; 12:12, 28; 13:12); “this is why” (ἐν ταύτῃ) (11:2); “if...then” (4:8-9? 7:11? 8:4? 8:7? 8:8? 11:15? 12:8, 25?); following Hebrew (אם), use of Greek “if” (εἰ) in swearing or oaths: (3:11; 4:3); “for” (γὰρ); “although, though” (καίπερ) (5:8; 7:5; 12:7); use of participles in argumentation (4:2: (μὴ συγκεκρασμένους) “since they were not united = not having been united; 6:6: (παρὰπεσόντας) having fallen away = if they fall away; (ἀνασταυροῦντας) crucifying = since they are crucifying; (παραδειγματίζοντας) since they are holding him up to contempt = since they are holding him up to contempt; 6:8: (ἐκφέρουσα) bringing forth = if it brings forth; 7:12: (μετατιθεμένης) being changed = when there is a change).¹⁹²

Pathos in Hebrews

The author of Hebrews uses emotional appeals to persuade his audience. He calls his audience sons (2:10, 12; 12:5, 7, 8), children (2:13, 14; 12:8), brothers (2:11, 17; 3:12; 10:19; 13:22), holy brothers (3:1), and God’s household (3:2-6; 10:21). He addresses the listeners with the first-person plural, thereby identifying with them (2:1, 3, 9; 3:6, 14; 4:1, 2, 3, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16; 6:1, 3, 18, 19, 20; 7:26; 8:1; 9:14, 24; 10:10, 15, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 26, 30, 39; 11:40;

¹⁹² Meaning of the Greek terms derived from Strong’s Concordance and Thayer’s Lexicon in Bible Hub, <https://biblehub.com>.

12:1, 9, 10, 28; 13:6, 10, 13, 14, 15, 18, 23). He speaks about fear (2:15; 4:1; 10:31; 11:7, 23, 27; 12:21; 13:6), awe, and reverence (12:28). By describing the word of God as a sharp double-edged sword, he literally sends chills down the spines of his listeners and leaves them feeling helpless (4:12-13), only to offer them comfort in God's mercy and help through Jesus their high priest (4:14-16). By describing the coming shaking of creation, he arouses despair in his audience leaving them no place to escape (12:25-27), only to give them hope in the unshakeable kingdom of God (12:28).

He speaks of shame (2:11; 11:16; 12:2) and he shames his audience by calling them infants who live on milk (5:11-14). He warns about God's judgment and wrath (2:1, 2, 3; 4:3; 6:3, 8; 10:26, 27, 28, 30, 39; 12:29; 13:4). He speaks of human feelings and senses, and concerns: anger and bitterness (11:27; 12:15), escape (2:3; 12:25); weakness, reproach, pain, struggle, suffering, persecution, and death (2:9, 10, 14, 18; 3:17; 4:14; 5:2, 7, 8; 7:23, 28; 9:16, 26, 27; 10:28, 32, 33, 34; 11:4, 5, 12, 13, 19, 20, 21, 22, 25, 26, 29, 30, 35, 36, 37, 38; 12:3, 4, 11; 13:3, 12, 13, 20); sharing (1:9; 2:14; 3:1, 14; 6:4; 12:8); rest (3:11, 18; 4:3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 11); mercy and sympathy (2:17; 4:15; 10:34); tasting and drinking (2:9; 6:4, 5, 7); seeing and looking (2:8-9; 7:4; 8:5 (in a citation); 11:3, 5, 13, 23, 26, 27; 12:2, 14, 15, 21); love and hate (1:9; 6:10; 10:24; 12:6); boasting, confidence, and hope (3:6, 14; 4:16; 6:9, 11, 18; 10:22, 23, 35); desire and pleasure (6:11; 10:6, 8, 38; 11:5, 6, 16, 25; 12:11, 17; 13:16, 21); discipline (12:5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11); joy, worship, and praise (10:34; 12:2, 11, 22, 28; 13:15, 17); and grace (2:9; 4:16; 10:29; 12:15, 28; 13:9, 25).

He provokes the imagination or enables the eyes of faith to see. At times he describes persons and events in a way to enable the listeners to see by the eye of the imagination. He constantly describes the glorious son of God as sitting at God's right hand (1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12;

12:2). This son is shown to completely identify with humanity (2:5-18). He describes the word of God as a sharp sword that cuts very deep and exposes everyone and everything (4:12-14). His detailed exposition of Melchizedek is even more vivid than what is found in Genesis 14. The author of Hebrews goes into some detail concerning the building and sanctifying of the earthly tabernacle (9:1-10). He then follows with Jesus' role as high priest which helps the listener to visualize the activities of the eternal high priest in his once-for all Yom Kippur ministry in a heavenly tabernacle (7:11-28). The heroes of faith are not merely listed but actually paraded for the inner eye (Hebrews 11). This parade is directed toward persuading the listeners to join the parade through perseverance in their race (12:1-2). The author shows that suffering is to be seen as fatherly discipline, thereby challenging the perspective of his listeners (12:5-13). The author contrasts the fearful sight of Sinai with the festive sight of Zion (12:18-25), which he follows immediately with a fearful shaking of the universe by their God who is compared to a raging fire (12:22-27). The effect he intends is gratitude, worship, reverence, awe (12:28-29), love, hospitality, charity, purity, contentment, confidence, faith, grace (13:1-12), loyalty, praise, good deeds, generosity, submission, and prayer (13:13-19).

Style in Hebrews: Figures of Speech and Imagery

Figures of Speech and Imagery in Hebrews

Corbett says that figures of speech are more than adornment because they add to clarity of thought, emotional appeal, and power of persuasion.¹⁹³ Hebrews begins with *Homoeopropheron*, or alliteration (Πολυμερῶς καὶ πολυτρόπως πάσαι, Heb. 1:1). The author is fond of

¹⁹³ Corbett, *Classical Rhetoric*, 459. Corbett cites Aristotle, Longinus (*On the Sublime*, XV, 9), and especially Quintilian (*Instit. Orat.*, IX, i) on the benefits of figures of speech for *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*.

anthropopatheia, that is, speaking of God as if he were a human being (Heb. 1:4, 12; 3:4; 4:13; 10:38). He uses a lot of rhetorical questions (*erotema*) (1:14; 2:3, 2:6 (in a citation); 3:16 (x2), 17, 18; 7:11; 10:2, 29; 11:32; 12:5, 7, 9; 12:6 (in a citation)). Tracing figures of speech in Hebrews reveal an author who is very comfortable with the Greek language, has a lively style of writing, and uses it to effectively communicate his message.¹⁹⁴

Use of images is part of style. As Gareth Cockerill puts it, “Ancient orators chose their imagery with care in order to address their hearers’ emotions (*pathos*) as well as their reason (*logos*).”¹⁹⁵ Cockerill has recognized how the author of Hebrews uses Old Testament images such as “Sinai, Promised Land, and Mosaic Tent.” Sinai is where the Israelites received the Law and the covenant from God. The Mosaic tent was where God encountered them in their wilderness journey. The Promised Land is where God led them out of the wilderness, a place where they would rest from their wandering. The speaker takes these evocative images and demonstrates how Jesus fulfilled them:

When the pastor would urge his hearers to perseverance in 3:1-4:13 and 10:19-12:3 he uses Promised Land imagery to describe God’s dwelling as the heavenly “homeland” (11:13-16), the eternal “City” (11:9-10; 12:22-24), or the divine “rest” (4:1-14). When he would urge them to approach God even now for the grace necessary for perseverance, he describes it as the heavenly Most Holy Place typified by the Tent (4:14-10:18). The pastor begins and ends by comparing God’s ultimate self-revelation in the Son with his self-disclosure on Sinai. What God has said (1:1-2:18) and continues to say (12:18-24) through the incarnate, exalted Son will reach consummation in God’s final declaration at the Judgment (12:25-29). Because it typifies God’s final revelation in his Son, the Mount Sinai theophany is foundational to the other two images employed by Hebrews.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁴ For a full list of figures of speech in Hebrew, see Appendix 2 on Figures of Speech in Hebrews. The list is derived from E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible: Explained and Illustrated* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1898; Mansfield Centre, CT: Martino Publishing, 2011).

¹⁹⁵ Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 63.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 63.

These Old Testament images are part of Jewish history, heritage, and identity. When Jesus is presented as fulfilling them, the listeners feel a sense of community with Him. Further, they gain an understanding that following Jesus is not a departure from what God gave them previously but a continuation of his provision for their journey now. They not only have access to the tent now, not only can they enter rest now, not only can they in a measure experience the heavenly communion now, but they also have hope for the future since Jesus is leading them in their race or pilgrimage to the ultimate place of revelation, rest, and reunion.

The author of Hebrews uses more images than just “Sinai, Promised Land, and Mosaic Tent.” By going through the sermon in some detail, the following use of imagery can be observed. Jesus is introduced as both the *radiance* and the *imprint* of God recalling the rays of the sun and the picture of a sovereign on a coin. Jesus sits as *king* on a heavenly throne having finished the work of a *high priest* in a temple (1:3). He is the *founder* of salvation (2:10), and a *hero* who fights the enemy of his brothers (2:14-16). Jesus as priest was *faithful* (3:6), *sympathetic* (3:15), *prayerful*, and *reverent* (3:7). The listeners are invited to enter a place or a time of *rest* (4:11), something that eluded former generations of Israelites. Further, they are reminded of the *double-edged sword* that is the word of God which *cuts through* everything and *exposes* everyone (4:12-13).

The listeners are described as *dull* and *infantile*, needing *milk* (5:11-13), and in danger of becoming like *useless agricultural land* ready to be burnt (6:7-8). The speaker, realizing the possible emotional response of his audience, reassures them that their situation is not hopeless (6:9-12). The speaker often returns to the picture of Jesus as the *high priest* (2:17; 4:14-15; 5:1-10:18). Because Jesus is such a great high priest, the listeners can see themselves doing something that ordinary Israelites could not do, namely, *approaching* the presence of God in the

holiest place in the *tabernacle* (4:16; 10:19-22). Jesus is pictured as the *mediator* of a *new covenant* (7:22; 8:13; 9:15) and as the *sacrifice* whose *body* and *blood* are offered in that covenant (7:27; 9:12-14, 26, 28; 10:5-14, 29). Because of the mediation and sacrifice of Jesus, the listeners experience forgiveness, salvation, cleansing of conscience, and they have grounds for confidence (7:25; 9:14, 23, 28; 10:18, 19). Emotionally, the listeners must be excited to picture themselves as those so favored. No wonder they can confess and witness to Jesus with abundance of hope and faith (4:14-16; 10:23-25, 32-39).

The author paints a picture of faith and faithfulness by means of examples from the past that culminate with Jesus as the supreme example. The listeners join this hall of fame as *runners in a foot race* by following Jesus' example (11:1-12:2). With the heroes of faith as witnesses in a stadium, and with the race almost over, it is not the time to be sluggish (12:3-4). But no sooner does he mention the race than he turns to a picture of suffering as *fatherly discipline* (12:5-11) before turning back to finishing the race (12:12-13). They must not be like *Esau* who exchanged his birthright for a meal (12:16-17).

If the theophany on the earthly *Mount Sinai* was an awe-inspiring vision to behold, how much more the arrival of the listeners to the heavenly *Mount Zion* where they will join Jesus, all the angels, all the faithful of the past, and God himself (12:18-24)? Interestingly, the *blood* of innocent Abel is brought up for comparison with the *blood* of innocent but redeeming Jesus (v.24). The listeners, in view of their approach to the *heavenly mountain*, must be careful to behave better than those before the *earthly mountain*, for the same God is speaking again, except now more sternly (12:25-27). The God who offers a *kingdom* is also the one who consumes like a *fire* (12:28-29). By now the listeners must be persuaded of the need to persevere and stay the course. But the speaker is not quite done. He yet has two more pictures to offer. The listeners are

to see themselves as *priests* with *sacrifices* and *offerings* and *services* to offer, an *altar* to eat from, and a *camp* to exit in order to remain faithful to God and to Jesus the *unchanging one* (13:8-16). In essence, the speaker is painting a picture of followers of Jesus as faithful priests. By leaving the camp of the unfaithful, they remain faithful to the God of Israel.

Is Hebrews Deliberative Speech?

Deliberative rhetoric is “*political, hortative, and advisory*,” and its concerns are what is “*expedient* or “*inexpedient*.” The rhetor uses “*exhortation* and *dehortation*.” In a deliberative speech, the goal is to persuade people to do something or to accept a view of things. Is what the speaker recommending good in itself or is it good for us? Or as Corbett puts it, is it worthy (*dignitas*), good (*bonum*) or advantageous (*utilitas*)? The problem, however, is that different audiences have different opinions about what is worthy, good, or advantageous. The speaker needs to know his topics and he needs to know his listeners. Cicero and the author of *Ad Herennium* remind us that most people choose what is advantageous over what is worthy. Everyone wants what he or she thinks will bring them, above all else, happiness however they may define happiness.¹⁹⁷ Aristotle (*Rhetoric*, I, 5) defined happiness in the following way:

We may define happiness as prosperity combined with virtue; or as independence of life, or as the secure enjoyment of the maximum of pleasure; or as a good condition of property and body, together with the power of guarding one’s property and body and making use of them. That happiness is one or more of these things, pretty well everyone agrees.”¹⁹⁸

What then is worthy, good, and advantageous, according to the author of Hebrews?

Belonging to God’s Family

¹⁹⁷ Corbett, *Classical Rhetoric*, 39, 146-148.

¹⁹⁸ Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, I, 5.

In praising Jesus as the one who came from the Father to bring salvation, the author of Hebrews declares to the listeners that they are in the family of God (2:10-18). Belonging to the family of God is worthy because of who God is. It is good in itself and good for the listeners because it brings them benefits. As members of the family of God, they are being brought into glory (v.10), they are being sanctified (v. 11), they are being delivered from slavery to the devil and the fear of death (v. 14), they are receiving propitiation for their sins (v17), and they are receiving the help of a sympathetic high priest (v.18). In deliberative rhetoric, whatever is promoted as increasing the happiness of the audience is considered as persuasive.

Entering God's Rest

God's rest is worthy, good, and advantageous for the audience of Hebrews. It is a gift worth recommending because it is not only good in itself, but it is also beneficial to the audience. In Heb. 3:7- 4:16, the author deals with God's rest. He cites Ps. 95:7-11 as a warning of the Holy Spirit (Heb. 3:7-11). If the listeners are aware of this psalm from their liturgy or study of Scripture, they will recall that it is a song of praise. The members of the congregation are encouraging each other to worship God with gratitude (Ps. 95:1-6). In Ps. 95:7-11, the voices of joyful worshipers give way to the voice of God who warns them.

Immediately after the citation, the author of Hebrews warns his congregation not to be like the wilderness Israelites whose hearts were full of unbelief. He enjoins them to exhort each other daily and confidently to the end in order to avoid unbelief. The voice of the speaker, like that of the Holy Spirit, is using a warning, which is deliberative rhetoric. The listeners, like the worshipers in Psalm 95, are also engaged in deliberative rhetoric when they exhort one another daily. How are they to escape the fate that befell the wilderness generation? By continual

deliberative acts. They are to do so with fear and faith (4:1). They are not just to wish for the rest that eluded their wilderness ancestors. They are to enter it (4:3).

By now the listeners may be wondering about this rest. Did Joshua not bring the people into the land of promise? Did they not conquer the Canaanites and settle in their land? What is this rest? Well, it must be something else because David, who reigned in Israel long after Joshua, is still speaking of God's rest. According to Psalm 95, there still remains a rest. The author connects this rest with God's sabbath rest at creation. God rested after creating (Gen. 2:2; Heb. 4:3-4). He offers his rest to his people in Psalm 95. Therefore, a rest still remains to be entered into that Joshua and Israel did not achieve.¹⁹⁹

Aristotle considered the form of logic used in rhetoric and called it the enthymeme. An enthymeme is like a syllogism except it may be abbreviated, leaving the listener to provide a missing premise.²⁰⁰ The author of Hebrews is urging his congregation to enter that rest, that is, to cease from their own striving and to trust God (4:9-11). How is this to be accomplished? There is

¹⁹⁹ For Psalm 95 to make sense, "rest" and "the land of Canaan" cannot be equated. Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 252: "if the κατάπαυσις had been Canaan, Ps. 95:7 would be meaningless." Joshua did bring the people of Israel into rest (Josh. 21:43-45): Καὶ ἔδωκεν Κύριος τῷ Ἰσραὴλ πᾶσαν τὴν γῆν ἣν ὥμοσεν δοῦναι τοῖς πατράσιν αὐτῶν, καὶ κατεκληρονόμησαν αὐτὴν καὶ κατώκησαν ἐν αὐτῇ. καὶ κατέπαυσεν αὐτοὺς Κύριος κυκλόθεν, καθότι ὥμοσεν τοῖς πατράσιν αὐτῶν· οὐκ ἀνέστη οὐθεὶς κατενώπιον αὐτῶν ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν ἐχθρῶν αὐτῶν· πάντα τοὺς ἐχθροὺς αὐτῶν παρέδωκεν Κύριος εἰς τὰς χεῖρας αὐτῶν. οὐ διέπεσεν ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν ῥημάτων τῶν καλῶν ὧν ἐλάλησεν Κύριος τοῖς υἱοῖς Ἰσραὴλ· πάντα παρεγένετο. Psalm 95 is speaking of a rest that remains to be entered into, namely, the Sabbath God enjoys.

²⁰⁰ Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, I, 1: "It is clear, then, that rhetorical study, in its strict sense, is concerned with the modes of persuasion. Persuasion is clearly a sort of demonstration since we are most fully persuaded when we consider a thing to have been demonstrated. The orator's demonstration is an enthymeme, and this is, in general, the most effective of the modes of persuasion. The enthymeme is a sort of syllogism, and the consideration of syllogisms of all kinds, without distinction, is the business of dialectic, either of dialectic as a whole or of one of its branches. It follows plainly, therefore, that he who is best able to see how and from what elements a syllogism is produced will also be best skilled in the enthymeme, when he has further learnt what its subject-matter is and in what respects it differs from the syllogism of strict logic. The true and the approximately true are apprehended by the same faculty; it may also be noted that men have a sufficient natural instinct for what is true, and usually do arrive at the truth. Hence the man who makes a good guess at truth is likely to make a good guess at probabilities."

a hint in 4:14, where the author reminds them that those who hold on to their original confidence to the end are the sharers in Christ. He also urges them to make effort to enter the rest (4:11). It sounds paradoxical that one has to struggle to enter a rest that is a gift, that one has to persist in obedience in order to enter rest. He then speaks about the incisive and powerful word of God (4:12-13). What has this to do with God's rest? Perhaps the implication is that God knows our hearts very intimately and that is why we are urged to persist to enter his rest.

In this part of the speech (3:7- 4:16), the speaker goes back and forth between an exposition of Ps 95:7-11 and an application to the congregation. He uses the authoritative word of the Holy Spirit, spoken through David, to urge the congregation to do something that Israel failed to do, that is to enter God's rest. This part of his speech is mostly deliberative. However, the example of the wilderness generation reminds us of blame in epideictic rhetoric (3:8-9, 16-18; 4:2, 6, 8), and that they were judged by God is a bit of judicial rhetoric (4:11; 4:3, 5).

Reliance on the High Priesthood of Jesus

If happiness was the greatest good in the ancient world, being in a right relationship with God was the greatest good for Israel because God was the source of all goodness.²⁰¹ Israel was assured of a continued relationship with God, not only by means of their belief in and obedience to God, but also by means of a sacrificial system that restored the relationship when Israel failed to live up to the demands of the covenant. The priesthood, and especially the high priesthood, was instituted to maintain that covenant relationship. The author of Hebrews praises the priesthood of Jesus as superior to the priesthood of the old covenant. Praise is an epideictic topic. However, by declaring the benefits of Jesus' high priesthood, he encourages his audience to rely on Jesus for forgiveness of sins, for salvation, for cleansing from sins, for a new covenant

²⁰¹ The greatest good for Israel is to be relationship with God as reflected in passages like Exod. 6:7; Lev. 26:11-12; Jer. 30:22; Ezek. 37: 27; Rev. 21: 3.

relationship, for strength to endure suffering as discipline, for ability to live a godly life, and for courage to approach God (1:3; 2:17; 4:14-16; 5:9; 6:18; 7:25; 8:10-12; 9:14; 10:10, 19-25, 32-39; 12:1-2, 3-13, 14-16, 22-24; 13:1-19). Every time he exhorts or warns his audience while praising Jesus' high priesthood, the author of Hebrews is reverting to deliberative speech. He is constantly revealing that his epideictic strategy serves his deliberative intent.

Having Faith

One may ask whether the life of faith or faithfulness is all that worthy, good, and advantageous. The author of Hebrews commends his listeners for their former struggles and suffering (10:32-34). He also encourages them to continue in endurance and faithfulness (10:35-39). In Hebrews 11 (a list of heroes of faith), the speaker repeats the phrase "by faith" very often and the listeners hear that refrain as an epideictic praise of faith. But, considering what he just said to them about their own need for faithful endurance, they also hear the names and experiences of the persons who lived by faith. They hear examples of people like themselves who needed to please God, trust God, obey God, and hope in God (11:1-38). Indeed, even though they all lived by faith, "they did not receive what was promised" because God had a future plan for them (11:39-40). The praise of faith is therefore intended to strengthen the listeners to live likewise. It is epideictic, but it turns, at the end, to be for the purpose of exhortation (12:1ff), which is deliberative. Clearly, the epideictic section is for the purpose of a deliberative purpose. If so, what is worthy, good, and advantageous? It is the life that imitates Jesus in faithfulness, who founded and will perfect their faith. A perfected faith is a happy and joyful ending (12:1-2).

If happiness is what we all wish for, then unhappiness is what we wish to avoid. If we negate Aristotle's list, we have to say that we all wish to avoid poverty combined with vice. We

do not envy anyone who is experiencing dependence, insecurity, pain, bodily weakness, harm, loss of property, or degraded bodily functions.²⁰² Yet we find that in Hebrews Jesus experienced deprivation and vice from his enemies. He suffered and even died at the hands of people he intended to help. Was he unhappy? We learn that he fully identified with the children of Abraham and that for their good (Heb. 2:14-18; 4:15; 5:7-8; 12:2-3). Jesus endured what we would regard as unhappiness for the salvation of others. The author of Hebrews also recognizes that his listeners have suffered for their association with Jesus, and he applauds them for their compassion and love directed at others who suffered likewise (6:9; 10:32-36). He exhorts them to imitate those who have endured and suffered in the past (11:1-38). He urges them to view their suffering as a positive thing, as discipline and as evidence that God considers them as legitimate children (12:4-13). He encourages them to seek the good of others even when it may lead to more trouble (13:1-3, 13-14).

It seems, then, that the author of Hebrews has redefined the highest good. It is not happiness in the here and now. Ultimate happiness is not what most people think about. Apparently, the audience of Hebrews is struggling with the cost of trusting and following Jesus. They need to learn what it means to endure pain and suffering as discipline for their own good,

²⁰² Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, I, 5: "We may define happiness as prosperity combined with virtue; or as independence of life; or as the secure enjoyment of the maximum of pleasure; or as a good condition of property and body, together with the power of guarding one's property and body and making use of them. That happiness is one or more of these things, pretty well everybody agrees. From this definition of happiness, it follows that its constituent parts are:-good birth, plenty of friends, good friends, wealth, good children, plenty of children, a happy old age, also such bodily excellences as health, beauty, strength, large stature, athletic powers, together with fame, honour, good luck, and virtue. A man cannot fail to be completely independent if he possesses these internal and these external goods; for besides these there are no others to have. (Goods of the soul and of the body are internal. Good birth, friends, money, and honour are external.) Further, we think that he should possess resources and luck, in order to make his life really secure. As we have already ascertained what happiness in general is, so now let us try to ascertain what of these parts of it is." Unhappiness can be defined as the opposite of happiness.

and, like Jesus, to “despise shame” for the joy that is deferred for a future time (12:2-24).²⁰³ This kind of deliberative speech can only succeed if the audience is convinced that the Christian life is the worthy life, the good life, and the advantageous life. Here, we see how the Christian life is unlike the ideal life as perceived by most people. The godly life of faith, hope, and love becomes, strangely, the means to the highest good which is fellowship with God, Jesus, the angels, and the saints of all ages. Thankfully for them, the author of Hebrews is not inventing the life of faith but indicating that it is the life predicted by the prophets (1:1) and experience by the heroes of faith (11:1-2). The author of Hebrews is keen to both persuade and dissuade, to exhort and warn. Because he explicitly and repeatedly gives counsel, his speech can be considered as deliberative.

The author of Hebrews inspires his listeners like Xenophon did in *The Persian Expedition* [*Anabasis*], III, 2. Corbett gives us a short introduction, Xenophon’s speech, and an analysis of its topics.²⁰⁴ Xenophon, born around 430 B.C., was a young Greek soldier who fought on the side of Cyrus the Younger against Artaxarxes, Cyrus’s brother, in a war for the Persian throne. Cyrus died in 401 B.C. fighting in the battle of Cunaxa. Greek generals were betrayed and killed by Tissaphernes, a Persian general. Xenophon, newly promoted to the rank of general, was called upon to address the soldiers. What action was more worthy, good, and advantageous for them in the present situation? He praised the Greek soldiers, denounced the native calvary who had defected, and dismissed as worthless the Persian general who had treacherously killed

²⁰³ Jesus, as the pioneer and perfecter of faith, looked forward to the joy (χαρά, Heb. 12:2) of returning to the Father and bringing with him the children of God that he had rescued. Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 609: “The procurement of salvation is the fulfillment of his sonship through earthly obedience (Heb. 1:1-4). Thus, it is appropriately called the “joy” set before him by God as the goal of that obedience. This “joy” that he has procured awaits those who endure at the consummation of their pilgrimage. It far outweighs anything that might attract or distract.”

²⁰⁴ Corbett, *Classical Rhetoric*, 203-214.

Greek generals. He then proposed that it was worthy, good, and advantageous for the Greek army of 10,000 men to march north the 1,500 miles from near Babylon to the Black Sea. He described the retreat as a military strategy that would involve determination, order, and courage for they may have to fight and pillage their way home. The speech was successful in persuading the soldiers and the plan had a happy ending for they made it home. This was a deliberative speech that used praise and blame (epideictic topics) to exhort listeners to definite action that was considered worthy, good, and advantageous (deliberative topics). Much like the disheartened and betrayed Greek soldiers, the listeners of Hebrews need an orator who will turn their attention from their suffering and misery by pointing out what is worthy, good, and advantageous and how they ought to act. In the case of Hebrews, the speaker praises the listeners for their former actions and urges them to follow Jesus their leader to a happy and glorious destination.

Is Hebrews Judicial Speech?

Judicial speech is the language of the law court, and it deals with justice and injustice. In the ancient Greek and Roman world, an accused person represented himself in court and therefore competence in legal speech was essential. The court was interested in whether something happened (*an sit*), what happened (*quid sit*), and what kind of happening it was (*quale sit*). It was important to have *evidence*, to have a *definition* of the crime or offence, and to determine *motives* and *causes of action*.²⁰⁵ Aristotle was persuaded of the need for self-defense, either physically or rhetorically:

It is absurd to hold that a man ought to be ashamed of being unable to defend himself with his limbs, but not of being unable to defend himself with speech and reason, when the use of rational speech is more distinctive of a human being than the use of limbs.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁵ Corbett, *Classical Rhetoric*, 149-151.

²⁰⁶ Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, I, 1.

In the book of Acts, we see Paul defending himself in both Jewish and Roman courts (Acts 22:30-10; 24:1-26:32). In Hebrews, however, the speaker is not involved in self-defense or accusation. It is true that he mentions the law in the context of priesthood and covenant (Heb. 7:12-19; 8:4-13; 10:1, 16). He discusses God's justice and judgment (2:2-3; 3:11; 4:3, 5, 12-13; 6:4-8; 9:15-22, 27; 10:26-31, 39; 12:29; 13:4, 7). Even though the author of Hebrews warns his listeners of divine retribution and leaves judgment in the hands of a just God, Hebrews does not qualify as judicial speech.

Is Hebrews Epideictic Speech?

Epideictic rhetoric has also been called “demonstrative, declamatory, panegyric, ceremonial.” Its goal is “not so much concerned with persuading an audience as with pleasing it or inspiring it.” “Its special topics were *honor* and *dishonor*, and its means were *praise* and *blame*.” Corbett notes that ancient rhetoric was not concerned about preaching but that “later, when rhetoric was studied in a Christian culture, the art of preaching was usually considered under the head of epideictic oratory—even though preachers are also concerned with man's past and future actions.”²⁰⁷

Special positive topics in epideictic oratory, include such virtues as *courage, temperance, justice, liberality, magnanimity, prudence, gentleness*. Special negative topics in epideictic includes such vices as *cowardice, incontinence, injustice, illiberality, meanness of spirit, rashness, brutality*.²⁰⁸ Epideictic rhetoric also praised personal qualities such as the following:²⁰⁹

1. Physical attributes—agility, strength, beauty, health

²⁰⁷ Corbett, *Classical Rhetoric*, 40.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 153.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 154.

2. External circumstances—family background, education, economic status, political, social, religious affiliations
3. Actions and achievements
4. Sayings
5. Testimony of others

In praising a person, Aristotle deemed it proper to “magnify his virtues and minimize his vices” in the following ways:²¹⁰

1. Show that a man is the first or the only one or almost the only one to do something.
2. Show that a man has done something better than anyone else, for the superiority of any kind is thought to reveal excellence.
3. Show that a man has often achieved the same success, for this will indicate that his success was due not to chance but to his own powers.
4. Show the circumstances under which a man accomplished something, for it will redound more to his credit if he has accomplished something under adverse conditions.
5. Compare him with famous men for the praise of a man will be magnified if we can show that he has equaled or surpassed other great men.

If Hebrews is considered a written sermon, a homily from a distance meant to be read out loud, can we consider it as epideictic oratory? The author of Hebrews begins with the praise of Jesus. Jesus is unique in that he is God’s final messenger. If prophets were praiseworthy for their association with God, how much more Jesus? Jesus is also unique as God’s Son, heir, and co-creator. His family background is honorable in that he is God’s own Son. His external circumstances are enviable because he is God’s heir. As God’s co-creator, who maintains creation by his powerful speech, his achievements are incomparable. He radiates God’s glory and represents God’s nature, again reminding the listeners of his personal attributes. He solved a problem that nobody else had succeeded in solving, namely the purification for sins. As evidence of his accomplishment, he now sits on a throne next to God (1:1-4). In these introductory words,

²¹⁰ Ibid., 154-55.

the author of Hebrews praises Jesus in a way that cannot be surpassed. He may amplify, but it is difficult to see how he can offer higher praise.

The author of Hebrews continues with a comparison of Jesus with angels (1:5-14; 2:5). Praising Jesus more than angels is epideictic. Not only is Jesus greater than the angels, but he is also the object of their worship (v.6). In the praise of Jesus as greater than the angels, the listeners hear God's testimony concerning his Son. In effect, it is not just the author of Hebrews who is praising Jesus but also God and the angels. Jesus is God's eternal Son who became a man in order to save mankind. Angels were the revered messengers of God and disobedience to their message brought condemnation and judgment.²¹¹ How much more will people be judged if they disregard the message of God's Son (2:1-2)? To praise this new message of salvation, the author of Hebrews lists the honorable persons associated with it: The Lord (Jesus) was the first messenger, then those who listened to him (the apostles). God himself witnessed to its truth and authenticity in supernatural ways. Finally, the Holy Spirit gave his approval through gifts given to those who accepted the message (2:3-4). The praise of the message is epideictic, but the author adds a clear warning for those who would neglect the message. Warning someone of God's just retribution sounds judicial. But asking people to pay close attention in order not to drift away (2:1) sounds deliberative since it is advisory. Here the listeners are trying to grasp whether the author's speech is intended to praise Jesus and his message of salvation or to warn the listeners of their potential neglect of Jesus and his message. Further, by speaking of God's judgment, the audience might detect a note of accusation. They are yet to determine what kind of speech this is.

²¹¹ For example, God says the following, concerning his angel (Exod. 23:20-21): “Καὶ ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ ἀποστέλλω τὸν ἄγγελόν μου πρὸ προσώπου σου ἵνα φυλάξῃ σε ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ, ὅπως εἰσαγάγῃ σε εἰς τὴν γῆν ἣν ἡτοίμασά σοι. πρόσεχε σεαυτῷ καὶ εἰσάκουε αὐτοῦ καὶ μὴ ἀπειθῇ αὐτῷ· οὐ γὰρ μὴ ὑποστείλῃται σε, τὸ γὰρ ὄνομά μου ἐστὶν ἐπ’ αὐτῷ.

The author cites Ps. 8:4-6, which traditionally was a psalm about the praise of man as God's glorious and honorable creation. Even though man was created below the angels, he is nevertheless above everything else God created (Heb. 2:5-8). But here in Hebrews, the psalm is problematic. At the present time, it is obvious that everything is not under man's rule or control. Perhaps this is a hint at the audience's own experience of not being in control of their circumstances. The solution offered by the author of Hebrews is amazing. The Psalm is not about man in general but one man in particular, namely Jesus. Jesus is the one who was made below the angels for a time but now he is above angels in glory and honor.²¹² He is more glorious and honorable because he did something unique: He suffered and died for everybody (2:9). Now that is a special topic of epideictic oratory. Jesus did something nobody else had done, namely, to sacrifice his life for the benefit of every human being. Men in the past had sacrificed for their friends, or family, or city, or nation, or empire. But who had ever sacrificed for all humanity? Only Jesus and he is praised as someone who achieved salvation for others at a great cost.

How did Jesus achieve this glorious feat? God is to be credited with making his Son into a human being, and then causing him to suffer as a means of saving others. Here, the author of Hebrews turns to the praise of God. But has he not digressed from an explanation about Jesus? Not really. He wishes to show that the glory of Jesus is derived from the will and purposes of God. Jesus had to become human in order to save human beings. He had to identify with human weakness, yet without becoming a sinner. He had to die to overcome the devil. The devil had the power of death and held people as slaves due to their fear of death. Jesus now is portrayed as the

²¹² Heb. 2:6-7 cites Ps. 8:4-5: τί ἐστὶν ἄνθρωπος ὅτι μνησκή αὐτοῦ, ἢ υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου ὅτι ἐπισκέπη αὐτόν; ἡλάττωσας αὐτόν βραχύ τι παρ' ἀγγέλους, δόξη καὶ τιμῇ ἐστεφάνωσας αὐτόν. "Man" and "son of man" are in parallel. Jesus, according to Hebrews, is that "Son of man." Jesus is made lower than angels for a "brief period" (βραχύ τι). In the LXX, man is lower than angels in rank.

hero who comes to the rescue of human beings (2:10-15). Not only did he rescue them, but he continues to help them (2:16-18). Here we hear the amplification of Jesus' role as the one who made purification for sins (1:3) since it was sin that had brought people into bondage to the power and fear of death. The fact that Jesus was repeatedly tempted but did not sin is praiseworthy.²¹³ Repeated success against sin showed that he was consistent, not just lucky. His consistency did not stop when he died but he continues to help people even after death. He benefited them, not only by dying once for the propitiation for the sins of the people, but also as a high priest who helped them all the time. This was unusual for in funeral orations one could only praise a man for what he had accomplished. Jesus continued to benefit the listeners even after death.

The author of Hebrews now wants to say more about Jesus as the son who is also the high priest (3:1-6). First, he honors the listeners by calling them holy brothers and sharers of a heavenly calling (3:1). Anybody listening realizes that he or she has received a benefit in their relationship with Jesus. He or she has been given a new status (holy) and he or she enjoys something heavenly. In rhetoric, it helps to remind listeners of their benefits and it helps to honor them or to recognize their worth. They are more likely to listen to any advice if the speaker thinks they are important and worthy. What are they asked to do? They are to consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of their confession. They are to confess, that is to witness to and to publicly acknowledge, that Jesus was commissioned and sent by God and that he is their faithful high priest. In Israel, Moses inaugurated the tabernacle, but his brother Aaron was the high

²¹³ Jesus identified with sinners in that he suffered and was tempted as other human beings suffer and are tempted. However, he did not succumb to temptation. That made him an extraordinary high priest and the perfect sacrifice (Heb. 2:9-18; 4:15). He was made perfect in the sense of fitness for his vocation. For the perfection of Jesus, see David L. Allen, *Hebrews*, NAC (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2010), 213-215.

priest. Moses was God's faithful servant in God's house, a title of great honor. Jesus was a son. In this comparison, the author uses a metaphor of God's people as God's house. In a household, a faithful son is more worthy and more honorable than a faithful servant. Previously, the speaker had already spoken of Jesus and the listeners as the family or household of God (2:10-18). Now the listeners are urged to be faithful like Jesus in continuing confidently to boast in their hope. This boasting can be understood as the equivalent of their confession (3:1, 6).²¹⁴ The speaker has confessed Jesus, boasted of Jesus, and now urges his listeners to do likewise. In short, they must continue to praise and honor Jesus. The author has praised Jesus, which is an epideictic activity. He has exhorted the listeners to do likewise which is a deliberative activity. The speaker is not satisfied to praise and leave the exhortation implicit in the praise. He explicitly makes the connection between praise and counsel. By doing so, he complicates analysis because epideictic rhetoric has slid into deliberative rhetoric.

Superiority of Jesus

The author of Hebrews compares Jesus with other notable persons whom the listeners already know about and admire. He does not diminish the other person but rather demonstrates that even though that person is great, Jesus is much greater. He also compares the old covenant given under Moses with the new covenant given under Jesus.

Jesus and Angels

Jesus is superior to angels because of his special relationship with God. He is a co-creator with God, he sustains the universe with his powerful word, and he is the heir of a great

²¹⁴ Boasting is allowed, even encouraged, if one's boasting (καύχημα) is a confession (ὁμολογία) about what God has done and will do. As Paul puts it in 1 Cor. 1:31: Ὁ καυχώμενος ἐν Κυρίῳ καυχάσθω. Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 106, says concerning Christian hope: "No-one is going to boast in a thing which is not certain to happen. The writer is sufficiently convinced of the certainty Christian hope to use a strong expression (to *kauchēma*, exultant boasting) to describe the Christian attitude toward it.

name and of all things. He radiates or reflects the glory of God and He sat with God on God's throne after providing purification for sins. God calls him "Son" and "God." Further, he will outlive the created order. The angels have a lower position before God because they are servants who are commanded to worship Jesus and serve the followers of Jesus. Also, the angels have an unstable nature in that they can be changed into wind or fire. Jesus is on the side of God, but the angels are on the side of natural elements (Hebrews 1). The author's strategy is not to diminish angels but rather to exalt Jesus. Simply put, the angels are great as God's servants, but Jesus is as great as God himself.

Jesus and Moses

Moses proved to be a faithful servant in God's household, and he spoke of someone greater to come after his time. Jesus, however, is a faithful son over the household.²¹⁵ If Moses was highly regarded by God's household, or God's people, how much more should Jesus be respected as a son?²¹⁶ In ancient cultures, the rank of son above servant was well acknowledged and observed. This means that the glory of a faithful son surpassed that of a faithful servant (3:1 - 6). For a Jewish audience, the implication is that what God spoke through Moses in the past is surpassed by what God spoke through the Son. As with angels, Moses is not diminished but Jesus is exalted above Moses.²¹⁷ In the household of God, the message through a son must take

²¹⁵ The difference in prepositions is significant. Jesus is "over" (ἐπὶ) while Moses is "in" (ἐν) God's household (οἶκος). See Attridge, *Hebrews*, 111.

²¹⁶ Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 83, distinguishes between a servant and a slave: "The Comparison of Moses and Jesus accounts for the significant differences between them. Moses was a servant and not a son. The noun "servant," *therapōn*, is distinct from the word for "slave," *doulos*, thus giving Moses more honor than a mere slave. The term is applied to Moses elsewhere in the LXX (Exod 4:10; 14:31; Num 11:11; Deut 3:24; Josh 1:2; 8:31, 33). Here it is drawn from LXX of Num 12:7, so perhaps not too much should be made of the author's terminology (Attridge, 111)."

²¹⁷ Attridge, *Hebrews*: "The comparison between Christ and Moses serves rhetorical, not polemical, purposes. As in encomia generally, the comparison serves not so much to denigrate the comparable figure as to exalt the subject of the discourse."

precedence over anything God has said through a servant. Members of God's house are encouraged to confess Jesus, who is also an apostle and a high priest (3:1). There should be no conflict between Moses and Jesus because Moses himself was a witness to what was to be revealed later (3:5).

Jesus and Joshua

After the death of Moses, Joshua was to take Israel across the Jordan into Canaan, a place of rest from both Egyptian slavery and wilderness wondering. The generation that left Egypt, however, died in the wilderness. Would the new generation finally enter rest? David did not think so because he still spoke of entering God's rest long after the conquest of Canaan. If in David's time there was still a promise of rest, then Canaan was not God's ultimate rest. Joshua, by this argument, did not succeed in bringing Israel into God's rest. God's rest is first mention in Gen. 2:2. This rest was what David meant and the offer still went forth for the Israelites. The listeners of Hebrews had the same offer, and they could enter God's rest through Jesus (a second and better Joshua) (3:7-11).²¹⁸ The author of Hebrews does not despise Joshua or Canaan but exalts Jesus (a new Joshua) and God's ultimate rest. The surprising thing is that the ultimate rest is now available to some extent in the period called "today."

Jesus and Aaron

Aaron was appointed by God to be the first high priest in the Sinaitic covenant. Aaron's role as a priestly mediator between God and Israel was well defined. He stood between a holy God and sinful Israel. But Aaron was a sinner too and he could mediate only after he had offered sacrifices for his own sin. He sympathetically identified with Israel, yet he needed to come

²¹⁸ Here one may wonder whether the name Joshua ("Jesus" in Greek) is a coincidence. The first "Jesus" failed while the second "Jesus" succeeded in bringing the people into God's promised rest. See Ounsworth, *Joshua Typology*, 71-74.

before God on their behalf. Jesus also needed to be appointed by God to be a high priest. Further, he identified with people in his suffering and sorrowful prayers. It was not enough that he was God's Son. He needed to identify with humanity in its misery and be educated in suffering. Only then could he become a qualified or a perfect savior. His priesthood, however, was not from Aaron's line but a special priesthood like Melchizedek's (4:14-5:10). Aaron is not denigrated in this comparison. After all, he too was appointed by God. Jesus, however, is shown to be an even greater high priest.

Jesus and Levitical Priests

According to the author of Hebrews, God appointed Jesus as an eternal priest (5:5), and a high priest (5:9) like Melchizedek. These two designations are combined so that Jesus is an eternal high priest like Melchizedek (6:20). Melchizedek served God Most High (7:1). Melchizedek was the king of Salem, and he appears in Genesis 14 where he blesses Abraham and Abraham gives him ten percent of the booty he took after defeating a group of kings. His greatness is perceived in his name, his city, and his status. His name means king of righteousness. His city is called peace which makes him king of peace. Melchizedek is presented without a genealogy which makes him like the eternal Son of God. The transaction between Melchizedek and Abraham reveals something about status. The greater man blesses the lesser and the lesser man pays a tithe.²¹⁹ Since Abraham is the lesser man, Levitical priests are of a lower status than Melchizedek because they were still in their ancestor (Abraham) when he paid

²¹⁹ Evidence for the lesser man blessing the greater exists so that the author of Hebrews is arguing, not absolutely, but with probability. For the lesser blessing the greater, see deSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude*, 267: "The inferior, however, frequently blesses the superior, as when mortals bless God (even Gen. 14:20 shows Melchizedek blessing God immediately after he blesses Abraham; see also Deut. 8:10; Ps. 15:7; 25:12; 33:2; 65:8, et al.) or when subjects bless their king." deSilva refer to Attridge, *Hebrews*, 196 n. 134 which mentions 2 Sam. 14:22 and 1 Kgs. 1:47. In these references, King David is blessed by his inferiors.

the tithe. In effect Levi paid the tithe to Melchizedek. The greatness of the priesthood of Melchizedek is thereby established. Jesus was declared by God to be a priest like Melchizedek. Jesus' priesthood is therefore superior to Levi's priesthood. Further, the declaration of a priest like Melchizedek is understood to mean that there was need for a new priesthood. The new priest has qualities that were lacking in the Levitical priesthood. He is perfect, better, eternal, more effective, sinless, and the Son who sits next to God in heaven (6:20-8:1). Jesus, a priest in the order of Melchizedek was greater than Levitical priests because of his personal qualities, service, and benefits for the listeners.

Jesus' New Covenant and Moses' Old Covenant

Jesus guarantees a better covenant (7:22) because the former one had a legal requirement, a command, or a law that was weak, useless, and unable to perfect anything (7:15-19). For example, in the Mosaic covenant, priests kept dying and had to be replaced constantly. Jesus brings a better hope that is based on a divine oath (7:19-21). He also lives eternally and therefore does not need to be replaced, which makes the salvation he offers permanent and his intercession unending (7:19-21, 23-25). The second covenant is better than the first in that God could not have announced a new covenant if the existing one was effective. God announced a new covenant because the people of Israel did not keep the first covenant.

Moses predicted that the Israelites would violate the covenant to the extent that God would cast them out of the Promised Land (Exodus 30). Nevertheless, after a period of exile, God would restore them to their land and circumcise their hearts to enable them to obey him: *καὶ περικαθαριεῖ Κύριος τὴν καρδίαν σου καὶ τὴν καρδίαν τοῦ σπέρματός σου, ἀγαπᾷν Κύριον τὸν θεόν σου ἐξ ὅλης τῆς καρδίας σου καὶ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς ψυχῆς σου, ἵνα ζῇς σὺ* (Deut. 30:6). The result would be that the people would turn back to God and obey his commands: *καὶ σὺ ἐπιστραφήσῃ*

ἐπὶ Κύριον καὶ εἰσακούσῃ τῆς φωνῆς Κυρίου τοῦ θεοῦ σου, καὶ ποιήσεις τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ ὅσας ἐγὼ ἐντέλλομαί σοι σήμερον (Deut. 30:8). The implication here is that the people would be transformed to observe the covenant.

However, Jeremiah speaks of a new covenant (διαθήκην καινήν), which is unlike the old one (Jer. 31:31-34). The people will keep the new covenant because God will internalize his laws in them, to the extent that they will all know him. He will forgive and forget their sins. The goal of the covenants will finally be achieved in that he will be their God and they will be his people (Heb. 8:6-12). When the new covenant is established, the old will have become obsolete and it will disappear (ἐν τῷ λέγειν Καινήν πεπαλαίωκεν τὴν πρώτην· τὸ δὲ παλαιούμενον καὶ γηράσκον ἐγγὺς ἀφανισμοῦ, 8:13).²²⁰

By means of the new covenant, the listeners are offered an eternal inheritance, promised in the first covenant but only available in the new (9:15). In comparing the two covenants, he demonstrates the superiority of the new and shows why the old is no longer viable.

Jesus' Death/Blood/Sacrifice and Animal Death/Blood/Sacrifices

In the first covenant, God commanded the high priest to sacrifice animals. Animal blood was used in the inaugural ceremony of the tabernacle, on its equipment, the book of the law, and the people (9:10, 13, 18-22). The blood of sacrificial animals was offered to God in the holiest room in the temple (9:8). This activity was aimed at the purification of the sins of the high priest and the people of Israel. However, the ceremonial presentation and sprinkling of blood only

²²⁰ When did the Sinaitic Covenant become old? Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 369-370, considers the aging process to have begun in the Old Testament, with God's promise of a new covenant in Jer. 31:31-34: "By saying 'new,' that is, by the very act of declaring this covenant 'new' and 'not like' the earlier covenant, God 'made the first obsolete.' He branded it as 'old,' out of date and thus inferior to the 'new.' . . . Since the New has come in Christ, the Old is no longer 'near to' but has definitely passed away as a way of relating to God. This assertion is a fitting transition to the impotence of the Old Tent and priestly service as described in 9:1-10. The Old Covenant continues only as a type of the New. It was always intended to have this typological function."

achieved the cleansing of the body (9:10, 13). The various blood ceremonies had to be repeated daily and annually yet they did not remove sin (10:1-4, 11). The whole ceremonial system, it turns out, was only a copy and a shadow of a reality yet to be accomplished in a future time and in a heavenly place. Indeed, even as the ceremonies were being performed according to God's law, God expressed his dissatisfaction with the system and promised to do something new (10:5-7). The coming of Jesus into the world to die for sins was God's ultimate salvation. This salvation provided an effective means of cleansing both sin and conscience and it brought about permanent forgiveness of sin (2:9-10, 14-18; 5:8-9; 7:23-28; 8:3, 6; 9:11-12, 14-15, 23-28; 10:1, 5-10, 12-22). The earthly animal sacrifices were according to God's law and therefore acceptable for their time. But now that the sacrifice they anticipated had come, namely the death and blood of Jesus, they were clearly seen for what they were. They were earthly shadows, copies, and ineffective means of purification from sins and defiled consciences.

Jesus' Faithfulness and the Faithfulness of Others

Hebrews 11 praises people in Israel's past who demonstrated faithfulness in their response to or walk with God. These were people who were sure of what they hoped for and were persuaded of things invisible. Because of this attitude, they pleased God and were commended for it (11:1-2, 6, 39). The list includes Abel, Enoch, and Noah from the period between creation and Noah's flood (11:4-7). The list continues with Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, the Israelites who crossed the Red Sea, those who captured Jericho, and Rahab who helped the Israelite spies. This second group covers the nation of Israel from its birth to the beginning of the conquest of Canaan (11:8-31). In this list, Joshua, who had been a faithful Israelite spy, stands out by omission. Rahab, a non-Israelite who helped Israelite spies, stands out by inclusion. Also omitted is the period of wilderness wandering. No heroes of faith are

considered from that restless (or faithless) period. The list continues with Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah from the period of the Judges, David, Samuel, and the prophets from the period of the monarchy. It concludes with nameless others who experienced the power of God, extreme suffering, and martyrdom (11:32-38). Interestingly, even though God approved of their faith, he did not fulfil his promises to them because he was waiting to do something even better for them in the future (11:39-40). This something better was the perfection of all the faithful. This perfection could only be accomplished by God through Jesus who is the “founder and perfecter” of faith (12:2). The list of the heroes of faith is incomplete without the audience of Hebrews. Jesus, however, is the greatest of the heroes because of his life of faith in an extremely hostile environment and his sacrificial death on the cross. Jesus is the one hero who, after all his faithful endurance, sat on a throne next to God (12:2-3).

This comparison of Jesus with other heroes of faith is epideictic because it praises him as better than others who are worthy of praise. Consistent with what he has been doing so often, the author of Hebrews slides into deliberative rhetoric when he explicitly exhorts his audience to live by faith, to persevere as in a foot race, and to endure suffering as fatherly discipline (12:1-13). That the author continues to exhort and to warn his audience to the very end (12:14-13:25) is further indication that he uses epideictic rhetoric for the sake of a deliberative purpose.

A comparison can be made between the epideictic sections of Hebrews and Pericles’ funeral oration as found in Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, II, 4. Corbett gives us an introduction, the oration, and an analysis of this epideictic or ceremonial speech.²²¹ The speech is a reconstruction of what may have been said, as are other speeches reported by Thucydides, per his own admission. Pericles was an Athenian politician in office between 461 B.C. and 429 B.C.

²²¹ Corbett, *Classical Rhetoric*, 229-239.

In 430 B.C. Pericles, in honor of fallen heroes, offered this oration. In it, he spent much time honoring the Athenians and their democratic form of government. In this way, he hoped not only to honor the dead but also to praise the living. The point of it was that Athenians were a great people and their way of life was worth defending even to the point of death. Indirectly, the listeners were being urged to continue living and, if need be, defending the Athenian way. The Athenians are praised as just, wise, prudent, and magnanimous. The dead heroes are praised as those who sacrificed dearly for their way of life to continue. As Pericles put it, “The people who have the most excuse for despising death are not the wretched and unfortunate, who have no hope of doing well for themselves, but those who run the risk of a complete reversal in their lives, and who feel the difference most intensely, if things went wrong for them.”²²² Toward the end, Pericles attempts to comfort the bereaved and to gently counsel them to live up to Athenian ideals:

I would prefer that you fix your eyes every day on the greatness of Athens as she really is, and should fall in love with her. When you realize her greatness, then reflect that what made her great was men with a spirit of adventure, men who knew their duty, men who were ashamed to fall below a certain standard.”²²³

All the same, those of you who are of right age must bear up and take comfort in the thought of having more children. In your own homes these new children will prevent you from brooding over those who are no more, and they will be a help to the city too, both filling the empty places, and in assuring her security.²²⁴

As for those of you who are now too old to have children, I would ask you to count as gain the greater part of your life, in which you have been happy, and remember that what remains is not long, and let your hearts be lifted up at the thought of the fame of the dead.²²⁵

²²² Ibid., 229.

²²³ Ibid., 234.

²²⁴ Ibid., 235.

²²⁵ Ibid., 235.

Pericles recognizes the difficulties the brothers of the dead will go through in comparing themselves with their dead brothers.²²⁶ He concludes with some advice for the widows to stay out of the public eye, and to expect that the government will provide for their orphans.²²⁷

This funeral oration is epideictic speech because it praises the living Athenians and their dead heroes. It ends with explicit, though brief, advice and that advice is deliberative. Here we have evidence that, though epideictic (ceremonial) rhetoric usually counsels implicitly, Pericles' oration has explicit advice. The author of Hebrews, in contrast, has a lot more explicit and repeated advice, which makes it difficult to decide whether he intends epideictic or deliberative rhetoric. The listeners must decide whether Hebrews is deliberative rhetoric with a heavy dosage of epideictic elements or epideictic rhetoric with a lot of deliberative elements.

Summary

Is Hebrews judicial, deliberative, or epideictic rhetoric? It is not a judicial speech for matters of justice or injustice are few. It is therefore either deliberative or epideictic. Because of the large parts that are dedicated to the praise of Jesus, especially as it continually compares him with others, it sounds like epideictic rhetoric. Yet the speaker constantly returns to explicit exhortation and warning, thereby suggesting that its purpose is deliberative. I am led to conclude that the situation of the listeners was ever before the speaker, and he wished to exhort them more than anything else. Indeed, he calls his speech a “word of exhortation” (13:22). My own conclusion is that this speech should be considered a mixture of epideictic and deliberative rhetoric. The epideictic sections (those concerned with praise or blame) serve a deliberative

²²⁶ Ibid., 235.

²²⁷ Ibid., 235-236.

purpose (to urge perseverance in faith, hope, and love in the midst of suffering) with the goal of leading the congregation into God's promised rest (both in the present and in the future).

The Arrangement of Material

According to Corbett, the Greeks called arrangement *taxis* and the Romans called it *dispositio*. It consisted of *exordium* (introduction), *narratio* (statement of facts or description of circumstances), *confirmatio* (proving one's case) *refutatio* (refuting the opposition), and *peroratio* (conclusion).²²⁸ There is no requirement that orators arrange their material in the same order every time. Each speaker is free to order their speech as he thinks best depending on :

1. The kind of discourse in which he is engaged—whether deliberative, judicial, or ceremonial.
2. The nature of his subject—a consideration which in turn will determine the quantity and quality of the matter available to him.
3. His own *ēthos*—his personality, his moral and philosophical bias, his limitations, and capabilities.
4. The nature of his audience—their age, their social, political, economic, and educational level, their mood at the moment.²²⁹

These considerations are helpful for analyses of speeches in that the analyst is not duty-bound to impose a certain order of material but to investigate each speech for its specific arrangement. This will help in the rhetorical study of Hebrews. It is important to investigate the order of Hebrews and not to impose a predetermined structure on the speech. The temptation to come to Hebrews with a presupposed order (*exordium, narratio, confirmatio, refutatio, peroratio*) is great and the arrangement needs to be observed rather than imposed. As Cicero put it, the

²²⁸ Ibid., 299.

²²⁹ Ibid., 300.

speaker “ought first to find out what he should say; next to dispose and arrange his matter, not only in a certain order, but according to the weight of the matter and judgment of the speaker.”²³⁰

Quintilian gives us the kinds of questions that orators have when arranging their material:

1. When is an introduction necessary and when can it be omitted or abbreviated?
2. When should we make our statement of facts continuous and when should we break it up and insert it *passim*?
3. Under what circumstances can we omit the statement of facts altogether?
4. When should we begin dealing with the arguments advanced by our opponents and when should we begin proposing our argument?
5. When is it advisable to present our strongest arguments first and when is it best to begin with our weakest arguments and work up to our strongest?
6. Which of our arguments will our audience readily accept and which of them must they be induced to accept?
7. Should we attempt to refute our opponents’ arguments as a whole or deal with them in detail?
8. How much ethical appeal must we exert in order to conciliate the audience?
9. Should we reserve our emotional appeals for the conclusion or distribute them throughout the discourse?
10. What evidence or documents should we make use of and where in the discourse will this kind of argument be most effective?²³¹

These questions are useful for the analysis of speeches in that the analyst can use them to observe what decisions a speaker has made in his speech. What evidence is there that the speaker thought through the details and the structure of his speech before he wrote it down? Are there signs that he had his audience and their needs in mind? Does his arrangement have an introduction, a narration, a statement of his case, a refutation of those who oppose his views, and a conclusion? What does he give most attention to?

²³⁰ Cicero, *De Oratore*, I, 31, cited in Corbett, *Classical Rhetoric*, 300.

²³¹ Quintilian (*Institutio Oratoria*, VII, 10), cited in Corbett, *Classical Rhetoric*, 301-302.

Rhetorical Arrangement in Hebrews

Does Hebrews have an introduction (*exordium*)?

Hebrews 1:1-4 is considered by many interpreters to be the *exordium* or introduction.²³² Harold Attridge recognizes 1:1-4 as the *exordium* and says the following: “The first four verses of the text consist of a single, elaborately constructed periodic sentence that encapsulates many of the key themes that will develop in the following chapters.”²³³ William Lane calls the introduction “a long and contrived period” which “demanded the organization of a number of clauses and phrases into a well-balanced unity and is characteristic of artistically developed prose (cf. Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 3.9, 1409a).”²³⁴ From this introduction, Lane forms an opinion about the author of Hebrews:

The opening four verses exhibit the style of a scholar whose expression is polished. His education is reflected in his observance of the canons of rhetorical prose and recommended by Isocrates ... These include a developed sense of rhythm, the variation of meter, and the cultivation of those elements of a literary style that commands attention

²³² Léon Vaganay, “Le plan de l’épître aux Hébreux,” in *Mémorial Langrage* (Paris: Gabalda, 1940):269-77 (see Witherington, *New Testament Rhetoric*, 200n41). Albert Vanhoye, *Structure and Message of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, Subsidia Biblica 12 (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Instituto Biblico, 1989), 23, cited in Harrington, *What Are They Saying*, 31; James Swetnam, In “Form and Content in Hebrews 1-6,” *Biblica* 53 (1972): 368-385. Idem, “Form and Content in Hebrews 7-13,” *Biblica* 55 (1974):333-348. Walter G. Übelacker, *Der Hebräerbrief als Appel: Untersuchungen zu Exordium, Narratio und Postscriptum (Hebr 1-2 und 13,22-25)*, Coniectanea Biblica: New Testament Series 21 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1989), 106-109? 187-97? (Cited by Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 64) considers 1:1-4 as the *exordium*. Donald Hagner, *Encountering the Book of Hebrews: An Exposition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 28, has an outline of thirteen parts. The first part is 1:1-4, and he titles it “God’s definitive revelation in the son.” Kenneth Schenck, *Understanding the Book of Hebrews: The Story Behind the Sermon* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 108, calls this passage “a brief introduction that encapsulates the main themes of the sermon.” Ben Witherington III, *New Testament Rhetoric: An Introductory Guide to the Art of Persuasion in and of the New Testament* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2009), 201, considers 1:1-4 the *exordium*. Thomas R. Schreiner, *Hebrews*, Evangelical Biblical Theology Commentary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2020), 51, entitles 1:1-4, “Definitive and Final Revelation in the Son,” and labels it a prologue. He finds it “elegant and eloquent, demonstrating the literary artistry of the author.”

²³³ W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1989), 36.

²³⁴ William L. Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, WBC 47A (Dallas TX: Word, 1991), 5.

of the ear when read aloud ... The writer has cultivated the instincts of an orator, which are now brought into the service of preaching.²³⁵

In the exordium the speaker manages to both instruct and impress his audience. His *logos* and *ethos* are already in full display.

Paul Ellingworth calls Heb. 1:1-4 the prologue, whose title is “God Has Spoken Afresh in His Son.” Ellingworth warns against treating this prologue as “stating a thesis to be proved, or as giving a précis of the following argument. The author proceeds rather by an interweaving of themes as in a musical composition.” The themes in the prologue are “primarily those of God’s revelation in the prophets and in his Son.” These themes, however, have connection with other themes found in the rest of the sermon.²³⁶

Thomas Long treats 1:1-4 as the introduction.²³⁷ For him, Heb. 1:5-14 expands on v. 4: “The rest of chapter 1 (vv. 5-14) consists of a constellation of seven quotations from the Old Testament, mainly from Psalms, all in service of elaborating verse 4: Jesus, the Son, is ‘much superior to the angels.’”²³⁸

Alan Mitchell considers 1:1-4 (A God Who Speaks) as the exordium. He says:

Hebrews opens with one of the most rhetorically polished statements in the New Testament. Although such stylistic elegance is characteristically displayed throughout Hebrews, the exordium shows clearly that the author has mastered the principles of advanced rhetorical composition. Its effect on the readers is compelling and persuasive. The original Greek, all one sentence, pleases the ear with its alliteration and cadence. No less are the mind and spirit satisfied by the carefully structured phrases, leading the reader and / or listener to grasp ideas that are central to the exposition that follows.²³⁹

²³⁵ Ibid., 5-6.

²³⁶ Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 89-90.

²³⁷ Thomas G. Long, *Hebrews*, Interpretation (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 4-16.

²³⁸ Ibid., 17.

²³⁹ Alan C. Mitchell, *Hebrews*, SP (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2007), 39-40.

Gareth Cockerill entitles 1:1-4: “God Has Spoken through His Son.” It belongs with the first two chapters and it:

is also carefully constructed to introduce the pastor’s sermon. These verses are fundamental to all that follows. The pastor begins by announcing his basic premise: God’s self-disclosure in his Son is the climax and fulfillment of all previous revelation. This premise lays a solid foundation of both for what the pastor will say about the Son’s high-priestly ministry and for his urgent exhortations to faithful endurance. He calls his listeners to attention through the elevated style of this passage and by building anticipation for the coming disclosure of what God has now said in his Son (1:2).²⁴⁰

Does Hebrews have a narration (*narratio*)?

Übelacker considers 1:5-2:18 as the *narratio*, “narration of the facts,” with 2:17-18 as the *propositio*, the proposition or “the thesis the orator would establish” in his speech.²⁴¹ Concerning the thesis, Cockerill says:

If 2:17-18 introduces the pastor’s central thesis that the Son is the all-sufficient High Priest, 2:10 introduces the subsidiary theme of the Son as the Pioneer and example par excellence of endurance (12:1-3; cf. “forerunner” in 6:20; “Great Shepherd” in 12:20). The first (High Priest) will dominate the central section of Hebrews (4:14-10:18); the second (Pioneer) surfaces again at the center (12:1-3) of the final section (10:19-12:29). It is through the high-priestly ministry that the son as Pioneer enables his own to enter their ultimate destiny.²⁴²

Not all interpreters, however, agree that Hebrews has a *narratio* or that 2:17-18 is the *propositio*.²⁴³

²⁴⁰ Gareth Lee Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 86-87.

²⁴¹ Übelacker, *Appel*, 106-109, 185-97? (Cited in Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 63-64).

²⁴² Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 64.

²⁴³ Witherington, *Letters and Homilies*, 44-45: “after the exordium in 1.1-4 it was not necessary to have a ‘narratio’ or ‘propositio’ since in effect there is only one long argument or act of persuasion in various parts throughout the discourse. . . . Übelacker’s analysis suffers, as Thuren has pointed out, from the fact that he tries to find a ‘narratio’ and a ‘propositio’ where there is not one. Heb. 1.5-2.18 is no ‘narratio’ (a narration of relevant past facts) any more than it is an ‘exordium’—the latter is limited to 1.1-4.” Further, Witherington claims: “We also have no ‘propositio’ in this discourse which should have

Does the speaker prove his case (*confirmatio*)?

The most basic structure of a speech is that it has an introduction, a middle, and a conclusion. The middle part includes the *confirmatio* or the *probatio*. This is where the proof belongs, “that part where we get down to the main business of our discourse.”²⁴⁴ In the *probatio* the speaker decides the order of his arguments, whether to present the strong arguments first and the weak ones last, or to mix them up. The speaker also may have to decide whether to begin with familiar topics and end with unfamiliar topics according to his knowledge of the audience.²⁴⁵ The structure of the middle part of Hebrews, where the speaker is expected to prove his case (*confirmatio*) is debated among interpreters. One way to see the complexity is to compare different proffered structures as we did in chapter 2 of this dissertation. Interpreters who pay attention to the rhetorical strategy of Hebrews have produced helpful structures. Ben Witherington and Donald Hagner have considered rhetorical arrangement of Hebrews worth considering.

While discussing the structure of Hebrews by Koester (*Hebrews*, 84-85), Witherington suggests an improvement that is “simple” and reflects the “macro-rhetoric of the sermon”:²⁴⁶

- 1) *exordium* – The beginning of the discourse is linked to this exordium through the use of hook words, preparing for the comparison with angels who are introduced in 1:4.
- 2) the epideictic discourse composed of one long act of persuasion or sermon in many parts – 1:5-12:17. This part can of course, be profitably divided into many subsections. ...
- 3) *peroratio* with concluding benediction – 12:18-29.
- 4) a final paraenesis – 13:1-21. ...
- 5) ... some concluding epistolary elements – 13:22-25.

been a dead giveaway that we are dealing with epideictic rhetoric, the effusive, emotive, and often hyperbolic rhetoric of praise and blame.”

²⁴⁴ Corbett, *Classical Rhetoric*, 321.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 321-322.

²⁴⁶ Witherington, *New Testament Rhetoric*, 201-202.

The main section, as the above arrangement shows, is Heb. 1:5-12:17. Therein are the proofs or the arguments (*probatio, confirmatio*), to be sought. The beauty of this simple structure is that it is easy to follow in a sermon. The surprise for the audience is that after the *peroratio* the speaker has a final paraenesis.

Witherington expands the above structure with more details in the main section of the sermon, what he calls a *probatio*. In classical rhetoric, the *probatio* is the same as the *confirmatio*:²⁴⁷

Exordium – 1:1-4 – Partial revelation in the past, full revelation in the Son

Section	Theme	OT Text	Paraenesis
<i>Probatio</i>			
• Part one (1:5-14)	Christ's Superiority	Catena (1:5-13)	2:1-4
• Part two (2:5-18)	"You crowned him"	Ps 8 (2:6-8)	
• Part three (3:1-4:13)	"Today"	Ps 95 (3:7-11)	3:12-4:13
• Part four (4:14-7:28)	"Priest forever"	Ps 110 (5:6)	4:14-16; 5:11-6:12
• Part five (8:1-10:31)	"New Covenant"	Jer 31 (8:8-12)	10:19-29
• Part six (10:32-12:2)	"By faith"	Hab 2 (10:37-38)	10:32-36; 12:1-2
• Part seven 12:3-17	"Don't lose heart"	Prov 3 (12:5-6)	12:3-16
<i>Peroration</i> (12:18-29)	Pilgrim's End	Theophany at Sinai (Ex 19; Deut 4, 9, 31; Hag 2:6)	

Final Summary Paraenesis – 13:1-21

Epistolary Closing – 13:22-25

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 206-207.

Witherington's structure is rhetorically sensitive and allows the sermon's listeners to follow along in a linear way, allowing the interaction among theme, OT texts and paraenesis to become visible. The *probatio* consists of seven themes which interact with OT citations and are interspersed with exhortations.

Hagner also outlines Hebrews in a way that is useful for rhetorical analysis because he notes the way the sermon goes back and forth between instruction and implication:²⁴⁸

- I. God's definitive revelation in the Son (1:1-4)
- II. Discourse: Christ is superior to the angels in his deity (1:5-14)
 - Application: a call to faithfulness (2:1-5)
- III. Discourse: Christ is superior to angels despite his humanity (2:5-9)
 - The benefits of Christ's humanity (2:10-18)
- IV. Discourse: Christ is superior to Moses (3:1-6)
 - Exhortation inspired by the exodus (3:7-19)
- V. Discourse: the remaining promise of rest (4:1-13)
 - Exhortation (4:14-16).
- VI. Discourse: the high priesthood of Jesus (5:1-10).
 - Application: the importance of maturity (5:11-6:3)
 - the seriousness of apostasy (6:4-12)
- VII. Discourse: the faithfulness of God (6:13-20)
 - The priesthood of Melchizedek (7:1-10).
 - The legitimacy and superiority of Christ's priesthood (7:11-28)
- VIII. Discourse: the true high priest (8:1-6)
 - The Promise of a new covenant (8:7-13).
 - The sacrifice of the old covenant (9:1-11)
- IX. Discourse: the definitive nature of Christ's work (9:11-10:18)
 - Application: the grounds for faithfulness (10:19-25)
 - The danger of apostasy (10:26-31)
 - Exhortation to endurance (10:32-39)
- X. Discourse: faith and a catalogue of examples (11:1-40)
 - Application: call to faithfulness, endurance, and holiness (12:1-17)
- XI. Discourse: the glory of the Christian's present status (12:18-24)
 - Application: various exhortations (12:25-13:17)
- XII. Closing remarks and a concluding prayer and doxology (13:18-21)
 - Postscript and final benediction (13:22-25).

²⁴⁸ Hagner, *Encountering the Book of Hebrews*, 20.

The ten discourses are his *probatio*. From the discourses, we observe that what the preacher is making is a complex case involving the superiority of Christ over other servants of God (angels and Moses), the rest that God offers now through Christ, the high priestly role of Christ, the faithfulness of God in Christ, the superior work of Christ as mediator of a new covenant, the importance of faith, especially as exemplified by Christ's faith, and the glorious mountain to which Christ's people are coming. In every way, Christ is better in his person, position, provision, mediation, faithfulness, accomplishment, and leadership than anybody else. In view of this reality, how then should the listeners respond? Positively, they are called to faithfulness, trust, progress in maturity, endurance, holiness, community, hospitality, service, and worship. Negatively, they are warned against neglecting God's salvation in Christ, falling away from the living God, becoming apostates, and attracting divine wrath and judgment. The pattern the preacher has chosen is a cyclic one that first presents Christ and then challenges the listeners. The excellence of Christ is the basis for exhortation and warning. If we were to state his case as an enthymeme, it would go as follows: Christ is excellent in every way, therefore you ought to live in the following way. The logic of it is that since God, through Christ, has provided all that the listeners need to live a godly life, they need not backslide but rather move forward in faith and faithfulness.

Does the speaker refute the opposition (*refutatio*)?

The listeners have experienced opposition, abuse, and persecution from sinners just as Jesus did, yet not to the point of martyrdom (10:32-39; 12:3-4). This has tempted some of them to draw back from following Jesus or associating with his followers. The author's concerns for them become obvious from his warnings and exhortations (2:1-4; 3:12-14; 4:1, 11; 5:11-14; 6:4-7; 10:26-31, 35-39; 12:1-17, 25; 13:12-14). The author does not take time to confront or refute

those who had caused pain and suffering. He focuses on exhorting and warning the listeners who have experienced pain and suffering. His rhetorical strategy is to interpret their suffering as fatherly discipline or parental education toward holiness, righteousness, and peace (12:5-11). This could count as a refutation, not of those who cause the suffering, but of the sufferers' attitude toward suffering. In chapter five below, I will deal with the author's understanding of suffering as beneficial to his audience.

Suffering may have caused the listeners to question the value of the new covenant as opposed to the old covenant. Some of the listeners may have desired to return to the relative comfort of their former way of worship since following Jesus brought a separation between them and their fellow Jews. The author declares that the old covenant is unable to accomplish God's will and therefore has been replaced by a new and better covenant. He shores up their appreciation for the new covenant by dwelling on who Jesus is and what he has done, how the new covenant differs from the old, and what benefits accrue to those who follow Jesus faithfully. This will be the focus of chapter four below, and it may count as a refutation of a mistaken or insufficient understanding of the new covenant, its sacrifice, and its priesthood.

Does the speaker have a conclusion (*peroratio*)?

The conclusion, *epilogos* or *anakephalaiosis* in Greek, *recapitulatio* or *peroratio* in Latin, is where the speaker summarizes (*enumeratio*) or attempts for the last time to affect the emotions of his listeners (*affectus*), according to Quintilian.²⁴⁹ Aristotle says that the speaker may use the conclusion to do any of the following:²⁵⁰

1. To inspire the audience with a favorable opinion of ourselves and the unfavorable

²⁴⁹ See Corbett, *Classical Rhetoric*, 328.

²⁵⁰ Ibid., 328.

- opinion of our opponents.
- 2. To amplify the force of the points we have made in the previous section and to extenuate the force of the points made by the opposition.
- 3. To rouse the appropriate emotions in the audience.
- 4. To restate in a summary way our facts and arguments.

According to Vanhoye's structure of Hebrews 13:20-21 is the *peroratio*, followed by an appendix (13:22-25).²⁵¹ In Hagner's outline, the conclusion is found in 13:18-21. The sermon is over by then. What remain are some words concerning the nature of what he has said (13:22) and some personal matters (13:23-25).²⁵² Cockerill treats 13:1-25 as *peroratio* or the conclusion of the letter. In this part of the speech, the speaker aims "to make his message concrete in the lives of the hearers."²⁵³ It is not clear whether the *peroratio* covers 13:1-18, 13:1-21, or 13:1-25.

Witherington finds the *peroratio* in 12:18-29, but then sees a final paraenesis (13:1-21) and an epistolary closing (13:22-25).²⁵⁴ Paraenesis after *peroratio* sounds strange and disorderly. Why did the speaker not first give the last paraenesis and then conclude his speech? The *peroratio* is better placed at 13:18-25, as in Hagner's analysis. Here the author seeks prayer (vv. 18-19), offers a benediction (vv.20-21), and mentions some personal matters (vv. 22-25). The speaker makes a final appeal to emotions by closely identifying with the listeners.

After comparing arrangements of Hebrews by means of classical divisions, I conclude that the speaker has a brief but captivating *exordium*, a lengthy and cyclic *confirmatio*, and a brief and emotional *peroratio*. His speech is effective in that it displays his *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*. He comes off as a learned man in the Greek language, in Greco-Roman rhetoric, and in

²⁵¹ See Harrington, *What Are They Saying About Hebrews*, 31.

²⁵² Hagner, *Encountering the Book of Hebrews*, 28.

²⁵³ Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 70.

²⁵⁴ Witherington, *New Testament Rhetoric*, 207.

the Greek Bible. He has personal appeal even when he gives strong warnings because he balances criticism with affirmation. His reasoning is sound (especially as seen in the constant use of *synkrisis*), and his style is impressive as observed in his masterly deployment of various figures of speech. His rhetoric provokes the imagination and evokes deep empathy. In brief, his sermon is a persuasive and masterful piece of rhetoric.

CHAPTER 4: FAILURE OF THE OLD COVENANT AND NEED FOR A NEW COVENANT TO PROVIDE REST

In chapter three above, when discussing the rhetorical arrangement of Hebrews, I considered whether there is *refutatio* in Hebrews. *Refutatio* is one part of a classical speech, whose parts often follow the order *exodium*, *narratio*, *confirmatio*, *refutatio*, *peroratio*. The author of Hebrews is faced with the fact that the old covenant was instituted by God as provision for worship, life, and rest in Israel. God's message of salvation through Jesus Christ has brought about disagreement and separation between Jews who follow Jesus and those who worship according to the old covenant. Why is there a need for a new covenant?

In this chapter, I will review the sacrifices and festivals of Israel as means of approaching God and thereby entering his rest. Ideally, if Israel had kept covenant, these means would have been sufficient. However, Israel did not observe the terms of the covenant, as is evident in her history and in the writings of the prophets. Second Temple literature reveals a hope that Israel may still use sacrifices and festivals to approach God. I will trace the record of failure to keep covenant which led to God's rejection of the very means of approach and rest which he had instituted.

In view of the history of failure to keep covenant, the author of Hebrews can refute the possible objection that the old covenant is still valid for worship, life, and rest among the people of God. He gives evidence from Scripture (citation of Jer. 31:31-34 in Hebrews 8) that the old covenant was bound to be replaced by a new covenant because the people of God kept violating the terms of the old covenant. He reveals that the old covenant, with its system of worship and earthly tabernacle, was a type of a future and better covenant (Hebrews 9). He introduces a

superior priesthood, a superior covenant, a superior sacrifice, and a heavenly tabernacle. He demonstrates that the way of Jesus is the long-awaited fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets.²⁵⁵

The Jesus-movement as a Jewish Sect

The Jesus-movement in the first century A.D. was considered a sect of Judaism.²⁵⁶ Other sects of Judaism included Pharisees, Sadducees, Qumran Community, Essenes, Therapeutae,

²⁵⁵ The followers of the way of Jesus were first called “Christians” in Antioch of Syria (χρηματίσαι τε πρώτως ἐν Ἀντιοχείᾳ τοὺς μαθητὰς Χριστιανούς, Acts 11:26); For the singular word “Christian” (Χριστιανός), see Acts 26:28; 1 Pet.4:16. To some scholars, it is anachronistic to speak of the way of Jesus as Christianity in the first century A.D. For example, John Gager says: “I will rigorously avoid the term Christianity when speaking of Jesus, his early followers and Paul. Instead, I will employ the term Jesus-movement. . . . Behind this shift of terms, from Christian to Jesus-movement, lies a much broader contention, namely, that there was no Christianity at all until well after the time of Jesus, his earliest followers, and Paul.” See John G. Gager, *Reinventing Paul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), viii. To be consistent with historical developments, it is advisable to avoid the term “Christianity” for the earliest period. See also, Anders Runesson, “The Question of Terminology: The Architecture of Contemporary Discussions on Paul,” in *Paul Within Judaism: Restoring the First-Century Context to the Apostle*, ed. Mark D. Nanos and Magnus Zetterholm (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015), 59-68. On p.59, note 11, Runesson informs us that “The first occurrence of the term *christianismos* is found in the letters of Ignatius of Antioch, dated to the early second century, either during Trajan’s or Hadrian’s reign: *Magn.* 10:1-3; *Rom.* 3:3; *Phld.* 6:1.” Runesson, “The Question of Terminology,” 67, suggest “Apostolic Judaism” for “the early Jesus movement.” In Acts, the followers of Jesus are called “the way” (ἡ ὁδός, Acts 24:14) or “the sect of the Nazarenes” (ἡ τῶν Ναζωραίων αἵρεσις, Acts 24:5). Jesus calls his followers “my church” (μου ἡ ἐκκλησία) or “the church” (ἡ ἐκκλησία, 18:17). Acts also uses this term for the wilderness generation (Acts 7:38), a public assembly in a theater in Ephesus (Acts 19:32, 39, 41), and the followers of Jesus (Acts 5:11; 8:1, 3; 9:31; 11:22, 26; 12:1, 5; 13:1; 14:23, 27; 15:3, 4, 22, 41; 16:5, 18:22; 20:17). Runesson, “The Question of Terminology,” 68-76, is concerned that Bible translators use historically accurate terminology when describing the assembly in each situation.

²⁵⁶ The term “Judaism” (Ἰουδαϊσμός) is found in Gal 1:13, 14. The Jesus-movement, as a sect of Judaism, had Jewish and non-Jewish members. Some observed Torah more strictly than others. For example, according to Magnus Zetterholm, Paul may have been a Torah observing Jew who “advocated continued Torah observance for Jewish disciples of Jesus, while dissuading non-Jews from getting involved in Torah affairs.” Therefore, “we must allow for a much more complex social situation, such as, for instance, non-Jews being expected to conform to Jewish food conventions (without becoming formally “under” Torah), since they were joining Jewish dietary customs guided group behavior.” See Magnus Zetterholm, “Paul within Judaism: The State of the Questions,” in *Paul Within Judaism: Restoring the First-Century Context to the Apostle*, ed. Mark D. Nanos and Magnus Zetterholm (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015), 49. The attitude of Paul toward non-Jews who attempted to live under the Law is clearly laid out in the letter to the Galatians. Paul and other leaders of the Jesus-movement faced a problem. Zetterholm, “Paul within Judaism: The State of the Questions,” 50, states the issue as follows: “The problem this young movement had to overcome was how to incorporate non-Jews, not only to find ways of socializing safely with non-Jews, but how to include non-Jews in the eschatological people of God.” In Hebrews, however, the problem of non-Jews does not arise, although it

Herodians, and Samaritans.²⁵⁷ Judaism was a recognized and protected religion in the Roman empire, and it was practiced by Jews, proselytes to Judaism, and God-fearers who attached themselves to a Jewish way of life. Jews, like most everyone else in the Roman world, experienced Hellenization in language and in culture.²⁵⁸

may lurk in the background with regard to why the congregation addressed had suffered and continued to suffer persecution.

²⁵⁷ For these groups, their common beliefs, and associates, see Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 480-546.

²⁵⁸ For the status of Judaism in the first century A.D. see Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 403-406. Jew in the Greco-Roman environment, had to decide how to relate to non-Jews. Karin Hedner Zetterholm argues for a nuanced understanding of Torah observance in the first century. There was rejection and accommodation. The book of Jubilees calls for rejection: "Separate yourself from the gentiles, and do not eat with them, and do not perform deeds like theirs. And do not become associates of theirs, because their deeds are defiled, and all their ways are contaminated, and despicable, and abominable. They slaughter their sacrifices to the dead and to demons and they bow down; and they eat in tombs. And all their deeds are worthless and vain" (*Jub.* 22:16-17). Paul, on the other hand, is more accommodating with regards to food offered to idols: "It is not everyone, however, who has this knowledge. Since some have until now been accustomed to idols, they still think of the food they eat as food offered to an idol; and their intention (*syneidēsis*), being weak, is defiled . . . But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. For if others see you, who possess knowledge, eating in the temple of an idol, might they not, since their intention is weak, be encouraged to the point of eating food sacrifice to idols? So by your knowledge those weak believers for whom Christ died are destroyed" (1 Cor. 8:7-11). Further, he counsels: "Eat whatever is sold in the market without raising any question on the ground of intention [toward idolatry] for "the earth is the Lord's." If an unbeliever invites you to a meal and you are disposed to go, eat whatever is set before you without raising any question on the ground of intention [toward idolatry]. But if someone says to you, "This is sanctified food," then do not eat it, out of consideration for the one who informed you, and for the sake of the intention—I mean the other's intention, not your own" (1 Cor. 10:25-28). See Karin Hedner Zetterholm, "The Question of Assumptions, Torah Observance in the First Century," in *Paul Within Judaism: Restoring the First-Century Context to the Apostle*, ed. Mark D. Nanos and Magnus Zetterholm (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015), 94, 97, 102. Paul knows that idols have no real existence (1 Cor. 8:4-6), and that pagans actually sacrifice to demons (1 Cor. 10:14-22), but he is being practical about how to live among pagans as a follower of Jesus. Paul, however, was adamant that non-Jewish followers of Jesus should not be circumcised, even though circumcision was required for all Jewish males. He was opposed to the circumcision of non-Jews as a mark of belonging to the covenant people of God. As Mark Nanos puts it, "Paul opposed Christ-following non-Jews becoming Jews (i.e., "converting" to Jewish ethnic identity), but he did not oppose, and instead promoted, them practicing Judaism, (i.e., "converting" into a Jewish way of living), alongside of Jews who did so, as himself." See Mark Nanos, "The Question of Conceptualization: Qualifying Paul's Position on Circumcision in Dialogue with Josephus's Advisors to King Izates," in *Paul Within Judaism: Restoring the First-Century Context to the Apostle*, ed. Mark D. Nanos and Magnus Zetterholm (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015), 106. If Nanos is correct, then what does Paul mean when he says in Col. 2:16-17: "Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a new moon or a Sabbath?"

What distinguished the Jesus-movement from the other Jewish sects was the belief that the long-awaited kingdom of God had arrived with Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah of Israel.²⁵⁹ Jesus and his followers taught that Jesus, in his incarnation, birth, life, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and enthronement at God's right hand, had fulfilled the promises of God for Israel and

These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ"? Paul's Jewish opponents from Asia declared: "Men of Israel, help! This is the man who is teaching everyone everywhere against the people and the law and against this place. Moreover, he even brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this place" (Acts. 21:28). Paul's opposition to circumcision for non-Jewish believers in Jesus (Rom. 2:25-29; 1 Cor. 7:19; Gal. 5:2, 6; 6:15; Phil. 3:2-8) may have disqualified him from being considered an observer of the Torah and therefore as being within Judaism, as far as his opponents were concerned. Nano, "The Question of Conceptualization," 151, however, defends Paul's place in Judaism when he says that "it is a category error of significance to universalize Paul's position against circumcision of Christ-following non-Jews without distinguishing that special topic from the issue of the circumcision of sons born to Jews, Christ-followers or not, and then to compare that conclusion to other Jewish groups' positions on the circumcision of Jews." Paul's place in Judaism is also defended by Caroline Johnson Hodge. She claims that Paul considered gentile believers in Christ as "in the seed of Abraham" and "inhabited by his [Christ's] *pneuma*." Paul "adamantly argues against the position that they should keep the Law in the way Jews do (specifically, circumcision for men), as others seem to have taught (Gal. 1:6; 5:2-12). For in Paul's view, God's larger plan requires gentiles to worship the God of Israel *as gentiles*, not as proselytes or something else. Paul allies himself with the Jewish eschatological expectation that God will establish his kingdom for Israel and for favored nations. As the apostle to the gentiles, he sees himself in the tradition of the prophets who call gentiles to Jerusalem on the day of the Lord, when "all nations shall stream to [the Lord's house]" (Isa. 2:2)." See Caroline Johnson Hodge, "The Question of Identity: Gentiles as Gentiles—but also Not—in Pauline Communities," in *Paul Within Judaism: Restoring the First-Century Context to the Apostle*, ed. Mark D. Nanos and Magnus Zetterholm (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015), 168.

²⁵⁹ Paula Fredriksen informs us that Jews had a "traditional restoration theology: redemption first to Israel—to all Israel, all twelve tribes—and then as well, consequently to the nations." After the resurrection of Jesus, there was a delay of the coming of the kingdom which Jesus had promise when he said, "the kingdom of God is at hand!" The gentiles were turning to God which required Paul to reconfigure the "sequence of end-time events" as is seen in Romans 9-11. The Messiah would come again. "In that incandescent interim between the resurrection and the Parousia, Paul now knew, the *plērōma* of the nations would first heed the gospel, and only after that would God cease hardening Israel. . . . By working to turn pagans from their gods to his god, Paul thus worked as well, under the canopy of biblical promises, for the ultimate redemption of his own people." See Paula Fredriksen, "The Question of Worship: Gods, Pagans, and the Redemption of Israel," in *Paul Within Judaism: Restoring the First-Century Context to the Apostle*, ed. Mark D. Nanos and Magnus Zetterholm (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015), 200-201. Matthew credits Jesus with giving clarity to eschatological expectations. Before the crucifixion, Jesus spoke about the destruction of the temple, the end of the age, the coming of the Son of Man, and the final judgment (Matthew 24-25). After his resurrection, he gave his disciples a commission to disciple all nations (Mat. 28:16-20). He also gave Paul his marching orders (Acts 9). Not all scholars, however, accept Acts as a primary source for Pauline studies. See Lloyd Gaston, *Paul and the Torah* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006), 5.

the world. The teaching about and worship through Jesus Christ were therefore the way of the new covenant promised by the prophets of Israel.

Jesus' followers declared him as divine (Son of God) and the final sacrifice for sin. Initially, they shared space (temple area and synagogues) with other Jews but were soon prohibited from speaking in or invoking "that name" (Acts 4:5-11; 5:27-28). Confrontation between Stephen and fellow Jews resulted in the first martyrdom of a follower of Jesus (Acts 6-7). Saul of Tarsus persecuted the young movement to such an extent that many disciples left Jerusalem for safer regions (Acts 8).²⁶⁰ Saul of Tarsus became a follower of Jesus while on the way to Damascus to persecute Christ's disciples (Acts 9). James the brother of John was imprisoned and then executed by Herod Agrippa. Herod also intended to execute Peter, but the Lord rescued him from prison (Acts 12). The mission of Paul and Barnabas in Asia Minor was plagued by opposition and threats to life (Acts 13-20). When Paul visited Jerusalem, he was

²⁶⁰ Why was Paul so intent on persecuting the followers of Jesus? Paul approved the killing of Stephen because he agreed with Stephen's accusers that Stephen spoke "words of blasphemy against Moses and against God" (Acts 6:11) and that "he never stops speaking against this holy place and against the law. For we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs Moses handed down to us" (Acts 6:13-14). Neill Elliott, in agreement with Paula Fredriksen, considers Paul's opposition to the followers of Jesus as motivated by politics. He states: "Fredriksen concludes that the reason the Pharisee Paul persecuted the *ekklēsiai* had nothing to do with halakah. It had everything to do, she proposes, with the precarious political security of minority Jewish communities in Palestine and Syrian cities. "The enthusiastic proclamation of a messiah executed very recently as a political insurrectionist—a *crucified messiah*—combined with a vision of the approaching End *preached also to Gentiles*—this was dangerous. If it got abroad, it could endanger the whole Jewish community." See Neil Elliott, "The Question of Politics: Paul as a Diaspora Jew under Roman Rule," in *Paul Within Judaism: Restoring the First-Century Context to the Apostle*, ed. Mark D. Nanos and Magnus Zetterholm (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015), 216. Elliott cites Paula Fredriksen, *From Jesus to Christ: The Origin of the New Testament Images of Jesus* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988), 153-154. Paul's own testimony is: "I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief" (1 Tim. 1:14). He was a zealous and legalistic Pharisee to the point of persecuting the church (Phil. 3:6). He says, "I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers" (Gal. 1:14).

arrested, beaten, imprisoned, tried, and eventually sent to Rome for an imperial trial (Acts 21 - 28).

While the temple stood, the tension recorded in Acts between Jesus' followers and the other sects of Judaism continued and resulted in isolation and persecution. The separation between the Jesus-movement and other Jews was not complete until the fall of the temple (A.D. 70). After the temple fell, there was a parting of ways between the Jesus-movement and rabbinic Jews.²⁶¹

Without the temple, its priesthood, its means of atonement through sacrifices, how were Jews to seek forgiveness of sin or approach God in worship? Followers of Jesus had already declared Jesus to be the atonement and sin offering. Those who followed him were forgiven on the basis of his sacrifice and therefore could approach God in worship. The old ritual was no longer acceptable because the means of atonement had changed. To give a freewill offering was acceptable only if a sin offering had been made. But since the death of Christ, no other sin offering was acceptable to God, according to the followers of Jesus. Animal sacrifices no longer atoned for the sins of the people. The sacrifice of Jesus replaced the animal sacrifices as a means of approaching God. The sacred place (the earthly temple) of sacrifice and atonement was replaced by the crucifixion and exaltation of Christ.²⁶² Also, John 4:21-24 records Jesus as

²⁶¹ For more on the parting of the ways, see James D. G. Dunn, *Neither Jew nor Greek: A Contested Identity*, Christianity in the Making, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015), 598-672.

²⁶² Dunn, *Neither Jew nor Greek: A Contested Identity*, Christianity in the Making, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015), 96, 242, 644-648; Geza Vermes, *Christian Beginnings: From Nazareth to Nicaea* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013), 102-103; Oskar Skarsaune, *In the Shadow of the Temple: Jewish Influences on Early Christianity* (Downers Grove, ILL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 142; Adelbert Denaux, "Jesus Christ, High Priest and Sacrifice according to the Epistle to the Hebrews" in *The Actuality of Sacrifice : Past and Present*, edited by Alberdina Houtman, et al. (Leiden: BRILL, 2014), 120-121. ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/liberty/detail.action?docID=1877221> (accessed August 11, 2023).

declaring that, since God is Spirit, the sanctity of the temple mount would belong to true worshipers, namely those who worship in truth and spirit (Πνεῦμα ὁ Θεός καὶ τοὺς προσκυνοῦντας αὐτὸν) ἐν πνεύματι καὶ ἀληθείᾳ δεῖ προσκυνεῖν). Indeed, the followers of Jesus would be indwelt by the Spirit of God and thereby become spiritual a temple (John 14:16-17; 1 Cor 3:16-17; 2 Cor. 6:16; 1 Pet. 2:5; Rev. 3:12).

What then was the new form of convocation that did not involve animal sacrifices? Followers of Jesus gathered to approach God together, to confess Jesus together, to thank God together, to encourage each other to love and good works, in short, to worship God together. Also, the followers of Jesus needed to reinterpret festivals as occasions for celebrating what God had done for Israel in the past, what he had done recently in Christ, and what he would do in the future. Jesus' followers did not cease to be Jews. They were now Jews who followed the Messiah who had recently been crucified, killed, and buried, who was resurrected, who had ascended, was exalted at God's right hand, and who was to come again. They therefore could approach God individually and communally, daily and on holidays in holy convocation to celebrate his achievements for them and their benefits from him.²⁶³

Jewish Objection to the Jesus-movement

An objection by Jewish believers to a new way of worship would be: It is a fact that the Jesus movement and other Jewish sects did similar things through tabernacle and synagogue services. The Law of Moses commanded God's people to observe rituals²⁶⁴ which included

²⁶³ For forms of worship before and after the parting of the ways, see Appendixes 3 and 4.

²⁶⁴ Ritual has been defined as "a patterned, repetitive, and symbolic enactment of a cultural belief or value." Robbie Davis-Floyd, "Rituals," *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, 2nd ed., edited by William A. Darity, Jr. (New York: Thomson Gale, 2008), 7: 259. For a discussion on religious ritual, see William K. Gilders, "Jewish Sacrifice: Its Nature and Function (According to Philo)," in *Ancient Mediterranean Sacrifice*, ed. Jennifer Wright Knust, and Zsuzsanna Varhelyi (2011; online edn, Oxford Academic, 19 Jan.2012), <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199738960.003.0004>

weekly Sabbaths, new moon celebrations, annual festivals in Jerusalem, offerings, and sacrifices. The way to enter God's rest was to approach him in worship by the means he had provided or commanded in the Sinaitic covenant. Why the need for the followers of Jesus to distinguish their worship of God from that of their fellow Jews? As long as the temple stood and the Levitical priesthood was in operation, what need was there for a new covenant?

Hebrews' Refutation of Jewish Objection to the Jesus-movement

The answer the author of Hebrews gave was that the old rituals, sacrifices, and festivals failed to bring rest, forgiveness, cleansing of the conscience, and communion with God (Heb. 3:7-4:11; 7:11-28; 8:1-13; 9:11-29; 10:1-39; 12:18-24). The sacrifices of the old covenant had been replaced by a more effective blood sacrifice and a heavenly priestly service because of who Jesus was (Son of God), what he had done (atonement through a once-for-all sacrifice of himself), and what he was doing (high priestly intercession in his heavenly session). Further, Israel's ritual performance that included sacrifices and feasts was rendered useless by continual violation of God's laws.

In what follows, I will review the sacrifices and feasts of Israel. These were the means of rest and worship in the old covenant. I will then take note of how the Israelites failed to observe the stipulations of the old covenant and thereby rendered their sacrifices and feasts unacceptable. Failure to keep the old covenant resulted in failure to enter or enjoy God's promised rest.

Sacrifices in Israel

The book of Numbers gives details about what is to be offered and when. The occasions are every day (morning and evening), Sabbath, New Moon, Passover, Tabernacles, Trumpets, and Day of Atonement (Numbers 28-29). The book of Leviticus describes the sacrifices and

(accessed August 9, 2023).

offerings of Israel and also gives their procedures and purposes (Leviticus 1-7). They are the burnt offering (1:1-17; 6:8-13), the grain offering (2:1-16; 6:14-23), the peace offering (3:1-17; 7:11-21), the sin offering (4:1-5:13; 6:24-30), the guilt offering (5:14-6:7; 7:1-10). All the offerings are “to the Lord” (δῶρα τῷ κυρίῳ, 1:2; 2:1; 3:1; 4:3; 5:14) but they serve different purposes.²⁶⁵ Mark Rooker notes that offerings to the Lord play a role “in Israel’s relationship with God. Here Moses explains how it is possible for the holy God to reside among sinful people. God’s presence may reside among the Israelites through the instrumentation of sacrifices.”²⁶⁶ The possibility of entering or remaining in God’s rest is to be found in approaching the presence of God by means of offerings and sacrifices.

Burnt Offering

The burnt offering is a male “without blemish” (ἄμωμον) from the herd or from the flock.²⁶⁷ The person who offers it brings it and places his hands on it.²⁶⁸ The animal is “to make atonement for him” (ἐξιλάσασθαι περὶ αὐτοῦ, Lev. 1:4), and he slaughters it. The priests take the blood and throw it against the altar. He then cuts it into pieces and the priests place the pieces on the altar. He washes the entrail and legs and the priests place them on the altar. They burn it

²⁶⁵ Offerings (δῶρα, plural of δῶρον) are gifts. According to John William Wevers, *Notes on the Greek Text of Leviticus*, SBLSCC 44 (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 1997), 1, “The word occurs, except for two citations in Ezek, only in Lev (40 times) and Num (24 times). . . . The translator understood the word as referring to any kind of gift, hence uses the plural. When these are specific, as in vv. 3, 10, 14, the singular is used.”

²⁶⁶ Mark F. Rooker, *Leviticus*, NAC Vol. 3A (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2000), 80.

²⁶⁷ Jesus, like the sacrificial lamb, was “without blemish” (Heb. 9:14; 1 Pet. 1:19). Followers of Jesus are to be “without blemish” (ἄμωμος), much like the lamb for the burnt offering (Eph. 1:4; 5:27; Phil. 2:15; Col. 1:22; Jude 1:24; Rev. 14:5).

²⁶⁸ Wevers, *Notes*, 3: “Precisely what is meant by the laying on of hands is uncertain, but it probably entails some symbolic transfer from the worshiper to the sacrifice by which action the worshiper identifies himself with the animal to be sacrificed. Possibly it means that the worshiper offers himself thereby, dedicating himself to God’s service by this cultic symbol.”

whole as “a burnt offering, a food offering” (κάρπωμά ἐστιν θυσία) and the smoke from it is “a pleasing aroma to the Lord” (ὁσμὴ εὐωδίας τῷ Κυρίῳ, Lev. 1:9). In this procedure we note that the worshiper and the priests are involved together in the sacrifice to the Lord. The worshiper handles the meat but only the priest is involved with the blood and the altar. The animal makes atonement because it is offered according to God’s rules.

Grain Offering

The grain offering consists of roasted fresh ears of firstfruits, fine flour, or baked goods from unleavened flour. The offering is mixed with oil and frankincense.²⁶⁹ Some of it is burnt on the altar by the priest but the rest belongs to the Aaronic priests. What is burnt is considered both “a pleasing aroma to the Lord” (ὁσμὴ εὐωδίας τῷ κυρίῳ, Lev. 2:2) and “a food offering to the Lord” (κάρπωμά ἐστιν Κυρίῳ, Lev. 2:16). Since the firstfruits (πρωτογεννημάτων) are for giving thanks for the harvest, this offering is part of showing gratitude for God’s provision of the harvest.²⁷⁰

Peace offering

The animal offered for a peace offering can be male or female without blemish. The process for the offering is similar to that of the burnt offering. What is different is that the whole is not burnt. The fat, the kidneys and the long lobe of the liver are burnt (Lev. 3:3-5, 9-11, 14-16). Israel is forbidden from eating the blood and the fat of sacrificial animals (πᾶν στέαρ καὶ

²⁶⁹ Rooker, *Leviticus*, 94-95: “The oil served the purpose of aiding the combustion process, while . . . “frankincense,” was the main ingredient in incense.”

²⁷⁰ The person making the offering does it as a memorial to God’s provision or to God’s “rule over all creation.” See Rooker, *Leviticus*, 95.

πάν ἄϊμα οὐκ ἔδεσθε, Lev. 3:17). Here Israel is instructed to distinguish between what belongs to God and what belongs to priests and worshipers.²⁷¹

Sin Offering

Sin and uncleanness bring guilt even when they are committed unintentionally (ακουσίως, Lev. 4:2).²⁷² Forgiveness occurs after the sinner, or the unclean person, offers a sin offering. If a priest sins, he offers a bull (Lev. 4:3). If members of the congregation sin, they also bring a bull. If the offender is a leader, he brings a male goat (Lev. 4:23). If a common person sins, he brings a female goat or a female lamb (Lev. 4:28). If a person cannot afford a goat, he brings two turtle doves, two pigeons, or fine flour (Lev. 4:7-11). The sinner will lay hands on the sacrificial animal and the anointed priest will then “make atonement for him” (ἐξιλάσεται περὶ αὐτοῦ, Lev. 5:13). In this way, the sinner will be forgiven (ἀφεθήσεται αὐτῷ, Lev. 5:13). The sin offering covers unintentional sins and not sins committed in defiance.

Guilt Offering

The guilt offering and the sin offering are similar (Lev. 7:7).²⁷³ The guilt offering is made by one who “ignoring should ignore the commandments of the Lord” (παριδὼν παρίδη τὰς

²⁷¹ The distinction between what belongs to God and what belongs to the worshiper has nothing to do with “the usual dietary considerations” but has to do with “its symbolic value.” See Baruch A. Levine, *Leviticus*, JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia/New York/Jerusalem: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 16.

²⁷² The sin offering was brought by a sinner who was either unaware of “the facts of law” or he was not aware of “the nature of the act.” “The presumption is that an Israelite possessed of full awareness and knowledge would seek to obey God’s laws, not violate them. Such unwitting offences could therefore be expiated by ritual means.” See Levine, *Leviticus*, 19.

²⁷³ Rooker, *Leviticus*, 122, discusses the difference between a sin and a guilt offering. What distinguishes a sin offering from a guilt offering? Is it the offended party, man or God, as Philo argues? Is it the presence or absence of witnesses as Josephus states? Is it the seriousness of the sin as Origen stipulates? Rooker gives the following distinction: “It is an issue of compensation. The guilt offering, in contrast to the sin offering, was required for the type of offence that created a debt calling for compensation. This compensation applied both to indebtedness incurred by mistreatment of one’s fellow man and for the improper treatment of one of “God’s holy things.””

ἐντολὰς Κυρίου, Lev. 5:17) unintentionally. If he sins against God by not giving something that was due, he is to compensate God and add a fifth of the value as penalty (Lev. 5:14-16). If he deceives, robs, oppresses his neighbor, or swears falsely, loses a deposit, or does not turn in lost property, he is likewise to fully compensate his neighbor with a fifth added as penalty. He is also to offer a ram without blemish whose value the priests will determine (Lev. 6:1-6). The priests will offer the ram in the same way as they offer a sin offering for an atonement and forgiveness of sin (Lev. 6:7).

According to Jacob Milgrom, the first three offerings (burnt offering, grain offering, and peace offering) are “spontaneously motivated sacrifices” while the last two (sin offering and guilt offering) are “required for expiation (purification and reparation).”²⁷⁴ Milgrom also recognizes how these offerings and sacrifices differ from those belonging to the festivals: “The common denominator is that they arise in answer to an unpredictable religious or emotional need, and are thereby set apart from sacrifices of the public feasts and fasts that are fixed by the calendar.”²⁷⁵ Nobuyoshi Kiuchi, finds significance in the order of the offerings and sacrifices:

The five types of offerings are clearly arranged according to their degree of pleasantness to the Lord: the *burnt offering* is the archetype for all other offerings in so far as it is completely burnt; the prescription for the *loyalty offering* stresses the soothing aroma, dealing with the offerer’s existential aspect without reference to sin; then the *fellowship offering* follows because it is offered on occasions of thanksgiving and oath making. Its focus is not as spiritual as the loyalty offering. Last come the *sin offering* and *reparation offering*, which concern the violation of the Lord’s specific commandments, a situation far more offensive to the Lord than circumstances assumed in the bringing of the preceding offerings.²⁷⁶

²⁷⁴ Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, AB (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1991), 134.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ Nobuyoshi Kiuchi, *Leviticus*, AOTC (Downers Grove, ILL: InterVarsity, 2007), 20.

Offerings and sacrifices are means of approaching God in various circumstances of an Israelite's life. In order to enter and enjoy God's rest, the people of God must be in a good relationship and at peace with God, with themselves, and with each other. Offerings and sacrifices are means to that end.

Feasts of Israel

Israel had seven annual feasts. There were three festivals in the spring in the month of Nisan (March / April). These were Passover, Unleavened Bread, and Firstfruits. In the month of Sivan (May / June), there was the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost. Three fall festivals were celebrated in the month of Tishri (September / October). These were the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles. In addition, there were holy days such as Sabbath (seventh day), New Moon (first day of the month), Sabbath Year (seventh year), and Jubilee (fiftieth year).²⁷⁷ During these holy days and annual feasts, the Israelites rested either at home (Sabbath, New Moon, Sabbath Year, and Jubilee), or in Jerusalem (Passover, Unleavened Bread, Firstfruits, Pentecost, Trumpets, Day of Atonement, and Tabernacles). When the Israelites went up to Jerusalem during the festivals, they approached God in his dwelling and resting place (Psalm 132). The expectation was that they would enter and enjoy God's rest in Zion.

²⁷⁷ For a detailed discussion of the feasts of Israel, see John E. Hartley, *Leviticus*, WBC 4 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1992), 363-394; Jay Sklar, *Leviticus*, TOTC (Downers Grove, ILL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 276-287; Mark A. Awabdy, *Leviticus: A Commentary on Leueitikon in Codex Vaticanus*, SCS (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2020), 381-395; Lloyd R. Bailey, *Leviticus-Numbers*, Smyth and Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2005), 279-288; Nobuyoshi Kiuchi, *Leviticus*, AOTC (Downers Grove, ILL: InterVarsity, 2007), 413-433.

Pesach (πάσχα) (The Passover) (Exodus 12:1-14, 21-32; Lev. 23:5)

Israel sojourned in Egypt for 430 years by the end of which time the Egyptians had turned the Israelites into slaves. When it was time for God to deliver the Israelites from the Egyptians, He sent ten plagues to persuade the Pharaoh to let the Israelites leave. The tenth plague was the killing of all the firstborns of the Egyptians and their animals. Before this plague, the Israelites had asked the Egyptians for gold, silver, and clothing items and the Egyptians had been generous (Exodus 11). Passover is thus named because on that fateful night the Lord would “pass over” (shelter, σκεπάσω) Israel but destroy the Egyptians (Exodus 12:13). The Israelites were commanded to slaughter a one-year lamb or kid of the goats and smear its blood on the lintel and the door posts. Then the Israelites were to stay within the house dressed and ready to travel. They were to roast and to eat the slain animal in haste. The Lord said, “I will pass through (διελεύσομαι) the land of Egypt” and “I will strike all the firstborn” (πατάξω παν πρωτότοκον) in the houses that do not have blood on their lintel and door posts (Exod. 12:12). This last plague finally broke Pharaoh’s stubbornness and he urged the Israelites to leave Egypt. Passover took place in what became the first month for Israel thereafter. On the tenth day of that month, each family would choose an unblemished lamb and they would kill it, roast it, and eat it on the fourteenth day (Exod. 12:1-6; Lev. 23:5). The day of Passover became one of the “holy convocations” (κλητὰς ἁγίας) and one of “the appointed feasts of the Lord” (αἱ ἑορταὶ Κυρίου) for Israel.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁸ Hartley, *Leviticus*, 384: “The first feast of the calendar is Passover. It commemorates the Exodus from Egyptian bondage. While many scholars hold that this feast had its roots in an early semi-nomadic, spring festival, the distinctive Israelite character of the Feast of Passover witnesses to its being intrinsically tied to her saving history.

Unleavened Bread (ἑορτὴ τῶν ἄζύμων) (Exod. 12:14-20; Lev. 23:6-8)

The feast of unleavened bread was closely connected with Passover, and it began on the day after Passover (the fifteenth day of the first month). The feast of unleavened bread, like Passover, was to be observed as a memorial day, as a statute forever, and as a feast to the Lord (Exod. 12:14; see also Exod. 12:17). For seven days the people were to do no work except to prepare food. They were to eat unleavened bread to recall the night they left Egypt in a hurry. In Egypt, they did not have time to wait for leavened dough to rise. They were to make sure that there was no leaven in their house during this feast. Anybody who consumed leavened bread was to be cut off from the congregation of Israel (Exod. 12:19), whether an Israelite or a non-Israelite within the land of Israel (Exod. 12:14-20).²⁷⁹

Firstfruits (ἀπαρχή) (Lev. 23:9-14)

The Israelites were to bring a sheaf of the firstfruits for a wave offering. The sheaf was accompanied by a year-old lamb without blemish, a grain offering, and a wine offering. They were not allowed to eat of the harvest until they had made this offering. They were to repeat this feast for endless generations in all their settlements (νόμιμον αἰώνιον εἰς τὰς γενεὰς ὑμῶν ἐν πάσῃ κατοικίᾳ ὑμῶν, Lev. 23:14).²⁸⁰

²⁷⁹ Sklar, *Leviticus*, 281: This festival was very significant: It counted as one of three that all Israelite males, as representatives of their families, were to celebrate at the sanctuary (Exod. 23:14-17; it should not surprise us if the whole family attended; cf. at vv. 15-22).

²⁸⁰ Exod. 9:31-32 informs the reader that the flax and the barley ripen early while wheat is a late crop. That is why the plague of hail against Egypt spared the wheat. The feast of Unleavened Bread is a barley harvest festival. Bailey, *Leviticus*, 280: "The festival of "first-fruits" (vv. 9-22), the first part of which celebrated the barley harvest (vv. 9-14) and the second the wheat harvest (the "Feast of Weeks," here detached and considered as Festival No. 3)."

Shavuot (πεντηκοστή) (Pentecost or Feast of Weeks) (Lev. 23:15-21)

Seven weeks or fifty days after the feast of Firstfruits, the Israelites were to bring two loaves of the new grain to be waved before the Lord and then burned. The bread was accompanied by a burnt offering of seven lambs, one bull, and two rams. In addition to these, the Israelites were to offer a male goat for a sin offering and two male lambs for a peace offering. This was to be done annually for ever (νόμιμον αἰώνιον εἰς τὰς γενεὰς ὑμῶν ἐν πάσῃ τῇ κατοικίᾳ ὑμῶν, Lev. 23:21).²⁸¹

Feast of Trumpets (μνημόσυνον σαλπίγγων) (Lev. 23:23-25)

The Feast of Trumpets, which occurred on the first day of the month of Tishrei (September / October), was a day of rest (ἀνάπαυσις) and blowing of trumpets. This feast became Rosh HaShanah later in Judaism.²⁸²

Yom Kippur (ἡμέρα ἐξιλασμού) (Day of Atonement) (Lev. 23:26-32)

The Day of Atonement was on the tenth day of the month of Tishrei. Beginning the previous evening, the people were to present a food offering, to afflict themselves (ταπεινώσετε τὰς ψυχὰς ὑμῶν, Lev. 23:27), and to rest as on a Sabbath (πᾶν ἔργον οὐ ποιήσετε, Lev. 23:28).

²⁸¹ In Lev. 23:21, “service work” (ἔργον λατρευτόν) is forbidden but in Lev. 23:22, the poor are not forgotten: Καὶ ὅταν θερίζετε τὸν θερισμὸν τῆς γῆς ὑμῶν, οὐ συντελέσετε τὸ λοιπὸν τοῦ θερισμοῦ τοῦ ἀγροῦ σου ἐν τῷ θερίζειν σε, καὶ τὰ ἀποπίπτοντα τοῦ θερισμοῦ σου οὐ συλλέξεις· τῷ πτωχῷ καὶ τῷ προσηλύτῳ ὑπολείψει αὐτό· ἐγὼ Κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὑμῶν. God lets Israel know that provision for the poor is protected. Harvesting must not be so thorough that there is nothing left for the poor to glean. As Awabdy, *Leviticus*, explains: “gleaning in v. 22 is not an exception to v. 21. Rather, v. 22 implies that the remainder of the harvest that Israelite landowners must leave behind in their fields “for the poor and the immigrant” (a command from 19:9-11) could be collected by these *personae miserae* throughout the 50-week span of the two harvest festival rituals.”

²⁸² Kiuchi, *Leviticus*, 426, finds significance in the fact that the seventh month is announced with trumpets: “Just as the Lord rested on the seventh day, so the people must rest on the seventh day, and here in the seventh month. The two subsequent important feasts (the Day of Atonement, and Booths) in this month make it the people’s month of rest. This particular day makes them prepare for these coming feasts by way of abstinence and self-dedication.”

The requirements for self-affliction and cessation from work are emphasized.²⁸³ This was to be a forever practice (νόμιμον αἰώνιον εἰς τὰς γενεὰς ὑμῶν ἐν πάσαις κατοικίαις ὑμῶν, Lev. 23:31).

Sukkot (ἑορτὴ σκηνῶν) (Feast of Booths) (Lev. 23:33-44)

The feast of Booths or Tabernacles reminded the Israelites of their sojourn in the wilderness. It was celebrated on the fifteenth day of the seventh month (Tishrei). The people were to rest and to offer food offerings on the first and eighth day of the feast. During the feast, the people were to celebrate and live in booths made of leafy branches.²⁸⁴ This feast was to be repeated every year forever (νόμιμον αἰώνιον εἰς τὰς γενεὰς ὑμῶν, Lev. 23:41)

These Old Testament festivals were feasts of the Lord and were to be celebrated forever. They were times of rest in which the people of Israel came to God's dwelling place in Zion to worship and to reflect on his salvation in the past, protection and provision in the present, and promises for the future. There is no indication in the Torah that a day would come when God would no longer require these feasts to be celebrated wherever the Israelites dwelt. Moses, however, warned of possible limitations due to disruptions to the life of Israel in exile. The scattering of Israel from their land would follow Israel's violation of covenant stipulations and the divine application of the curses warned of in the covenant (Deut. 28:63-68; 30:1-4). Israel's

²⁸³ That self-denial and rest are repeated show the importance of this day. Sklar, *Leviticus*, 285: "The emphasis is no surprise: this is the day on which the people's sins and impurities were cleansed and removed so they could continue in covenant fellowship with their holy Lord. Those who did not observe this day were denying either the Lord's holy hatred of sin or their desperate need of cleansing and forgiveness (or both)."

²⁸⁴ According to Levine, *Leviticus*, 162, the booth was "a small, often impermanent structure that is covered on top, but may be only partially enclosed on its sides." Levine, *Leviticus*, 163, points out that "This is the only festival prescribed in chapter 23 on which rejoicing is explicitly commanded. In the festival calendar of Deuteronomy 16, rejoicing is also mentioned in connection with the Feast of Weeks (v. 11). Elsewhere we read that sacrificial worship in the temple is an occasion for rejoicing. It is not clear why the Sukkot festival is singled out here, although it may be because Sukkot was the most prominent of the ancient pilgrim festivals."

prophets, like Moses, warned the people of God that violation of the covenant would result in exile. Exile meant loss of land, security, temple worship, and promised rest.

Purim (φουρίμ) (Esther 9)

The feast of Purim is not found in the Torah. It came about because of events during the exile. Jews celebrated their escape from annihilation due to the scheming of Haman the Agagite, who had cast the lot (κλήρος) to determine when to destroy the Jews. Instead of an attack on the Jews, the Jews avenged themselves against their enemies. Mordecai wrote to all the Jews urging them to celebrate the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the twelfth month, the month of Adar (February / March). It was to be a festival of feasting and generosity to the poor (Esther 9:20-22). The feast of Purim was to be celebrated annually and forever (Esther 9:28).²⁸⁵

Chanukkah (ἐγκαίνια) (1 Maccabees 4:36-59)

Chanukkah is another Jewish festival that is not found in the Torah. It originated in the defeat of the Syrian Greeks by the Maccabees in 164 B.C.²⁸⁶ Antiochus IV provoked Jewish rebellion because of his aggressive Hellenization of Jews and his disdain for the Jewish way of life. Judah Maccabee and his men cleansed the temple after expelling the Syrian Greeks. As the story is told later in the Babylonian Talmud, when it came time to cleanse the temple, there was not enough sacred oil for the lamps, but God miraculously sustained the little oil available

²⁸⁵ While the enemies of the Jews had cast “lots” to determine the day when they would destroy the Jews, the irony is that the Feast of Purim (lots) became a time to celebrate the deliverance of the Jews. It became a joyous festival, promoted by Esther and Mordecai, though not one of the festivals commanded by the Lord. See Gary V. Smith, *Ezra-Nehemiah & Esther*, vol. 5b CBC (Carol Stream, ILL: Tyndale House, 2010), 284-286.

²⁸⁶ For the Maccabean revolt and establishment of Chanukkah, see Skarsaune, *In the shadow of the Temple*, 24-27; Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 383-388.

(Shabbat 21b). The miracle of oil was celebrated for eight days in the feast of Chanukkah or dedication starting on the twenty-fifth day of Chislev (November / December).

Daily Service

The people of Israel are to make a morning and an evening offering every day (Num. 28:1-8). God calls the daily offering “my offering, my food for my food offerings, my pleasing aroma” (Τὰ δῶρά μου δόματά μου καρπώματά μου, εἰς ὁσμὴν εὐωδίας, 28:2). The animals include two young male lambs without blemish, oil, fine flour, and wine for the burnt sacrifice. A daily sacrifice reminds the people “of God’s presence and of the honor thus due.”²⁸⁷ God’s presence is the guarantee of Israel’s welfare so long as they honor him. The people of God can find daily rest in his holy presence.

Sabbath (σάββατα) (Exod. 20:8-11; Lev. 23:3)

The Sabbath was a weekly holy day. Observation of the Sabbath was the fourth of the ten commandments that Moses brought down from Mount Sinai (Exod. 20:8-11). Israel was to observe the seventh day as a holy day, “a Sabbath to the Lord” (σάββατα Κυρίῳ τῷ θεῷ σου, Exod. 12:10) and a day of rest for human beings and domestic animals. On that day, the Israelites were to recall the days of creation, realizing that God rested on the seventh day, blessed it, and set it apart. In Lev. 23:3, the Israelites were reminded that the Sabbath was one of the appointed feasts of the Lord, a holy convocation and “a Sabbath of solemn rest” (σάββατα ἀνάπαυσις).

²⁸⁷ Bailey, *Leviticus-Numbers*, 563. The biblical *tamid* (daily sacrifice) is similar to daily offering made to pagan gods in the ancient world. The ancient gods needed to be fed in the morning and in the evening. The Israelites believed that they were safe as long as they could observe this daily ritual, and they considered its interruption a tragedy (Dan. 8:11-13; 11:31; 12:11). See the discussion in Jacob Milgrom, *Numbers*, JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1990), 486-488. Jewish commentators are eager to remind readers that God does not eat or drink. The pleasant aroma is rather a reminder to Israel about what pleases the Lord. See Milgrom, *Numbers*, 238.

Rest was not optional as Moses later reiterated (Exod. 35:1-3). In addition to what the law states in Exodus 20, here the Lord adds the death penalty for violation and specifies that even fires should not be lit. In the book of Numbers, an Israelite is executed for gathering wood on the Sabbath (Num. 15:32-36). The Israelites are to remember that they are creatures in a world created and maintained by God. Therefore, they are to rest and allow others to rest on that day. God expects complete rest (ἀνάπαυσις) and for Israel to gather for a holy assembly (κλητὴ ἁγία) for it is the Lord's Sabbath (σάββατά ἐστιν τῷ κυρίῳ) (Lev. 23:3).

New Moon

Sacrifices for the new moon (Num. 28:11-15) are comparable to those of each day of Passover (Num. 28:16-25). The liturgical celebration of the new moon is connected with God's deliverance from Egypt (Ps. 81:1-7).

Sabbath Year

God commands that the land, like the people, must also enjoy its rest after six years of being cultivated (Lev. 25:1-7). However, even though the land is not worked on the seventh year, whatever it produces in that year is God's provision for people and animals. The point is that the Lord is the provider and not just human labor.

Jubilee

Every fiftieth year, the Year of Jubilee, slaves are to be set free and the land that has been sold is to be returned to its original owners (Lev. 25:8-55). The reason given is that God owns the land, and every Israelite is his servant (Lev. 25:23, 55). Therefore, people and land cannot be sold perpetually. The fact that God owns both the people and land is a constant check on greed and despair.

As Moses warns in Deuteronomy 28-30, Israel will violate the terms of the Sinaitic covenant with the result that God will send Israel into Exile. The prophets of Israel continue to issue warnings about covenant unfaithfulness. The observation of festivals is not enough to maintain covenant if Israel's daily life is marked by blatant violations of covenant obligations to God and to each other.

Rejection of Festivals and Sacrifices in the Old Testament

The following are lists of covenant violations that prophets and historians of Israel record as profaning sacrifice and desecrating the feasts of the Lord. Anyone acquainted with the prophetic writings and historians of the Old Testament will agree with the author of Hebrews that Israel so violated the covenant that sacrifices and festivals became unacceptable means of approaching God.

Amos

Judah is condemned for rejecting the law of God (2:4). Northern Israel is condemned for selling the righteous, exploiting the needy, sexual immorality, idolatry, confiscating the clothes and wine of the poor, making Nazirites drink wine, and commanding God's prophets not to prophesy (2:6-12). Other sins of Israel include the following: idolatry (3:14), living luxuriously at the expense of the poor (4:1; 8:4, 6), injustice and unrighteousness (5:7), hating people who tell the truth (5:10), taxing the grain of the poor (5:11), afflicting the righteous and taking bribes (5:12). Judah and Israel are guilty of the following: luxurious and prideful lifestyles without concern for the welfare of the nation (6:4-8). Because of these offenses, God rejects Israel's sacred sacrifices and holy convocations (4:4-5; 5:4-5; 8:10).²⁸⁸

²⁸⁸ Amos ironically calls Israel to come and worship and transgress. For the irony in Amos 4:4-5, see James D. Nogalski, *The Book of the Twelve: Hosea to Jonah* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2011), 301.

Hosea

Hosea's marriage to a loose woman serves as a picture of God's relationship with unfaithful Israel. Israel is accused of several offenses against God: lack of faithfulness or covenant fidelity (4:2; 5:7; 6:7), ignorance (4:6), forgetting God and God's law (4:6; 8:14; 13:6), greed (4:8), whoredom and drunkenness (4:10, 13, 14, 15, 18; 5:3, 4; 6:10; 7:4, 5; 9:1-2), idolatry (4:12, 13, 14, 17; 8:4-6; 8:11; 9:10; 10:1-2, 5, 8; 13:1-2; 14:8), stubbornness (4:16), pride (5:5; 7:10), trust in foreign nations such as Assyria and Egypt (5:13; 7:11; 8:8-10), ephemeral love (6:4), transgressing the covenant (6:7), murder (6:8-9; 12:14), dealing falsely (7:1), mockery (7:5), assassinations (7:7), insincere mourning (7:14), devising evil (7:16), appointing kings without God's approval (8:4), hating true prophets (9:7-8), corrupting themselves (9:9), not listening to God (9:17), swearing falsely (10:4), trusting in military strength (10:13), using false balances (12:7-8), making human sacrifices (13:2), and rebellion (13:16). Israel cannot do these things and expect God to accept her sacrifices and delight in her holy convocations. Her sins have made her ritual worship unacceptable. Visiting holy sites amounts to more sinning (4:15; 12:11). God rejects sacrifices without covenant faithfulness (6:6; 8:13). Festivals will do such sinners no good (9:4-5).²⁸⁹ Prayers from those who reject God will not be heard (11:7). Only with repentance can there be acceptable offerings (14:2).

Isaiah

Judah is sinful and corrupt (1:4). The list of the sins of Israel and her kings is long. It includes the following: rebellion, sin, and idolatry (1: 27-31), worshiping idols (2:6-22; 30:22;

²⁸⁹ When Israel goes into exile, they will no longer have access to the temple and will not be able to celebrate the annual feasts. Thomas E. McComiskey, "Hosea," in *The Minor Prophets*, ed. Thomas M. McComiskey (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 140, 141: "The captivity would bring to an end the sacrifices that served to establish the relationship of the people with their God. . . . The rhetorical question that comprises this verse [Hos. 9:5] implies that the people will be able to do nothing when the various feast days arrive. They will be far from the temple and will no longer observe their holy days."

31:7; 42:17; 44:9-20; 48:6-7; 57:5, 6, 8-13; 65:3; 66:17), injustice of leaders (3:13-15), pride of the women of Jerusalem (3:16-4:1), injustice and bloodshed (5:1-7; 59:6-9, 13-14), greed, drunkenness, arrogance, overturning of standards and values (5:8-30), rejecting a prophetic sign of assurance (7:12), seeking mediums and spirits of the dead (8:19; 65:4), speaking in pride and arrogance (9:9-10), following false leaders and prophets (9:15-17), doing injustice to the vulnerable (10:1-2), engaging in rivalry (11:13), making a treaty with Egypt without God's counsel (30:1-3), rejecting divine instructions (30:8-11), seeking military help from Egypt (31:1-3), being willfully blind and deaf to what is right (42:18-20), tiring of dependence on God (43:22), burdening God with sins (43:24-28), being stubborn and obstinate (48:4), following blind, ignorant, lazy, greedy, and drunken leaders (56:10-12), offering children as sacrifices (57:5), committing adultery (57:7), committing murder (59:3, 7), telling lies (59:3), being dishonest in lawsuits (59:4), turning their backs on God (59:13), attacking the righteous (59:15; 66:5), grieving the Holy Spirit with rebellion (63:10), refusing to call on God for mercy (64:7), eating forbidden meat (65:4, 17), and delighting in sins (66:3). This list of sins profanes sacrifices when the sinners come to worship. God rejects festivals and sacrifices because of the sinfulness of the worshipers (1:10-23).²⁹⁰ The worshipers desecrate the temple because they assume that they will be accepted as they are without true repentance.

Micah

Micah denounces those in Judah who plot to rob the poor and reject the word of true prophets (2:1-13). The rulers and false prophets are especially condemned (3:12). God brings a

²⁹⁰ John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, WBC, Vol. 24 (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1985), 20: "That which brings displeasure to God is not the sacrifice per se; the *trampling of his courts* is revolting to him. The failure to accompany sacrificial and festal worship with a lifestyle of justice and righteousness is the problem. The latter is invalid without the former."

case against Israel (6:1-5). He prefers justice, covenant faithfulness, and humility to multitudes of sacrifices (6:6-8).²⁹¹ He declares judgment against those who gain wealth by oppression and deceit (6:9-16). Injustice in the nation makes a mockery of sacred sacrifices and holy convocations.

Zephaniah

Judah will be judged for such sins as the following: idolatry (1:4-5), not following the Lord (1:6), following foreign ways and superstitions (1:8-9), claiming that God does not act (1:12), rebellion (3:1, 11), refusing correction (3:2, 7), not trusting the Lord (3:2), violence (3:3), treachery (3:4), profanity (3:4), and pride (3:11). After judgment, God promises that there will be a humble, faithful, righteous, and truthful remnant that will enjoy peace in the land. God will be king over that remnant and Zion will again be a place of worship, praise, and proper sacrifices (3:9-20). Zephaniah indicates that God does not reject ceremonial worship if the people are living humbly according to his standards (2:3; 3:10, 18).²⁹²

Jeremiah

Jeremiah, like Isaiah, has a long list of sins that defile Israel's sacrifices and render religious festivals unacceptable to a holy God. This list includes the following: forsaking God (1:16, 2:11-13, 19), following worthless idols (1:16; 2:4, 8, 25-28; 3:1-14; 5:7-8, 19; 7:9, 17; 8:19; 9:14; 10:11-16; 11:9-13; 16:11, 18; 22:8-9; 25:6-7; 32:29, 34-35; 44:3, 8), defiling the land

²⁹¹ Ralph Smith speaks of "two basic ideas about religion." "How can a man approach God? One answer is: with sacrifice, things, good works. The other answer is reflected in v. 8. God requires not external gifts from his worshipers but a humble communicant who loves to serve God and practice justice toward his fellowman." Ralph L. Smith, *Micah-Malachi*, WBC, Vol 32 (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1984), 51.

²⁹² Zeph. 3:18 is a difficult verse to translate. See the various possibilities in Thomas Renz, *The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2021), 638-640. I opted for the ESV translation: "I will gather those of you who mourn for the festival, so you will no longer suffer reproach." This is in the context of a future restoration.

(2:8), ignoring God (2:8), transgression by the leaders (2:8), listening to idolatrous prophets (2:8), making alliances with Assyria and Egypt (2:18, 36), transgressing against God (2:29), forgetting God (2:32; 3:21), murdering the poor (2:34), denying sin (2:35), being willfully ignorant (4:22; 8:7), practicing injustice (5:1-4, 25-28; 22:13-14), claiming that the Lord will do nothing (5:12), despising God's prophets (5:13), delighting in falsehood (5:31; 8:8), practicing oppression and violence (6:6-7; 9:6; 22:17), rejecting God's word (6:10, 19; 32:23-24; 35:16-17), greed (6:13), lacking shame (6:15; 8:12), being stubborn and rebellious (6:28; 19:15), oppressing the helpless (7:5-6), trusting in lies (7:8; 8:10-11; 13:24; 14:14), stealing, murdering, committing adultery, swearing falsely (7:9-10; 9:2-3; 13:27; 29:20-23), rejecting true prophets (7:25; 11:22-23; 20:1; 25:4-6; 29:19; 35:15; 43:2-7; 44:4-5), sacrificing children (7:31), worshiping sun, moon, and stars (8:1-3), continually backsliding (8:5; 15:4), greed (8:10), slandering each other (9:4-5), practicing deception (9:8), forsaking God's law (9:13; 44:10), trusting in man rather than God (17:6), violating the Sabbath (17:19-27), refusing to repent (18:12), being destructive shepherds (23:1-4), following false priests and prophets (23:9-40; 29:24-31), violating covenant (34:8-22), refusing to be humble (44:10).²⁹³

Ezekiel

Ezekiel, like Isaiah and Jeremiah, has a long list of sins that Israel has committed: being a rebellious house (2:3-5, 8; 3:9; 5:6; 12:1, 3, 25; 17:12; 20:21; 44:6), refusing to listen to God (3:7), rejecting God's law (5:6-7; 11:12; 20:13-17), committing abominations (5:9; 6:11; 7:3-9; 11:18, 21; 14:6; 16:22, 25, 43; 22:1; 44:6, 7, 13), defiling God's sanctuary (5:11), worshiping

²⁹³ The only hope for Israel is a new covenant because the people continually violated the old one. The problem is the condition of the people's hearts (Jer. 31:31-34). However, God will never totally reject Israel, and demolished Jerusalem will be rebuilt (Jer. 31:35-40). F. B. Huey, Jr., *Jeremiah*, NAC (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1993), 284: "“When Israel proved to be incapable of relating to God according to the Mosaic covenant, he provided a new one that would compensate for their lack. He is a God who not only comes down to us (Phil 2:6-8) but in the process lifts us up toward him (Eph 2:5-7).”"

idols (6:1-7, 9, 13-14; 7:20; 8:3-17; 14:3-6; 16:15-19; 20:7-8, 16, 28-29, 39; 22:3, 4, 9; 36:25; 44:12), committing injustice and murder (9:9; 22:3, 4, 6, 9, 12, 13, 25; 24:6), giving wicked counsel (11:2), following false prophets (13:1-16; 22:25-26, 28), performing magic (13:17-23), performing child sacrifice (16:20-21; 20:31), committing spiritual adultery (16:1-52, 22:9; 23:1-49), breaking covenant (16:59-63; 17:13-16), committing blasphemy (20:27); despising correction (21:10, 13), swearing falsely (21:23), exploiting the vulnerable (22:7, 29), treating parents with contempt (22:7), profaning sacred things and days (22:8), committing sexual sins (22:10-11), charging interest (22:12), exploiting neighbors (22:12, 13), doing violence to the law (22:26), listening to but not obeying God's word (33:31-32), being self-serving shepherds (34:1-10), being selfish sheep (34:17-22), dealing treacherously with God (39:23), and desecrating the temple and its sacred equipment by admitting the uncircumcised (44:7-8). Ezekiel's list of sins helps us to understand why God rejects the sacrifices, the temple personnel, and ultimately the temple itself. Sin defiles and profanes holy people, things, seasons, and places. When Israel commits such sins, what use are sacrifices and holy convocations?²⁹⁴

Daniel

Daniel, realizing that the seventy years of the Babylonian exile are almost over, prays for his people (Daniel 9). He confesses the sins of Israel, admitting that Israel did not keep God's covenant (9:1-5). Israel rejected the voice of God through the prophets (9:6) which amounted to treachery (9:7). Because the Israelites disobeyed God's commands, they brought upon themselves the curses of the covenant (9:8-15). The only hope left is God's mercy, concern for his holy sanctuary which lies in ruins and his holy name which is intimately connected with the

²⁹⁴ Ezekiel has great hope for the restoration of Israel to the land and the revival of temple worship (Ezek. 39:25-48:35). This restoration will be accompanied by a people whose hearts have been cleansed and transformed (Eze. 36:22-38).

people of Israel and the holy city of Jerusalem (9:16-19).²⁹⁵ Daniel has no hope in the righteousness or holiness of his people but expects God to intervene on their behalf, nevertheless. Without a restored people and a rebuilt temple, the sacrificial system is not even viable.

Joel

Joel calls for fasting and lamentation after a devastating locust invasion (Joel 1). The devastation has not only affected the food supply for the nation, but it has also ensured that the temple does not receive grain and drink offerings (1:9, 13-16).²⁹⁶ If the people sincerely repent (2:12-17), God will restore the food supply so that grain and drink offerings will be available again (2:14). For Joel, the sacrificial system is still valid and can be restored if people turn back to God with all their hearts.

Habakkuk

Habakkuk is concerned that Judah has been violent, sinful, wicked, unjust and yet God does not appear to do anything about it (1:1-4). But God's response is even more than the prophet had bargained for because God will punish Judah with an even more violent, sinful, wicked, and unjust invader, the Chaldean army (1:5-17). God's response to the prophet's dismay

²⁹⁵ Carol A. Newsom and Brennan W. Breed, *Daniel*, OTL (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2014), 296: "While an appeal to the merciful character of God (cf. v. 9) appears twice (v. 16a, 18b), the primary basis of the appeal is grounded on God's concern for reputation and honor. Both motives are developed through the frequent repetition of the second-person-singular possessive pronoun "yours." The appeal refers to "your people" (3x: vv. 15, 16, 19), "your city Jerusalem," "your holy mountain," "your servant," "your desolate sanctuary," and "your city.""

²⁹⁶ The tragedy caused by a locust invasion is an indication of the broken relationship between God and His people. Richard D. Patterson, "Joel" in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Daniel-Malachi*, Revised Edition, ed. Tremper Longman and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 320-321: "These offerings spoke of the very heart of the believer's daily walk with God: the burnt offering, of a complete dedication of life; the meal offering, of a believer's service that should naturally follow; and the drink offering, of the conscious joy in the heart of the believer whose life is poured out in consecrated service to God. The observance of these offerings had degenerated into merely routine ritual (cf. Isa 1:11; Hos 6:6; Am 4:4-5; Mic 6:6-7)."

is to assure him that the Chaldean invaders will also be punished (Habakkuk 2). The prophet then expresses his confidence in God's justice no matter what happens. Habakkuk does not show interest in the sacrificial system but trusts in God's salvation for those who wait for God and live by faith (2:4; 3:3:17-19).²⁹⁷

Malachi

Malachi is concerned about the attitude of the priests and the quality of the sacrifices at the temple. The priests are wearily offering polluted sacrifices such as blind, lame, and sick animals (1:6-8, 12-14). The priests are also guilty of misleading the people by their instructions, which has led to the profaning of the covenant, the sacrifices, and the temple (2:1-12). The people are coming to God in false humility and mourning while the men are hating and divorcing their wives (2:13-16). They cheat God on their tithes and claim that the service of God is pointless because the prosperous wicked get away with arrogance and evil doing (3:6-15). Malachi is persuaded that true worship involves both the attitude of the worshipers and the quality of their sacrifices. Not only must the priests teach the people how to make acceptable offerings but also that God cares about what they think while making such offerings. Malachi has a place for proper worship through sacrifices.²⁹⁸

²⁹⁷ Even though Habakkuk does not say much about sacrifices, he condemns the worship of idols. Carl E. Armerding, "Habakkuk," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Daniel-Malachi*, Revised Edition, ed. Tremper Longman and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 632: "Despite a widespread human tendency to 'trust' in what we can create ourselves, the stark truth is that created objects (wood, stone, metal) remain dumb, lifeless, and impotent. It can be 'trusted' only to deceive the one who created it."

²⁹⁸ The book of Malachi begins with God's love (1:1-5). It continues with God's disappointment concerning Israel's response. Attitudes and motives matter in how Israel responds to God's love. Sacrifices, offerings, and temple worship can become perfunctory and deteriorate to the extent of dishonoring God. Mignon Jacobs (*The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, 180) states it as follows: "This unit, Mal 1:6-2:16, involves two sets of addresses: the priests (Mal 1:6-2:9) and the community (Mal 2:10-16). In light of Mal 1:2-5, the macrounit 1:6-2:16 defines the perspective about the issue of honor in the Yahweh-Israel covenant relationship. Each party legitimizes its perspective toward the other. Fundamentally, Mal 1:6-2:16 illustrates an impasse. In which each party potentially withholds what is due

God rejects festivals and sacrifices because of such violations of covenant as idolatry, spiritual adultery, injustice to the poor, self-indulgence, foreign alliances, multiplication of high places, and rejection of prophetic warnings. The prophets, as the above summaries indicate, make it clear that sacrifices and holy convocations cannot be substitutes for holy and righteous living. Because of Israel's violations of the covenant, the promised rest remains elusive for Israel. God's rest is dependent on covenant faithfulness on Israel's part.

Ezra

Upon return from exile, Ezra and the other priests rebuild the altar of sacrifice and begin making sacrifices on it. They also celebrate the Feast of Booths in the seventh month and other feasts in their season (Ezra 3:1-6). They then lay the foundation of the temple (3:7-9). They celebrate the event with fanfare with the older Israelites weeping as they recall the glorious temple of Solomon while the younger Israelites shout for joy (3:8-13). Their neighbors, however, do not join them in their celebration but rather take every measure to stop them from rebuilding the temple in the reigns of Ahasuerus and Atarxerxes (Ezra 4). In the reign of Darius, with the urging of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, and under the leadership of Zerubbabel, the temple is rebuilt and rededicated.²⁹⁹ The feasts of the Lord are resumed (Ezra 5-6). Ezra the priest comes

the other." Not only have the Israelites responded with ingratitude, but they have also spoken against God. Jacobs (*The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, 264,) continues: "That the people have wearied God with their words is the basic charge of 2:17-3:12. They claim that Yahweh regards evil as good and favors evildoers." They also complain that God blesses the arrogant (3:13-15). God declares that he does make a distinction between the righteous and the wicked (3:16-4:5).

²⁹⁹ The dedication of the second temple (Ezra 6:17) pales in comparison with the dedication of Solomon's temple, but what matters is the people's heart dedication. Edwin M. Yamauchi, "Ezra and Nehemiah," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: 1 Chronicles-Job*, Revised Edition, vol 4, ed. Tremper Longman and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 430: "The number of victims was small compared to the thousands in similar services under Solomon (1 Ki 8:5, 63), Hezekiah (2Ch 30:24), and Josiah (2Ch 35:7). Nonetheless they represented a real sacrifice under the prevailing circumstances."

from Babylonia with temple gifts and vessels to teach the people (Ezra 7). On arrival, Ezra finds out that the people of Judah have not lived separate from their neighbors but rather intermarried with them and this causes him to pray a desperate prayer of confession (Ezra 9). The people of Judah join him, and they determine to rededicate themselves by sending away the foreign wives with their children (Ezra 10). Clearly, ritual purity, festivals, the sacrificial system, and temple service are regarded in this period as efficacious for the maintenance of covenant with God.

Nehemiah

Just as Ezra found opposition to rebuilding the temple, so does Nehemiah find opposition to rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. Those in opposition are initially amused at the effort, then they become incensed, and finally they conspire to discredit or destroy Nehemiah (Nehemiah 3, 4, 6). Nehemiah also has to deal with internal strife in that some of the Jews were oppressing the poor among them. Nehemiah corrects this injustice (Nehemiah 5). Once the wall is finished, the people study the Torah, celebrate the feasts of Israel, and confess their sins (Nehemiah 8-9). They also covenant to separate from the nearby nations, to observe Jewish holy days, to support the priests and Levites with tithes, and to make the required sacrifices (Nehemiah 10). Everything seems to be going well under the leadership of Zerubbabel and Nehemiah (Nehemiah 12). But once Nehemiah returns to Babylon, the zeal of the Jews for religious purity and separation wanes. Nehemiah returns to Jerusalem only to rebuke the priests and the people for their backsliding.³⁰⁰ The priests are sharing the temple storage area with non-Jewish leaders, the Levites are busy in their fields because the tithes are not coming in, the people are trading on the Sabbath, and the men are intermarrying with non-Jews. Nehemiah has to reform the priests, the

³⁰⁰ Edwin M. Yamauchi, "Ezra and Nehemiah," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: 1 Chronicles-Job*, Revised Edition, vol 4, ed. Tremper Longman and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 561: "Nehemiah's actions remind us of Christ's furious expulsion of the moneychangers from the temple (Mt 21:12-13; Mk 11:15-16; Lk 19:45-46; Jn 2:13-33).

people, and the temple all over again (Nehemiah 13). Again, it becomes obvious that Israel does not keep covenant and stay faithful to its commitments. The sacrificial system, good in itself, is powerless against the people's propensity for disobedience.

The history of Israel turns out to be a history of covenant unfaithfulness. Whether it was before or after the exile, the people would pledge to keep covenant but ended up in violation. What was needed was a new covenant, a new priesthood, and a new sacrifice, a new heart, and a new way to approach God in worship.

Sacrifices and Festivals in the Second Temple Period

1 Maccabees

The revolt and success of the Maccabees (also known as the Hasmoneans) against the Seleucid dynasty are recorded in 1 Maccabees. Mattathias, the father of this family and his five sons (John, Simon, Judas, Eleazar, and Jonathan) are renowned in Israel for their zeal for the Law of Moses, the sacrifices and the feasts of Israel, the temple, and the covenant of God with people of Israel. Their struggle began with a violent refusal to obey the Hellenizing orders of Antiochus Epiphanes. The Maccabees preferred suffering, warfare, and death to profanation of God's ways. They fought a guerilla war against the Greeks of Syria (Seleucids) and eventually succeeded in cleansing the temple which the Hellenists had profaned. They rebuilt Jerusalem and resettled the Jews in the land of Israel. Because of their warfare against the Greeks of Syria, their covenants of peace with the Romans, and their continual struggle against hostile neighboring nations, they eventually won their independence and right to practice their ancient religion.³⁰¹

³⁰¹ For a summary of the Maccabean period (167-63 B.C.), See Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 383-388, 421-422; For the texts of 1 and 2 Maccabees, see Angela M. Kinney, ed. *The Vulgate Bible, vol.5, The Minor Prophetic Books and Maccabees (Douay Rheims Translation)* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 275-555.

2 Maccabees

2 Maccabees relates the struggle for the priesthood between the Oniads and Tobiads, two families that sought to control the temple and rule over Judah (Chapters 1-4). Onias the high priest honored the old ways of the Jews, but Jason desired to take the high priesthood through corrupt means. Jason, to curry favor with the Greeks, accelerated the Hellenization of the Jews (chapters 3-5). Those Jews who observed the Law or celebrated biblical festivals were tortured and killed (chapters 6-7). The Maccabees revolted, cleansed the temple, reinstituted the sacrificial system, and the festivals (chapters 8-10). They however, learnt the hard way that they could not observe the Sabbath if under attack but must fight back. They prayed for divine assistance, experienced angelic help, and won many battles. Occasionally the Syrians admitted that God was fighting for the Jews but they, and other neighboring nations would not let the Jews enjoy their victories and festivals in peace (chapters 11-15). 2 Maccabees stresses that though the Jews were valiant in battle, they depended on God to help them against their enemies, and they observed the Law and the festivals as much as they were able under difficult circumstances.

Dead Sea Community

Jewish religious sects of the first century A.D. held the following in common:

Holiness and purity are related to the presence of God according to a system of concentric circles, with the Holy of Holies in the center, then the sanctuary, then the courtyards, then Jerusalem, the Land, the earth. A corresponding system of concentric circles involves human beings: in the center the high priest, the only one to enter the Holy of Holies; around him priests, Levites, Jewish men, Jewish women, Gentiles.³⁰²

While the Sadducees were satisfied with the temple as it was, the Pharisees wished “to extend the temple realm into their own houses and courtyard,” and the Zealots desired to be rid of the

³⁰² Skarsaune, *In the Shadow of the Temple*, 128.

Romans who occupied the holy land.³⁰³ The Qumran community was comprised of Zadokite priests who broke away from the other priests in Jerusalem. Members of this community believed that the priests in Jerusalem were ritually compromised and their sacrifices ineffective because of impurities. The Dead Sea area became a place of refuge for those who sought a stricter way of Jewish ritual purity. They engaged in multiple ablutions and believed themselves to be an alternative temple as they prayed for and waited for a final confrontation with the wicked priesthood in Jerusalem. They believed that they would participate with angels in overthrowing the evil priesthood of Jerusalem and then cleanse the temple as the Maccabees had done in the past. In the meantime, they offered prayers which they believed to be better than defiled sacrifices.³⁰⁴

2 Baruch

Baruch laments the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. He receives visions of the future and their interpretations. He writes to the exiles of the northern kingdom and tells them of the future. In this book, he connects the welfare of the people and the city with the sanctity of the temple. With the destruction of the city came the devastation of the temple:

O that mine eyes were springs,
And mine eyelids a fount of tears.
For how shall I lament for Zion,
And how shall I mourn for Jerusalem?
Because in that place where I am now prostrate,
Of old the high priest offered holy sacrifices,
And placed thereon an incense of fragrant odors.
But now our glorying has been made into dust,

³⁰³ Skarsaune, *In the Shadow of the Temple*, 128

³⁰⁴ Skarsaune, *In the Shadow of the Temple*, 128. See CD 6:11-14; 11:18-21; 1QS 8:5-7. Michael Wise, Martin Abegg, Jr., and Edward Cook, *Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1996), 137.

And the desire of our soul into sand.³⁰⁵

He recalls the good times in the reigns of David and Solomon when the temple was dedicated and sacrifices offered, which led to a period of peace and prosperity (60:1-8). Later came the time of Manasseh when wickedness proliferated, and the sanctuary was defiled and overturned (64:1-6). Then came Josiah, who restored the worship of God in the temple (66:1-4). He predicted a future restoration of the people, the city, and the temple (68:1-6).

4 Ezra (2 Esdras)

Ezra, like Baruch, is concerned about the fate of Jerusalem. Ezra is an exile in Babylon and prays for Israel. God sends the angel Uriel to explain the fate of Israel by means of visions. Ezra appropriately mourns the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple:

For thou seest that our sanctuary is laid waste, our altar broken down, our temple destroyed; Our psaltery is laid on the ground, our song is put to silence, our rejoicing is at an end, the light of our candlestick is put out, the ark of our covenant is spoiled, our holy things are defiled, and the name that is called upon us is almost profaned: our children are put to shame, our priests are burnt, our Levites are gone into captivity, our virgins are defiled, and our wives ravished; our righteous men carried away, our little ones destroyed, our young men are brought in bondage, and our strong men are become weak; And, which is the greatest of all, the seal of Sion hath now lost her honour; for she is delivered into the hands of them that hate us.³⁰⁶

For Ezra, as for Baruch, there is no prosperity for the Jews without a functioning temple.

1 Enoch

Enoch was caught up in a vision that took him into the presence of God. He passed the region of the stars into heaven itself. He entered a region of fire and into a house of crystals. He felt extremes of heat and cold. The place was no habitation of men but of fiery cherubim. Then

³⁰⁵ 2 Baruch 35: 2-5, Early Jewish Writings, <https://www.earlyjewishwritings.com/2baruch.html> (accessed August 23, 2023).

³⁰⁶ 2 Esdras 10:21-23, King James Version + Apocrypha, <https://ebible.org/kjv/2ES10.htm> (accessed August 23, 2023).

he saw a second and bigger house made of fire which had an open door. In the second house was the great throne of God and uncountable numbers of angelic beings who could not approach the throne because of its majesty and glory. The Lord was on his throne, and he invited Enoch to draw near. Enoch fell with his face to the ground as the Lord spoke to him.³⁰⁷

The visionary journey remind the reader of an approach to the temple's two chambers. The starry host would be courtyards of the temple, the first house is the priestly chamber, the inner house is the holy of holies, and the throne is the ark of the covenant. Enoch, like the high priest, is allowed to enter the very presence of God. The priests who serve in the earthly temple are represented by the heavenly host who dare not approach God uninvited. The visionary journey can be interpreted to mean that the temple is but an earthly model of the heavenly realm.

Philo

Philo is important for understanding how intellectual Jews in Alexandria Egypt in the first century A.D. understood the significance of Jewish sacrifices. William Gilders explains the significance of Philo as follows:

Philo is unique amongst ancient Jewish writers on sacrifice in giving focused attention to elucidating the *meaning* of sacrificial ritual in conceptual terms. Indeed, he not only seeks to explain what is signified by the various distinct sacrificial complexes and the ritual actions that compose them, he also offers general observations about the origin and meaning of sacrifice as a religious practice. Philo offers an explicit “theory” of sacrifice as a system of symbolic actions. This theory is set out in considerable detail in Philo’s work *On the Special Laws*, his apologia for and elucidation of Jewish cultural practices based on biblical legislation.³⁰⁸

³⁰⁷ 1 Enoch 14. The *Book of Enoch* in R. H. Charles, ed., *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1913), Scanned and Edited by Joshua Williams Northwest Nazarene College, 1995, https://www.ccel.org/c/charles/otpseudepig/enoch/ENOCH_1.HTM (accessed August 16, 2023).

³⁰⁸ Gilders, “Jewish Sacrifice.” The citations of Philo in this section are suggested by Gilders, “Jewish Sacrifice” and taken from Philo, *Special Laws* 1 in *The Works of Philo*, Early Christian Writings, <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/yonge/book27.html> (accessed August 10, 2023).

Philo helps the reader to understand why human beings need a temple, sacrifices, animal victims, and blood. A temple is necessary because it represents the universe, which is God's cosmic temple. Sacrifices enable human beings to show gratitude to God and to seek forgiveness when they have sinned. Also, since there is one universe, there is also one true temple:

We ought to look upon the universal world as the highest and truest temple of God, having for its most holy place that most sacred part of the essence of all existing things, namely, the heaven; and for ornaments, the stars; and for priests, the subordinate ministers of his power, namely, the angels, incorporeal souls, not beings compounded of irrational and rational natures, such as our bodies are, but such as have the irrational parts wholly cut out, being absolutely and wholly intellectual, pure reasonings, resembling the unit. But the other temple is made with hands; for it was desirable not to cut short the impulses of men who were eager to bring in contributions for the objects of piety, and desirous either to show their gratitude by sacrifices for such good fortune as had befallen them, or else to implore pardon and forgiveness for whatever errors they might have committed. He moreover foresaw that there could not be any great number of temples built either in many different places, or in the same place, thinking it fitting that as God is one, his temple also should be one.³⁰⁹

Philo finds significance in the kind of animals required for sacrifice, since the animal represents the person who brings it:

And the accuracy and minuteness of the investigation is directed not so much on account of the victims themselves, as in order that those who offer them should be irreproachable; for God designed to teach the Jews by these figures, whenever they went up to the altars, when there to pray or to give thanks, never to bring with them any weakness or evil passion in their soul, but to endeavor to make it wholly and entirely bright and clean, without any blemish, so that God might not turn away with aversion from the sight of it.³¹⁰

In sacrificial rituals, the sprinkling of blood is significant:

And the blood is poured out in a circle all round the altar because a circle is the most complete of all figures, and also in order that no part whatever may be left empty and unoccupied by the libation of life; for, to speak properly, the blood is the libation of the

³⁰⁹ Philo, *De spec. legibus* 1.66-67. See also *De spec. legibus* 1.195 for the reasons why people sacrifice: "And the benefit they derive is also twofold, being both an admission to a share of good things and a deliverance from evils."

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 1. 167.

life. Therefore, the law here symbolically teaches us that the mind, which is always performing its dances in a circle, is by every description of words, and intentions, and actions which it adopts, always showing its desire to please God.³¹¹

For Philo, the blood represents the soul, much as the Bible says that “the life of the flesh *is* in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it *is* the blood *that* makes atonement for the soul” (Lev. 17:11, NKJV). Philo draws a parallel between the soul of the person who offers a sacrifice and the purity of the animal offered. The virtuous person is like a pure sacrifice and the wicked person is like an impure sacrifice. In this we see that the animal represents the person and can be a substitute for a person:

Let the man, therefore, who is adorned with these qualities go forth in cheerful confidence to the temple which most nearly belongs to him, the most excellent of all abodes to offer himself as a sacrifice. But let him in whom covetousness and a desire of unjust things dwell and display themselves, cover his head and be silent, checking his shameless folly and his excessive impudence, in those matters in which caution is profitable; for the temple of the truly living God may not be approached by unholy sacrifices.³¹²

It becomes clear in Philo that physical things are pointers to non-physical realities. The character of the person who offers is more important than the price of the sacrifice:

I should say to such a man: My good man, God is not pleased even though a man bring hecatombs to his altar; for he possesses all things as his own and stands in need of nothing. But he delights in minds which love God, and in men who practice holiness, from whom he gladly receives cakes and barley, and the very cheapest things, as if they were the most valuable in preference to such as are most costly. And even if they bring nothing else, still when they bring themselves, the most perfect completeness of virtue and excellence, they are offering the most excellent of all sacrifices, honoring God, their Benefactor and Savior, with hymns and thanksgivings; the former uttered by the organs of the voice, and the latter without the agency of the tongue or mouth, the worshippers making their exclamations and invocations with their soul alone, and only appreciable by

³¹¹ Ibid., 1. 205.

³¹² Ibid., 1. 270.

the intellect, and there is but one ear, namely, that of the Deity which hears them. For the hearing of men does not extend so far as to be sensible of them.³¹³

Philo also discusses the following ten Jewish festivals: 1. Every Day, 2. Sabbath, 3. New Moon, 4. Passover, 5. Unleavened bread, 6. The Sacred Sheaf, 7. Pentecost, 8. Trumpets, 9. The Fast, 10. Tabernacles.³¹⁴ He not only gives details of what is done in each festival, but he also gives the rationale of each. Every day is a festival because men ought to live virtuously every day:

If all the powers of the virtues remained in all respects unsubdued, then the whole time from a man's birth to his death would be one uninterrupted festival, and all houses and every city would pass their time in continual fearlessness and peace, being full of every imaginable blessing, enjoying perfect tranquility.³¹⁵

Philo reminds the reader that life, however, is full of all kinds of trouble because of the wickedness of man. The Sabbath gives Philo the opportunity to discuss the significance of the number seven. It is the number of perfection and also there are seven planets. It is a day of rest and reflection on virtue.

The New Moon is a festival because beginnings are good and also because the sun shares its light with the moon indicating that strong people should be generous toward the weak. That the moon comes and goes shows that we should have a balance between beginnings and ends. Also, the moon helps to control tides and the weather.³¹⁶

³¹³ Ibid., 1. 271-272.

³¹⁴ Philo, *De spec. legibus* 2. 41. <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/yonge/book28.html> (accessed August 08, 2023).

³¹⁵ Ibid., 2. 42.

³¹⁶ Ibid., 2. 140-144.

During Passover the Jews celebrate their release from slavery and idolatry. Each family, in sacrificing a lamb, shares the dignity of the temple. The feast of Unleavened Bread takes place in the spring of the year, a time of growth and fertility. The bread without leaven is a pure gift of nature and it is imperfect in the sense that at that time more is expected in the coming harvest. The Sacred Sheaf is the festival when the people bring to the priest a sheaf to be waved. Just as a priest represent a city, the Jews represent the nations. Also, in this feast, the people bring evidence of the bounty of the land which God gave them.³¹⁷

During Pentecost, the people offer two loaves, signifying the people's gratitude for food. Pentecost also means fifty, and fifty can be derived from a right-angled triangle of sides 3, 4, 5. The number 50 is equal to the sum of the squares (3x3, 4x4, 5x5). Here and elsewhere, Philo indulges in discussing the significance of numbers to prove that the religion of the Jews is not only reasonable but also contains wonders of Mathematics. This is consistent with Philo's allegorical method by which he discovers hidden meanings in the most unusual places.³¹⁸

The Feast of Trumpets commemorates the sound of a trumpet when the Law was first given. Also, since the trumpet is associated with war, the people blow trumpets to remind each other that God is the giver of peace.³¹⁹ The Fast is, ironically, a festival because it reminds people to be temperate and prayerful, and to pause before they pounce on the fruit recently harvested.³²⁰

³¹⁷ Ibid., 2. 145-149.

³¹⁸ Ibid., 2. 176-187.

³¹⁹ Ibid., 2. 188-192.

³²⁰ Ibid., 2. 193-202.

The Feast of Tabernacles is a time to consider what it is to be equal and a time to look back at what goodness people have received from God in the previous harvests. In it is the memory of the hard times the people went through since leaving Egypt.³²¹

From his writings, it is obvious that Philo is an apologist for temple sacrifices and Jewish festivals. He is ingenious in mixing scriptural, natural, and cultural reasons for feasts and sacrifices. He continually allegorizes and justifies the ways of God with Israel by showing their significance for all of mankind. As an apologist for the Jewish way of life and Jewish worship, he sees no contradiction between ritual practice and allegorical speculation.³²²

Philo claims that the Law is concerned about the body and the soul, the internal and the external state of the person bringing an offering.³²³ Just like Israel's ancient prophets, he is critical of those who make sacrifices without due regard to how they live. He thinks that those who offer sacrifices should also be wise and virtuous people.³²⁴ Philo rejects sacrifices and rituals if they are not accompanied by inner purity and holiness:

If a man practices ablutions and purifications, but defiles his mind while he cleanses his body; or if, through his wealth, he founds a temple at a large outlay and expense; or if he offers hecatombs and sacrifices oxen without number, or adorns the shrine with rich ornaments, or gives endless timber and cunningly wrought work, more precious than silver or gold—let him none the more be called religious ([Greek: *eusebês*]). For he has wandered far from the path of religion, mistaking ritual for holiness, and attempting to bribe the Incorruptible, and to flatter Him whom none can flatter. God welcomes genuine

³²¹ Ibid., 2, 204-214. While discussing the decalogue, Philo considers the fourth commandment (on the Sabbath) to be a summary of all festivals. See Philo, *De Decalogo* 30. <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/yonge/book26.html> (accessed August 8, 2023).

³²² For a succinct summary on Philo's writings on animal sacrifices and Jewish festivals, see Maria-Zoe Petropolou, *Animal Sacrifice in Ancient Greek Religion, Judaism, and Christianity, 100 BC to AD 200* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 149-188.

³²³ Philo Judaeus, *De spec. legibus* 1, 48. See Charles Duke Yonge, <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/yonge/book27.html> (accessed August 8, 2023).

³²⁴ Ibid., 1, 50 (269-272).

service, and that is the service of a soul that offers the bare and simple sacrifice of truth, but from false service, the mere display of material wealth, he turns away.³²⁵

Josephus

Joseph, the son of Matthias, better known as Flavius Josephus, narrates the history of Israel in *Jewish Antiquities*. He is considered a historian and not an interpreter.³²⁶ “His intention was not to interpret the history of the Jews, but to narrate it in a continuous form.” However, here and there, he manages to insert “details known to him from contemporary Jewish cult.”³²⁷

Josephus narrates how God gave Moses rules for priests, sacrifices, offerings, purity, tabernacle, and warfare. Josephus begins with the nature of sacrifices:

I will now however make mention of a few of our laws, which belong to purifications, and the like sacred offices, since I am accidentally come to this matter of sacrifices. These sacrifices were of two sorts: of those sorts one was offered for private persons; and the other for the people in general: and they are done in two different ways. In the one case what is slain is burnt, as a whole burnt offering: whence that name is given to it. But the other is a thank offering; and is designed for feasting those that sacrifice.³²⁸

In the rest of chapter 9, he discusses sacrifices. He discusses festivals in chapter 10, purification in chapter 11, various laws concerning adultery, priestly purity, sabbatical years, the Jubilee, war, setting and breaking camp, and the use of trumpets in chapter 12. His narration follows the

³²⁵ Cited in Norman Benwich, *Philo-Judaeus of Alexandria* (Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1910), 128.

³²⁶ Flavius Josephus “was a Jewish writer of the first century AD. He was a priest, who also participated in the politics of his day, having played a central role during the Jewish War against the Romans in AD 66-70.” See Petropolou, *Animal Sacrifice*, 130. There is no such thing as history writing without interpretation since every historian must choose what events to cover and how to cover them. Simply put, history is interpretation of events.

³²⁷ Petropolou, *Animal Sacrifice*, 131. For examples of Josephus’ extra-biblical details, see pp. 181-189.

³²⁸ Josephus’ *Ant.* III, 9.1, <http://penelope.uchicago.edu/josephus/ant-3.html> (accessed August 8, 2023).

Old Testament regulations, only that he summarizes and at times gives details that a non-Jew would need to know, such as the names of different months and the number of animals sacrificed.³²⁹

Summary

The old covenant was given by God to Israel to enable the people of God to worship, live, and rest in the Promised Land and in the presence of God. God gave them a tabernacle and then a temple as a place of sacrifice and holy convocation. However, the people continued in unbelief and disobedience in the land. God kept warning them of dire consequences through his prophets. The message of the prophets was that sin made sacrifices and holy convocation unacceptable, and that the people would lose their place of rest (the land) and their central place of worship (the temple). Eventually, Israel lost the temple and the land and went into exile. Even after the Babylonian exile, the people of God continued to break the covenant despite their protestations to the contrary. God's promised rest remained just that, a promise.

Even though God regathered Israel after the Babylonian exile and temple worship was reestablished, the circumstances under the Persian, Greek, and Roman empires were not ideal. Not only did Israel lose her kingdom and political freedom, but the temple was eventually destroyed, and the people exiled yet again. The promised rest of God proved to be elusive due to the people's violation of covenant and the consequences that followed.

The various religious groups in Israel acknowledged that sacrifices and offerings helped the Israelites maintain fellowship with God and with each other. Sacrifices and offerings also helped them deal with ritual purity, sin, guilt, restitution, forgiveness, and sanctification. An

³²⁹ Josephus' *Ant.* III, 9-12, <http://penelope.uchicago.edu/josephus/ant-3.html> (accessed August 8, 2023).

unclean or unholy people could not approach a holy God without cleansing. To maintain covenant, rituals were necessary, as prescribed in the many laws of purity in Leviticus.

The New Covenant in Hebrews

The above history of unbelief and disobedience caused God to reject Israel's sacrifices and festivals and led to loss of rest. This history is the background against which the author of Hebrews defends the need for a new and better covenant (Heb. 7:22; 8:6-13; 9:15; 12:24). Since the people of God failed to keep the old covenant, they did not enjoy the promised rest of God (Hebrews 3-4). The author of Hebrews, unlike other Jews in his time who still hoped that Israel would somehow enter God's rest by the sacrifices and festivals of the old covenant, believes that the time of the old covenant is over. The time of the new covenant has arrived with the coming of Jesus.

According to the author of Hebrews, the promised rest becomes available in their relationship with God through Jesus Christ (Heb. 3:7-4:13). A perfect high priest has been appointed (Heb. 5:1-7:28). The sacrifice to which all sacrifices looked forward has been offered (Heb. 10:1-18). The annual pilgrimages to Jerusalem can now be interpreted as a life of pilgrimage to the heavenly Jerusalem (Heb. 12:18-24). The temple in heaven is operational because Jesus is there sitting at the right hand of God and serving as the high priest (Heb. 8:1-2; 9:11-28). All followers of Jesus serve as priests of a new covenant and serve God with acceptable sacrifices of thanks, praise, and deeds of love (Heb. 10:19-25; 12:28; 13:15). All this is possible because of who Jesus is and what he has accomplished.

The author of Hebrews presents Jesus as the Son of God, the high priest, the mediator of the new covenant, the effective sacrifice, and the ultimate hero of faith. He uses OT citations

(acknowledged authority) as God's speech to demonstrate the divinity of Jesus (Hebrews 1:5-13). He uses comparisons (*synkrisis*) to demonstrate the superiority of Jesus over other respected persons (Heb. 3:3-6; 5:1-10; 7:23-28; 11:1-12:3; 12:24). He compares the old and the new covenants and then declares the new one better (8:6-13). He uses typology to contrast the earthly tent where Levites serve with the heavenly tabernacle where Jesus serves as high priest (Hebrews 9). He compares the blood of sacrificial animals with the blood of Jesus and concludes that the blood of Jesus is more effective in purifying sinners (Heb. 9:11-14). He gives a list of historical exemplars (biblical and Jewish) to fix the attention of his audience upon Jesus (Heb. 11:1-12:3). He vividly depicts his audience as joyfully arriving in the heavenly Jerusalem in contrast to the wilderness generation that fearfully remained at the foot of Mount Sinai (Heb. 12:18-24). He turns a ceremonial removal of sacrificial bodies from the camp (or city) into a departure of believers from the camp to be with Jesus who suffered outside the gate (Heb. 13:11-14). He compares the praise of God by believers and good deeds done on behalf of others to sacrifices usually offered by a select group of priests (13:15-16).

By deploying these rhetorical strategies, he refutes the objection that the old covenant remains valid and that the people of God can still enter God's rest by its sacrifices and festivals. Only by paying careful attention to God's new message, action, and covenant in Jesus can the audience persevere in their faith, hope, and love and avoid drifting away or falling away from the living God. Once they understand that God's Son is also the high priest and the final sacrifice of the new covenant, that their sins are forgiven and their consciences are cleansed, that they can approach and worship God with confidence. Then and only then can they enter and enjoy God's promised rest which has proved elusive for so long.

CHAPTER 5: ROLE OF SUFFERING IN LEADING TO SABBATH REST

While discussing the rhetorical arrangement of Hebrews in chapter three above, I considered possible *refutatio* in Hebrews. In chapter four I considered a possible objection to a new covenant and how the author refutes that. In this chapter I will consider an objection to the suffering of the community of Jesus' followers and the author's refutation of the audience's negative response to that suffering. The objection can be stated as follows: If Jesus is the Son of God, our brother and heavenly high priest, why are we experiencing dishonor, rejection, pain, and suffering? If Jesus overcame death and the enemy who held us in slavery by the fear of death, why do we face persecution? Their suffering was a consequence of their connection with and confession of Jesus. The temptation was to give up their confession of Jesus and return to traditional Judaism as understood and practiced in the first century A.D.

The *refutatio* that the author of Hebrews gives is that suffering is necessary as parental education if they are to become mature "sons" and make progress in their journey "out of the camp" to the heavenly "Mount Zion." In other words, there is no going back to any comfort zone within traditional Judaism. Suffering which results from persecution and rejection is divine and fatherly discipline. Suffering as training is not a new idea. As I will demonstrate in this chapter, innocent suffering and suffering as education toward virtue and character are common themes in Israel and the Greco-Roman world. Furthermore, there are people of renown who endured suffering for their beliefs and ways of life. Jesus, especially, is portrayed as a hero who suffered unjustly yet prevailed in his mission to bring salvation. It is therefore a badge of honor to be identified with Jesus and to be called God's children. Jesus endured suffering and was made perfect (fit) to be a high priest on their behalf. They too will suffer as they are being made perfect (mature) for communion with God in the heavenly Jerusalem. In the meantime, they can enter

God's rest as they appreciate that suffering is a means to a joyful end, namely, their fitness for a future life with God.

In this chapter I will investigate the history of suffering in the Old Testament period, in the works of Philo of Alexandria, in the works of Flavius Josephus, in various Second Temple texts, and in the New Testament. I will then compare Jesus with other famous people who suffered such as Socrates, Heracles, various Greco-Roman figures, and heroes of faith in Hebrews. Jesus was the culmination of the heroes of faith and his suffering not only brought salvation for his followers, but his example became worthy of emulation. The goal is to demonstrate that the author of Hebrews and his audience had a background against which they could understand their own suffering as beneficial and as a means to enjoying God's promised rest in the present and in anticipation of a fuller rest in the future.

Righteous Suffering in the Old Testament

There is a history of the suffering of righteous or innocent people in the Old Testament. Cain killed Abel because God accepted Abel's sacrifice but rejected Cain's sacrifice (Gen. 4:3-12).³³⁰ God told Cain, φωνὴ αἵματος τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ σου βοᾷ πρός με ἐκ τῆς γῆς, "the voice of your brother is crying to me from the ground" (Gen. 4:10). Isaac and Abraham dug wells which the Philistines confiscated (26:15-21). Isaac did not retaliate but moved on and dug another well which he named Rehoboth or broad places (expanse, εὐρυχωρία, Gen. 26:22). Jacob, who deceived his brother Esau out of his birthright, was deceived and exploited by his uncle Laban (Genesis 27-31). After twenty years of servitude to his uncle, Jacob fled. Laban pursued him but

³³⁰ Gary Schnittjer notes parallels between Cain's sin and his mother's desire: "Its *desires* to have you, but you *must rule over* it" (Gen. 4:7). Compare this warning with God's curse of Eve: "your *desire* will be for your husband, and he *will rule over* you" (3:16). See Gary Edward Schnittjer, *Old Testament Use of Old Testament: A book-by-Book Guide* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2021), 9. Here we see a connection between desire and domination.

they settled their differences at Jegar-sahadutha or Galeed (hill of witness, βουνός μαρτυρεί, Gen. 31:56) also known as Mizpah (vision, ἡ ὄρασις, Gen. 31:49). Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers out of envy and hatred (Genesis 37). Joseph ended up in prison because Potiphar's wife lied about him (Genesis 39). But God was with Joseph, and he eventually became Pharaoh's advisor, even determining the affairs of state with regard to food security. When Joseph's brothers came to Egypt to buy food, Joseph did not take vengeance upon them but aided them and even helped them settle in Goshen. His attitude toward them was that God turned evil for good (Gen. 50:19-21).³³¹

Pharaoh, out of fear, enslaved the Israelites and ordered the killing of Israelite male children (Exodus 1). In the wilderness, Aaron, Miriam, Korah, Dathan, On, Abiram, and the rest of the Israelites rejected Moses' leadership (Numbers 11, 12, 13, 14, 16). Moses was upset at the behavior of Israel when they complained about food, and he was ready to give up but God helped him by distributing the weight of leadership to seventy elders (Num. 11:10-12:17). When Aaron and Miriam challenged Moses, God angrily rebuked them (Num. 12:6-9). After that rebuke, the Lord departed, and Miriam's skin turned leprous. Moses, the aggrieved party, became her intercessor (Num. 12:13).³³² When Israel refused to fight the Canaanites, God was ready to destroy them and to start over with Moses. But Moses interceded for them, reasoning with God that it was not to his advantage that the people should be destroyed. Moses reminded God that his reputation among the nations as a powerful deliverer was at stake. Therefore, Moses pleaded

³³¹ Joseph's attitude is like the attitude of Jesus who, even though betrayed by his own people, nevertheless benefited them in that his suffering became a source of their salvation (Heb. 2:16-18).

³³² Moses and Jesus interceded for their people, even though the people caused them suffering. Jesus is portrayed as one who prayed with great intensity and his painful experiences qualified him to be a savior and a high priest (Heb. 5:7-10).

for mercy and pardon for the people (Num. 14:17-19). God relented and forgave them at the intercession of Moses. When Korah and his group challenged Moses' authority, God opened the ground, and it swallowed them. When the Israelites blamed Moses for the death of Korah's group, God sent them a plague. All the while, Moses was mediating God's word and falling on his face before God (Numbers 16). All this time, Moses came between an angry God and a sinful people. Moses was a sufferer who continued to care for those who rejected him.

During the period of the monarchy, there was a struggle between the righteous and the wicked. King Saul, because he was jealous, pursued David to kill him (1 Samuel 18-27).³³³ Elijah the prophet lived under the threat of death from King Ahab and Queen Jezebel of Israel (1 Kings 18-19). Naboth lost his life and inheritance to Ahab and Jezebel because they trumped up false charges against him (1 Kings 21). Micaiah, son of Imlah, was imprisoned by Ahab because he prophesied that Ahab and Jehoshaphat, kings of Israel and Judah, would lose a battle in Ramoth-Gilead against the king of Syria (1 Kgs. 22:13-40). Athalia, daughter of Ahab and wife of King Jehoram and mother of Ahaziah, tried to eliminate every challenger to the throne of Judah (2 Kings 11).³³⁴

From the writing prophets, we find a similar struggle between those who spoke and stood for God and those who defied God. The prophets who pronounce judgment were often persecuted. Amos, a prophet from Tekoa sent to Bethel in the north, was threatened by Amaziah,

³³³ As in the case of Cain and Abel, so in the relationship between Saul and David. Envy proves to be a source of murderous desires. Even in Jesus' case, Pilate recognized the envy of the leaders of Israel (ἦδει γὰρ ὅτι διὰ φθόνον παρέδωκεν αὐτόν, Matt. 27:18).

³³⁴ Those with royal power often abused it to benefit themselves and to destroy subjects who opposed them. They transgressed the rules that God gave Moses concerning royalty (Deut. 17:18-20). Robin Routledge, *Old Testament Theology: A Thematic Approach* (Downers Grove, ILL: IVP Academic, 2008), 226, reminds us that "In Israel, God was the lawgiver, and the king had responsibility both to uphold and observe covenant law."

the priest of Bethel (Amos 7:10-12).³³⁵ Micah lamented that the wicked people of Judah told him not to preach against them (Mic. 2:6).³³⁶ In the book of Isaiah, we learn about the suffering servant of the Lord (Isa. 52:12-53:12). The servant is a man whose form becomes unrecognizable, but his sufferings benefit many people because his wounds bring healing to many people (Isa. 53:4-6). The servant of the Lord is oppressed and killed, yet his oppression and death were an offering for the sins of many people. Because of his death, many people will be counted as righteous (Isa. 53:10-12). Here we see the supreme example of an Israelite whose innocent life becomes a ransom for many. This is no mere martyrdom but a plan by God to rescue many people of Israel and the nations through the suffering and death of his chosen servant.³³⁷

Jeremiah suffered persecution from the priests of Anathoth, his own village, and from the priests, prophets, and officials of Jerusalem (Jer. 11:21-23; 20:1-2; 26:1-15; 37:11-21). He lamented often but he did not shrink from his responsibilities as a prophet. God kept his word to

³³⁵ Amaziah the high priest of Bethel is acting on behalf of the king of Israel. M. Daniel Carroll R., *The Book of Amos*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2020), 416: “This confrontation makes more vivid the indictment of the monarchy and its religious construct and is a testimony to how religious leaders, and probably the nation, refused to listen to the true voice of God (2:10-11; 4:6-11; 9:10; cf. 5:18-20; 8:11-12; 9:10).”

³³⁶ According to Mark. S. Gignilliat, *Micah*, ITC (New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2019), 113, Micah is in confrontation with pseudo-prophets who “represent those in positions of leadership or power involved in the activities described in 2:1-5. The Pseudo-prophets turn a blind eye towards their actions and their calamitous effects, and thus deny Micah’s prophetic warnings.”

³³⁷ The identity of the suffering servant is debated. Is this Israel, a remnant in Israel, or an individual in Israel? For Jesus and his followers, Jesus is the suffering servant who life is “poured out” for many (Isa. 53; Matt. 20:20-28; 26:26-30; Mark 10:35-45; 14:22-26; Gal. 1:3-4; 2:20; 1 Cor. 15:3). See William R. Farmer, “Reflections on Isaiah 53 and Christian Origins, in *Jesus and the Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 and Christian Origins*, ed. William H. Bellinger Jr. and William R. Farmer (Eugene, OR: Wopf & Stock, 2009), 260-280.

protect him in the midst of his troubled prophetic ministry in Judah and eventually in Egypt where he was taken against his will (Jer. 1:4-10; 39:11-43:13).³³⁸

During the Babylonian exile, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were thrown into a fiery furnace because they would not bow down to a golden statue (Daniel 3). Daniel was cast into a den of lions because he refused to pray to a human king (Daniel 6). God delivered them to prove his power and faithfulness with the result that the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar and the Persian King Darius gave glory to God.³³⁹

During the Persian period, Esther, Mordecai, and other Jews were threatened by Haman the Agagite who was a confidant of the king (Book of Esther).³⁴⁰ After the exile, Ezra the priest needed a royal decree to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem because Tattenai, a governor, opposed the project (Ezr. 5:3-6:12).³⁴¹ Nehemiah's effort at rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem was met with

³³⁸ Philip Graham Ryken, *Jeremiah and Lamentation: From Sorrow to Hope*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, ILL: Crossway, 2001), 19: "The Rabbis called him "the Weeping Prophet." They said that he began wailing the moment he was born. When Michelangelo painted him on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, he presented him in a posture of despair. He looks like a man who has wept so long that he has no tears left to shed. His face is turned to one side, like a man who has been battered by many blows. His shoulders are hunched forward, weighed down by the sins of Judah. His eyes also are cast down, as if he can no longer bear to see God's people suffer. His hand covers his mouth. Perhaps he has nothing left to say."

³³⁹ In the cases of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, God intervened to rescue them from suffering and a certain death (See Heb. 11:33-34). Not so the heroes of faith in Heb. 11:35-38. Even though God did not always intervene, the heroes of faith were commended for their faith and would receive what was promised in due time (Heb. 11:39-40).

³⁴⁰ According to David G. Firth, *The Message of Esther, God Present but Unseen*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, ILL: InterVarsity, 2010), 63: "Haman takes Mordecai's refusal to prostrate himself as a reason for attacking all Jews. . . . It is an opportunity to reach into the past and settle old scores. Amalek and Israel are old enemies, and Amalek now seems to have the upper hand."

³⁴¹ Tattenai the governor can be excused for his opposition of Ezra since the times were full of political intrigue following the death of King Cyrus and the ensuing struggle for the throne of Persia between Cyrus' son Cambyses and Gaumata of the Magi tribe. Following the death of Cambyses, Darius overcame the rebellion began by Gaumata and claimed the throne for himself. For this narrative, see

opposition by the Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite, Geshem the Arab, and the Ashdodites (Neh. 2:9-10, 19; 4:1-23).³⁴²

The book of Job is concerned with the undeserved suffering of a righteous man (Job 1-2).³⁴³ Job's friends are persuaded that Job is guilty of some sin since God does not punish the innocent. Job rejects that explanation and insists that, though he does not consider himself perfect, his suffering is undeserved. In their discussion they consider the subject of suffering. Job wonders why God allows suffering people to go on living (3:20-23).

Eliphaz the Temanite, in answering Job, wonders why Job, who has counselled others, does not take his own advice (Job. 4:3-6). He admits that “man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward” (Job 5:7) and considers suffering as discipline (Job. 5:17). Bildad the Shuhite is not persuaded of innocent suffering and sees suffering as evidence of sin (8:3-4). He advises Job to seek God's mercy and not to continue pleading innocent (8:5-7). This provokes Job to insist that he is in the right, but because he cannot contend with a powerful God (9:1-14), he will seek God's mercy (9:15-21). In the heat of his anger, Job accuses God of not differentiating between

Knute Larson and Kathy Dahlen, *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*, HOTC (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2005), 61-62.

³⁴² The resistance of Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite, Geshem the Arab, and the Ashdodites would prove Nehemiah's leadership abilities. Smith, *Ezra-Nehemiah Esther*, 111: “Their opposition to Nehemiah's goal of rebuilding the walls would test his ability to persevere in the midst of great opposition, a testing that most people in leadership positions must face when they introduce change that disrupts the status quo of any group.”

³⁴³ The readers of the book of Job know what the human characters in Job do not know, namely the reason why Job suffers. Job is being tested because Satan claims that Job only serves God for the benefits he receives (ἀπεκρίθη δὲ ὁ διάβολος καὶ εἶπεν ἐναντίον τοῦ κυρίου Μὴ δωρεὰν σέβεται Ἰὼβ τὸν κύριον; οὐ σὺ περιέφραξας τὰ ἔξω αὐτοῦ καὶ τὰ ἔσω τῆς οἰκίας αὐτοῦ καὶ τὰ ἔξω πάντων τῶν ὄντων αὐτῷ κύκλω; τὰ ἔργα τῶν χειρῶν αὐτοῦ εὐλόγησας, καὶ τὰ κτήνη αὐτοῦ πολλὰ ἐποίησας ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς. ἀλλὰ ἀπόστειλον τὴν χειρὰ σου καὶ ἅψαι πάντων ὧν ἔχει· εἰ μὴν εἰς πρόσωπόν σε εὐλογῇσει. τότε εἶπεν ὁ κύριος τῷ διαβόλῳ Ἴδού πάντα ὅσα ἐστὶν αὐτῷ δίδωμι ἐν τῇ χειρὶ σου, ἀλλὰ αὐτοῦ μὴ ἄψῃ. καὶ ἐξῆλθεν ὁ διάβολος παρὰ τοῦ κυρίου, Job 1:9-11, LXX). Can a man worship and serve God if God allows him to suffer the loss of property, family, friends, and health?

the guilty and the innocent (9:22-24). Unfortunately for Job, God is not a man that he may be brought to trial (9:31-32). Job, however, goes ahead with his accusation of God (10:22). Zophar the Naamathite is indignant at Job's audacity. It seems to Zophar that Job is forgetting how much wiser God is than man (11:1-12). Job's only hope is to repent and look to God for help (11:13-20). Job does not take kindly to being considered unwise. He in fact believes that even dumb animals will testify on his behalf that God is responsible for his troubles (12:1-11). Job knows God is wise and powerful, but he still wishes to defend his innocence (12:12-13:3).³⁴⁴ He does not appreciate that his friends are trying to defend God with lies and useless proverbs (13:4-12). Job wishes for his friends to be silent as he presents his case to and against God (13:13-14:22).

Job's friends begin a new round of arguments against Job and in God's defense. Their argument is that God makes the wicked suffer and therefore Job's suffering is evidence of his sins (Job 15-31) while Job begs to differ because he knows that he is righteous and the wicked prosper at times. Elihu the Buzite, the youngest of Job's friends, thinks he has something new to say that has not yet been said by his older friends. He criticizes Job and his friends and defends God (Chapters 32-37). Finally, God answers Job, not to defend his own justice, but to question Job about his knowledge of God's dealings with his creation and creatures (38-41). Job ends up admitting his ignorance (42:1-6). God also rebukes Job's three friends for misrepresenting him

³⁴⁴ Job, in chapter 12, speaks from personal experience in opposition to his friends who claim to have wisdom. In their wisdom, they have declared that God is not to blame for Job's trouble and that Job is experiencing divine retribution for something he has done. But as far as Job is concerned, even animals know better. Jerry Boss, *Human Consciousness in the Book of Job: A theological and Psychological Commentary* (New York, NY: T & T Clark, 2010), 80: "In contrast to the miseries which the righteous suffer, the wicked sometimes lead comfortable lives of good fortune and in 12:6 the sense is that robbers are secure in whatever God brings into their hands. From 12:7 to the end of the chapter (and so of this section of Job's speech) Job sets experience against the theoretical structure of the friends' distributive justice. This experience is that God can do anything, and is not bound by the rules set by his friends. Surely they would appreciate this if they would but learn from the beasts, the birds, the earth, and the fish of the sea."

before Job and he defends Job's view of God's dealings (42:7-9). God seems to ignore Elihu even though Elihu defends God's power, knowledge, and independence. The three friends offer the required sacrifice, Job prays for them, and God blesses Job in the end with more than he had in the beginning (42:7-17). The book of Job teaches that God does test righteous people and we should not be quick to condemn those who suffer. Also, sufferers should not presume to fully understand why God permits loss, pain, and suffering.³⁴⁵

In Proverbs, there is a connection between God's or a parent's reproof and a son's need for discipline as the following passages demonstrate. God or the parent are the cause of the suffering for the benefit of the child. The child may perceive discipline as innocent suffering, but God and the parent consider it as necessary for instruction and correction (Prov. 3:11-12; 6:23-24; 10:17; 13:1, 18, 24; 15:32; 19:18; 22:15; 23:13-14; 29:14, 17).

Righteous suffering in the Greek Period

In the Greek period, the Seleucid Antiochus IV tried to spread the Greek way of life among the Jews. The Maccabees fought to free the Jews from Hellenism. The Maccabean revolt against Hellenists was led by Mattathias, a priest from the village of Modein, and his five sons. The sons' names were John, Simon, Judah, Eleazar, and Jonathan. This family, also called the Hasmoneans, freed Jews from Hellenism, cleansed the temple, established the feast of Hanukkah, and ruled Judah until the coming of the Romans. Members of this family of priests suffered as they fought back against unrighteousness in Israel.³⁴⁶

³⁴⁵ In Hebrews, suffering is beneficial for Jesus as the savior, high priest, pioneer, and perfecter of faith, and for his followers as divine education that prepares the family of God for a life of peace and holiness (Heb. 2:9-11; 12:2-15).

³⁴⁶ 1 Macc. 1:1-2:70. See Jonathan A. Goldstein, *1 Maccabees: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 189-242.

In 2 Maccabees, we are told about seven brothers who would not compromise their Jewish religion and were tortured and murdered in front of their mother. The mother and the boys encouraged each other to remain steadfast to the amazement and fury of King Antiochus. The purpose of 2 Maccabees was to encourage the Greek speaking Jews of Egypt to remain faithful even if it meant a painful death.³⁴⁷

In Qumran, a desert community contrasted itself with the corrupt priesthood in the temple at Jerusalem. The high priest in Jerusalem (the wicked priest) persecuted the leader of the Qumran community (the teacher of righteousness).³⁴⁸ The members of the community considered themselves the people of Melchizedek, the prince of light, who struggles against Belial, the prince of darkness and his followers (11Q13, col. II, lines 4-16). The members of the community had left the defiled camp of Israel in order to live righteous lives while they awaited the final confrontation between light and darkness.³⁴⁹

Philo of Alexandria on Suffering

Philo discusses the relationship between God and Suffering.³⁵⁰ Philo defends the character of God by saying that God is not a tyrant but a kind king and a father in *On Providence*

³⁴⁷ See especially 2 Macc. 7. Jonathan A. Goldstein, *II Maccabees: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1983), 289-317.

³⁴⁸ (*1QpHab*, col. 11, lines 2-10). Tov, E. ed., *Dead Sea Scrolls Electronic Library Non-Biblical Texts*. Leiden: Brill, 2016, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2542-3525_dsselbt_DSS_EL_NBT_1qphab, accessed September 28, 2022).

³⁴⁹ 11Q13, col. II, lines 4-16.

³⁵⁰ On Philo of Alexandria and his writings, see “Philo of Alexandria,” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, (<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/philo/>, accessed March 3, 2023). For a summary on Philo and suffering, see Oliver Leaman, *Evil and Suffering in Jewish Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 36, https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-cambridge-core/content/view/800E380E24149752E78C8AEBF9F52128/9780511585685c2_p33-47_CBO.pdf/philo.pdf, accessed September 28, 2022). Philo’s *De Providentia* can be found in Loeb

(*De Providentia*), Fragment 2, 2-3. He explains why the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer. He speaks of God as a father who pampers badly behaved children but deprives well behaved children (*De Providentia*, Frag. 2, 5). Philo considers tyranny or disasters necessities when evil needs to be eliminated. In such events, innocent suffering appears to be collateral damage since suffering brought about by tyranny and calamity does not distinguish between the guilty and the innocent (*De Providentia*, Frag. 2, 41). Philo is not consistent in that he does not always blame God for natural catastrophes, but at times finds such to be accompaniments of natural events (*De Providentia*, Frag. 2, 53). Since God is responsible for the whole world, he may have to inconvenience or cause suffering to some people for the benefit of the majority (*De Providentia*, Frag. 2, 44). Philo allegorizes on the story of Cain and Abel in his work *Quod deterius potiori insidiari soleat* (*That the Worse Attacks the Better*). Cain represents self-centered and self-loving people while Abel stands for those who love God (*det*, X [32], [34]).³⁵¹ People who are self-centered are not exempt from suffering because they too are subject to the vulnerability of the senses (seeing, smelling, hearing, tasting, touch, organs of speech, and organs of generation) (*det*, XXVI [99]). Wise people, however, have pure senses (*det*, XLVII [173]). A God-centered person pursues virtue and wisdom, and the result is present possession of happiness and joy, or hope, that is, the expectation of a future possession. But the self-centered person pursues pleasure of the senses and folly in search of a fleeting happiness (*det*, XVII [60]).³⁵² Self-

Classical Library, https://www.loebclassics.com/view/philo_judaeus-providence/1941/pb_LCL363.455.xml?rskey=3AtK9e&result=22 (accessed September 28, 2022). See also Early Jewish Writings (<https://www.earlyjewishwritings.com/text/philo/book39.html>, accessed September 28, 2022).

³⁵¹ Charles Duke Yonge's translation of Philo's Work, *The Worse is Wont to Attack the Better*, in Early Christian Writings, (<http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/yonge/book7.html>, accessed March 12, 2023).

centered people cause suffering to the God-centered people, at times to the point of torture ((*det*, XLVIII [175-176]). But God-centered people endure suffering as education but the self-centered suffer and live in fear of pain and suffering (*det*, XXXII [119]). God-centered people endure suffering, punishment, and correction because they know it is for their good (*det*, IV [9]; XV [49]; XL [145]; XL [146]). It is more profitable to endure suffering than to be abandoned by God (*det*, XXXIX [142]; XXXIX [143]). In this work Philo does not attribute to God the source of evils in the world but puts the blame on human beings (*det*, XXXII [122]).

In *de praemiis et poenis* (*On Reward and Punishments*) Philo agrees with Moses' teaching in the Torah that good people are rewarded (or blessed) while evil people are punished (or cursed). F. H. Colson gives a summary of this work.³⁵³ In it, Philo describes how Moses structured the Torah, the rewards that were given to such individuals as Enosh (man), Enoch and Noah (hopefulness, repentance, and justice), Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Self-taught, Taught, and Practiser), and Moses (kingship, lawgiving, priesthood, and prophecy). He then moves on to the rewards for the families of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Israel). When Philo discusses punishments, he begins with Cain (who is punished with continual death, grief, and fear) and moves on to the rebellion of the Levites against the priests. The reward for those who keep the law are victory in battle, the taming of wild animals, wealth, health, and long life (1-126). Philo gives a long list of the curses that follow disobedience to the law (127-161). The curses are not the final word for there is a future restoration to land and blessings if Israel truly repents (162-

³⁵² For Philo, true joy and happiness are intimately connected to virtue and wisdom and not with wealth or physical well-being. See *det*, XXIII [85]; XXXII [120]; XXXIII [124]; XXXIII [125]; XXXVII [137]; XXXVIII [140].

³⁵³ *Philo*, vol. 8, pp. 309-311. See Philo, *On Rewards and Punishments*, Early Jewish Writings, <http://www.earlyjewishwritings.com/text/philo/book32.html> (accessed March 13, 2023).

172). The list of curses demonstrates Philo's understanding of suffering in the Jewish Bible, just as Moses describes the curses in Leviticus and Deuteronomy as consequences for disobedience. But since there is hope for the future, they can be viewed as educative for the nation if the Israelites learn their lesson and return to God in sincere obedience. Retributive punishment can be a means to education.³⁵⁴

Philo, in *Flaccum* (*Against Flaccus*), details the innocent suffering of Alexandrian Jews under the governorship of Aulus Avillius Flaccus in the late 30s A.D. Flaccus allowed the Greeks of Alexandria to mock the Jews, to attack them, to drive them out of certain quarters, and to loot their homes. Eventually, Flaccus was removed from office and exiled. Philo gives gruesome details of what happened to the Jews and seems to gloat at Flaccus' eventual demise. The troubles of the Jews and the removal of Flaccus illustrate that even though the innocent suffer, God watches over his people and punishes those who seek to harm them.³⁵⁵

We can conclude that, for Philo, people suffer for various reasons, with different attitudes, and with different consequences. There are those who live without reference to God and their end is to be utterly abandoned by God. There are those whom God treats as his children and their suffering is beneficial. The author of Hebrews agrees with Philo in that there is a day of reckoning for those who reject God and there is a good end for those whom God accepts as his

³⁵⁴ For more on Philo, see, *On the Birth of Abel and the sacrifices Offered by Him and by His Brother Cain*, Early Christian Writings, <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/yonge/book6.html> (accessed August 21, 2023); *On Joseph*, Early Christian Writings, <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/yonge/book23.html> (accessed August 21, 2023); For Philo's significance for early Christians, see Jennifer Otto, *Philo of Alexandria and the Construction of Jewishness in Early Christian Writings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

³⁵⁵ See the introduction to Philo, in *Flaccum*, Loeb Classical Library, https://www.loebclassics.com/view/philo_judaeus-flaccus/1941/pb_LCL363.295.xml (accessed August 31, 2023). For more on the troubles of the Alexandrian Jews under the reign of Emperor Gaius Caesar Augustus Germanicus (also known as Caligula), see Philo, *On the Embassy to Gaius*, XV11[119]-XX [138] in Early Christian Writings, <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/yonge/book40.html> (accessed August 31, 2023).

children. The author of Hebrews exhorts his audience to fix their eyes on the Son of God and to persevere in faith because God is treating them as his children.

Flavius Josephus on the Suffering of the Jews

Josephus, in *The Wars of the Jews*, relates the history of the Jews from the days of Antiochus Epiphanes to the capture of Jerusalem and the fortress of Masada by the Romans. In this history, he recounts the sufferings of the Jews caused by the tyranny of the Greeks, by their own leaders, and finally by the Romans under General Titus Flavius Vespasianus. Josephus later wrote a more comprehensive history (*Antiquities of the Jews*) that began with the creation account of Genesis and ended with the time of Gessius Florus, who was the procurator of Judea and who is blamed for the rebellion of the Jews against the Romans.³⁵⁶

Josephus (*Antiquities of the Jews*) retells the Bible from Genesis onward. He mentions the murder of righteous Abel by wicked Cain. Abel “was the younger, was a lover of righteousness; and believing that God was present at all his actions, he excelled in virtue; and his employment was that of a shepherd.” Covetous Cain “was not only very wicked in other respects but was wholly intent upon getting; and he first contrived to plough the ground.” Cain was upset that God accepted Abel’s sacrifice but not his. God accepted the sacrifice of Abel because Abel sacrificed that which grew naturally, but Cain was rejected because he sacrificed that which he forced the ground to produce.³⁵⁷ In this event, Josephus teaches that the character of a person matters as much as the nature of the sacrifice. Noah was a righteous man in a wicked generation:

³⁵⁶ For *The Wars of the Jews*, see Project Gutenberg, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/2850/2850-h/2850-h.htm>, accessed September 28, 2022). For *Antiquities of the Jews*, see Project Gutenberg, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/2848/2848-h/2848-h.htm>, accessed September 28, 2022).

³⁵⁷ *Antiquities*, Book 1, Chapter 2, 1.

Noah was very uneasy at what they did; and being displeased at their conduct, persuaded them to change their dispositions and their acts for the better: but seeing they did not yield to him, but were slaves to their wicked pleasures, he was afraid they would kill him, together with his wife and children, and those they had married; so he departed out of that land.³⁵⁸

Joseph was a righteous man who was hated by his brothers out of envy:

Now these brethren rejoiced as soon as they saw their brother coming to them, not indeed as at the presence of a near relation, or as at the presence of one sent by their father, but as at the presence of an enemy, and one that by Divine Providence was delivered into their hands; and they already resolved to kill him, and not let slip the opportunity that lay before them.³⁵⁹

The Israelites were enslaved by the Egyptians out of envy:

Now it happened that the Egyptians grew delicate and lazy, as to pains-taking, and gave themselves up to other pleasures, and in particular to the love of gain. They also became very ill-affected towards the Hebrews, as touched with envy at their prosperity; for when they saw how the nation of the Israelites flourished, and were become eminent already in plenty of wealth, which they had acquired by their virtue and natural love of labor, they thought their increase was to their own detriment.³⁶⁰

David was endangered by King Saul because Saul envied David for receiving more praise than the king:

he began to be afraid and suspicious of David. Accordingly he removed him from the station he was in before, for he was his armor-bearer, which, out of fear, seemed to him much too near a station for him; and so he made him captain over a thousand, and bestowed on him a post better indeed in itself, but, as he thought, more for his own security; for he had a mind to send him against the enemy, and into battles, as hoping he would be slain in such dangerous conflicts.³⁶¹

Elijah was threatened by wicked Queen Jezebel because he had slain her prophets:

When Jezebel, the wife of Ahab, understood what signs Elijah had wrought, and how he had slain her prophets, she was angry, and sent messengers to him, and by them

³⁵⁸ Ibid., Chapter 3, 1.

³⁵⁹ Ibid.

³⁶⁰ *Antiquities*, Book 2, Chapter 9, 1.

³⁶¹ *Antiquities*, Book 6, Chapter 10, 1.

threatened to kill him, as he had destroyed her prophets. At this Elijah was affrighted, and fled to the city called Beersheba, which is situated at the utmost limits of the country belonging to the tribe of Judah, towards the land of Edom; and there he left his servant, and went away into the desert.³⁶²

The Davidic line was nearly exterminated by wicked Athaliah:

Now when Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab, heard of the death of her brother Joram, and of her son Ahaziah, and of the royal family, she endeavored that none of the house of David might be left alive, but that the whole family might be exterminated, that no king might arise out of it afterward.³⁶³

Daniel's kinsmen were envied by Babylonian officials, and they were cast into a furnace for refusing to worship a golden statue:

So these men were convicted, and cast immediately into the fire, but were saved by Divine Providence, and after a surprising manner escaped death, for the fire did not touch them; and I suppose that it touched them not, as if it reasoned with itself, that they were cast into it without any fault of theirs, and that therefore it was too weak to burn the young men when they were in it. This was done by the power of God, who made their bodies so far superior to the fire, that it could not consume them. This it was which recommended them to the king as righteous men, and men beloved of God, on which account they continued in great esteem with him.³⁶⁴

Jews were stopped from rebuilding Jerusalem because the hostile governors of Syria, Phoenicia, Ammon, Moab, and Samaria implored wicked Cambyses, son of Cyrus, to forbid it citing the possibility of Jewish rebellion. Cambyses responded as follows:

I gave order that the books of my forefathers should be searched into, and it is there found that this city hath always been an enemy to kings, and its inhabitants have raised seditions and wars. We also are sensible that their kings have been powerful and tyrannical, and have exacted tribute of Ceesyria and Phoenicia. Wherefore I gave order, that the Jews shall not be permitted to build that city, lest such mischief as they used to bring upon kings be greatly augmented.³⁶⁵

³⁶² *Antiquities*, Book 8, Chapter 13, 7.

³⁶³ *Antiquities*, Book 9, Chapter 7, 1.

³⁶⁴ *Antiquities*, Book 10, Chapter 10, 5.

³⁶⁵ *Antiquities*, Book 11, Chapter 2, 2.

Nehemiah, because of the persecution of the Jews by enemies who did not want Jerusalem to be rebuilt, procured a bodyguard, and armed those who were building the wall:

But now when the Ammonites, and Moabites, and Samaritans, and all that inhabited Celesyria, heard that the building went on apace, they took it heinously, and proceeded to lay snares for them, and to hinder their intentions. They also slew many of the Jews, and sought how they might destroy Nehemiah himself, by hiring some of the foreigners to kill him. They also put the Jews in fear, and disturbed them, and spread abroad rumors, as if many nations were ready to make an expedition against them, by which means they were harassed, and had almost left off the building. But none of these things could deter Nehemiah from being diligent about the work; he only set a number of men about him as a guard to his body, and so unweariedly persevered therein, and was insensible of any trouble, out of his desire to perfect this work ... He also gave orders that the builders should keep their ranks, and have their armor on while they were building.³⁶⁶

Mordecai the Jew refused to worship Haman the Amalekite, who was accustomed to receiving worship from men. Haman decided to destroy not only Mordecai but also the Jews:

When Haman observed this, he inquired whence he came; and when he understood that he was a Jew, he had indignation at him, and said within himself, that whereas the Persians, who were free men, worshipped him, this man, who was no better than a slave, does not vouchsafe to do so. And when he desired to punish Mordecai, he thought it too small a thing to request of the king that he alone might be punished; he rather determined to abolish the whole nation, for he was naturally an enemy to the Jews, because the nation of the Amalekites, of which he was; had been destroyed by them.³⁶⁷

The Jews were forced to adopt pagan ways by Antiochus Epiphanes, but Mattathias, a priest from the village of Modin, and his five sons resisted:

Now this Mattathias lamented to his children the sad state of their affairs, and the ravage made in the city, and the plundering of the temple, and the calamities the multitude were under; and he told them that it was better for them to die for the laws of their country, than to live so ingloriously as they then did . . . So Mattathias got a great army about him, and overthrew their idol altars, and slew those that broke the laws, even all that he could get under his power; for many of them were dispersed among the nations round about them for fear of him. He also commanded that those boys which were not yet circumcised

³⁶⁶ *Antiquities*, Chapter 5, 8.

³⁶⁷ *Antiquities*, Book 11, Chapter 6, 5.

should be circumcised now; and he drove those away that were appointed to hinder such their circumcision.³⁶⁸

Jesus was crucified by Pilate because some leaders of the Jews suggested it:

Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man; for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. He was [the] Christ. And when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him; for he appeared to them alive again the third day; as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him. And the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day.³⁶⁹

James, the brother of Jesus, was executed by the younger Ananus, the high priest who was appointed instead of his father Joseph, the elder Ananus. Ananus did not even wait for the new procurator to arrive:

Festus was now dead, and Albinus was but upon the road; so he assembled the sanhedrim of judges, and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James, and some others, [or, some of his companions]; and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned: but as for those who seemed the most equitable of the citizens, and such as were the most uneasy at the breach of the laws, they disliked what was done.³⁷⁰

The Jews suffered greatly under Gessius Florus, the procurator who replaced Albinus. Even though Albinus was wicked, Florus was worse, and he was a major cause of the hostility Jews felt toward the Romans before war broke out:

This Florus was so wicked, and so violent in the use of his authority, that the Jews took Albinus to have been [comparatively] their benefactor; so excessive were the mischiefs that he brought upon them. For Albinus concealed his wickedness, and was careful that it might not be discovered to all men; but Gessius Florus, as though he had been sent on purpose to show his crimes to everybody, made a pompous ostentation of them to our nation, as never omitting any sort of violence, nor any unjust sort of punishment; for he was not to be moved by pity, and never was satisfied with any degree of gain that came in

³⁶⁸ *Antiquities*, Book 12, Chapter 6, 1, 2.

³⁶⁹ *Antiquities*, Book 18, Chapter 3, 3.

³⁷⁰ *Antiquities*, Book 20, Chapter 9, 1.

his way; nor had he any more regard to great than to small acquisitions, but became a partner with the robbers themselves.³⁷¹

In *Antiquities*, Josephus shows how often righteous or innocent people suffered because of the envy and hostility of the wicked. The righteous often did not retaliate. In the time of Nehemiah, the Jews who returned from exile armed themselves and were ready to defend themselves even as they continued to build the wall of Jerusalem. On several instances, however, the Jews defended themselves. For example, the Jews of Persia in the times of Mordecai and of the Maccabees in the time of the Syrian Greeks went on the offensive.

Righteous Suffering in Various Texts of the Second Temple Period

Charles Talbert finds examples of suffering as “divine education” or “moral and spiritual development” in such texts as “Wisdom of Solomon 3:5-6; 11:9; Sir 2:1-6; 4:17; 2 Macc 6:12-17; 7:33; 10:4; Psalms of Solomon 13:7-10; 18:4-5; and 2 Baruch 13:10.”³⁷² Wisdom of Solomon 3:1-8 is the larger context of 3:5-6. Those God chastises in this life will be greatly rewarded in the next.³⁷³ Wisdom of Solomon 11:4-10 concerns the different ways God dealt with Israel and the Egyptians at the time of the Exodus. The Egyptians thirsted because God turned their water into blood. For the Israelite, God mercifully assuaged their thirst by providing water

³⁷¹ *Antiquities*, Book 20, Chapter 11, 1.

³⁷² Charles H. Talbert, *Learning Through Suffering: The Educational Value of Suffering in the New Testament and in Its Milieu* (Waco Texas: Baylor University Press, 2018), 10. N. Clayton Croy, *Endurance in Suffering* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 160-161, gives the following as Jewish texts on non-punitive suffering, what I call innocent or righteous suffering: Wisdom 3:1-12; 11:1-14; 12:19-22 Sirach 2:1-6; 4:17 Deuteronomy 8:2-5 Exodus 16:4; 4 Macc. 10:10; 11:20 Josephus, *Ant.* 3.13-16; Philo, *Vit. Mos.* 1.191-9; *De Prov.* 55; *De Congr.* 157-80 *De Cher.* 77-82; Words of Heavenly Lights (4Q 504, 3); *b. Ber.* 5a; *b. Hagiga* 4b-5a; *b. Sabb.* 55b; Psalm 17:3; 26:1-3; 66:8-12; 105:16-19; Judith 8:25-7; Wisdom 3:6. Some works questioned the punitive view of suffering (Job and Ecclesiastes). Some punitive suffering was considered as beneficial to others, implying that the sufferer was innocent (Isaiah 52:13-53:12; 4 Macc. 1:11; 6:28-9; 17:21-2).

³⁷³ Swift Edgar and Angela M. Kinney, eds. *The Vulgate Bible, vol.3, Poetical Books (Douay-Rheims Translation)* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 763-766.

from a rock.³⁷⁴ Sirach 2:1-6 teaches God's people how to deal with temptation and trouble. They must endure patiently, faithfully, and cheerfully because God is refining them as gold through the fire.³⁷⁵ Sir 4:17-18 reveals how wisdom treats him who love her. She tests him to prove him and if he passes the test, she rewards him.³⁷⁶ 2 Maccabees 6:12-17 explains why God punishes Israel so often. God preserves Israel by constant discipline while he patiently waits to destroy wicked nations.³⁷⁷ 2 Macc. 7:33 is spoken in the context of the speech of a young Jewish man who defiantly tells King Antiochus that he is not afraid of torment because he knows God's plan for his faithful ones and for the wicked king.³⁷⁸ 2 Macc. 10:4 is a prayer of the Maccabees after they had cleansed and rededicated the temple. They confess that the temple was defiled because of the sins of Israel. Their hope is that God should never again punish them by means of the Gentiles.³⁷⁹ In Psalms of Solomon 13:7-10, we learn that God disciplines his children to remove their sin whereas he judges sinners to destroy them.³⁸⁰ In Psalms of Solomon 18:4-5, we are taught that God disciplines his children to remove their folly, to purify them, and to prepare them for the future coming of the Messiah.³⁸¹ The larger context of 2 Baruch 13:10 is an explanation

³⁷⁴ Ibid., 795-798.

³⁷⁵ Ibid., 849.

³⁷⁶ Ibid., 859.

³⁷⁷ Angela M. Kinney, ed. *The Vulgate Bible, vol.5, The Minor Prophetic Books and Maccabees (Douay Rheims Translation)* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 481.

³⁷⁸ Ibid., 491.

³⁷⁹ Ibid., 509.

³⁸⁰ <http://qbible.com/brenton-septuagint/psalms-of-solomon/13.html> (accessed February 16, 2023).

³⁸¹ <http://qbible.com/brenton-septuagint/psalms-of-solomon/18.html> (accessed February 16, 2023).

of why Zion was devastated. It was revealed to Baruch that God is just, and Israel was punished for her sins. However, the punishment was aimed at her sanctification.³⁸²

Righteous Suffering in the New Testament

King Herod killed the children of Bethlehem because he was angry that the wise men did not come back to reveal the identity of the Christ child, the king of the Jews (Matt. 2:1-18).³⁸³ Joseph and Mary had to flee to Egypt to hide from Herod and even when they returned from Egypt, they were not safe in Judea, the territory controlled by Herod's son Archelaus (Matt. 2:22).³⁸⁴

John the Baptist announced the coming of the one who “will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire” (αὐτὸς ὑμᾶς βαπτίσει ἐν Πνεύματι Ἁγίῳ καὶ πυρὶ), baptized Jesus, and was arrested not long after that (Matt. 3:11; 4:12). John was imprisoned because he rebuked Herod the tetrarch for taking his brother Philip's wife, Herodias. Herod executed John in prison to

³⁸² 2 Baruch, Early Jewish Writings, <https://www.earlyjewishwritings.com/2baruch.html> (accessed August 24, 2023).

³⁸³ Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, ILL: IVP Academic, 1993), 50-51: “Because the only natural route by which the Magi could have returned was through Jerusalem (2:12), Herod knew that the Magi had purposely avoided returning to him. He was known for acts of massacre described here. A young popular competitor, a high priest, had a “drowning accident” in a pool that was only a few feet deep. Enraged at his favorite wife, Herod had her strangled; he was deceived into having two innocent sons executed; and on his deathbed Herod had another son executed (admittedly a guilty one). Although probably fictitious, a purported comment of the emperor is appropriate: Better to be one of Herod's pigs than his son. Josephus reports that Herod ordered nobles executed at his death to ensure mourning when he died; they were instead released at his death, producing celebration.”

³⁸⁴ Ibid., 51: “Archelaus, one of Herod's surviving sons, exhibited his father's worst flaws and was a bad ruler. That his mother was a Samaritan surely also failed to commend him to his Jewish subjects. His rule was unstable, and the Romans ultimately deposed him and banished him to Gaul (France).”

satisfy a request of Herodias' daughter at the instigation of Herodias who resented John (Matt. 14:1-12).³⁸⁵

Jesus taught his disciples to expect hatred and persecution for his name's sake (Matt. 10:16-25; 16:24-26). He exhorted them not to fear but to continue following him even if it meant being rejected by their families. They were to continue loving Jesus and expecting their reward from him (Matt. 10:26-42). Even though Jesus was popular among the common people, he expected opposition, persecution and eventual execution from Pharisees, Sadducees, elders, priests, and scribes (Matt. 16:1, 21; 17:22-23; 20:17-19; 21:23-27; 22:23-33; 26:1-5, 47-67; 27:1-2, 11-56).³⁸⁶

Jesus predicted not only his own suffering but also that of his followers whose suffering he compared to the murder of all the righteous people from Abel to Zechariah son of Barachiah (Matt. 23:34-36). Jesus was betrayed by Judas, denied by Peter, and forsaken by his disciples (Matt. 26:14-16, 30-35, 47-50, 69-75). Jesus knew what suffering he must endure before he died but he also knew that God would raise him from the dead (Matt. 26:30-32). In Matthew, then, we see that Jesus was aware of those who opposed him and expected the worst from them, yet he moved forward in expectation of vindication after death.

³⁸⁵ The Herodian family was famous for marital confusion. Herodias was the wife of Herod Philip and a niece of Herod Antipas, who had married the Nabatean princess, whose father was King Aretas. Herodias was the daughter of Aristobulus, who was a son of Herod the Great. In essence, the relationship between Antipas and Herodias was incestuous and condemned by the Law (Lev. 18:16; 20:21). For these details see Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, PNTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 370.

³⁸⁶ With regard to Pharisees and Sadducees, Keener, *Bible Background*, 89, says: "The Pharisees and Sadducees differed on most matters. The Pharisees had great popular support, whereas the Sadducees held political power. Together they could make a dangerous team." Concerning the elders and chief priest and scribes, Morris, *Matthew*, 428, informs us: "The conjunction is a comprehensive term for the Jewish leadership, and the single article that precedes the list classes them as a united group. The conjunction can scarcely be anything other than the Sanhedrin, the supreme legislative body among the Jews."

In Luke, Jesus explained that suffering was not necessarily evidence of the sufferers' great sinfulness:

Now on the same occasion there were some present who reported to Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. And Jesus said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were greater sinners than all other Galileans because they suffered this fate? I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. Or do you suppose that those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them were worse culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem? I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." (Luke 13:1–5).³⁸⁷

The followers of Jesus were transformed from people who were afraid of Jewish leaders to people who were willing to confront anyone and everyone with the gospel. This transformation was caused by the bodily appearance and teachings of Jesus after his resurrection and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost (Luke 24; John 20-21; Acts 1-4). The now emboldened disciples were willing to suffer just as Jesus had suffered. They refused to obey the Jewish leaders who order them to stop speaking and preaching about Jesus (Acts. 4:17-20, 23-31; 5:27-42). The martyrdom of Stephen and the persecution of the church that ensued did not stop the followers of Jesus from preaching (Acts 7-8). When Saul the persecutor was confronted by Jesus on the road to Damascus, he was transformed into Paul the apostle (Acts 9). When Herod executed James the brother of John and imprisoned Peter (Acts 12), this did not stop the preaching of the gospel. When certain Jews followed Paul all over Asia Minor trying to discredit him and have him killed, the gospel kept on spreading among Jews of the Diaspora and among Gentiles (Acts 13-14; 16-19). When Paul was arrested in Jerusalem, it became an opportunity to preach to a crowd and to confront the Sanhedrin (Acts 21-23). When Paul was safely delivered to

³⁸⁷ Jesus, rather than blame the victims for their supposed sins, deals with the more tragic end of any person who does not repent. Darrell L. Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, BECNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1996), 1206: "the issue is not when death will happen or why, but avoiding a terminal fate with even greater consequences. Only repentance will prevent the death that lasts . . . Without a change of view about Jesus, a black cloud of death hovers over all. This tragedy makes evident the fragile character of life. Jesus issues a call to repent, for a disaster looms for the unresponsive."

Caesarea for trial, he turned his trial into a proclamation of the gospel, even challenging his judges to consider becoming Christians (Acts 24-26). When Paul was stranded on the island of Malta, he had an opportunity to minister to the native people of Malta (Acts 27). When Paul finally arrived in Rome and was under house arrest, he took time to preach to all who came to visit him, both Jews and Gentiles (Acts 28). The book of Acts portrays the sufferings of the followers of Jesus as a consequence of their faithfulness to Jesus and the gospel.³⁸⁸

Peter, in his first epistle, considers suffering for Christ a blessing (1 Pet. 3:13-17), and reminds his audience that Jesus also suffered to benefit others (1 Pet. 3:18; 4:1-2; 12-19). Paul, in his letters, often calls attention to the suffering he and others go through because of their faithfulness to the gospel.³⁸⁹ In the epistle to the Thessalonians, he recalls their affliction when they received the message of the gospel:

And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all believers in Macedonia and Achaia (1 Thess. 1:6-7).

He reminds them of how he suffered in Philippi before coming to Thessalonica (2:1-2). In 2 Thessalonians, he applauds them for their love and endurance in the midst of persecution, and he promises them a future vindication of God when Jesus comes to judge those who oppose the gospel (1:4-10). Paul, in his letters to the Philippians and Colossian mentions his sufferings for

³⁸⁸ In Acts, the Holy Spirit is credited with enabling the followers of Jesus to endure suffering and to boldly proclaim the gospel in spite of great persecution. Donald A. Hagner, *The New Testament: A Historical and Theological Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 327, call the church age the era of the Holy Spirit: “The new time frame of the kingdom of God, the era of the church, is supremely the era of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is indispensable to the story of Acts—the birth, growth, and life of the church. The new era of the kingdom, dependent on the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, is the era of the outpouring of the Spirit upon all without distinction.”

³⁸⁹ Whatever differences existed between Peter (the apostle to the Jews) and Paul (the apostle to the Gentiles), they both agreed about the need to preach the gospel of Christ and the certainty of persecution for preaching the gospel. They both saw present and future benefit for enduring suffering for Christ’s sake (cf. Acts 15; Galatians 2; 1 Peter 4; Romans 5).

the gospel. In Philippians, he says that his imprisonment has resulted in more preaching of the gospel (Phil. 1:7, 12-18). In Col. 1:24-26, he rejoices in his troubles since he sees how they benefit the Colossians.

In Romans, Paul says that suffering has benefits:

Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us (Rom. 5:3-5).

In Romans 8, Paul compares current suffering with future glory (8:18) and declares that nothing can separate the followers of Jesus from the love of God (8:35-39). In 2 Timothy, Paul reminds Timothy of his sufferings and then adds that those who wish to live a godly life will be persecuted by non-believers (3:10-13). In Galatians, Paul reminds the audience how they bore with his physical suffering (Gal 4:13-14) and encourages them to bear each other's burdens (6:2). Paul's most detailed description of sufferings in his missionary journeys is found in the second letter to the Corinthians. He says:

But we have this treasure in jars of clay, showing that the surpassing power belongs to God not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our bodies. For we who live are always given to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you (2 Cor. 4:7-12).

Paul gives a long list of specific trials and persecutions that he has endured. He worked long hours, was often in prison, was beaten frequently, was shipwrecked thrice, was always in danger by land and by sea, was often hungry and thirsty, was always heavily burdened by the needs of others, and was being hunted down by hostile people (2 Cor. 11:16-33).³⁹⁰ These troubles were

³⁹⁰ Keener, *Bible Background*, 511: "Aristocrats typically boasted in their heritage, their accomplishments and so forth; but they did not normally boast in their sufferings. Some philosophers listed the sufferings they endured as a model of emulation. (In other contexts, lists of sufferings could

already predicted by Jesus when Paul first became a follower of Jesus (Acts 9:15-16). James sees value in enduring suffering (James 1:1-4, 12) and also encourages followers of Jesus to endure suffering like Job and the prophets of old (James 5:7-11).

Educational Suffering in the Greco-Roman Environment

In the Greco-Roman world, suffering was often considered as divine education. God, as a father, trained his children to endure suffering, disasters, and evils. The student may have found the lessons painful, but they produced virtue. God, out of love for his children, hardened them for their own good. However, as in some biblical texts (Job 9:22; 12:6; 21:7, 17; Ecclesiastes 8:14), God was seemingly implicated in unjust suffering.³⁹¹

Solon (born c. 630 B.C. - died c. 560 B.C.), a statesman and a poet, taught that virtue is superior to wealth (Plut. Sol. 3.2).³⁹² Solon valued virtue above wealth because virtue lasts but

prove one's devotion to another cause; e.g., in a romance novel by Chariton, Leucippe's letter recounts what she suffered for her beloved Clitophon.) But those list sufferings to prove endurance do so to boast in their strength, not in their weakness. For Paul, if one boast, one should boast in the values of the kingdom (10:17), humbling oneself for God's glory."

³⁹¹ Charles Talbert (*Learning Through Suffering*), 17-20, has the following example of "Sufferings as Divine Education": Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, 177; Sophocles, *Oedipus at Colonus*, 7; Herodotus, *History*, 1.207; Plato, *Republic*, 380B, Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, 5.1.18; Dio Chrysostom, *Oration*, 8; Seneca, *On Providence*, 1.5; 2.5-6; 4.5; 4:7; Pseudo-Theano, *Letter to Eubule*; Epictetus, *Discourses*, 1.xxiv.1-3; 1.xxix.33; 3.x.7-8. N. Clayton Croy, *Endurance in Suffering* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 161, considers non-punitive suffering found in such texts as Solon, Frag. 15; Theognis 377-8 383-5; Herodotus 1.207; Aeschylus, *Agam.* 177-8, 250-1; *Eumenides* 520-1; Sophocles, *Oedipus Coloneus* 7-8; *Antigone* 1350-3; *Philoctetes* 534-8; Democritus, Frag. 182; Plato, *Republic* 379a-380d; Diodorus Siculus 15.48.4; Dionysius of Halicarnassus 8.33.3; Appian of Alexander 12.13.87; Pseudo-Aeschines, Epist. 5.4; Aesop, Fables 134, 223; Seneca, *Ad Helviam* 2.3, Epist. 94.74, 110.3; *Ad Marciam* 5.5; *De Providentia*; Epictetus 3.22.57; 24.113 Musonius Rufus, Essays 6 and 7; Marcus Aurelius 2.11; 6.36. For more on educational suffering in Greco-Roman texts, see Appendix 5.

³⁹² Plutarch, *Life of Solon* (Plut. Sol. 3.2), https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Plutarch/Lives/Solon*.html (accessed April 20, 2023). Loeb Classical Library, https://www.loebclassics.com/view/solon-fragments/1999/pb_LCL258.137.xml (accessed February 17, 2023).

wealth is ephemeral. The implication was that it was better to suffer in a life of poverty with virtue than to enjoy a life of wealth which lacked virtue. Plutarch tells us that Solon, being a merchant, was wealthy and enjoyed a good life, but he would not attempt to gain wealth unjustly.³⁹³

Theognis was a Greek elegiac poet who lived in the 6th cen. B.C. He, like Job and Ecclesiastes, was not so quick to exonerate God (Theognis 373-400). He lamented that Zeus, son of Cronus, esteemed the wicked and the righteous equally. He observed that unjust men became rich and those who love justice became poor. Poverty, Theognis claimed, caused even good people to do bad things. It seemed unfair that innocent people should suffer, and Zeus was implicated since he had divine power, knowledge, and immortality and yet he allowed injustice.³⁹⁴ Theognis entertained the view that the gods were the ultimate cause of both good and bad (Theognis 133-142). He was especially concerned about poverty and exile as evils since even one's friends forsook the poor and the exiled (Theognis 173-178, 209-210, 332).³⁹⁵

³⁹³ Plutarch, *Life of Solon* (Plut. Sol. 2.3), https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Plutarch/Lives/Solon*.html (accessed April 20, 2023). Charlotte Schubert in Oxford Bibliographies (<https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com>, accessed April 20, 2023), gives us a summary of Solon's life. For more on Solon, see Ivan Mortimer Linforth, *Solon the Athenian* (Andesite Press, 2017); Josine H. Blok, Andre Pierre, and M. H. Lardinois, eds., *Solon of Athens: New Historical and Philological Approaches* (Leiden: Brill, 2006); Kathleen Freeman, *The Work and Life of Solon* (London: Milford, 1926); Ron Owens, *Solon of Athens: Poet, Philosopher, Soldier, Statesman* (Brighton, UK: Sussex Academic, 2010).

³⁹⁴ Theognis, *Elegiac poems*, 373-400. Loeb Classical Library 258:229-231, https://www.loebclassics.com/view/theognis-elegiac_poems/1999/pb_LCL258.229.xml?readMode=recto (accessed February 17, 2023).

³⁹⁵ Tufts University, *The Eleagic Poems of Theognis*, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A2008.01.0479%3Avolume%3D1%3Atext%3D11%3Asection%3D2>, accessed April 25, 2023).

The mystery (or vanity) of life was that the wisdom which insisted that the righteous prosper and the wicked suffer did not apply in every case. Job, Ecclesiastes, and Theognis brought up counterexamples. Those counterexamples, though disturbing and adding to the suffering of the righteous, surprisingly did not produce unbelief in Job and Qoheleth but rather a deeper fear of God (Eccl. 12:13, Job 1:22; 2:3, 10). Theognis, though skeptical, continued to be a believer in the gods whom he praised (*Elegiac poems*, 1.1-18).

Socrates and Jesus as Models of Endurance and Courage in the Face of Death

Socrates, like Jesus, left no writings behind and therefore we have to depend on those who wrote about him.³⁹⁶ Socrates and Jesus taught in the public space. Socrates was declared the wisest man in Athens by the oracle of Delphi. Jesus was declared the Son of God at his conception, birth, baptism, and transfiguration by the angelic messengers and the voice of God. Socrates and Jesus did not charge a fee for their lessons. Socrates and Jesus so believed what they taught others that they were willing to die for it. Socrates would not escape from prison and willingly accepted the sentence of death. He was not deterred from teaching and was hated by the leaders of Athens for corrupting the youth. Jesus refused to escape from those who came to arrest him. He would not stop teaching people about the kingdom of God even though Jewish leaders accused him of breaking the law. He died willingly, even forgiving his enemies as he died on the cross. Socrates taught the need to question accepted wisdom and to expose people's ignorance. Jesus questioned the received traditions of the Jews, taught the need to repent of sin and to accept the offer of forgiveness, and he exposed people's guilt and hypocrisy.

³⁹⁶ On the difficulties in extricating the historical Socrates from the Socrates of later interpretations, see S. Sarah Monson, "Socrates," Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/socrates/> (accessed May 04, 2023). See also Plato, *The Apology of Socrates*, <https://chs.harvard.edu/primary-source/plato-the-apology-of-socrates-sb/> (accessed August 22, 2023).

Heracles and Jesus as Models of Endurance in Suffering

Heracles is the mythological Greek hero par excellence:

There is more material available on Herakles than any other Greek god or hero. His story has many more episodes than those of other heroes, concerning his life and death as well as his battles with myriad monsters and other opponents. In literature, he appears in our earliest Greek epic and lyric poetry, is reinvented for the tragic and comic stage, and later finds his way into such unlikely areas as philosophical writings and love poetry. In art, his exploits are amongst the earliest identifiable mythological scenes, and his easily recognizable figure with lionskin and club was a familiar sight throughout antiquity in sculpture, vase-painting and other media. He was held up as an ancestor and role-model for both Greek and Roman rulers, and widely worshipped as a god, his unusual status as a hero-god being reinforced by the story of his apotheosis. Often referred to by his Roman name Hercules, he has continued to fascinate writers and artists right up to the present day.³⁹⁷

One version of his story goes as follows. Heracles is the son of Zeus by a human mother. Zeus has a wife, Hera, who is very angry about Zeus' infidelity. She intervenes so that Heracles' cousin Eurystheus is born first, and therefore becomes king in place of Heracles. She, however, unknowingly suckles the infant Heracles. Heracles grows up, marries, and has children. But Hera inspires madness in him so that he slays his family. After realizing what he has done, he goes to the Delphic oracle to learn how he may atone for his sins. The oracle, under the influence of Hera, requires Heracles to serve King Eurystheus and do whatever the king asks him to. The king sets him ten impossible tasks which he must complete unaided and unrewarded. The tasks

³⁹⁷ Emma Stafford, *Herakles* (London and New York: Taylor and Francis, 2012), i. For more on Herakles, see Emma Griffiths, *Euripides: Herakles* (London: Duckworth, 2006), <https://www.bloomsburycollections.com/book/euripides-herakles/ch2-heracles-and-greek-myth> (accessed February 27, 2023); Euripides, *Heracles*, Loeb's Classical Library, https://www.loebclassics.com/view/euripides-heracles/1998/pb_LCL009.311.xml?rskey=USuoAA&result=1 (accessed April 20, 2023); Timothy Gantz, *Early Greek Myths: A Guide to Literary and Artistic Sources*, Vol 1 (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 374-466; Robin Hard, *The Routledge Handbook of Greek Mythology* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 246-286.

become the famous twelve labors, twelve because two of them are not counted by the king since Heracles was aided or rewarded. The twelve labors are as follows:

- (1) Killing the Nemean lion. (2) Killing the Hydra. (3) Capturing the Cerynitian hind.
- (4) Capturing of Erymanthian boar. (5) Cleaning the Augean stables. (6) Removing the Stymphalian birds. (7) Capturing the Cretan bull. (8) Capturing the Thracian horses.
- (9) Bringing back the girdle of Hippolyte. (10) Bringing back the cattle of Geryon.
- (11) Bringing back the golden apples of the Hesperides. (12) Capturing Cerberus.³⁹⁸

These labors require mostly superhuman strength, courage, persistence, and some intelligence. Heracles manages all twelve required labors and thereby atones for the slaughter of his family. The twelve labors are incidentally helpful to human beings in that many involve the killing of monsters that had caused much harm and death to people in different places.³⁹⁹

Heracles remarries, but on one occasion he brings home a concubine. His wife, out of jealousy, puts a love potion on his clothes without knowing that the potion is actually poison. Heracles dies a painful death, but Zeus rewards him by elevating him to be a god on Mount Olympus.⁴⁰⁰

Jesus and Heracles can be compared and contrasted. Jesus, like Heracles, is born of a human mother but has no human father. The differences are that the Son of God is preexistent (Hebrews 1), and that the incarnation is not the result of a sexual relationship between a promiscuous god and a human. Zeus has a wife, but God has no consort. Hera, Zeus' wife, is a troublemaker for Heracles. Jesus has one supernatural enemy, namely the devil, who keeps

³⁹⁸ Stephen L. Harris and Gloria Platzner, *Classical Mythology: Images and Insights* (Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1995), 214-215.

³⁹⁹ Harris and Platzner, *Classical Mythology*, 219, find something beneficial to humanity in some of the labors of Heracles: "several of the labors present the hero in his civic function as preserver of society and civilized life—killing the Stymphalian birds who were plaguing one town, for example, or cleaning out the Augean stables by diverting two rivers through the barn. Another task involved bringing back the belt of the Amazon Queen Hippolyte: perhaps she yielded to him, or perhaps he killed her for it; either way, he "tamed" a formidable female opponent.

⁴⁰⁰ For the death of Heracles, see Harris and Platzner, *Classical Mythology*, 220.

humans enslaved by the fear of death (Heb. 2:14-15). Jesus becomes a human being to save mankind from their sins and deliver them from their fears, but Heracles is a demi-god whose twelve labors are for his own redemption, whatever benefits may accrue to human beings in the process. However, in his minor labors, Heracles is not atoning for his sins but defending himself or helping others who are in need. Heracles uses deception and at times acts out of great rage, but Jesus is presented as one without sin and one who acts out of sympathy for suffering human beings (Heb. 2:16-18). Heracles, in the twelve labors, endures the opposition of the goddess Hera while carrying out the orders of his cousin the king, with occasional help from sympathetic gods like Athena and Hermes. Jesus is portrayed as opposed by sinners but helped by God. Zeus is very proud of Heracles and eventually rewards him with divinity after death and with the goddess Hebe for a wife.⁴⁰¹ After Jesus has successfully endured the opposition of sinners to the point of death, God raises him physically from death, sits him at his right hand in heaven (Heb. 1:1-4, 13; 2:9; 12:2, 3; 13:13, 20), and demands that angels worship him (Heb. 1:6). Both Jesus and Heracles are worshiped as divine. Heracles becomes an intercessor for those who seek his help. Jesus is portrayed as a high priest in heaven who continually intercedes for his human followers (Heb. 8:1-7). While Jesus and Heracles are admired for their endurance and accomplishments, no man can hope to match Heracles in his superhuman strength or Jesus in his sinlessness. Jesus is an example of endurance against sin and sinners. Heracles is at times not a moral example worth emulating because he is easily overtaken by madness, rage, and inordinate

⁴⁰¹ See *Homeric Hymn, 15. To Heracles the Lionheart*. Loeb Classical Library, 496: 195, https://www.loebclassics.com/view/homeric_hymns_15_heracles_lionheart/2003/pb_LCL496.195.xml, (accessed November 20, 2023) for Heracles as the son of Zeus and the husband of Hebe: “Of Heracles the son of Zeus I will sing, far the finest of men on earth, born in Thebes of the beautiful dances to Alcmena in union with the dark-cloud son of Kronos. Formerly he roamed the vastness of land and sea at the behest of King Eurystheus, causing much suffering himself and enduring much; but now in the fair abode of snowy Olympus he lives in pleasure and has fair-ankled Hebe as his wife.”

desires. Zeus, his father, was not exactly a god of moral integrity when it came to his relationship with beautiful women.⁴⁰² Jesus' followers are asked to look to him and to depend on God to persevere in their struggle against sin and sinners. Their suffering and endurance count as discipline, not as atonement for their sins. Zeus invites Heracles to join the gods on Mount Olympus. Jesus leads his followers to Mount Zion, the heavenly city, where they will be perfected in holiness but not deified.

The Greco-Roman view of suffering as education or training in virtue is similar to that of the author of Hebrews. The mythical Heracles (or Hercules) is admired and worshiped for his supernatural feats and moral example as one who endured, much like Jesus who is presented as an example of endurance. In Hebrews 12, the author exhorts his audience to consider their suffering as God's discipline for his legitimate children and their struggle against sinners as a foot race to be endured and completed successfully (vv. 1-13). The difference comes in the goal of such training. The Greco-Roman goal is happiness (*eudaimonia*) by means of virtue, while the goal for Heracles is absolution. Hebrews has Jesus' perfection as high priest and savior as goals, while Jesus' followers are exhorted to pursue God's holiness (ἁγιότητος αὐτοῦ) (v.10), peace and righteousness (καρπὸν εἰρηνικὸν . . . δικαιοσύνης) (v.11). To inspire his audience to endure this training, the author of Hebrews portrays Jesus as the great example of one who endured opposition from sinners, one who despised the cross, and one who was motivated by the joy to be had at the end of the race (v. 2). We see that the author of Hebrews has a Greco-Roman

⁴⁰² Zeus is berated by the gods for his loose behavior with women. See Lucian, *The Parliament of the Gods*, Loeb Classical Library, 302: 427, https://www.loebclassics.com/view/lucian-parliament_gods/1936/pb_LCL302.427.xml?rskey=PJejJ2&result=2 (accessed November 20, 2023). Momus says of Zeus: "It was you, Zeus, who began these illegalities and caused the corruption of our body politic by cohabiting with mortal women and going down to visit them, now in one form, now in another."

background and examples with which his audience may be familiar as he presents his argument for endurance in suffering.

Suffering in Hebrews

Against the background of innocent suffering or suffering as education in their background and environment, the author of Hebrews and his audience are in good company when they consider the sufferings of Jesus. The incarnation of the Jesus meant that not only would he be like his human brothers and sisters, but he would also suffer like them (2:9-10). The difference was that his death, which was a form of suffering (τὸ πάθημα τοῦ θανάτου), was for everyone and because of it, he was crowned with glory and honor (δόξῃ καὶ τιμῇ ἐστεφανωμένον).⁴⁰³ Having experienced temptation and suffering unto death (πέπονθεν αὐτὸς πειρασθεὶς), he became a sympathetic high priest who could help his followers (2:18).⁴⁰⁴ However, he was a superior kind of high priest in that temptation did not result in sin (4:15). Jesus' suffering was also a means of perfection (τελειωθείς ἐγένετο). As a human being, he prayed fervently and learnt to obey through suffering. His perfection qualified him to be the source of eternal life for his followers and a high priest in the order of Melchizedek (5:7-10).⁴⁰⁵

⁴⁰³ Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 132 n38: "Throughout Hebrews Christ's suffering is the cause or means of his session (1:3; 9:12; 10:12). As 2:10 says, it is through his suffering that he is "perfected" as the savior of God's people."

⁴⁰⁴ Hagner, *Hebrews*, 58: "The translation of *peirazō* by "test" rather than "tempt" (as in the NEB) may be of some help in understanding this verse, although the distinction is not always easy to make (cf. James 1:13-15). . . . For the testing of Jesus, see Mark 3:21; 8:32; and esp. Matt. 4:1-11, material with which our author was familiar, if not from the written Gospels, at least from the oral tradition."

⁴⁰⁵ Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 111: The verb *teleioun* in Greek means to be complete, but it is also the verb used to express the idea of ordination of priests in the LXX. In 2:10 the author spoke of the propriety of Jesus being made perfect through suffering, as the pioneer of salvation who brings others to glory. The idea here is not far from that, namely that through his won completion he became a source of salvation for all who obey him. Having learned obedience, he can save others who are likewise obedient. The author

Because Jesus looked forward to and rejoiced in the future God had for him, he looked beyond hostility from sinners and death on the cross (12:2-3).

The author also sees the sufferings of his audience as consistent with a long tradition of faithful and enduring people (Hebrews 11) whose faithfulness was tested and who at times suffered without receiving what they hoped for. His listeners have shown patient endurance in the past and they need to consider present suffering as a means to maturity for God is treating them as legitimate children (Heb. 10:32-39; 12:4-13). If they are feeling rejected by their former co-religionists, let them “go outside the camp” where Jesus is waiting for them knowing that they have a new form of worship whose altar excludes those who reject them (Heb. 13:9-14).

Conclusion

It is possible that the author of Hebrews and his audience share many traditions about endurance in suffering, whether Israelite or Greco-Roman. The long history of the suffering of the innocent and the righteous at the hands of the guilty and the unrighteous may be part of their background knowledge. Objection to current suffering can be overcome by a reminder that it is not always a sign of God’s punishment when innocent people suffer.

Sometimes suffering is a sign of the ongoing struggle between light and darkness, good and evil. It may also be a sign that God accepts them as his messengers or his children. It has been the experience of the righteous from time immemorial that the wicked always oppose them. If Jesus, the Son of God, the son of Abraham, the son of David, the high priest like Melchizedek, the mediator of a new covenant, the author and finisher of faith, suffered and endured opposition from sinners, then it should be a badge of honor and evidence of legitimate sonship to go through

wishes to make a connection between the suffering/learning of Christ and what his readers must undergo.”

similar experiences. Once they acknowledge that their suffering is purposeful and that it is a part of their training, they will find it easier to trust God, heed his warnings and exhortations, and thereby enter his rest.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND APPLICATION

Conclusion

In this dissertation I have discussed such riddles as author, destination, date, and structure of Hebrews. I settled for Apollos as the most likely author and the audience as Jewish followers of Jesus in first Century A.D. Rome. These Jews were conversant with Greek philosophy, attended synagogue, and read from the Greek Bible. In their environment (first century A.D. Greco-Roman world), rhetoric was the art of persuasion used in speeches. They believed in the authority of Scripture and the Septuagint (LXX) as divine revelation. They may also have believed that the Sinaitic covenant (between God and Israel) was still valid in the early part of first century A.D. Their circumstances were such that they were in danger of falling away from the living God by giving up their public confession of Christ and their regular communion with fellow believers in Christ. Whether the danger of falling away resulted from persecution or isolation, the solution the author gave them was an invitation to enter God promised rest.

The author proved to be well educated in Greco-Roman rhetoric, had an excellent command of the Greek language, and was well versed in the Greek Bible (Septuagint or LXX). He asserted the following: Jesus was God's Son and final revelation to Israel, that is, the fulfilment and culmination of revelation (Hebrews 1, and the catena of OT citations). Jesus the Son of God was their brother (Hebrews 2; Ps. 22:22; Isa. 8:18). Jesus was the high priest in a heavenly tabernacle (Psalm 110:4; Heb. 5:6; 7:17, 21; 9:11-12). Jesus was the mediator of a new covenant with Israel as prophesied (Hebrews 8; Jeremiah 31). Jesus had offered a better sacrifice than the sacrifices offered in the old covenant (Heb. 10:1-18; Psalm 40). Jesus was leading his followers to the heavenly Jerusalem (Hebrews 12:22-24). In view of these assertions, the congregation needed to look to Jesus as the author and perfecter of their faith (Heb. 12:2).

The audience of Hebrews needed to realize that the old way of approaching and worshiping God through priests, high priest, sacrifices, tabernacle, sabbaths and the feasts of the Lord had been superseded by a new way. Their new approach to God, entry into God's rest, and worship of God were by means of regular meetings (Heb. 3:12; 10:25), confession of Christ (Heb. 3:1; 4:14; 13:15), deeds of love, hospitality, prayer, and praise (Hebrews 13). Their suffering was evidence of divine sonship (Prov. 3; Heb. 12) and should not take away believers' rest but rather enhance it.

Application

Continued Relevance of the Feasts of Israel Today

In the Old Testament story of Israel in the wilderness, the people who were rescued from Egypt disbelieved God and disobeyed him when he told them to enter and conquer the land of Canaan, which was to be their place of rest. Because of their disbelief and disobedience, He swore that they will never enter his rest. They spent the next forty years wondering in the wilderness until the last of them had died, except for Joshua and Caleb. Joshua and Caleb were among the twelve leaders who were sent by Moses to spy the land. Of the twelve, only they brought back a good report encouraging the people to take the land. The other ten brought back a bad report and discouraged their fellow Israelites from obeying God.

In Psalm 95, the psalmist is encouraging the Israelites to come with joy and gratitude to worship God. He warns them not to disbelief or disobey God but rather to enter the promised rest of God. The people have already entered and occupied the land of Canaan and are coming together to worship God. The author of Hebrews interprets God's rest in Psalm 95 as an invitation to enter into a vibrant relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Does this imply an end to the old way of approaching God in worship? What about the feasts of Israel and annual

pilgrimages to Jerusalem? What was the implication of the new covenant for all convocations of Israel?

While the temple stood and pilgrimage to Jerusalem was possible, the feasts were celebrated according to Levitical regulation. Jesus and his followers, however, were already preaching and teaching the fulfillment of prophecy and the institution of a new covenant. When the temple fell, Jewish followers of Jesus were less devastated than other Jewish worshipers. Jesus had prepared them for the disappearance of the temple and its worship regulations. Animal sacrifices at the temple were no longer needed now that Jesus had given his life as a sacrifice, and he was the high priest in the heavenly tabernacle interceding for his followers. The feasts of the Lord, for Jesus' disciples, had already been given Christological, ecclesiological, and eschatological explanations. What then was left for them to do in worship? They were to gather in faith, persevere in hope, and serve in love.⁴⁰⁶ This was better than OT ceremonies and rituals. The sacrifice of Christ was superior to OT sacrifices. The new habits of NT were superior to the OT celebrations. However, questions still remained.

Did they see baptism (Heb. 6:2), the breaking of bread (the altar of Heb. 13:10), and confession of faith (4:14) as rituals that were to continue? Were these the equivalent of Jewish ritual baths, fellowship offerings, communal meals after sacrifices, and the daily confession of the Shema? In other words, were these practices equal to religious rituals? Were such practices as worship, praise, thanksgiving, and acts of kindness equal to rituals?

⁴⁰⁶ On three things to do in place of ritual, see Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, 285-89: Heb. 10:22: approach God in faith; 10:23: hold fast to the hope; 10:24: love each other. If they do this continually and communally, they will persevere to the end.

If the audience of Hebrews was Jewish and Messianic, what did they do with Israel's festivals? Did they continue to celebrate the festivals, albeit as fulfilled in Christ? Did they celebrate them in memory of historical events (Passover / exodus and the death of Jesus as the lamb of God; Pentecost and the giving of the Law / Coming of the Holy Spirit; Yom Kippur and the atoning death of Jesus), and in anticipation of the coming kingdom (Succoth / God dwelling with man and the future Messianic age)? Was it possible to celebrate the festivals without animal sacrifices?

If they took the feasts of Israel as occasions for worship and fellowship, then they could continue in the New Covenant. For example, Wayne Strickland shows us how the Feast of Passover had continuing relevance:

It was not only important to be holy, forgiven of sin, and in fellowship with God, but it was essential to be a worshiping people. The Israelites were obligated to engage in actively declaring the worthiness and glory of God. Worship was in part expressed through the annual cycles of feasts. For example, the Passover (Lev. 23:5-8) reminded them of God's deliverance and resulted in their declaration of God's worth and glory and their recognition of his initiative in providing salvation.⁴⁰⁷

If this was true of Passover, how about all the other feasts?

The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, These are the appointed feasts of the LORD that you shall proclaim as holy convocations; they are my appointed feasts..." (Lev. 23:1-2, ESV)

⁴⁰⁷ Wayne G. Strickland, "The Inauguration of the Law of Christ with the Gospel of Christ: A Dispensational View," in *Five Views on Law and Gospel*, ed., Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 229-279. On p. 238, Strickland has a section titled "The Purpose of the Mosaic Law" (pp. 236-239), and subsection named "Provision for Worship" (p. 238).

Sabbaths, Feasts, and Entering God's Rest Today

Today, when people think of rest, they probably consider cessation of regular business and enjoyment of other activities, such as sports, shopping, going on vacation, sleeping in, and relaxation. But maybe what they need is a kind of rest that they can enjoy all the time. This is still God's offer today. It begins with a relationship with God through repentance and forgiveness of sins because of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. When sins are forgiven, consciences cleansed, and fear of judgment and death removed, entering God's rest becomes a present reality.

This rest continues with approaching God daily through Jesus our high priest. It involves worshiping together, warning, encouraging, and serving each other to deepen our relationship with God and with each other. It can be done in church buildings, in the park, at work, at home, or any place where believers congregate. In the new covenant, sanctity belongs to the people. Jesus' followers sanctify the time and place of worship when they come into God's presence, in Christ's name, and by the power of the Holy Spirit. If they do these things, their faith, hope, and love will grow, and they will not fall back or fall away from the living God. They will live in a perpetual state of rest even as they await the future fulfillment of God's final rest when Jesus comes again. As Psalm 95 teaches, and the author of Hebrews reminds them, there is always a rest reserved for the people of God.

Since animal sacrifices were a shadow of a reality, a sign and a symbol pointing to fulfillment in Christ, they are no longer needed. But a regular reminder is needed that they have found their fulfillment. As for the feasts of the Lord, maybe they constitute a divine calendar indicating the first coming of the Lord (Passover), the coming of the Holy Spirit (Shavuot), and the period of the Church (God is with us, the Spirit is in us, Succoth/Tabernacles or Booths).

Maybe, they look to the second coming of Christ (Rosh Hashanah). Could it be that God wants us to use the feasts to remind the Jews that God is not done yet and there is hope for them as a nation? They still have a chance to become a holy nation and a royal priesthood if they turn to Jesus the Son of God and Messiah as their high priest and mediator of a new covenant.

Maybe the followers of Jesus should have holy convocations wherever they live, meeting to celebrate the feasts of the Lord according to the Jewish calendar, but emphasizing their fulfillment in Christ (Sabbath, Pesach or Passover), their ongoing reminder of the provision of God in Christ (Unleavened Bread, First Fruits, Shavuot or Feast of Weeks or Pentecost), and of the future hope they have in Christ (Rosh Hashanah or Feast of Trumpets, Yom Kippur or New Year, Succoth or Tabernacles or Feast of Booths). In such celebrations, liturgical readings of Scripture, singing, and rejoicing should be prominent. Not that the feasts are obligatory for salvation, but they can be a powerful witness of salvation.

The implication for Christ's followers of all periods of history appears to be that they should learn about the feasts of Israel and celebrate them, not as rituals, but as typologically, historically, and eschatologically fulfilled or to be fulfilled in Christ and the church. They should invite their neighbors, not to offer sacrifices, but to celebrate what God has done through Jesus. Their holy convocations should be times of joy. They should also have holy communion regularly to recall the body broken for them and the blood of Jesus shed for them. Without the broken body and shed blood of Jesus, there is no forgiveness of sin and no communion with God. Without forgiveness of sin and communion with God, there is no rest.

Suffering of Messianic Jews and Christians Today

This new understanding of God's offer of rest in the midst of suffering can be applied to Messianic Jews and other followers of Jesus who are tempted to fall away or to deconstruct their

faith. The offer of God's rest still remains and followers of Jesus can and should take advantage of who Jesus is and what he has accomplished in order to be at rest today even as they await their final rest in the future when they will enter the heavenly city of God.

The nation of Israel suffers isolation because of hostility from Gentile nations today (anti-Semitism and anti-Israel sentiments). What is often ignored is the double isolation of Messianic Jews because of anti-Semitism in the world and anti-Messianism in Israel. The book of Hebrews is of direct and urgent application to Messianic Jews because it demonstrates to them that they need not be afraid to identify with Jesus or be ashamed of their faith in the Messiah. Since Jesus is the Son of God and the heavenly High Priest, they have received a great salvation, become children of God, have continual uninhibited access to the throne of God, enjoy the rest that God provides through Jesus, have a covenant that cannot be replaced, and are on a pilgrim journey to Mount Zion, the new Jerusalem.

Christians in communist countries and places where Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam are dominant religions face mortal threat and are under social pressure to deny Jesus Christ. In places where secularism is dominant, many believers in Jesus are lonely, isolated, and bombarded continually with distracting entertainment and negative media. These believers are at the risk of drifting away from the community of faith and falling away from the living God. To counter all that, the book of Hebrews is relevant in encouraging believers to participate in daily approach to God, daily confession of the word of God (which is fulfilled in Jesus, the Son of God, and High Priest), regular meetings of communal worship, and acts of charity. Daily personal and communal approach to the throne of God provides the mercy and grace needed for perseverance in the faith and it is an antidote to drifting and falling away. Daily communion, confession, and loving deeds should not be left only to clergy and other church leaders. Members

of Messianic and Christian communities should be encouraged to exhort each other daily. Continual worship, fellowship, witness, testimony, charity, outreach, and confession will keep believers from drifting away. We can call this practice a lifestyle of *paraenesis*, or better still, we can call it a lifestyle of *paraclesis* for the faith community and by the faith community. This democratization of the ministry is what Peter calls the priesthood of all believers (1 Pet. 2:9), what John calls a kingdom of priests (Rev. 5:10), and what Paul refers to as the proper functioning of the body of Christ (Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4). In Hebrews, as elsewhere in the New Testament, exposition of Scripture is motivation for exhortation. Or as others have put it, the indicative should always lead to the imperative.

In brief, since God has spoken by his Son, and acted through Jesus the High Priest, what must believers in Jesus the Messiah and High Priest say and do in response? They must come together daily to worship God, to confess Jesus as the Son of God and their High Priest, to testify to what he has done, is doing, will do, and to bear witness to those outside the congregation concerning who Jesus is, what he has done, is doing, and will do. By the grace and mercy of God, their daily and communal participation in word and deed will help them persevere in faith, enjoy God's rest in the present, and finally bring them into perfect rest in the heavenly city which is the goal of their pilgrimage.

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APPENDIXES

In the following appendixes, I will give more details on the meaning of rest in ancient texts (Appendix 1), a comprehensive list of figures of speech in Hebrews (Appendix 2), sacrifices and feasts in the New Testament (Appendix 3), worship after the fall of the temple in A.D. 70 (Appendix 4), and evidence of suffering as education in ancient writers (Appendix 5). This material guided my thinking about rest, rhetoric, and worship (before and after the fall of the temple) and suffering in the background to and the environment of the author and audience of Hebrews.

APPENDIX 1: ANCIENT TEXTS ON THE MEANING OF REST

The following list of texts is taken mostly from Attridge, *Hebrews*, 126-127. The biblical texts in Greek texts are from Swete's Septuagint, <https://biblehub.com/sepd/>. The biblical texts in English are from the Common English Bible, <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/>. The other texts are from <https://www.ccel.org/c/charles/otpseudepig>; <http://www.earlyjewishwritings.com>; <https://www.marquette.edu/maqom>; <http://www.markgoodacre.org>; <http://www.pseudepigrapha.com>; <https://www.earlychristianwritings.com>. Online texts of Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha checked against Pseudepigrapha checked against R. H. Charles, *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament, Volume One: Apocrypha* (Berkeley, CA: Apocryphile Press, 1913; R. H. Charles, ed., *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament, Volume Two: Pseudepigrapha* (Berkeley, CA: Apocryphile Press, 1913); R. H. Charles, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, Volume One: Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1983); Michael Wise, Martin Abegg Jr, and Edward Cook, *Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation* (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 1996); Carey A. Moore, *Judith: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB Vol. 40 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985).

Deut. 12:9 (Inheritance of land as rest)

οὐ γὰρ ἤκατε ἕως τοῦ νῦν εἰς τὴν κατάπαυσιν καὶ εἰς τὴν κληρονομίαν ἣν Κύριος ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν δίδωσιν ὑμῖν.

Josh. 21:44 (Security from enemies as rest)

καὶ κατέπαυσεν αὐτοὺς Κύριος κυκλόθεν, καθότι ὤμοσεν τοῖς πατράσιν αὐτῶν· οὐκ ἀνέστη οὐθεὶς κατενώπιον αὐτῶν ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν ἐχθρῶν αὐτῶν· πάντα τοὺς ἐχθροὺς αὐτῶν παρέδωκεν Κύριος εἰς τὰς χεῖρας αὐτῶν.

3 Kgdms. (1 Kgs.) 8:56 (Peace and security as promised rest)

Εὐλογητὸς Κύριος σήμερον, ὃς ἔδωκεν κατάπαυσιν τῷ λαῷ αὐτοῦ Ἰσραὴλ κατὰ πάντα ὅσα ἐλάλησεν· οὐ διεφώνησεν λόγος εἰς ἐν πᾶσιν τοῖς λόγοις αὐτοῦ τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς οἷς ἐλάλησεν ἐν χειρὶ δούλου αὐτοῦ Μωυσῆ.

Exod. 35:2 (Sabbath day as holy rest to the Lord)

ἔξ ἡμέρας ποιήσεις ἔργα, τῇ δὲ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ ἐβδόμῃ κατάπαυσις, ἅγιον, σάββατα ἀνάπαυσις Κυρίῳ· πᾶς ὁ ποιῶν ἔργον ἐν αὐτῇ τελευτάτω.

Isa. 66:1 (House [Temple] as God's resting place)

Οὕτως λέγει Κύριος Ὁ οὐρανός μου θρόνος, καὶ ἡ γῆ ὑποπόδιον τῶν ποδῶν μου· ποῖον οἶκον οἰκοδομήσετε μοι; καὶ ποῖος τόπος τῆς καταπαύσεώς μου;

Jer. 6:16 (Walking in God's paths as rest for the soul)

Τάδε λέγει Κύριος Στήτε ἐπὶ ταῖς ὁδοῖς καὶ ἴδετε καὶ ἐρωτήσατε τρίβους Κυρίου αἰωνίους, καὶ ἴδετε ποία ἐστὶν ἡ ὁδὸς ἡ ἀγαθή, καὶ βαδίζετε ἐν αὐτῇ, καὶ εὐρήσετε ἀγνισμόν ταῖς ψυχαῖς ὑμῶν· καὶ εἶπαν Οὐ πορευσόμεθα.

Ps. 131 [132]:14 (Zion as God's chosen resting place)

αὕτη ἡ κατάπαυσίς μου εἰς αἰῶνα αἰῶνος· ὧδε κατοικήσω, ὅτι ἠρετισάμην αὐτήν.

2 Chron. 6:41 (Jerusalem Temple as God's resting place)

καὶ νῦν ἀνάστηθι, Κύριε ὁ θεός, εἰς τὴν κατάπαυσίν σου, σὺ καὶ ἡ κιβωτὸς τῆς ἰσχύος σου.

Matt. 11:28 (Relationship with Jesus as rest from weariness and burdens)

Δεῦτε πρὸς με πάντες οἱ κοπιῶντες καὶ πεφορτισμένοι, καὶ γὰρ ἀναπαύσω ὑμᾶς.

T. Dan. 5:12 (New Jerusalem as a place of rest like Eden)

And the saints shall rest in Eden, And in the New Jerusalem shall the righteous rejoice, And it shall be unto the glory of God for ever.

2 Maccabees 15:1(Sabbath as a day of rest)

Nicanor, on learning that Judas and his men were in the region of Samaria, plotted to take advantage of the day of rest to attack them when he could do it in perfect safety.

4 Ezra (2 Esdras) 7:75 (The state of souls after death: torment or rest?)

I replied: "If I have found favor with you, Lord, show this also to your servant: After death, as soon as each person gives up his or her soul, will we be kept asleep until the time comes for you to begin to renew creation, or will we be tormented right away?"

4 Ezra 7:91 (Godly people's rest after death)

First, they will see with great joy the glory of him who receives them. They will have rest on account of seven orders.

4 Ezra 7:95 (Godly people in resting chambers after death)

The fourth order—understanding the peaceful rest that they now enjoy, gathered in their resting chambers, guarded by angels in deep silence, and understanding the glory that awaits them in their last days.

4 Ezra 7:98 (Godly people joyful after death)

The seventh order, which is greater than all those mentioned—because they will rejoice with confidence and will trust without being disappointed and will rejoice without fear; for they hasten to see the face of him whom they served when they were alive and from whom they are about to receive a reward now that they are glorified.

4 Ezra 8:52 (A good future connected with rest)

For you, paradise is opened, the tree of life is planted, the future time is prepared, abundance is made ready, the city is built, rest is appointed, goodness is perfected, and wisdom is perfected in advance.

2 Bar. 51:10, 14 (The righteous at rest after death)

For in the heights of that world shall they dwell,
And they shall be made like unto the angels,
And be made equal to the stars . . .
For they have been delivered from this world of tribulation,
And laid down the burden of anguish.

2 Bar. 78-86 (Benefits of repentance after rebellion)

Enoch encourages those who have gone into exile because of their violation of the covenant that if they repent, they will receive much more than they lost. They must not forget the law, the city of Zion, the holy land, the covenant, the festivals, and the sabbaths.

1 Enoch 39:4-5 (Resting places for the righteous)

And there I saw another vision, the dwelling-places of the holy.
And the resting-places of the righteous,

Here mine eyes saw their dwelling with the angels,
And their resting-places with the holy.

And they petition and interceded and prayed for the children of men,
And righteousness flowed before them a water,

And mercy like dew upon the earth:
Thus it is amongst them for ever and ever.

1 Enoch 45:3-6 (Future places of rest and blessing for the righteous)

On that day Mine Elect shall sit on the throne of glory
And shall try their works,
And their places of rest shall be innumerable.

And their souls shall grow strong within them when they see Mine elect ones,
And those who have called upon My glorious name:
Then will I cause Mine Elect One to dwell among them.

And I will transform the earth and make it an eternal blessing and light:
And I will transform the earth and make it a blessing:
And I will cause Mine elect ones to dwell upon it:
But the sinners and the evil-doers shall not set their foot thereon.

For I have provided and satisfied with peace My righteous ones
And I have caused them to dwell before Me:

But for the sinners there is judgment impending with Me,
So that I shall destroy them from the face of the earth.

T Levi 18:9 (Future Levitical priesthood and rest for the just)

And in his priesthood the Gentiles shall be multiplied in knowledge upon the earth,
And enlightened through the grace of the Lord:
In his priesthood shall sin come to an end,
And the lawless shall cease to do evil. [And the just shall rest in him.]

(4Q174) 4QFlor 1:7-8 (Rest for David from enemies)

As for what he said to David, "I [will give] you [rest] from all your enemies" (2 Sam 7:11b), this passage means that He will give them rest from [al]l the children of Belial, who cause them to stumble, seeking to destroy the[m by means of] their [wickedness].

Ps Philo Lib. ant. bib. 28:10 (Rest for the righteous after death)

If the rest of the righteous be such after they are dead, it is better for them to die to the corruptible world, that they see not sin.

T. Abr. 7:9-16 (Abraham's death as going from labors to rest)

Abraham (the sun in Isaac's dream) is to be "taken up from labors into rest and from lowliness into height" and "from straitness into spaciousness" and "from darkness into light."

T. Isaac 2:10-16 (Isaac's death as entry into joy and rest)

Isaac is told by an angel that he will die without pain but joyfully and that he "shall attain to blessings and repose forever and shall go from confinement into spaciousness. He "shall go away to rejoicing which has no end, and to light and bliss and acclaim and delight without ceasing."

***Apoc. Sedrach 16:3* (The just have a place of refreshment and rest)**

The Lord saith to him: Sedrach, my beloved, I promise to have sympathy and bring down the forty days to twenty: and whosoever shall remember thy name shall not see the place of chastisement but shall be with the just in a place of refreshment and rest: and if anyone shall record this wonderful word his sins shall not be reckoned against him for ever and ever.

Jdt. 9:8 (Temple as resting place for God's name)

Dash their might by your powers; in your anger bring down their strength! For they plan to desecrate the tabernacle, the resting place of your glorious name, to knock off the horns of your altar with the sword!

Jos. Asen. 8:9 (Entering rest prepared for the elect)

And may she enter into thy rest, which thou has prepared for thine elect.

Jos. Asen. 22:8 (Place of rest in heaven)

... and Levi saw the place of her rest in the highest heaven.

Philo Cher. 87 (Sabbath as temporal rest and God as ultimate rest)

And on this account too Moses calls the sabbath, which name being interpreted means "rest," "the sabbath of God." . . . Touching upon the necessary principles of natural philosophy, not of the philosophy of men, in many parts of his law, for that among existing things which rests, if one must tell the truth, is one thing only, God. And by "rest" I do not mean "inaction" (since that which is by its nature energetic, that which is the cause of all things, can never desist from doing what is most excellent), but I mean an energy completely free from labour, without any feeling of suffering, and with the most perfect ease.

Philo Poster. C. 23-24 (Nearness to God's stability as rest)

But the connection of the consequence affects me in no moderate degree; for it happens that that which comes near to him who is standing still longs for tranquillity, as being something which resembles itself. Now that which stands still without any deviation is God, and that which is moved is the creature, so that he who comes near to God desires stability; but he who departs from him, as by so doing he is approaching a creature easily overturned, is borne towards that which resembles it. On this account it is written in the curses contained in scripture, "Thou shalt never rest; nor shall there be any rest for the sole of thy Foot."

Philo *Poster. C.* 128-29 (Word of God as the source of virtue and nourishment)

And the lawgiver shows this, when he says, "And a river went out of Eden to water the Paradise; and from thence it is divided into four Heads." For there are four generic virtues: prudence, courage, temperance, and justice. And of these, every single one is a princess and a ruler; and he who has acquired them is, from the moment of the acquisition, a ruler and a king, even if he has no abundance of any kind of treasure; for the meaning of the expression, "it is divided into four heads," is [...] nor distance; but virtue exhibits the pre-eminence and the power. And these spring from the word of God as from one root, which he compares to a river, on account of the unceasing and everlasting flow of salutary words and doctrines, by which it increases and nourishes the souls that love God.

Philo *Fug.* 173-76 (Peace, nourishment, blessing, and joy as rest in God)

He who is bred up among such doctrines as these has everlasting peace, and is released from wearisome and endless labours. And according to the lawgiver there is no difference between peace and a week; for in each creation lays aside the appearance of energising and rests. (174) Very properly, therefore, is it said, "And the sabbath of the law shall be food for you," speaking figuratively. For the only thing which is really nourishing and really enjoyable is rest in God; which confers the greatest good, undisturbed peace. Peace, therefore, among cities is mixed up with civil war; but the peace of the soul has no mixture in it of any kind of difference. (175) And the lawgiver appears to me to be recommending most manifestly that kind of discovery which is not preceded by any search, in the following words, "When the Lord thy God shall lead thee into the land which he swore to thy fathers that he would give thee, large and beautiful cities which thou buildest not, houses full of all good things which thou filledst not, cisterns hewn out of the quarries which thou hewedst not, vineyards and olive gardens which thou plantedst Not." . . . You see here the ungrudging abundance of all the great blessings which are ready, and poured forth for man's possession and enjoyment. And the generic virtues are here likened to cities, because they are of the most comprehensive kind; and the specific virtues are likened to houses, because they are contracted into a narrower circle; and the souls of a good disposition are likened to cisterns, which are well inclined to receive wisdom, as the cisterns are calculated to receive water; and the improvement, and growth, and production of fruit, are compared to vineyards and olive gardens; and the fruit of knowledge is a life of contemplation, which produces unmixed joy, equal to that which proceeds from wine; and a light appreciable only by the intellect, as if from a flame of which oil is the nourishment.

Philo *Deus imm.* 12-13 (Number seven as soul rest in God)

and this is the constitution of the number seven, that is to say, of the soul that rests in God, and which no longer concerns itself about any mortal employment, when it has quitted the number six which it allotted to those who were not able to attain to the first rank, but who of necessity contented themselves with arriving at the second. It is therefore not incredible that the barren woman, not being one who is incapable of becoming fruitful, but one who is still vigorous and fresh, striving for the chief reward in the arena of fortitude, patience, and perseverance, may

bring forth a seven, equal in honour to the unit, of which numbers, nature is very productive and prolific.

Philo *Migr. Abr.* 30 (End of labor and abundance of good things in God's presence as rest)

and if you receive his inheritance, you will of necessity discard labour, for excessive abundance of things ready prepared, and of good things offered to your hand, will be the causes of cessation from toil. And the fountain from which good things are poured forth is the presence of the bounteous and beneficent God; on which account setting the seal to his loving kindness he says, "I will be with thee."

APPENDIX 2: FIGURES OF SPEECH IN HEBREWS

According to E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible: Explained and Illustrated* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1898; Mansfield Centre, CT: Martino Publishing, 2011):

God speaks in Heb. 1:1-2 and in 2:1-4. The Son of God is described as higher than angels in 1:2-14 and lower than angels in 2:5-18. The figure of speech used here is correspondence by alternation (p.367).

Heb. 1:1 (Πολυμερῶς καὶ πολυτρόπως πάσαι). In this verse we observe a use of

Homoeopropheron, or alliteration, is “the repetition of the same letter or syllable at the beginning of two or more words in close succession.” (pp171, 175) We also observe *Homoeteleuton*, a repetition is at the end of words (p176).

Heb. 1:2 (αἰῶνας) “ages” is a *metonymy* where a word stands in place of “what takes place in it” (p 593). In this instance ages represents “the world, and all that pertains to it” (p594). An effect can be used in place of its cause as in Heb. 6:1 (νεκρῶν ἔργων) “dead works.” The cause is the “old nature,” and the effects are dead works (p566). Heb. 9:28 (ἁμαρτίας) “sin” is a metonymy for “punishment” or “death.” Sin is the cause and punishment (or death) is the effect (p551); Heb. 11: 7 (οἴκου) “house” is metonymy which stands for subject “household.” “The container stands for the content” (pp 567, 573, 574). In 13:10 “altar stands for “the sacrifices offered upon it, which were eaten” (p575). In 11:13 (ἐπαγγελίας) “promises,” represent “things promised.” After all, the people had received the promises but not what was promised (p602, 603). The people “embraced” (ἁσπασάμενοι) the promises or “welcomed” them from afar (p606). In 11:15, the people’s “remembering” (μνημόνευον) is used for the people’s strong desire (pp554, 555). In 13: 4 (κρινεῖ) “judge” is a metonymy for “punish or condemn” (p557).

Heb. 1:2 (ἔθηκεν) “placed”, that is “appointed”. This is a *synecdoche* of the species that takes the place of a genus (p631), or “when the particulars are put for the universals” (p623). Heb. 2:14 (αἵματος καὶ σαρκός) “flesh and blood” is a synecdoche (a part for the whole) used to speak of

“true and perfect human body” (p645). In 10:7 (κεφαλίδι) “the head of the book” refers to the “knob of the roll” which then represents the whole book (p651). In Heb. 10:20, Christ’s “flesh” (σαρκὸς) stands for Christ’s “whole, and true, humanity” (p643). In Heb 13:9 (βρώμασιν) “meats” is one thing that stands for many things such as “divers and strange doctrines” (p635). A synecdoche of the genus that takes the place of a species (“all is put for the greater part”) is used in 6:16 (πάσης αὐτοῖς ἀντιλογίας) “all their disputes ...” (p614). Heb. 2:9 (παντὸς) every man” stands for “all manner of men, without *distinction*” (p617). In 9:12 (εὐράμενος) is a synecdoche of “a special meaning” “used in a more general sense.” The word “found” is used to mean “obtained” (p630). In 11:13, the author uses synecdoche of “the collective for the particular” when he claims that “these all died” since the audience has already been told that Enoch did not die (pp636, 637).

Heb.1:4 (δεξιᾷ) God’s “right hand” is an *anthropopatheia* by which God is given “human attributes (p871, 880). Other examples are God having a “soul” (10:38) (p872); God as a “builder” (3:4; 11:10) (p891); God as a “shepherd” (13:20) (p891); God as a “father” (12:5-10) (p892); Christ or God having a “throne” (1:8; 4:16)(p892); God having “years” (1:12; 13:8) (p893); God having a “first-born” (1:6) (p893); God having “anointing oil” (1:9) (p894); God or Christ having a “sceptre” (1:8); (p894); God “begetting” (1:5); (p889); God having “eyes” (4:13) (p875).

Heb. 1:5 (Τίνι γὰρ εἶπέν ποτε τῶν ἀγγέλων ...) “for to which of the angels...?” is *erotesis* or *peusis* or *pysma*, or *percontatio* or *interrogatio*, that is “asking a question without waiting for an answer.” While the figure is *erotesis*, the question itself is *erotema*. (p943, p944, p950).

Bullinger explains this figure as follows:

This figure is used when a speaker or writer ask animated questions, but not to obtain information. Instead of making a plain and direct statement, he suddenly changes his style, and puts what he was about to say or could otherwise have said, into the form of a question, without waiting for an answer. Instead of declaring a conviction, or expressing indignation, or vindicating authority, he puts it in form of a question without expecting a reply (p.943).

The question in 1:5 is “put in the affirmative, and the answer to be supplied by the mind is a very emphatic negative” (p949). See also 1:13 (p.950). This figure involves the listeners in the speech and forces them to think of an answer. Other rhetorical questions (*erotema*) in Hebrews are to be found in 1:14; 2:3, 2:6 (in a citation); 3:16 (x2), 17, 18; 7:11; 10:2, 29; 11:32; 12:5, 7, 9; 12:6 (in a citation).

Heb. 1:6 (τὴν οἰκουμένην) “the inhabited” is used for “the world” is an *antimereia*, that is, when “one part of speech is used instead of another” (p.491). In this case, a noun is replaced by a participle (p.493). See also In 6:17 (ἀμετάθετον) “the unchangeable” is an adjective that is used in place of an adverb “the unchangeableness” (p496); 9:17 (διαθέμενος) “maker of the covenant” for the “sacrifice”; In 12:9 (σαρκὸς ἡμῶν) “of our flesh” is a genitive that functions as “natural”, adjective; In 12:11 (χαρᾶς) “joy” is a noun use for an adjective “joyous” (p497); 12:18 (ψηλαφωμένῳ) “a touchable” meaning the mountain (p.493); 12:27 (σαλευομένων) the “shakable” meaning the shakable things (p494). We see here that the author of Hebrews was capable of using one part of speech to do duty for another part of speech. 10:39 (ἔσμεν ὑποστολῆς ... πίστεως) has antimereia of a noun and it is to be understood as “[*children*...] of drawing back but [*children*] of faith” (p504).

Heb 1:8-9 uses *gnome* or citation from Ps. 45:6-7 while Heb. 1:10-13 cites Ps. 102:25-27.

Indeed, Hebrews has many citations from the LXX. Bullinger counts 22, a number only surpassed by Romans with 51 and Matthew with 38 (pp778, 780, 786). It is noteworthy that whereas other writers refer to Scripture as a written source, Hebrews routinely cites Scripture as

God's or Jesus' or the Holy Spirit's voice. This adds to the idea that Hebrews is a speech in which God is heard speaking.

Heb. 1:14 (κληρονομεῖν σωτηρίαν) "heirs of salvation" is a *periphrasis* or a circumlocution for "the elect." A speaker who uses "a description ... instead of the name" is "calling attention to" a figure of speech for the sake of "emphasis" or "effect".

Heb. 2:9 (διὰ τὸ πάθημα τοῦ θανάτου δόξῃ καὶ τιμῇ) "for the suffering of death with glory and honor" is a *parenthesis* place here to explain why Jesus was made a little lower than angels.

Heb 2:11 (ἐξ ἑνὸς πάντες) has an *ellipsis*: he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified "are all [sons] of one [father]" (p80). See also 7: 4: "Consider how great this [man] was ..."; Heb. 4:10: "for he that hath entered into his rest, he himself also hath rested from his works, as God [rested] from his; 4:15 "according to the likeness [of us] apart from sin" (p18); 5:3 "to offer [sacrifices] for sins" (p69); 9:1 "the first [covenant] (p8); In 9:16-18, a testament is mentioned but the context requires the listener to recall the covenant. The first (ἡ πρώτη) is the first [covenant] (pp69, 70). In 10:22 (ῥεραντισμένοι) "sprinkled" represents an ellipsis of "sprinkled [and so being delivered]" (p70). In Heb. 11:20, 21, a person who knows the stories Isaac and Jacob on their deathbeds will recall that the second born sons received the blessing which legally belonged to the first born. We therefore have a case of an omission in the account, which figure is *ellipsis* or *brachylogia* or *breviloquence* (pp 47, 50). 12:20 is elliptic if compared with Exod. 19:13 (p113). In 12:25 several words need to be provided to complete the sense (p92). In 13:25 (χάρις) grace [of God] is intended (p25).

Bullinger thinks that an ellipsis is intentional:

The omission arises not from want of thought, or lack of care, or from accident, but from design, in order that we may not stop to think of, or lay stress on, the word omitted, but may dwell on the other words which are thus emphasized by the omission.” (p1).

Heb. 2:14 uses an *antanaclasis* which a repetition of the same word in a sentence but not with the same meaning (p286). Jesus’ death includes atonement, but people’s death is natural. (p293).

Heb. 2:16 (ἐπιλαμβάνεται) “he taketh” is a *heterosis* of tenses, whereby “the present tense is used for the past” (pp520-521). Other examples are 7:3 (μένει) “he remaineth” and 7:8 (ζῆ) “he liveth.” The speaker intends to make what to turn what is past into a present concern. In 9:12, 23; 10:28; 13:8 we have heterosis of the “plural” (holies, sacrifices, mercies, ages) “for the singular” (holy, sacrifice, mercy, age) (p531). By using the plural, the speaker magnifies or emphasizes something (p529). Heterosis of masculine for feminine is found in Heb. 9:16, 17 where “testator” is masculine and refers to Jesus. The “sacrifice” a feminine noun but the one sacrificed is a male person (p533). Heterosis of the “neuter for the masculine” is found in 7:7 where the inferior (neuter) is blessed by the superior” (p534). Heb 10:11 (ἔστηκεν) “stood” is a past tense that is used for “stands”, a present tense (p518). Bullinger considers 3:14 (γεγόναμεν) “we have been made” as heterosis of “the past for the future” (“we shall become”). In a heterosis of degree, a “positive” is used but a “superlative” is understood as in 10:21 (ἱερέα μέγαν) “great priest” standing for “greatest” and in 13:20 (τὸν ποιμένα ... τὸν μέγαν) “great shepherd” standing for “greatest shepherd” (p527). In 12:22 (προσεληλύθατε) “you have come” is a past tense used for the future “you will come.” (pp519-520). There are times “when the speaker views the action as being as good as done” (p518).

Heb. 3:6 (οὗ οἴκος ἐσμεν ἡμεῖς) “whose house we are” is an *association* or *inclusion* in which “the speaker or the writer associates himself with those he addresses” (p900). The speaker

enhances his chances of being heard sympathetically when the listeners or the readers take him to be one of them. Every time the author of Hebrews uses the 1st person plural (we, us) in a way that includes the listeners (2:1-3, 5, 8-9; 4:1-3, 11, 14-16; 6:1-2, 18-20; 10:19-30, 39; 11:39-12:1-2; 13:13-15), he wins them over to his cause.

Heb. 3:8 uses a *hysteron-proteron* or “last-first” when it places the provocation of God before the temptation for emphasis (p703).

Heb. 3:12 (καρδία πονηρὰ ἀπιστίας) “an evil heart of unbelief” has “*the genitive* of relation and object” (pp.999, 1000). Other examples are 5:13 (λόγου δικαιοσύνης) “word of righteousness”; 9:21(σκεύη τῆς λειτουργίας) “vessels of ministry”; 11:26 (ὀνειδισμὸν τοῦ Χριστοῦ) “reproach of Christ” (p1000).

Heb. 4:12 (μάχαιραν δίστομον) is a *pleonasm* or a “redundancy” which is evocative. “A sword with two mouths is a sword which devoured exceedingly and slew large numbers” (p408). See also 11:34 (στόματα) “mouth” of a sword (p407). In 13:15 (ὄνόματι αὐτοῦ) “his name” stand for “God *himself*” (pp409, 410).

Heb. 5:8 (ἔμαθεν ἀφ’ ὧν ἔπαθεν τὴν ὑπακοήν) “he learned obedience by the things he suffered” is *paranomasia*, which is “rhyming words,” “the repetition of words similar in sound, but not necessarily in sense.” The purpose is to call attention to the two words (pp 307, 320).

Heb. 6:1-3 is a *metabasis*, which is a “transition” or “a passing from one subject to another.” The speaker briefly says what he wishes to move away from, namely the “elementary doctrines of Christ.” (p908).

Heb. 6:14 (εὐλογῶν εὐλογήσω σε), “in blessing I will bless you”, is a *polyptoton*, “the repetition of the same part of speech in different inflections” (p267). However, this is a citation (Gen.

22:17) so we cannot credit the author of Hebrews with creating it. Heb. 10:37 (ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἥξει) “he who cometh will come” is a polyptoton of “verbs in different moods and tenses” (p268, 272).

Heb. 6:16 (ὄρκος) “oath” is in a place which is out of grammatical order, thereby producing a *hyperbaton*, for the sake of emphasis (p697). Another example is 7:4 (ὁ πατριάρχης) “the patriarch.”

Heb. 6:17 (τὸ ἀμετάθετον τῆς βουλῆς αὐτοῦ) “the immutability of his counsel” is an *antiptosis*, where we have an “exchange of one case for another” (p507). In this instance, the meaning is “his unchangeable counsel” (p508). See also 9:15 “the promise of the eternal life” meaning “the promised eternal life.” (p509).

Hebrews 7:18 (Ἀθέτησις) “disannulling” is an *idiom* that is “a technical legal expression.” See also 9:26 (p855). In 10:20 (ὁδὸν ζῶσαν) “living way”, the word “living” is an idiom for “the excellency of the thing to which it is applied” (pp830-31).

Heb. 9:12 (αἵματος τράγων καὶ μόσχων) “blood of goats and calves” is a *meiosis* (*litotes*, *diminutio* or *extenuatio*), by which “one thing is diminished in order to increase *another* thing” “to call our attention, not to the smallness of the thing thus lessened, but to the importance of that which is put in contrast with it (p155). The author of Hebrews is fond of this strategy and by it he magnifies Jesus and his accomplishments above famous people in Israel’s history and time-honored institutions of Israel. In 13:17 he understates what is “disastrous and ruinous” by calling it “unprofitable” (p158).

Heb. 9:12, 14; 10:19; 12:24; 13:12 use *metalepsis* or double metonymy because “blood” of Jesus stands for both his “death” and its “atonement” (p610). This is a compact way to say a lot.

Heb. 9:15 has a *hypallage*, which is an “interchange of construction” where “the promise of eternal inheritance” represents “the eternal inheritance which has been promised” See also 9:23 (τὰ ἐπουράνια) where “heavenly things” stand for “those who shall enter” heaven. The speaker does this to “attract attention to what is said, and thus emphasizes the true and real meaning” (pp535, 537).

Heb 9:19 (τὸ βιβλίον ... ἐράντισεν) “sprinkling of the book” is a *hysteresis*, a “subsequent narration” of a historical event that is a supplement to the original event. Exodus 24 does not mention this detail. In 11:21 Jacob’s posture in worship says a bit more than can be found in Gen. 48:12, not to be confused with the earlier instance of bowing in Gen. 47:31 (p712). In 12:21, the detail about Moses trembling with fear is missing from Exodus 19-20. There are readers who call this a discrepancy, but others call it a supplement given by the Holy Spirit (p.709).

Heb. 10:34 (ὕπαρχόντων) “goods” and (ὑπαρξιν) “substance” are *paregmenon (derivatio)*, that is, they are formed from the same root (p306). It is a figure that is pleasant to hear for a Greek audience who can detect the similarity.

Heb. 10:37 (ὅσον ὅσον) “how little, how little” or “yet a little while” is an *epizeuxis* (duplication), a “repetition of the same word in the same sense.” Bullinger calls it “a common and powerful way of emphasizing a particular word, by thus marking it and calling attention to it” (p189, 198).

Heb. 11:12, the author uses a *hyperbole* or “exaggeration” when he compares the number of children of Abraham with “the stars of heaven” and with “grains of sand by the seashore.” (P427). These figures could also be *paroemia* or “proverbial sayings” (p758).

Heb. 11:16 uses *tapeinosis* or “demeaning” which is “a lessening of a thing in order to increase it.” God is “not ashamed” actually means that God is “well-pleased” (p159, 164). This figure is used also used in 13:2 “not forgetful” means “make it your business to remember” (p164).

11:31 (πόρνη) “harlot” has a wider meaning in Hebrew “*female hostess*, or *landlady*, as well as *harlot*” (p680). The figure here is *catachresis* or “incongruity” because of moving from one language to another (p674, 680). By the time of Hebrews, the word had become an *ampliatio* or an *epithet*. (pp689, 690). Rahab was a person later remembered for her virtue, namely, helping Israelite spies against Jericho. In 13:15 (ὁμολογεῖν) “to confess” is from a Hebrew word (*hōdah*) to *praise* or *celebrate*” (p678).

In 11:32, the speaker declares his intention to go quickly over some historical persons of faith. This is *paraleipsis* or “passing by” which has other names such as *parasiopesis*, *praetermissio*, and *praeteritio* (p484).

Heb. 11:32-38 illustrates the figure *asyndeton*, that is “without conjunctions” (p137). This figure is also an *epitrochasmus* (“summarizing”) or *percursio* (“running through”) (p438).

Bullinger considers why a speaker or writer would use this figure:

When the figure asyndeton is used, we are not detained over the separate statements, and asked to consider each in detail, but we are hurried on over the various matters that are mentioned, as though they were of no account, in comparison with the great climax to which they lead up, and which alone we are thus asked by the figure to emphasize. (p137)

In Hebrews, the climax that the speaker is hurrying to is 12:1-4, his audience’s participation in faith, Jesus’ heroic demonstration of faith, and the fact that Jesus is the founder and perfecter of faith.

11:39 is *symperasma* or *athroesmos* which is a “concluding summary.” (p468).

12:5,6 has *paroemia* or *proverbium*, that is, proverbs that have become so common that they can be regarded as “proverbial sayings” (p.761).

12:20, 21 is *epitrechon* or “running along.” It is “parenthetical” to or an “undercurrent” (*subcontinuatio*) beneath another thought (pp. 472, 474).

12:18-19 is a *parembole* or “insertion” which is a “parenthetic independent addition.” It has also been called *epembole* and *paremptosis* (p. 476).

13:8 uses *polysyndeton* or “the repetition of the word ‘and’” at the beginning of successive clauses.” The speaker wishes the listener to “stop at each point, and weigh each matter that is presented to us, and to consider each particular that is added and emphasized” (pp. 208, 226).

APPENDIX 3: SACRIFICE AND FEASTS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

As long as the temple stood, Jesus and his followers attended temple services. Jesus was, like every other Jewish boy, circumcised on the eighth day (Luke 2:21). He and his parents made the annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem (Luke 2:41-42). Jesus, as an adult, was baptized by John the Baptist, who was calling the nation of Israel back to God (Luke 3:21-22). Jesus visited Jerusalem during the feasts of the Lord (John 5:1; 7:10-14, 37; 12:1; 13:1). In fact, Jesus taught in Jerusalem during the feasts. Jesus was arrested, tried, and condemned to crucifixion during Passover. The Holy Spirit was poured out on the believers during Pentecost (Acts 2). The Acts of the Apostles record Paul as visiting Jerusalem during the feast of Pentecost (Acts 20:16). During the New Testament period (1st century A.D.), Jewish followers of Jesus kept the feasts and participated in temple rituals much like other Jews (Acts 2:46; 3:1).

Jesus, however, taught his disciples to interpret Israel's feasts and sacrifices in a Christological fashion. Jesus himself instituted the Lord's Supper and declared that the new covenant promised in the Old Testament was to be fulfilled in his blood (Mark 14:22-25). After his death and resurrection, he appeared to his disciples and taught them for forty days. He proved to them from the Scriptures that his death and resurrection were a fulfillment of Scripture (Luke 24:25-27). He commanded them to go and make disciples of all people groups (nations), baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to observe all that he had taught them (Matt. 28:18-20).

On the day of Pentecost, Peter preached to the crowd of residents and pilgrims in Jerusalem that the time of repentance and belief in Jesus had arrived for Israel (Acts 2:14-41). The book of Acts records the interaction between the followers of Jesus, other Jews (Acts 3:42-47), Samaritans (8:4-25), and Gentiles (Acts 10). The followers of Jesus used the temple

premises to preach in the name of Jesus and this is evidence that they did not consider following Jesus as a new religion but rather a fulfillment of the Jewish religion. They did not forsake the temple but were persecuted by Jewish leaders, driven from the temple, and scattered from Jerusalem into Judea and beyond. Paul, when he became a follower of Jesus, always began with the Jews before moving on to the Gentiles (Acts 13). He did not forsake the Jews, but they drove him out of Jerusalem and pursued him all over Asia.

From what I can tell, Jewish followers of Jesus did not reject the services of the temple or of the synagogues. I conclude that their worship of God followed the order of the synagogues with the exception that they considered Passover as fulfilled in Jesus as the lamb of God whose blood diverted the judgment of God; the Day of Atonement as fulfilled in Jesus who took away the sins of the world. The implication for the rest of the feasts of the Lord is obvious: they were already fulfilled or would be fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Their temple or synagogue worship must reflect the fact that God had acted in Jesus and the Israelites were obliged to repent and commit their lives to Jesus.

As for the form of worship, the radical change was the inclusion of Jesus in the worship of the God of Israel, and not in elaborate rituals. The more liturgical forms of worship in both the synagogue and in Christian meetings come later (after the fall of the temple in A.D. 70). If the Epistle to the Hebrews was written before the fall of the temple, the author and the audience were not concerned with rituals but with the implication of including Jesus in the worship of God, claims of his messiahship, and his role as the mediator of a new covenant. That the author spent so much time exploring the high priesthood of Jesus and its implication for worship was an indication of where the problems lay. It was not the form but the content of worship that divided the followers of Jesus from their Jewish co-religionists. In fact, as far as I can tell, Gentiles

considered the quarrels between Jesus' followers and other religious Jews as intra-Jewish quarrels (Acts 18:12-17).

When it comes to determining the form of worship in the New Testament, Paul Bradshaw reminds us of the scarcity of evidence. He also warns against three tendencies: "Panliturgism," "reading back later liturgical practices," and "harmonization." Panliturgists tend to regard the NT documents as produced for liturgical services. Those who read later liturgical practices back into an earlier period assume much continuity between the New Testament and what came later. Harmonizers use partial evidence to generalize. Bradshaw suggest that it is better to accept that the scarcity of evidence makes it difficult to know for certain what liturgy looked like in the New Testament period.⁴⁰⁸

Worship in the Synagogues

Parallel to temple worship were services in synagogues, both in Israel and in the diaspora. The synagogues may have had their origin in the exilic or post-exilic period. They served as places where Jews gathered to read and study the Scriptures, to hear a sermon, to confess faith in God, pray, and to praise God. According to Everett Ferguson,

The Synagogue was the most important institution developed within Judaism insofar as Christian origins are concerned: it provided the locus for the teaching of Jesus and later his apostles and so the place of recruitment of the earliest Christian converts, and many aspects of the worship and organization of the early church were derived from the synagogue. Although a new institution, the synagogue represents an organized way of carrying out activities commanded in the law.⁴⁰⁹

Skarsaune tells us the following concerning the synagogues:

The Synagogue was never meant to replace the temple. There is evidence of synagogues in Egypt as far back as 250 B.C. Literary and archaeological evidence for synagogues in

⁴⁰⁸ Paul F. Bradshaw, *The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship: Sources and Methods for the Study of Early Liturgy* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2002), 47-72.

⁴⁰⁹ Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 540.

the first century A.D. can be found in Galilee (Gamla, Capernaum), in the desert (Masada), at Herodium, and Jerusalem. A simple liturgy existed in which the Torah was read weekly, taking a year or three years to complete, depending on the cycle used. The Torah reading was accompanied by a reading of the Prophets called the Haftarah. There were set prayers or *Teffilah* that were recited while standing, and therefore also called *Amidah*, which with time came to be called the eighteen benedictions (*Shmoneh Esre*). The leadership was not priestly but led by lay people with scribes as readers. Only after the fall of the temple did the synagogue services increasingly use blessings and recitations belonging to the temple. There was hope that the temple, even after destruction, would be rebuilt but meantime prayer would take the place of sacrifices.⁴¹⁰

We find Jesus in the synagogue at Nazareth on a Sabbath. He reads from the scroll of Isaiah and teaches after the reading (Luke 4:16-27). He both amazes and infuriates his audience (vv. 22, 28-30). In Capernaum, he teaches on the Sabbaths and in one instance he casts out an evil spirit during a synagogue service (Luke 4:31-37). On different Sabbaths, he teaches in synagogues and heals a paralytic and a woman with a bent back (Luke 6:6-11; 13:10-17). We find Paul and Barnabas preaching in Jewish synagogues on the island of Cyprus (Acts 13:5). They visit a synagogue in Antioch in Pisidia on a Sabbath (Acts 13:14-52). In fact, it was Paul's custom to visit synagogues of the diaspora and to preach, teach, and discuss the Scriptures and their fulfilment in Jesus Christ (Acts 14:1; 17:1-2, 10-12; 18:1-4). Many churches began in synagogues but soon separated from them because of the hostility of unbelieving Jews. Geza Vermes argues that Jesus and his followers were considered another Jewish religious sect, in addition to the Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, Zealots / Sicarii. The real problem began with Paul's admission of Gentiles as "full members" into the Jesus party without the Gentiles "first passing through Judaism." Vermes claims that "Paul's successful missionary activity is the primary source of the parting of ways" between Christianity and Judaism.⁴¹¹

⁴¹⁰ Skarsaune, *In the Shadow of the Temple*, 123-126.

⁴¹¹ Geza Vermes, "The Jewish Movement," in Hershel Shanks, ed., *Partings: How Judaism and Christianity Became Two* (Washington DC: Biblical Archaeological Society, 2013), 1-25 (see esp. 2, 23).

Significance of the Feasts of Israel for NT Believers

Passover

It was during Passover that Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper (Mark 14:17-25; Matt. 26:17-29; Luke 22:7-23). John the Baptist had previously declared him to be "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). Jesus is compared to the lamb that was consumed during Passover. Jesus, shockingly, tells Jews the following:

Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of me. This is the bread that came from heaven—not as your fathers ate manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever. These things he said in the synagogue as He taught in Capernaum (John 6:53-59, NKJV).

The imagery of the slain Passover lamb is important in that the blood of the original lambs shed in Egypt just before the exodus from Egypt (Exodus 12) is now revealed to be a type of the blood of Jesus who would also perform an exodus at Jerusalem (Luke 9:30). The Last Supper fits in with a Jewish understanding of the exodus and the Sinaitic covenant:

Just as the flesh of the Passover lamb had to be eaten in order for the sacrifice to be completed, so too the flesh of the new Passover lamb, given under the form of bread, had to be consumed by the disciples in order that they might participate in the eschatological Passover set in motion by Jesus' prophetic sign. And just as the Jewish Torah prohibited the consumption of animal blood because the "life" was in the blood, so too, for this reason Jesus commanded his disciples to consume his blood, so that they might be partakers of the life of the world to come, through the eschatological banquet of the kingdom of God. Far from being impossible in a Jewish context, it is precisely Jewish beliefs about the blood, bread, covenant, manna, and Passover lamb that enables us to make any sense of why Jesus of Nazareth could ever have spoken as he did about his body and blood.⁴¹²

⁴¹² Brant Pitre, *Jesus and the Last Supper* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015), 514.

Unleavened Bread

On the night that Jesus was betrayed, he broke bread with his disciples (Luke 22:19). The breaking of bread during the Last Supper became part of the celebration of the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 15:17-34). It is possible that the Lord's Supper is hinted at when the author of Hebrews says, "We have an altar from which those who serve the tent have no right to eat (Heb. 13:10). However, this passage may also allude to other foods that priests, and other Israelites, ate at the temple during the feasts of the Lord.⁴¹³

Firstfruits

Believers have the Holy Spirit, who is called "the firstfruits of the Spirit" (Rom. 8:23). Paul, while defending his ministry to the Gentiles and holding out hope for the Jews, says:

For if their rejection means reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead? If the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, so is the whole lump, and if the root is holy, so are the branches (Rom. 11:15-16).

Paul considered the first convert in Asia as firstfruits: "Greet my beloved Epaenetus, who was the firstfruits to Christ in Asia" (Rom. 16:5). The first converts in Achaiah are also called firstfruits (1 Cor. 16:15). Jesus Christ, as the first to permanently rise from the dead, is firstfruits:

But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who fall asleep. . . For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming all who belong to Christ (Rom. 15:20, 23).

Believers in Jesus Christ are the firstfruits of God's creatures (James 1:18). Finally, 144,000 select emissaries are set apart from other human beings and designated "firstfruits for God and the Lamb" (Rev. 14:4).

⁴¹³ Gerald O'Collins and Michael Keenan Jones, see a reference to the Eucharist in Heb. 13:10. See O'Collins and Jones, *Jesus Our Priest: A Christian Approach to the Priesthood of Christ* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010), 64. On allusions to the Lord's Supper, and the meaning of "altar" of Heb. 13:10 as the cross/death of Christ, see Koester, *Hebrews*, 127-129, 568-9.

Feast of Weeks or Pentecost.

The Feast of Weeks is special for the followers of Jesus because the Holy Spirit was poured out during that festival (Acts 2) in fulfillment of prophecy (Joel 2:28-32). After the preaching of Peter on that day in Jerusalem, 3000 new believers were baptized and added to the church. It was a great harvest of souls at the time when Israel was celebrating the harvest of new grain.

Feast of Trumpets

Jesus will return to earth and gather his followers to the sound of a trumpet:

Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven will be shaken. Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other (Matt. 24:29-31).

Paul also taught the Thessalonians to expect a trumpet call at the coming of the Lord:

For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of the archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage each other with these words (1 Thess. 4:16-18).

In the book of Revelation, we read of seven angels blowing trumpets and thereby effecting the judgments of God on the earth (Rev. 8:6-11:19).

Day of Atonement

The book of Hebrews explains how Jesus, who was of the tribe of Judah, was appointed high priest in the order of Melchizedek (Heb. 2:17; 3:1; 4:14; 5:1-10; 6:20-7:28; 8:1-4; 9:11-28; 10:5-20; 12:24). The Day of Atonement was important for Israel because on it the high priest made sacrifices that would cover the sins of the nation for the past year. When Jesus came, he

not only atoned for sin, but he also cleansed the conscience of the people thereby enabling them to approach God with boldness. We can now have confidence before God because Jesus has performed the Day of Atonement sacrifices once for all. He now represents us in heaven, which is the reality to which the Holy of Holies in the earthly temple pointed. Jesus identifies with us even as he represents us:

When Jesus is presented as a high priest praying in agony in 5:7-10, it seems that this recapitulates the portrayal of him and his siblings in 2:10-18. The fact that Jesus' priesthood is grounded in his ability to show solidarity invites the addressees to identify with the praying man portrayed in 5:7-10. The addressees know that Jesus fully identifies with their situation because he fully shared in it. By implication, therefore, they are also allowed to identify with the life, suffering, death, and exaltation of Jesus.⁴¹⁴

Jesus is both the high priest (Heb. 4:14-5:10) and the sacrifice (Heb. 9:23-10:18). As the sacrifice, he suffered more than any sacrificial animal ever suffered because he also experienced what Bruce Malina and Jerome Neyrey call "status-degradation rituals." The book of Mark records four such humiliating rituals:

- (1) A sham trial before the ruling Jerusalem elite at which Jesus is spat on, blindfolded, and beaten (14:53-65); (2) a sham trial before Pilate that resulted in Barabbas, a murderer and insurrectionist, being acclaimed worthier than Jesus (15:1-15); (3) a mock investiture of Jesus as king during which he is struck and spat on (15:16-26); and (4) Jesus's crucifixion, a very demeaning form of execution, at which he is publicly derided by all parties present, even those crucified with him (15:25-32).⁴¹⁵

⁴¹⁴ Ole Jacob Filtvedt, "With Our Eyes Fixed on Jesus: The Prayer of Jesus and His Followers in Hebrews," in *Early Christian Prayer and Identity Formation*, WUNT 336, Reidar Hvalvik and Karl Olav Sandnes, eds. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 161-182 (esp. p165).

⁴¹⁵ Here Richard E. Damaris, *The New Testament in its Ritual World* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2008), 94, is appropriating Bruce J. Malina and Jerome H. Neyrey, *Calling Jesus Names: The Social Value of Labels in Matthew*, Foundations and Facets: Social Facets (Sonoma, CA: Polebridge Press, 1988), 51, 88-91.

Feast of Tabernacles

God has come to tabernacle with us in Christ Jesus: “And the Word became flesh and dwelt with us, and we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). Jesus, before he left for heaven, assured his disciples that he would always be with them (Matt. 28:20). Even though Jesus is now in heaven, he has not left us as orphans but has sent the Holy Spirit to dwell with and in us (John 14:15-21). Because of our relationship with Jesus, we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and therefore we enjoy the continuous presence of the Lord (Eph. 1:13-14; 2:11-22). Believers will reign with Christ for a thousand years and afterwards dwell with God in the new heaven and the new earth (Rev. 20:1-22:4)

Daily Service, Sabbath, New Moon, Sabbath Year, Jubilee

Regulations for days, weeks, months, and years were given to remind the Israelites of their dependence on God for provision day by day, week by week, month by month, year by year. God took care of the Israelites and so they were to stop, rest, and reflect on his benevolence. The land of Israel belonged to God. It was given to the Israelites as a place of rest, but it could be taken away if the people abused it. In the same way, Christ’s followers were to daily remember and confess their dependence on God for grace, mercy, help, rest, and provision (Heb. 2:16-18; 4:1, 11, 16; 13:5-6). Jesus’ followers could also use appointed holidays and feasts to talk about the inaugurated kingdom of their Lord in which they already enjoy a measure of rest, and the future kingdom when all the people of God shall finally enter their permanent rest.

APPENDIX 4: WORSHIP AFTER THE FALL OF THE TEMPLE

With the fall of the temple in A.D. 70, and especially in the second century A.D. we begin to see the growth of ritualistic and liturgical forms of worship in rabbinic Judaism and Christianity as the two forms of worship increasingly parted company. A look at the period after the fall of the temple helps us to see just how soon ritual became an important part of synagogue and church worship. In Christianity, this is most evident in the way baptism, holy communion, and prayer became formalized. Rabbinic Judaism and Christianity settled as two different, even rival, religions as each developed its own leadership structures and rituals in worship.

Baptism

Baptism can be regarded as “cleansing from sin and sickness”; “incorporation into the community”; “sanctifying and illuminative”; “dying and rising”; “the beginning of the new creation.”⁴¹⁶ In the *Didache*, a manual written either at the end of the first century A.D. or at the beginning of the second century A.D., there are strict instructions for baptism.⁴¹⁷ With time (4th cen. A.D.), the church clarified the exact steps to take in a baptism ritual.⁴¹⁸

⁴¹⁶ See the chapter headings in Robin M. Jensen, *Baptism Imagery in the Early Church: Ritual, Visual, and Theological Dimensions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academics, 2012), vii-viii.

⁴¹⁷ *Didache*, VII. Trans. Cyril C. Richardson, LCC, I, 174. Cited in James F. White, *Documents of Christian Worship: Descriptive and Interpretive Sources* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1992), 147.

⁴¹⁸ Robin M. Jensen, *Baptism Imagery in the Early Church: Ritual, Visual, and Theological Dimensions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academics, 2012), 2-3. We can contrast this detailed ritual with the simplicity found in Matt. 28:19; Acts 2:38; 8:15-17, 36-38; 10:48. See White, *Documents of Christian Worship*, 146. For a comprehensive study on baptism, see Everett Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009).

Eucharist

The Lord's Supper also became more of a formal meal. In the *Didache*, the words said over the bread and the wine differ significantly from those in the New Testament (Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:14-22; Matt. 26:26-29; 1 Cor. 11:23-25):

Now about the Eucharist: This is how to give thanks: First in connection with the cup: "We thank you, our Father, for the holy vine of David, your child, which you have revealed through Jesus, your child. To you be glory forever." Then in connection with the piece [broken off the loaf]: "We thank you, our Father, for the life and knowledge which you have revealed through Jesus your child. To you be glory forever." . . . After you have finished your meal, say grace in this way: "We thank you, holy Father, for your sacred name which you have lodged in our hearts, and for the knowledge and faith and immortality which you have revealed through Jesus, your child. To you be the glory forever."⁴¹⁹

Fixed Order of Hours, Forms, and Leadership

Jesus is known to have prayed early in the morning: "Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there he prayed" (Mark 1:35, NKJV). He prayed from afternoon to evening (Mark 6:46; Matt. 14:23). Luke records that he was in the habit of going into the wilderness to pray (Luke 5:15) and at times prayed all night (Luke 6:12). His disciples observed him in prayer (Luke 9:18; 11:1). He taught his disciples how to pray (Matt 6: 5-14). He prayed before feeding five thousand (Matt. 14:18). People came to him expecting him to pray for their children (Matt. 19:13). He prayed for himself, his disciples, and his future followers (John 17). He prayed in the garden of Gethsemane

⁴¹⁹ *Didache*, IX-X. Trans. Cyril C. Richardson, LCC, I, 175-176. Cited in White, *Documents of Christian Worship*, 182. There are more prayers and instruction in the *Didache* and the above are just a sample. Contrast this with the Jesus' words of institution (Mark 14:22-26; Matt. 26:26-30; Luke 22:14-22). These verses are given by White, *Documents of Christian Worship*, 181. For a comprehensive study on the eucharist, see Bryan D. Spinks, *Do This in Remembrance of Me: The Eucharist from the Early Church to the Present Day* (London: SCM Press, 2013).

at night (Mark 14: 32-42; Matt. 26:36-46). From these passages, we conclude that Jesus was bound to pray at any time of day, alone and in the company of others.

The followers of Jesus spent much time praying together (Acts 1:14, 24; 4:23-31). Peter and John observed the afternoon hour of prayer in the temple (Acts 3:1). The apostles desired to be relieved from serving tables so that they may occupy themselves with teaching and praying (Acts 6:3-4). Stephen prayed for those who were stoning him to death (Acts 7:60). Peter prayed at noon before lunch (Acts 10:9). Believers prayed at night for Peter after he was imprisoned (12:12). The church of Antioch prayed and fasted before sending Barnabas and Saul on mission (13:1-3). Paul and Silas prayed and sang hymns at midnight in a Philippian jail (16:25). Paul knelt down to pray with the Ephesian elders before he left them for the last time (Acts 20:36). Acts therefore depicts the followers of Jesus praying at all times of day.

In his epistles, Paul prays for believers and ends his letters with benedictions (Rom. 1:8-10; 16:25-27; 1 Cor. 1:4-8; 16:23; 2 Cor. 13:14; Gal. 6:18; Eph. 6:23-24; Phil. 1:1-11; 4:23; Col. 1:3-4; 4:18; 1 Thess. 1:2-3; 5:28; 2 Thess. 1:3; 3:18; 1 Tim. 6:20; 2 Tim. 1:3; 4:22; Tit. 3:15; Philem. 1:4-6, 25). He encourages believers to keep on praying (Phil. 4:6-7; 1 Thess. 5:17). The author of Hebrews recalls the earthly life of Jesus as a life of earnest prayer (2: 12; 5:7; 10:5-7). As a high priest in heaven and as the mediator of the new covenant, Jesus helps his followers to approach God with confidence (2:17-18; 4:11, 14-16; 8:1-2; 10:19-23; 13:15, 18-19). The author of Hebrews ends the epistle with a benediction (13:20-21, 25). James encourages believers to pray when they suffer and to sing psalms when they are happy. Believers are to pray for the sick fervently and earnestly as Elijah did (James 5:13-18).

Prayers directed at God the Father often include Jesus the Son as mediator (Rom. 15:5-6; 1 Cor. 15:57; 2 Cor. 2:14). Benedictions and doxologies mention both God the Father and Jesus

Christ the Son (Rom. 16:27; 2 Cor. 1:3; 11:31). God is praised as the “Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Eph. 1:3; Col. 1:3).⁴²⁰ Apparently, from the above examples, the NT encourages extemporaneous and continual prayer, prayer at all times and in all circumstances, in the name of Jesus to God the Father.

Fixed hours and formulae became more common with time. The *Didache* required believers to pray three times a day.⁴²¹ Geza Vermes tells us that The *Epistle of Clement*, written from Rome to Corinth around A.D. 95 or 96, used the same prayer formulae as found in Pauline epistles (1 Clem. 20:11; 50:7; 59:2-3; 61:3; 64:1). In these verses, prayer is directed to God the Father through Jesus Christ his Son and our Lord.⁴²² However, Hippolytus (*Apostolic Tradition* 10:3-5), did allow for freedom in prayer even as he was formulating models to be used:

Let the bishop pray according to these models, and let no one hinder him or judge him if he simply does so. But if he deviates, “no one shall prevent him. Only let his prayer be thanksgiving to God, but let each pray according to his ability. If indeed he is able to pray suitably with grand and elevated prayer, this is a good thing. But if he . . . should pray and recite a prayer according to a fixed form, no one shall prevent him”⁴²³

Early in the third century A.D. (c. 217), Hippolytus (*Apostolic Tradition*, XLI) teaches believers to pray seven times a day (morning, third hour, sixth hour, ninth hour, before bed, midnight, cockcrow). He gives justification for those times, and ends by saying, “And if you act so, all you

⁴²⁰ Vermes, *Christian Beginnings*, 111-113.

⁴²¹ *Didache*, VIII. Trans. Cyril C. Richardson, LCC, I, 174. Cited in White, *Documents of Christian Worship*, 78. For prayer in the third, sixth, and ninth hour, see Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata or Miscellanies*, VII, 7, Tertullian, *On Fasting*, X, *On Prayer*, XXV-XXVI. (Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata or Miscellanies*, VII, 7. Trans. William Wilson, ANF, II, 534; Tertullian, *On Fasting*, X. Trans. S. Thelwell, ANF, IV, 108; Tertullian, *On Prayer*, XXV-XXVI. Trans. S. Thelwell, ANF, III, 690.) These citations are found in White, *Documents of Christian Worship*, 78-79.

⁴²² Vermes, *Christian Beginnings*, 162. For a discussion of Jesus Christ and the church in *1 Clement*, see Vermes, *Christian Beginnings*, 159-162.

⁴²³ Skarsaune, *In the Shadow of the Temple*, 378.

faithful, and remember these things, and teach them in turn, and encourage the catechumens, you will not be able to be tempted or perish, since you have Christ always in memory.”⁴²⁴

First Epistle of Clement (c. 96 A.D.) was written to resolve a crisis in which some members of the Corinthian church had rejected their leaders. It is reminiscent of Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians (see 1 Corinthians 3-4). Apparently, the church at Corinth did not learn from Paul concerning division over leadership. The author of *1 Clement* appeals to Old Testament order of service to teach the Corinthians how to submit themselves to their leaders. *1 Clement* 40 encourages the church at Corinth to observe the order of service appointed by God:

1. Since these matters have been clarified for us in advance and we have gazed into the depths of divine knowledge, we should do everything the Master has commanded us to perform in an orderly way and at appointed times.
2. He commanded that the sacrificial offerings and liturgical rites be performed not in a random or haphazard way, but according to set times and hours.
3. In his superior plan he set forth both where and through whom he wished them to be performed, so that everything done in a holy way and according to his good pleasure might be acceptable to his will.
4. Thus, those who make their sacrificial offerings at the arranged times are acceptable and blessed. And since they follow the ordinances of the Master, they commit no sin.
5. For special liturgical rites have been assigned to the high priest, and a special place has been designated for the regular priests, and special ministries are established for the Levites. The lay person is assigned to matters enjoined on the laity.⁴²⁵

Just as God appointed the high priests and other priests to offer appointed sacrifices at the Jerusalem temple and its altar (*1 Clement* 41), so also God has appointed an order of church ministry in which bishops and deacons lead the rest of the church (*1 Clement* 42). *1 Clement* 43 reminds the Corinthians that God chose Aaron and his sons to be priests and confirmed their ministry by the miracle of Aaron’s rod that budded. In *1 Clement* 44, a succession of leaders (or

⁴²⁴ Hippolytus, *Apostolic Tradition*, XLI. Trans. Geoffrey J. Cuming, *Hippolytus for Students* (Bramcote, Notts.: Grove Books, 1976), pp. 29-31. Cited in White, *Documents of Christian Worship*, 79-81.

⁴²⁵ *1 Clement*, Loeb Classical Library, https://www.loebclassics.com/view/clement-first_letter/2003/pb_LCL024.107.xml?result=1&rskey=LKhFtA (accessed November 30, 2023)

of the episcopate) is justified on the grounds that Jesus appointed apostles and the apostles appointed the leaders who came after them. The succession was of course with the agreement of the church members because the ministers (presbyters) were known to be men of good character and conduct. *1 Clement* 47 claims that the recent rejection of presbyters is worse than the leadership strife during the time of Paul when the Corinthians were divided over their leaders. The author exhorts the congregation to submit with love and humility to its presbyters (*1 Clement* 48-50) and for those who caused the sedition to repent of their sins (*1 Clement* 57). *First Epistle of Clement* is evidence that toward the end of the first century A.D. Christian congregations have a structure of government in which leaders are appointed by former leaders, with the agreement of the congregation. This is the beginning of what later became the fixed order of clergy and laity. Such a hierarchy had consequences for worship in that the church was returning to formalities similar to those of temple service.

As history rolls along, the propensity to formalism that is a human tendency in religion increases. The church becomes more hierarchical with bishops and deacons and priests leading in formal prayer.⁴²⁶ There is nothing wrong with formal prayer and set times and places of prayer, but the experience can quickly turn into a routine that has lost meaning and spontaneity. Relationship with Christ and the response to the Spirit can often give way to a meaningless liturgical exercise. We should learn from Augustine about the true nature of prayer. Augustine (*On the Lord's Sermon on the Mount* 2.3.14) views prayer as simply turning our heart toward God when he writes the following:

One might ask whether we ought to pray with words or deeds, or what necessity we have for prayer, especially since God already knows what we need before we ask.

⁴²⁶ Hippolytus, *Apostolic Tradition*, XXXIX, XLI. Trans. Geoffrey J. Cuming, *Hippolytus for Students* (Bramcote, Notts.: Grove Books, 1976), pp. 28-29. Cited in White, *Documents of Christian Worship*, 82.

Nevertheless, the act of prayer purges, cleanses, and clarifies our heart and makes it more capable of seeing and embracing the divine gifts that pour forth upon us from the spirit. God does not heed the ambitious desires of our prayers, because God is always ready to shine divine light upon us, not a visible light but an intellectual and spiritual one. Sadly, we are rarely ready to turn our eyes toward it and instead we twist aside to other alluring objects out of a desire for momentary pleasures that pass away as soon as they are grasped. In prayer, however, our hearts turn to God, whose generosity always readily overflows. If only we will but embrace what God offers: in turning away from the world and its fleeting moments of temporal joy the purification of the inner eye allows true vision and turns our gaze from what we crave. So the eyes of the purified heart without blinking or wavering lid bear the pure light that shines divinely. Not only does the eye bear it, but it abides in it; not only without difficulty, but even with unspeakable joy, with which the blessed life is truly and genuinely brought to fulfillment.⁴²⁷

Christian Worship on Sunday

Luke tells us that, at first, Christians met every day for study, worship, and fellowship:

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread . . . And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved (Acts 2:42, 46-47).

With time, this changed, and Sunday became the day of worship. According to Skarsaune,⁴²⁸ by the second century A.D., Sunday meetings combined into one what used to be a daily meeting for prayer, a Sabbath meeting for reading of Scripture, and an annual Passover meal. This new day of worship was an innovation away from the Jewish calendar, and it could be justified on the basis of the resurrection of Jesus. Jesus rose on the first day of the week. Evidence for the importance of the first day of the week can be found in John 20:1-9, 20, 26; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2; Rev. 1:10.

⁴²⁷ Cited in Roy Hammerling, ed., *A History of Prayer: The First to the Fifteenth Century* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2008), v.

⁴²⁸ Skarsaune, *In the Shadow of the Temple*, 378-381.

In the first century A.D., the author of the *Didache* (14:1-2) gives the follow instructions for Sunday worship:

On the Lord's [Day] of the Lord [Greek, *kata kyriakēn de kyriou*] come together, break bread and hold eucharist, after confessing your transgressions that your offering may be pure; but let none who has a quarrel with his fellow join in your meeting until they be reconciled, that your sacrifice be not defiled.⁴²⁹

In the second century A.D. Ignatius (*To the Magnesians* 9:1) appeals to the resurrection for Sunday worship:

If then they who walked in ancient customs came to a new hope, no longer living for the Sabbath, but for the Lord's Day, on which also our life sprang up through Him and His death . . . and by this mystery we received faith.⁴³⁰

Also, early in the second century A.D. Pliny reports to the Roman emperor the following concerning Christian worship in Bithynia:

[Those who had been Christians but were so no longer, under interrogation] asserted that . . . their custom had been to gather *before dawn* on a fixed day and to sing a hymn antiphonally to Christ as to God, and to bind themselves by an oath, not for any crimes, but to abstain from theft, robbery, adultery, breach of faith, and not to deny a deposit when demanded. When this was done, it had been their custom to separate, and to *meet again to take food*, but ordinary, harmless food.⁴³¹

Justin Martyr (*First Apology* 67:3-7) gives us details of Sunday worship in the middle of the second century A.D., which included weekly holy communion:

On the day called Sunday all [believers] who live in cities or in the countryside gather together at one place, and the memoirs of the Apostles or the writings of the Prophets are read, as long as time permits. Then, when the reader has finished, the president of the assembly in a speech admonishes and invites all to imitate such virtues. Then we all rise together to pray, and . . . when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president likewise offers up prayers and thanksgiving, to the best of his ability and the people express their approval by saying "Amen." Then there is a distribution to each and a consumption of that over which thanks were given, and to those who are

⁴²⁹ Ibid., 382.

⁴³⁰ Ibid., 382.

⁴³¹ Ibid., 382, translation and italics by Skarsaune.

absent a portion is sent by the deacons. The wealthy, if they wish, contribute whatever they desire, and the collected means are placed in the custody of the president, who cares for orphans and widows and those who are in need because of sickness or any other reason, and the captives and the strangers in our midst. In short, he takes care of those in need. Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly, because it is the first day on which God, having transformed the darkness and matter, created the world. And Jesus Christ our Saviour on the same day rose from the dead.⁴³²

Skarsaune notes the following structure that was repeated in later forms of Christian liturgy:

- *Scripture reading
- *Expository sermon
- *Common prayer

- *Bringing forward the bread
- *Eucharistic prayer
- *Partaking of bread and wine
- *Bringing donations to the poor⁴³³

The aspects of this service which are very much like a synagogue service in the first century A.D. include Scripture reading, expository sermon, common prayer, and bringing donations to the poor.

Worship in the synagogue

Similar to the development in Jewish Christian worship, non-Christian Jewish worship became increasingly formalized after the fall of the temple in A.D. 70. Initially, however, “in both camps, there was a combination of freedom in wording and stability in themes and patterns.”⁴³⁴

⁴³² ANF 1-10: Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1967-1969), 1:186. Cited by Skarsaune, *In the Shadow of the Temple*, 384.

⁴³³ Ibid., 384.

⁴³⁴ Ibid., 378.

In the synagogue, the Shema and the Eighteen Benedictions were recited. These benedictions included three “blessings,” twelve “petitions,” and three “thanksgivings.” The reading of the Law and the Prophets continued, and a sermon was given.” During festivals, priests (if present) could say the Aaronic blessing over the congregation. More prayers could be added as occasion demanded.⁴³⁵ Psalms that used to be sung by the priests in the temple were now sung by the congregation in the synagogue. Since sacrifices could not be offered once the temple fell, prayers were used as substitutes. Oskar Skarsaune puts it as follows:

At a somewhat late date, specific prayers were thought to replace the temple sacrifices (according to a rabbinic exegesis of Hosea 14:2: Words of the lips are more valuable than animal sacrifices). It also became customary to recite the biblical and Mishnaic passages concerning sacrifices as a substitute for the actual sacrifices. It should be emphasized that none of the sages responsible for these modifications of the synagogal liturgy thought of the synagogue service as a permanent substitute for the temple service. They created prayers for the rebuilding of the temple and the restoration of the sacrifices, and the synagogue equivalent to the temple service were only meant to be temporary substitutes until the time of restoration.⁴³⁶

Because sacrifices ceased with the fall of the temple, the focus was no longer on priests and sacrificial rituals but on rabbis and the teaching of the Torah. James D. J. Dunn succinctly describes the change of focus as follows:

But now the real focus was on the Torah, the impetus being to formulate a Judaism which could thrive without a temple: to take over responsibility previously exercised by the priests in determining the calendar and ‘rabbinizing’ the liturgy; and to gather the halakhic rulings (the oral Torah) which had already been well developed particularly by the Pharisees in the latter decades of the Second Temple. . . . In the process Judaism had been transformed from a religion of sacrificial cult to one of Torah compliance, where the central ministry was no longer that of priest but that of rabbi—‘a new Judaism in which good deeds and prayer would take the place, at least in terms of theological efficacy, of Temple cult.’⁴³⁷

⁴³⁵ Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 542-546.

⁴³⁶ Skarsaune, *In the Shadow of the Temple*, 125-126.

⁴³⁷ Dunn, *Neither Jew nor Greek*, 622-623.

In the congregations of Jewish followers of Jesus, similar freedom within restraints can be observed. In the *Didache* (10:7) for example, we find the following instructions: “But allow the prophets to say eucharistic prayers in the way they like.”⁴³⁸ After the fall of the temple, the relationship between Jewish believers in Jesus and those who followed the rabbis worsened. The rabbis sought to exclude believers in Jesus by introducing the “*birkat ha-minim*” or “the blessing (malediction) against the heretics” into the “eighteen benedictions” or “*Shemoneh ‘Esreh*” which were recited in the synagogues:

And for apostates let there be no hope; and may the insolent kingdom be quickly uprooted, in our days. And may the Nazarenes and the heretics (*minim*) perish quickly; and may they be erased from the Book of Life; and may they not be inscribed with the righteous. Blessed art thou, Lord, who humblest the insolent.”⁴³⁹

The hostility between Jews and Christians affected Jewish believers in Christ, especially as the church became increasingly gentile. Shaye Cohen puts it as follows:

Jewish believers-in-Christ had a choice. They could join the emerging Christian communities that were being populated more and more by gentile Christians; or they could try to maintain their place within Jewish society, a stance that would become harder and harder to maintain as the decades went by; or, if they were uncomfortable among non-Jewish Christians and non-Christian Jews, they could try to maintain their own communities, separate from each of the others.⁴⁴⁰

The hostility between Jews who believed in Jesus and those who did not was mutual. While the synagogue liturgy reflects this hostility in the *birkat ha-minim*, it may also be reflected in the

⁴³⁸ Skarsaune, *In the Shadow of the Temple*, 378.

⁴³⁹ Dunn, *Neither Jew nor Greek*, 624-625. This malediction helped to accelerate the parting of ways between the church and the synagogue. For more on the parting of the ways, see Dunn, *Neither Jew nor Greek*, 598-672.

⁴⁴⁰ Shaye J. D. Cohen, “In Between Jewish-Christians and the Curse of the Heretics,” in Hershel Shanks, ed., *Partings: How Judaism and Christianity Became Two* (Washington DC: Biblical Archaeological Society, 2013), 207-236 (esp. 209).

Didache. Shaye Cohen cites *Didache* 8 as Christians calling the Jews “hypocrites”: “Do not let your fasts coincide with those of the hypocrites. They fast on Monday and Thursday, so you must fast on Wednesday and Friday.” However, if we consider the *Didache* as a product of Jewish followers of Jesus, then the conflict we find in the *Didache* 8:1-3 could be between Jewish groups, much like those conflicts found in the New Testament (Matthew 23; Acts 4:1-31; 5:17-42; 6:8-8:3; 9:19-30; 13:49-52; 14:19-20; 21:27-26:32).

Geza Vermes considers the mention of hypocrites in *Didache* 8:1 as a reference to Christian Jews who continued to fast on Monday and Thursday as Pharisees did:

From the New Testament (Luke 18:12) we learn that a twice-weekly fasting was a Pharisee custom, confirmed in the Mishnah (Taan. 2:9), where it is specified that the two-day public fasting had to take place on Monday and Thursday, and a three-day fast on Monday, Thursday and on the following Monday or on Thursday and the following Monday and Thursday.⁴⁴¹

⁴⁴¹ Vermes, *Christian Beginnings*, 140.

APPENDIX 5: EDUCATIONAL SUFFERING

Herodotus 1.207:

Croesus the Lydian king, while advising King Cyrus of Persia on a course of military action, says the following:

τὰ δὲ μοι παθήματα ἔοντα ἀχάρिता μαθήματα γέγονε. εἰ μὲν ἀθάνατος δοκέεις εἶναι καὶ στρατιῆς τοιαύτης ἄρχειν, οὐδὲν ἂν εἶη πρήγμα γνώμας ἐμὲ σοὶ ἀποφαίνεσθαι· εἰ δ' ἔγνωκας ὅτι ἄνθρωπος καὶ σὺ εἷς καὶ ἐτέρων τοιῶνδε ἄρχεις, ἐκεῖνο πρῶτον μάθε, ὥς κύκλος τῶν ἀνθρωπείων ἐστὶ πρηγμάτων, περιφερόμενος δὲ οὐκ ἔῃ αἰεὶ τοὺς αὐτοὺς εὐτυχέειν.

And disaster has been my teacher. Now if you deem yourself and the army that you lead to be immortal, it is not for me to give you advice; but if you know that you and those whom you rule are but men, then I must first teach you this: men's fortunes are on a wheel, which in its turning suffers not the same man to prosper forever.⁴⁴²

King Croesus of Lydia, famous for his wealth, counsels King Cyrus of Persia to act against the advice of his chief men. They wish to allow the army of Queen Tomyris of the Massagetae, to come over the river and engage the Persians on territory controlled by the Persians. But Croesus' strategy is that the Persians should engage the Massagetae on Massagetae territory. His reasoning is that if Cyrus loses on his own side, his kingdom will be undone but if he wins on the enemy's side, his kingdom is enlarged. Croesus claims that he has come by this wisdom by painful experience. He has had disaster as his tutor. He has learned that men are mortal and that no man is guaranteed perpetual success. Suffering, for Croesus, teaches people lessons that they cannot learn otherwise.⁴⁴³

⁴⁴² Loeb Classical Library, https://www.loebclassics.com/view/herodotus-persian_wars/1920/pb_LCL117.261.xml?result=1&rskey=hn3XOx (accessed February 17, 2023).

⁴⁴³ For more on the advice of Croesus, See Herodotus, *The Persian Wars* 1.205-208 in *The Persian Wars*, George Rawlinson, Translator (New York, NY: Random House, 1942), 110-112.

Aeschylus, *Agam.* 177-8:

According to Loeb Classical Library, 143.3, “*The Oresteia*, consisting of *Agamemnon*, *Libation-Bearers*, *Eumenides*, and the satyr-play *Proteus*, was produced in 458 B.C.”⁴⁴⁴

τὸν φρονεῖν βροτοὺς ὁδῶσαντα, τὸν “πάθει μάθος” θέντα κυρίως ἔχειν.

who set mortals on the road to understanding, who made “learning by suffering” into an effective law.⁴⁴⁵

Zeus is the one credited with establishing a law which states that suffering is a path that leads to education (Aeschylus, *Agam.* 176-183):

Zeus, who sets mortals on the path to understanding, Zeus, who has established as a fixed law that “wisdom comes by suffering.” But even as trouble, bringing memory of pain, drips over the mind in sleep, so wisdom comes to men, whether they want it or not. Harsh, it seems to me, is the grace of gods enthroned upon their awful seats.⁴⁴⁶

Aeschylus, *Agam.* 250-4:

Justice brings suffering and suffering brings about learning. But one should not worry ahead of time:

Δίκα δὲ τοῖς μὲν παθοῦσιν μαθεῖν ἐπιρρέπει· τὸ μέλλον δ’ ἐπεὶ γένοτ’ ἂν κλύοις· πρὸ χαίρετω· ἴσον δὲ τῷ προστένειν· τορὸν γὰρ ἥξει σύνορθρον αὐγαῖς.

Over the one side Justice looms, that they may suffer and learn. The future one will hear about when it happens; But the future, that you shall know when it occurs; till then, leave it be—it is just as someone weeping ahead of time. Clear it will come, together with the light of dawn.⁴⁴⁷

⁴⁴⁴ Loeb Classical Library, https://www.loebclassics.com/view/aeschylus-oresteia_agamemnon/2009/pb_LCL146.3.xml?rskey=ZZAQce&result=9 (accessed February 17, 2023).

⁴⁴⁵ Loeb Classical Library, https://www.loebclassics.com/view/aeschylus-oresteia_agamemnon/2009/pb_LCL146.21.xml?result=9&rskey=ZZAQce (accessed February 17, 2023).

⁴⁴⁶ Tufts University, *Aeschylus Agamemnon*, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0004%3Acard%3D176>, (accessed February 25, 2023).

⁴⁴⁷ Loeb Classical Library, https://www.loebclassics.com/view/aeschylus-oresteia_agamemnon/2009/pb_LCL146.31.xml?result=9&rskey=ZZAQce (accessed February 17, 2023).

Aeschylus, *Eumenides* 520-1:

ξυμφέρει σωφρονεῖν ὑπὸ στένει.

it is beneficial to learn good sense under the pressure of distress.⁴⁴⁸

When people experience tragedy and fear rules (510-19), they are consoled with the benefits of lessons learnt under duress.

Aeschylus' *Oresteia* trilogy (*Agamemnon*, *Libation Bearers*, and *Eumenides*) was dramatized as a tragedy for the Dionysia festival in Athens in 458 B.C. This trilogy may also have been accompanied by a satyr-play called *Plouteus*. Aeschylus may also have presented the plays in other forums. The trilogy tells the story of the murder of Agamemnon the king of Argos by his wife Clytemnestra and her lover Aegisthus, the eventual revenge of Agamemnon's son Orestes on his father's murderers, the haunted wandering of Orestes, the eventual rescue and restoration of Orestes by the gods Apollo, Hermes, and Athena, and a human court in Athens called to order by Athena. Although a tragedy, the trilogy has a happy ending in that the cycle of killing comes to an end.⁴⁴⁹

Sophocles, *Oedipus Coloneus* 7-8:

στέργειν γὰρ αἱ πάθαι με χῶ χρόνος ξυνὼν μακρὸς διδάσκει καὶ τὸ γενναῖον τρίτον.

for my sufferings, and the time that has long been my companion, and thirdly my nobility teach me to be content with it.⁴⁵⁰

⁴⁴⁸ Loeb Classical Library 146.420-421, https://www.loebclassics.com/view/aeschylus-oresteia_eumenides/2009/pb_LCL146.421.xml?result=1&rskey=LgYGDj (accessed February 17, 2023).

⁴⁴⁹ For more on the trilogy, see https://ancient-literature.com/greece_aeschylus_oresteia/ (accessed April 25, 2023), https://ancient-literature.com/greece_aeschylus_agamemnon/, accessed 04/25/2023), and https://ancient-literature.com/greece_aeschylus_libation/ (accessed April 25, 2023); Andrew Lyon Brown, *Libation Bearers* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2018); Michael Llyod, ed, *Oxford Readings in Aeschylus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Simon Goldhill, *Aeschylus, the Oresteia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

⁴⁵⁰ Loeb Classical Library, https://www.loebclassics.com/view/sophocles-oedipus_colonus/1994/pb_LCL021.413.xml?result=3&rskey=Cj3ynH (accessed February 17, 2023).

Sophocles is the author of the trilogy *Oedipus Rex*, *Oedipus at Colonus*, and *Antigone*.

Sophocles wrote *Oedipus Rex* in 429 B.C., *Oedipus at Colonus* in 406 B.C., and *Antigone* in 442 B.C. In *Oedipus at Colonus*, 7-8, Oedipus says to his daughter Antigone that he has learnt contentment from suffering, long life, and being a noble person. As a baby, Oedipus was rejected by his father, King Laius of Thebes, and given away to a shepherd by his mother, Jocasta. The parents were reacting to an oracle that predicted the death of Laus at the hand of his own son. Oedipus was rescued and given to the king Polybus of Corinth and his wife Merope who had no child. He grew up thinking the Corinthian royals were his parents. As a young man, he learned from an oracle that he would kill his father and marry his mother. To avoid that fate, he left Corinth. He killed an old man with whom he quarreled, not knowing that the old man was his real father. He also married his real mother unknowingly. He thereby fathered his own brothers and sisters. When he finally found out the truth, he gauged out his eyes and wandered about in distress, in the company of his daughters. At a sacred grove in Colonus near Athens, his crimes were atoned for and the gods declared that he would be a blessing to the city within whose borders he would be buried. The story teaches that one cannot escape the fate determined by the gods, yet the guilt of one's crimes remains even though the crimes were committed in ignorance. In Hebrews, the sinners who oppose Jesus and his followers are guilty, yet it is God's will that Jesus suffers for the benefit of his siblings. God uses the suffering of his children for their own good. Just like Oedipus learnt to submit to the gods in his misery, God's children must learn to submit to God their heavenly Father in their persecutions.⁴⁵¹

⁴⁵¹ For summaries of Sophocles' trilogy, see Ancient Literature, https://ancient-literature.com/greece_sophocles_oedipus_king/ (accessed April 27, 2023); https://ancient-literature.com/greece_sophocles_oedipus_colonus/ (accessed April 27, 2023); https://ancient-literature.com/greece_sophocles_antigone/ (accessed April 27, 2023).

Sophocles, *Antigone* 1350-3:

μεγάλοι δὲ λόγοι μεγάλας πληγὰς τῶν ὑπεραύχων ἀποτείσαντες γήρα τὸ φρονεῖν
ἐδίδαξαν.

The great words of boasters are always punished with great blows, and as they grow old teach them wisdom.⁴⁵²

These words are spoken by the chorus after Creon exits at the end of the play. Creon has brought disaster to his family and now suffers for it. Creon became king of Thebes after Oedipus' two sons, Eteocles and Polynices, died fighting each other for the throne. Creon would not allow Polynices a proper burial but Antigone, one of the daughters of Oedipus, buried her brother against the orders of the king. In anger, Creon decided that Antigone should be punished by being buried alive. Creon's son Haemon, who was to marry Antigone, disagreed with his father's decision. Antigone and Haemon took their own lives and the news disrupted the royal family to the extent that Eurydice, the queen, also took her own life. Creon was left without wife or son and he became exceedingly distraught. Creon acknowledged that he had singlehandedly destroyed his own household. The last words of the play come from the chorus who declare that the fate of the arrogant is to suffer greatly and thereby to learn wisdom in old age. In brief, painful experiences educate the proud.⁴⁵³

Sophocles, *Philoctetes* 534-8:

ὥς με καὶ μάθης ἀφ' ὧν διέζων, ὥς τ' ἔφυν εὐκάρδιος. οἶμαι γὰρ οὐδ' ἂν ὄμμασιν μόνον
θέαν ἄλλον λαβόντα πλὴν ἐμοῦ τλῆναι τάδε· ἐγὼ δ' ἀνάγκη προὔμαθον στέργειν κακά.

⁴⁵² Loeb Classical Library,
https://www.loebclassics.com/view/sophocles-antigone/1994/pb_LCL021.127.xml?result=12&rskey=5jIcIq (accessed February 17, 2023).

⁴⁵³ For the final word in *Antigone*, See Tufts University,
<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0186%3Acard%3D1347>
(accessed 04/27/2023). For a summary of *Antigone*, see Ancient Literature, https://ancient-literature.com/greece_sophocles_antigone/ (accessed April 27, 2023).

so that you may learn how I contrived to live, and what courage I displayed! I think that no other but me who had even set eyes on it could have endured this; but of necessity I gradually learned to put up with hardships.⁴⁵⁴

Sophocles presented the play *Philoctetes* in 409 B.C. In it, Philoctetes confesses that he has learned to endure hardships. Philoctetes was abandoned in the desert by the Greeks for having a wound from a snake bite, yet he ended up helping the Greeks conquer Troy.⁴⁵⁵

A summary of Sophocles' *Philoctetes* can also be found in Greek Mythology.⁴⁵⁶ The gist of it is as follows. The Greeks need a hero to help them against Troy. The oracles state that only Philoctetes can be that hero with the bow and arrows of Heracles. But the Greeks had earlier abandoned Philoctetes on the island of Lemnos because of a festering and incurable wound. Odysseus and Neoptolemus set out to seek Philoctetes. Odysseus is willing to trick Philoctetes but Neoptolemus is ambivalent. Odysseus hides on the island while Neoptolemus pretends to have come to take Philoctetes back to Greece while all the while intending to ship him off to the war with Troy. Philoctetes meantime faints from his pains and Neoptolemus holds his bow for him. Neoptolemus is greatly affected and decides not to leave without the sick man, against the wishes of Odysseus. When Philoctetes recovers, Neoptolemus confesses the truth about the Greeks' aim to smuggle Philoctetes to Troy. Philoctetes would rather throw himself off the cliff than help the devious Greeks. Heracles, in a phantom, appears and convinces Philoctetes to go along with the Greeks, promising him victory and healing.

⁴⁵⁴ Loeb Classical Library, https://www.loebclassics.com/view/sophocles-philoctetes/1994/pb_LCL021.307.xml?result=5&rskey=UZMzLz (accessed February 17, 2023).

⁴⁵⁵ Carl Phillips and Diskin Clay, *Sophocles: Philoctetes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

⁴⁵⁶ Greek Mythology.com., <https://www.greekmythology.com/Plays/Sophocles/Philoctetes/philoctetes.html> (accessed April 27, 2023).

Philoctetes takes Neoptolemus into the cave he has been living in to show him that he has learned to endure hardships over time out of necessity. This is a play about betrayal, bitterness due to suffering, true friendship, and divine intervention. It is reminiscent of Job who started out healthy and wealthy, lost everything, suffered greatly from a sickness, experienced the betrayal of his friends, but was eventually vindicated and restored by God. In Hebrews, Jesus and his followers also experience suffering and betrayal. Jesus is eventually vindicated by God and his followers are encouraged to hold on in faith and in hope of a future vindication.

Democritus, Frag. 182:

Beautiful objects are wrought by study through effort, but ugly things are reaped automatically without toil. For even one who is unwilling is sometimes so wrought upon by learning.⁴⁵⁷

Democritus of Abdera, who believed that ultimate reality is an infinite number of atoms in an infinite void, was born around 460 B.C. Even though some interpret him as an atheist, he believed in perception, human souls, and beneficent gods who were subject to the movements of atoms in the void.⁴⁵⁸ In the *Fragments*, he promoted learning and toiling, because he realized that beauty did not appear automatically.

How does one believe that all is atoms in a void and that there are gods? Christian Vassallo investigates this paradox in “Atomism and the Worship of Gods”:⁴⁵⁹

⁴⁵⁷ Demonax Hellenic Library, http://demonax.info/doku.php?id=text:democritus_fragments (accessed February 17, 2023).

⁴⁵⁸ “Democritus” in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/democritus> (accessed November 28, 2023). On Atomism, see “Ancient Atomism” in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/atomism-ancient> (accessed November 28, 2023).

⁴⁵⁹ On Democritus’ ‘Rational Attitude’ toward Theology, *La Athéisme Antique* 18 (2018), pp 105-125. The essence of his article is found in *Philosophe Antique*, <https://journals.openedition.org/philosant/1020> (accessed April 28, 2023).

Cet article réexamine la totalité des témoignages sur la pensée démocritéenne de l'origine du culte divin. Une étude approfondie de ces témoignages nous autorise à affirmer que, dans l'esprit de Démocrite, le culte des dieux ne dérivait pas seulement d'une peur des phénomènes naturels hostiles, mais aussi de la reconnaissance pour les événements favorables à la survie des humains. Il est à présent possible de réinterpréter cette conception selon un point de vue polémique : Démocrite n'aurait pas nié l'existence des dieux, mais plutôt exposé les mécanismes psychologiques qui conduisent les hommes ordinaires à croire dans les dieux traditionnels. Contre la croyance superstitieuse, il démontre, en s'aidant également de la théorie des εἶδωλα, que les seuls dieux qui existent sont pourvus de la même « raison » que celle à l'œuvre dans la nature et grâce à laquelle les hommes peuvent comprendre ses phénomènes aussi suprenants que variés.

This article re-examines all of the evidence on Democritean thought of the origin of divine worship. A thorough study of these testimonies authorizes us to affirm that, in the spirit of Democritus, the worship of the gods did not derive only from a fear of hostile natural phenomena, but also from gratitude for events favorable to the survival of humans. It is now possible to reinterpret this conception from a polemical point of view: Democritus would not have denied the existence of gods, but rather exposed the psychological mechanisms that lead ordinary men to believe in traditional gods. Against superstitious belief, he demonstrates, also with the help of the theory of εἶδωλα, that the only gods that exist are endowed with the same "reason" as that at work in nature and thanks to which men can understand its phenomena as surprising as they are varied.⁴⁶⁰

Democritus, in the fragments, has the following to say about peace of mind, endurance, misfortune, friendship, difficulties, suffering, cheerfulness, and contentment:⁴⁶¹

3. The man who wishes to have serenity of spirit should not engage in many activities, either private or public, nor choose activities beyond his power and natural capacity. He must guard against this, so that when good fortune strikes him and leads him on to excess by means of (false) seeming, he must rate it low, and not attempt things beyond his powers. A reasonable fullness is better than overfullness.

45. The wrongdoer is more unfortunate than the man wronged.

⁴⁶⁰ On Democritus: University of Michigan Press, <https://www.press.umich.edu/pdf/0472113887-ch3.pdf> (accessed 02/17/2023); Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/democritus/#7> (accessed February 17, 2023). The translation was done with the help of Google Translate.

⁴⁶¹ Demonax Hellenic Library Beta, http://demonax.info/doku.php?id=text:democritus_fragments (accessed March 8, 2023). For the sayings of Democritus, see also C. C. W. Taylor, *The Atomists: Leucippus and Democritus: Fragments* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 15, 235-238.

46. Magnanimity consists in enduring tactlessness with mildness.

54. The foolish learn sense through misfortune.

101. Many avoid their friends when they fall from wealth to poverty.

106. In prosperity it is easy to find a friend, in adversity nothing is so difficult.

107a. It is proper, since we are human beings, not to laugh at the misfortunes of others, but to mourn.

108. Good things are obtained with difficulty if one seeks; but bad things come without our even seeking.

149. (Inside, we are) a complex store-house and treasury of ills, with many possibilities of suffering.

159. (Democritus said): If the body brought a suit against the soul, for all the pains it had endured throughout life, and the ill treatment, and I were to be the judge of the suit, I would gladly condemn the soul, in that it had partly ruined the body by its neglect and dissolved it with bouts of drunkenness, and partly destroyed it and torn it in pieces with its passion for pleasure—as if, when a tool or a vessel were in a bad condition, I blamed the man who was using it carelessly.

174. The cheerful man, who is impelled towards works that are just and lawful, rejoices by day and by night, and is strong and free from care. But the man who neglects justice, and does not do what he ought, finds all such things disagreeable when he remembers any of them, and he is afraid and torments himself.

175. But the gods are the givers of all good things, both in the past and now. They are not, however, the givers of things which are bad, harmful, or non-beneficial, either in the past or now, but men themselves fall into these through blindness of mind and lack of sense.

189. The best way for a man to lead his life is to have been as cheerful as possible and to have suffered as little as possible. This could happen if one did not seek one's pleasures in mortal things.

191. Cheerfulness is created for men through moderation of enjoyment and harmoniousness of life. Things that are in excess or lacking are apt to change and cause great disturbance in the soul. Souls which are stirred by great divergences are neither stable nor cheerful. Therefore, one must keep one's mind on what is attainable, and be content with what one has, paying little heed to things envied and admired, and not dwelling on them in one's mind. Rather must you consider the lives of those in distress, reflecting on their intense sufferings, in order that your own possessions and condition may seem great and enviable, and you may, by ceasing to desire more, cease to suffer in

your soul. For he who admires those who have, and who are called happy by other mortals, and who dwells on them in his mind every hour, is constantly compelled to undertake something new and to run the risk, through his desire, of doing something irretrievable among those things which the laws prohibit. Hence one must not seek the latter, but must be content with the former, comparing one's own life with that of those in worse cases, and must consider oneself fortunate, reflecting on their sufferings, in being so much better off than they. If you keep to this way of thinking, you will live more serenely, and will expel those not-negligible curses in life, envy, jealousy, and spite.

234. Men ask in their prayers for health from the gods, but do not know that the power to attain this lies in themselves; and by doing the opposite through lack of control, they themselves become the betrayers of their own health to their desires.

240. Toils undertaken willingly make the endurance of those done unwillingly easier.

243. All kinds of toil are pleasanter than rest, when men attain that for which they labour, or know that they will attain it. But whenever there is failure to attain, then labour is painful and hard.

285. One should realize that human life is weak and brief and mixed with many cares and difficulties, in order that one may care only for moderate possessions, and that hardship may be measured by the standard of one's needs.

291. To bear poverty well is the sign of a sensible man.

297. Some men, not knowing about the dissolution of mortal nature, but acting on knowledge of the suffering in life, afflict the period of life with anxieties and fears, inventing false tales about the period after the end of life.

Democritus is sharing his wisdom on how to be cheerful and serene in life, how to be content with what one has, and how to avoid unnecessary suffering through folly, ambition, envy, or desire. There is little in the fragments that treat suffering as divine education. The gods give good things and people are responsible for their thoughts, desires, and deeds in the world.

Plato, *Republic* 379a-380d:

Plato and Adeimantus, his brother, discuss the way a state should be established and governed and what the poets may be allowed to say about the gods. Poets must write about the gods in a way that describes them truly. The gods are good and not harmful and therefore no harm or evil can be attributed to them. Unlike what Homer says, God is not responsible for evil.

Nor can the gods be said to implant guilt for the purpose of punishing someone, as Aeschylus says. When evil befalls people, then the people are at fault and are being punished rightfully. Writers will not be allowed to impute any evil to the gods. The state will censure any writing against the gods because they are good. The question is also raised whether the gods can change their forms at will.⁴⁶²

Diodorus Siculus 15.48.4:

These disasters have been the subject of much discussion. Natural scientists make it their endeavour to attribute responsibility in such cases not to divine providence, but to certain natural circumstances determined by necessary causes, whereas those who are disposed to venerate the divine power assign certain plausible reasons for the occurrence, alleging that the disaster was occasioned by the anger of the gods at those who had committed sacrilege. This question I too shall endeavour to deal with in detail in a special chapter of my history.⁴⁶³

Diodorus Siculus, starting at about 56 B.C., authored a history of the world in forty books called *Bibliothēkē* in Greek, or *Bibliotheca* in Latin, or *The Library of History*. He intended to cover history from creation to his own time (the Roman period).⁴⁶⁴ Book 15, chapters 45-56 cover the period of the wars between Sparta and Thebes. The disasters mentioned in 15.48.4 were caused by an earthquake during the night on Greek cities and tidal waves that followed during the day. For those who believed in the gods, there was need to explain such disasters, and people's evils

⁴⁶² Loeb Classical Library, https://www.loebclassics.com/view/plato_philosopher-republic/2013/pb_LCL237.205.xml?result=1&rskey=rrhqhy (accessed February 17, 2023). On Plato (c.429-347 BC), See Stanford University Encyclopedia (SEP), <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/plato/> (accessed April 28, 2023)

⁴⁶³ Diodorus Siculus-Book XV Chapters 45-56, LacusCurtius, https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Diodorus_Siculus/15C*.html (accessed February 17, 2023).

⁴⁶⁴ For general introduction to Diodorus Siculus by Charles Henry Oldfather, see Lacus Curtius, https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Diodorus_Siculus/Introduction*.html (accessed November 28, 2023); Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History*, in Loeb Classical Library, <https://www.loebclassics.com/search?q=diodorus+siculus> (accessed November 28, 2023).

were possible reasons for divine retribution. Diodorus' own view is that the gods are bound to punish sacrilege (16:61-64). He says the following in 16.61.1:

But first it is only right, so we think, to record the punishment which was visited by the gods upon those who had committed the outrage on the oracle. For, speaking generally, it was not merely the perpetrators of the sacrilege but all persons who had the slightest connection with the sacrilege that were hounded by the inexorable retribution sent of Heaven.⁴⁶⁵

Diodorus then proceeds to detail what happened to individuals and cities who committed sacrilege against a shrine or received gifts taken from the shrine. In 16.64.1-3, he concludes thus:

Now the participants in the sacrilege met in this fashion with their just retribution from the deity. And the most renowned cities because of their part in the outrage were later defeated in war by Antipater, and lost at one and the same time their leadership and their freedom . . . Thus those who had the effrontery to flout the deity met just retribution in the manner I have described at the hands of the gods, while Philip who rallied to the support of the oracle added continually to his strength from that time on and finally because of his reverence for the gods was appointed commander of all Hellas and acquired for himself the largest kingdom in Europe.⁴⁶⁶

We conclude then, that Diodorus sees disasters, whether natural or due to war, as punishment for sins against the gods. Perhaps others who read this history took note and learned from the sufferings of others.

Dionysius of Halicarnassus 8.33.3:

What, then, will be my fate if I change my course and endeavour to increase your power and humble theirs? Will it not be just the reverse, and shall I not incur the dire wrath of Heaven which avenges the injured, and just as by the help of the gods I from a low estate

⁴⁶⁵ LacusCurtius,
https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Diodorus_Siculus/16C*.html#61 (accessed April 28, 2023).

⁴⁶⁶ LacusCurtius,
https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Diodorus_Siculus/16C*.html#61 (accessed April 28, 2023).

have become great, shall I not in turn from a great be brought again to a low estate, and my sufferings become lessons to the rest of the world?⁴⁶⁷

The above citation is from a discussion between Marcius Coriolanus (late 6th and early 5th cen. B.C.), a general who was banished by the Romans and welcomed by the Volscians of central Italy, and Marcus Minucius, a Roman ex-consul and a former friend of Marcius, who, in the company of four other ex-consuls and former friends of Marcius, wishes to bring him back to the Roman side (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*, 8.22.4). Marcius, upon his banishment, had gone over to the Volscians that he may avenge himself against the Romans. Marcius had said to Tullus Attius, a wealthy man and the most powerful general of the Volscians (8.1.6):

For though I was once looked upon as the most powerful of all men in the greatest city, I am now cast aside, forsaken, exiled and abased, and destined to suffer any treatment you, who are my enemy, shall think fit to inflict upon me. But I promise you that I will perform as great services for the Volscians, if I become their friend, as I occasioned calamities to them when I was their enemy.⁴⁶⁸

The Romans know that Marcius has had great military success in the past, and now they decide to invite him back to the Roman side of their ongoing conflicts with the Volscians. Marcius explains to Marcus Minucius that it would be a betrayal of his hosts and of the gods to go back to the Romans who had showed him hostility. He could not expect the continued blessings of Heaven but rather the punishment of the gods for betraying his new-found friends. It appears that Marcius does not follow his own advice but gives in to the entreaties of his mother and wife.

⁴⁶⁷ LacusCurtius,
https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Dionysius_of_Halicarnassus/8A*.html (accessed February 17, 2023).

⁴⁶⁸ LacusCurtius,
https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Dionysius_of_Halicarnassus/8A*.html (accessed April 27, 2023).

Ironically, he suffers the fate of traitors that he had spoken about because the Volscians kill him for betraying their cause. But because he was an honorable man, the Volscians gave him an elaborate funeral and built him a monument. He is remembered for his virtues (8.60.1-2):

Such was the end of Marcius, who was not only the greatest general of his age, but was superior to all the pleasures that dominate young men, and practised justice, not so much through compulsion of the law with its threat of punishment and against his will, but voluntarily and from a natural propensity to it. He did not regard it as a virtue to do no injustice, and not only was eager to abstain from all vice himself, but thought it his duty to compel others to do so too. He was both high-minded and open-handed and most ready to relieve the wants of his friends as soon as he was informed of them. In his talent for public affairs he was inferior to none of the aristocratic party, and if the seditious element of the city had not hindered his measures, the Roman commonwealth would have received the greatest accession of power from those measures. But it was impossible that all the virtue should be found together in a human being's nature, nor will anyone ever be created by Nature from mortal and perishable seed who is good in all respects.⁴⁶⁹

He is also remembered for his faults (8.61.1-2):

In any case the divinity who bestowed these virtues upon him added to them unfortunate blemishes and fatal flaws. For there was no mildness or cheerfulness in his character, no affability in greeting and addressing people that would win those whom he met, nor yet any disposition to conciliate or placate others when he was angry with them, nor that charm which adorns all human actions; but he was always harsh and severe. And it was not alone these qualities that hurt him in the minds of many, but, most of all, his immoderate and inexorable sternness in the matter of justice and the observance of the laws, and a strictness which would make no concessions to reasonableness.⁴⁷⁰

All things considered, Marcius was a hero to both the Romans and the Volscians. Perhaps, if his soul did not perish with his body, there was a future reward for him (8.62.1):

Now if when the body perishes the soul also, whatever that is, perishes together with it and no longer exists anywhere, I do not see how I can conceive to seem to be happy who have received no advantage from their virtue but, on the contrary, have been undone by this very quality. Whereas, if our souls are perchance forever imperishable, as some

⁴⁶⁹ LacusCurtius,
https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Dionysius_of_Halicarnassus/8B*.html, accessed (April 28, 2023).

⁴⁷⁰ LacusCurtius,
(https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Dionysius_of_Halicarnassus/8B*.html) (accessed April 28, 2023).

think, or if they continue on for a time after their separation from the body, those of good men for a very long time and those of the wicked for a very short period, a sufficient reward for those who, though they have practised virtue, have suffered the enmity of Fortune, would seem to be the praise of the living and the continuance of their memory for the longest period of time. And that was the case with this man.⁴⁷¹

The book of Job (14:7-17; 19:25-27) hints at and hopes for a future vindication while Hebrews (11:13-16, 35-40) affirms that present endurance and faith in God will be rewarded in another life.

Appian of Alexandria 12.13.87:

Mithradatic wars, 68 B.C. (Tigranes and Mithridates collect a new army):

Τιγράνης δὲ καὶ Μιθριδάτης στρατὸν ἄλλον ἡθροίζον περιόντες, οὗ τὴν στρατηγίαν ἐπετέτραπτο Μιθριδάτης, ἡγουμένου Τιγράνου αὐτῷ γεγονέναι τὰ παθήματα διδάγματα.

Tigranes and Mithridates traversed the country collecting a new army, the command of which was committed to Mithridates, because Tigranes thought that his disasters must have taught him some lessons.⁴⁷²

Appian of Alexandria (c95-c165 A.D.) is the author of a *Roman History*. Its twelfth book is “The Mithridatic Wars.” In 68 B.C., Tigranes, King of Armenia, entrusted his father-in-law Mithridates VI Eupator, King of Pontus, with an army (12.13.87), reasoning that Mithridates’ previous military defeat must have taught him how to fight better the next time. Tigranes and Mithridates had suffered defeat at the hand of Lucullus, the Roman General, who received the help of deserting Greek mercenaries in the battle for Tigranocerta, the capital city of Armenia. Even before that, Mithridates had learnt much in his battles against the Romans. In brief,

⁴⁷¹ LacusCurtius, https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Dionysius_of_Halicarnassus/8B*.html (accessed April 28, 2023).

⁴⁷² Appian, *Roman History* 12. The Mithradatic wars, Loeb Classical History 3. 404-405, https://www.loebclassics.com/view/appian-roman_history_book_xii_mithridatic_wars/1912/pb_LCL003.405.xml?result=1&rskey=1IfeJG (accessed February 19, 2023).

suffering can be a lesson. Mithridates kept up his struggle against the Romans. Eventually, during the third Mithridatic war, in fear of capture and humiliation, he gave his daughters poison and took some himself. When the poison failed to kill him, he asked an officer to put him out of his miseries. He was honored with a royal funeral at the command of Pompey, the Roman general, who admired his great tenacity.⁴⁷³

Pseudo-Aeschines, Epist. 5.4:

Croy, *Endurance in Suffering*, 145, cites Pseudo-Aeschines as distinguishing between one who learns by painful experience and one who learns from wisdom:

For the things that I learned after having suffered, these things he bears in mind before suffering, being taught by wisdom, and not by trial as fools are.⁴⁷⁴

Since the Pseudo-Aeschines epistles are from the 4th cen. A.D. and considered spurious, they may not be of much use for the first century background of Hebrews.⁴⁷⁵

Aesop, Fables 134, 223:

In the *Augustana Collection* of Aesop's Fables, suffering can be as instructive as victory, according to C. A. Zafiropolous:

In the collection's framework of conflict and continuous need for survival, the lesson that derives from defeat and suffering is equally important to that derived from victory, both being practical messages. The message promises future success on the basis of a more thorough accumulated experience. On the narrative level, the fable's protagonist does not put into practice the lessons that come from his misfortunes. He simply acknowledges

⁴⁷³ For a full account of the defeat of Mithridates by the Romans, see Livius.org. Articles on Ancient History: Appian, The Mithridatic Wars, <https://www.livius.org/sources/content/appian/appian-the-mithridatic-wars> (accessed April 28, 2023). For the demise and funeral of Mithridates, see <https://www.livius.org/sources/content/appian/appian-the-mithridatic-wars/appian-the-mithridatic-wars-23#111> (accessed April 28, 2023).

⁴⁷⁴ See Croy, *Endurance in Suffering*, 145n172.

⁴⁷⁵ See Owen Hodkinson, "Epistolary and Narrative in Ps.-Aeschines Epistle 10" in *Epistolary Narratives in Ancient Greek Literature*, Owen Hodkinson, Patricia A. Rosenmeyer, and Evelien Bracke, eds (Leiden: Brill, 2013), p. 323 (323-345).

that he has learned his lesson at the end of the fable. Yet it is either too late, for he dies afterwards, or, even if the consequences of his mistake are not fatal, we never see him again in another fable demonstrating his knowledge.⁴⁷⁶

Zafiropolous gives an example of a character who quickly learned from the suffering of another character in the same fable:

A lion, an ass, and a fox formed a partnership and went out to hunt together. After they had seized a lot of prey, the lion ordered the ass to share it out for the three of them. He made three equal portions and as he exhorted the lion to choose [*his portion*], the lion got angry, jumped at him and devoured him. And [*then*] he ordered the fox to share it out. The fox put almost everything into one portion, Keeping only a small part for himself, and exhorted the lion to choose. He, in his turn, asked the fox who taught him to share in such a way, and the fox replied “the sufferings of the ass.”⁴⁷⁷

Indeed, “all animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others” as George Orwell taught us.⁴⁷⁸ Therefore, we must not rush to take the “lion’s share” if we are not lions. Aesop’s commonsense philosophy is for each of us to know our place in society (or in the food chain) and avoid trouble. The author of Hebrews, however, teaches his listeners that they are children of God (Heb. 2:10-16; 12:5-11). Their endurance and contentment are based on the fact that God is treating them as sons (Heb. 12:7) and the promise that he will never forsake them (Heb. 13:5-6).⁴⁷⁹

Aesop’s fable, “the shepherd and the sea” has a victim who survives and learns his lesson:

A shepherd, keeping watch over his sheep near the shore, saw the Sea very calm and smooth, and longed to make a voyage with a view to commerce. He sold all

⁴⁷⁶ C. A. Zafiropolous, *Ethics in Aesop’s Fables*, 65; See Croy, *Endurance in Suffering*, 145n173.

⁴⁷⁷ Zafiropolous, *Ethics in Aesop’s Fables*, 66.

⁴⁷⁸ George Orwell, *Animal Farm* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1945).

⁴⁷⁹ On suffering and lessons, see: Christos A. Zafiropoulos, *Ethics in Aesop’s Fables: The Augustana Collection* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 65-69, https://www.google.com/books/edition/Ethics_in_Aesop_s_Fables_The_Augustana_C/BgD1DwAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=aesop+on+lessons+of+suffering&pg=PA65&printsec=frontcover (accessed February 19, 2023).

his flock, invested it in a cargo of dates, and set sail. But a very great tempest came on, and the ship being in danger of sinking, he threw all his merchandise overboard, and barely escaped with his life in the empty ship. Not long afterwards when someone passed by and observed the unruffled calm of the Sea, he interrupted him and said, "It is again in want of dates, and therefore looks quiet."⁴⁸⁰

The shepherd learn by bitter experience not to be deceived by a calm sea into changing his career in order to become more prosperous. A calm sea can suddenly become stormy. In this case, suffering produced learning. The author of Hebrews teaches his readers to be content with what they have and not to be deceived by the prospect of having more money (Heb. 13:5-6).

Aesop's "the cage-bird and the bat" teaches that precautions are useless after the event:

A Singing-bird was confined in a cage which hung outside a window, and had a way of singing at night when all other birds were asleep. One night a Bat came and clung to the bars of the cage, and asked the Bird why she was silent by day and sang only at night. "I have a very good reason for doing so," said the Bird: "it was once when I was singing in the daytime that a fowler was attracted by my voice, and set his nets for me and caught me. Since then I have never sung except by night." But the Bat replied, "It is no use your doing that now when you are a prisoner: if only you had done so before you were caught, you might still have been free."⁴⁸¹

The bat spoke truly that it was too late for the captive singing bird. But others who hear this fable might learn from the suffering of the bird. In many of Aesop's fables, the lesson is for the readers or listeners, not for the characters in the fable. We can learn from the sufferings of others. Paul says that the sufferings of Israel were for our example (1 Cor. 10:1-13) and the author of Hebrews gives us a cloud of witnesses whose experiences are for our learning (Hebrews 11:1-12:2).⁴⁸²

⁴⁸⁰ Townsend's version of "the shepherd and the sea," <https://fablesfaesop.com/the-shepherd-and-the-sea.html> (accessed May 2, 2023).

⁴⁸¹ Vernon Jones's translation of "the cage-bird and the bat," *Aesopica: Aesop's Fables in English, Latin, and Greek*, <http://mythfolklore.net/aesopica/vernonjones/189.htm> (accessed May 2, 2023).

⁴⁸² For more of Aesop's fables, see Vernon Stanley Jones, *Aesop's Fables: A New Translation* (New York: Avenel, 1912), <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/11339> (accessed May 2, 2023). Vernon

Seneca, *Ad Helviam* 2.3:

Fleant itaque diutius et gemant, quorum delicatas mentes enervavit longa felicitas, et ad levissimarum iniuriarum motus conlabantur; at quorum omnes anni per calamitates transierunt, gravissima quoque forti et immobili constantia perferant. Unum habet adsidua infelicitas bonum, quod quos semper vexat, novissime indurat.

Let those, therefore, whose pampered minds have been weakened by long happiness, weep and moan continuously, and faint away at the threat of the slightest injury; but let those whose years have all been passed in a succession of calamities endure even the heaviest blows with strong and unwavering resolution. Constant misfortune brings this one blessing, that those whom it always assails, it at last fortifies.⁴⁸³

Seneca the Younger (c. 4 B.C.-65 A.D.), who was a Roman Stoic philosopher and tutor to Emperor Nero, is consoling his mother Helvia who has suffered many calamities throughout her life, mostly loss of family through death. Seneca himself is in exile on the island of Corsica, sent there by Emperor Claudius in 41 A.D. Seneca had been accused of committing adultery with Julia Livilla, Gaius Caesar's sister. His exile is exacerbating his mother's sorrows. In consoling his mother, he recalls her many trials, hoping that, by opening old wounds, he will bring about true healing (Seneca, *Ad Helviam*, 2.4-5):

To you Fortune has never given any respite from the heaviest woes; she did not except even the day of your birth. You lost your mother as soon as you had been born, nay, while you were being born, and entering life you became, as it were, an outcast. You grew up under a stepmother, but by your complete obedience and devotion as great as can be seen even in a daughter you forced her to become a true mother; nevertheless every child has paid a great price even for a good stepmother. My most loving uncle, an excellent and very brave man, you lost just when you were awaiting his arrival, and, lest Fortune by dividing her cruelty should make it lighter, within thirty days you buried your dearest husband, who had made you the proud mother of three children. This blow was announced when you were already mourning, when, too, all of your children were absent, just as if your misfortunes had been concentrated into that period purposely in order that

Jones has a list of 284 fables, <http://mythfolklore.net/aesopica/vernonjones/index.htm>, (accessed May 2, 2023).

⁴⁸³ Seneca the Younger, *De Consolatione ad Helviam*, Loeb Classical Library, https://www.loebclassics.com/view/seneca_younger-de_consolatione_ad_helviam/1932/pb_LCL254.421.xml?result=1&rskey=ndnoNF (accessed February 20, 2023)

your grief might find nothing to rest upon. I pass over the countless dangers, the countless fears which you have endured, though they assailed you without cessation. But lately into the self-same lap from which you had let three grandchildren go, you took back the bones of three grandchildren. Less than twenty days after you had buried my son, who died in your arms and amid your kisses, you heard that I had been snatched from you. This misfortune you had still lacked—to mourn the living.⁴⁸⁴

Seneca, Epist. 94.74:

Nam quasi ista inter se contraria sint, bona fortuna et mens bona, ita melius in malis sapimus; secunda rectum auferunt. Vale.

For these two things are, as it were, at opposite poles—good fortune and good sense; that is why we are wiser when in the midst of adversity. It is prosperity that takes away righteousness. Farewell.⁴⁸⁵

Seneca, Epist. 110.3:

Adhibe diligentiam tuam et intueri, quid sint res nostrae, non quid vocentur; et scies plura mala contingere nobis quam accidere. Quotiens enim felicitatis et causa et initium fuit, quod calamitas vocabatur?

Apply careful investigation, considering how our affairs actually stand, and not what men say of them; you will then understand that evils are more likely to help us than to harm us. For how often has so-called affliction been the source and the beginning of happiness!⁴⁸⁶

Seneca, *Ad Marciam* 5.5:

cogita non esse magnum rebus prosperis fortem gerere, ubi secundo cursu vita procedit; ne gubernatoris quidem artem tranquillum mare et obsequens ventus ostendit, adversi aliquid incurrat oportet, 6 quod animum probet.

⁴⁸⁴ Loeb Classical Library, https://www.loebclassics.com/view/seneca_younger-de_consolatione_ad_helviam/1932/pb_LCL254.421.xml?result=1&rskey=TYRpUH (accessed 05/02/2023).

⁴⁸⁵ Loeb Classical Library, https://www.loebclassics.com/view/seneca_younger-epistles/1917/pb_LCL077.59.xml (accessed February 20, 2023).

⁴⁸⁶ Seneca the Younger, Epistles, LCL 77:266-267, https://www.loebclassics.com/view/seneca_younger-epistles/1917/pb_LCL077.267.xml (accessed February 20, 2023).

Reflect, too, that it is no great thing to show one's self brave in the midst of prosperity, when life glides on in a tranquil course; a quiet sea and a favouring wind do not show the skill of a pilot either—some hardship must be encountered that will test his soul.⁴⁸⁷

Here Seneca is consoling Marcia. Marcia, daughter of the historian Aulus Cremutius Cordus, is mourning the death of her son Metilius. Her grief has gone on too long, according to Seneca, and he wishes to bring it to an end. He wants her to remember her son's virtues and not to dwell on her own loss. At one time he argues that people should not fear death because death is nothing and brings all people to nothing. At another time he insists that after death the soul experiences peace, true knowledge, and immortality. He also gives her examples of famous Roman people who mourned differently. He commends those who bore their loss without excessive grief. He dwells on the transitory nature of human life and the inevitability of death and loss. Seneca is using different approaches to bring consolation and his letter may be faulted for logical inconsistencies. His appeal to immortality, however, reminds us of the Christian hope that death is not the end but the beginning of a better life for believers. His use of examples of sufferers who endured is like the examples the author of Hebrews gives in Hebrews 11.⁴⁸⁸

Epictetus 3.22.57:

οὐ πέπεισται δ', ὅ τι ἂν πάσῃ τούτων, ὅτι ἐκεῖνος 57 αὐτὸν γυμνάζει; ἀλλ' ὁ μὲν Ἡρακλῆς ὑπὸ Εὐρυσθέως γυμναζόμενος οὐκ ἐνόμιζεν ἄθλιος εἶναι, ἀλλ' ἀόκνως ἐπετέλει πάντα τὰ προσταττόμενα· οὗτος δ' ὑπὸ τοῦ Διὸς ἀθλούμενος καὶ γυμναζόμενος μέλλει κεκραγέειν καὶ ἀγανακτεῖν,

⁴⁸⁷ Loeb Classical Library, https://www.loebclassics.com/view/seneca_younger-de_consolatione_ad_marciam/1932/pb_LCL254.21.xml?result=1&rskey=iqAPri (accessed February 20, 2023).

⁴⁸⁸ See a summary of the *Ad Marciam* in: How to be a Stoic, <https://howtobeastoc.wordpress.com/2017/01/06/senecas-consolation-letters-part-i-marcia/> (accessed February 20, 2023). Concerning Seneca's life and his works, see Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (SEP), <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/seneca/> (accessed May 2, 2023).

And is he not persuaded that whatever of these hardships he suffers, it is Zeus that is exercising him? Nay, but Heracles, when he was being exercised by Eurystheus, did not count himself wretched, but used to fulfil without hesitation everything that was enjoined upon him: and yet is this fellow, when he is being trained and exercised by Zeus, prepared to cry out and complain?⁴⁸⁹

Here suffering is portrayed as divine training with Heracles as the example of how to respond to suffering. In Hebrews, Jesus is given as the example of one who endured opposition from sinners in obedience to God and for the benefit of others (Heb 2:10-18; 12:3).

Epictetus 3.24.113:

τὰ ἀγαθὰ ἔξω μὴ ζητεῖτε, ἐν ἑαυτοῖς ζητεῖτε· εἰ δὲ 113 μὴ, οὐχ εὐρήσετε. ἑπὶ τούτοις με νῦν μὲν ἐνταῦθα ἄγει, νῦν δ' ἐκεῖ πέμπει, πένητα δείκνυσιν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις, δίχα ἀρχῆς, νοσοῦντα· εἰς Γύαρα ἀποστέλλει, εἰς δεσμωτήριον εἰσάγει. οὐ μισῶν· μὴ γένοιτο· τίς δὲ μισεῖ τὸν ἄριστον τῶν ὑπηρετῶν τῶν ἑαυτοῦ; οὐδ' ἀμελῶν, ὅς γε οὐδὲ τῶν μικροτάτων τινὸς ἀμελεῖ, ἀλλὰ γυμνάζων καὶ 114 μάρτυρι πρὸς τοὺς ἄλλους χρώμενος.

Do not look for your blessings outside, but look for them within yourselves; otherwise you will not find them.' These are the terms upon which now He brings me here, and again He sends me there; to mankind exhibits me in poverty, without office, in sickness; sends me away to Gyara, brings me into prison. Not because He hates me—perish the thought! And who hates the best of his servants? Nor because He neglects me, for He does not neglect any of even the least of His creatures; but because He is training me, and making use of me as a witness to the rest of men.⁴⁹⁰

Epictetus (55 A.D.-135 A.D.), was a Stoic philosopher, born in Hierapolis, Phrygia, who studied in Rome as a slave, and later moved to Nicopolis, Greece, to teach philosophy. His ideas have been written down by Arrian, a historian and a philosopher. Epictetus understood the relationship of God (or gods) to nature as that of a soul to a body. Each individual human being, therefore, participates in a small way in the life of God. God determines all things, yet he has given man the ability to exercise virtue or vice, that is, to live according to nature or contrary to nature. The

⁴⁸⁹ Loeb Classical Library, https://www.loebclassics.com/view/epictetus-discourses/1925/pb_LCL218.151.xml (accessed February 20, 2023).

⁴⁹⁰ Loeb Classical Library, https://www.loebclassics.com/view/epictetus-discourses/1925/pb_LCL218.221.xml, (accessed February 20, 2023).

good life is the life of virtue, and the bad life is the life of vice. Many of the things we desire or do are externals. They are neither good nor bad but rather indifferent. Not what one possesses counts as a good and not what one lacks counts as an evil. How one responds is all that matters. God, or nature, has given or withheld from us all sorts of things for the purpose of testing whether we will recognize what they are, how we are to respond to them, and whether we will use all things to develop virtue and act virtuously. Loss is a return of borrowed property and death is the recall of souls back to God. The stoic does not cheer in or jeer at the game of life but accepts its eventualities. Suffering is to be endured because it is like an athletic event, a play, a festival, or military service. What counts is virtue and virtuous living. The writer of Hebrews similarly uses the metaphors of pilgrimage and athletics to encourage believers to endure hardships (Hebrews 12: 1, 12, 18-24). Early Christians did not equate nature with God's body but saw God as the creator of the universe. They also believed that God was in control of all things and that people were responsible beings. Even though virtue and virtuous living were stressed in Christian living, the goal was to live according to God's will and for the testimony of Jesus, God's Son. Loss was acceptable since there was an expectation of a future reward and death meant going to live with God in the heavenly Jerusalem. Meantime, Christians were to approach God their Father, and Jesus their High Priest for help in time of need. They were also to lean on each other for comfort, provision, and encouragement.⁴⁹¹

⁴⁹¹ For more on the Epictetus, see "Epictetus" in: Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, <https://iep.utm.edu/epictetu/> (accessed March 28, 2023); Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/epictetus/> (accessed May 3, 2023); Oxford Bibliographies (<https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com>). Some books on Epictetus: Anthony Long, *Epictetus: A Stoic and Socratic Guide to Life* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2002); Theodore Scaltsas and Andrew S. Mason, eds., *The Philosophy of Epictetus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); W. O. Stephens, *Stoic Ethics: Epictetus and Happiness as Freedom* (London: Continuum, 2007).

Musonius Rufus, Essay 6:

Lecture 6 is on training. Musonius taught that theoretical knowledge must be followed by practice if it is to be of any use. He uses the examples of “the art of medicine and music.” His main concerns are philosophy and virtue. Learning virtue and philosophy require even more exercise than studying medicine or music because people are born into a corrupt world and have to strife against pleasure, selfishness, greed, fear, and evil. Also, people have to learn how to distinguish between what is truly good or evil and what is only apparently so. Human beings expend much energy avoiding apparent evils and pursuing apparent goods. There are exercises for both soul and body such as “cold, heat, thirst, hunger, meager rations, hard beds, avoidance of pleasures, and patience under suffering.” There is profit in these exercises:

For by these things and others like them the body is strengthened and becomes capable of enduring hardship, sturdy and ready for any task; the soul too is strengthened since it is trained for courage by patience under hardship and for self-control by abstinence from pleasures.

The student of philosophy and virtue must remain vigilant of deception because “neither pain nor death nor poverty nor anything else which is free from wrong is an evil, and again that wealth, life, pleasure, or anything else which does not partake of virtue is not a good.”⁴⁹²

The author of Hebrews would agree with Musonius with regard to endurance for a good end. Musonius, however, recommends philosophy and virtue as goals. The author of Hebrews recommends faith and endurance for the sake of godliness and righteousness in this life, and a reward in the next life. Both Musonius and the author of Hebrews accept suffering as education.

Musonius Rufus, Essay 7:

⁴⁹² TheStoicLife.org – Musonius Rufus,
https://sites.google.com/site/thestoiclifethe_teachers/musonius-rufus/lectures/06 (accessed February 20, 2023).

Musonius recognizes how much people toil for apparent goods such as intemperate love, profit, and fame. How much more should we strive for goodness and virtue? Musonius is surprised how less motivated are those who seek the ideal goods than those who toil for apparent goods:

Now, since, in general, toil and hardship are a necessity for all men, both for those who seek the better ends and for those who seek the worse, it is preposterous that those who are pursuing the better are not much more eager in their efforts than those for whom there is small hope of reward for all their pains.

He encourages his students to be willing to persevere in pursuit of what is truly good:

How much more fitting, then, it is that we stand firm and endure, when we know that we are suffering for some good purpose, either to help our friends or to benefit our city, or to defend our wives and children, or, best and most imperative, to become good and just and self-controlled, a state which no man achieves without hardships. And so it remains for me to say that the man who is unwilling to exert himself almost always convicts himself as unworthy of good, since "we gain every good by toil."⁴⁹³

On the life of Musonius Rufus:

Musonius Rufus was born around 30 CE in Vulsinni, now modern Bolsena, in Italy, into a family of equestrian rank. He taught or influenced many elite Romans of his day, as well as the Stoic Epictetus and the orator Dio of Prusa. His reputation is confirmed even by the Christian Origen, in his *Contra Celsum*. As representatives of the best life, Origen mentions Heracles, Odysseus, Socrates, and "among those who have lived quite recently," Musonius. To be mentioned in one breath with Socrates was the highest praise one could earn in antiquity among those who appreciated philosophers not just for their views but also, and more importantly, for the exemplary lives the best among them led. Tellingly, Musonius is listed alongside such mythical heroes as Heracles and Odysseus (who in their turn were often used as role models by philosophers, especially the Cynics and the Stoics).⁴⁹⁴

William O. Stephens gives the following details concerning Musonius Rufus:

⁴⁹³ TheStoicLife.org – Musonius Rufus, https://sites.google.com/site/thestoiclif/the_teachers/musonius-rufus/lectures/07 (accessed February 20, 2023).

⁴⁹⁴ Cora E. Lutz, ed., trans., *Musonius Rufus, That One Should Disdain Hardships: The Teachings of a Roman Stoic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020), viii; See also Cora E. Lutz, "Musonius Rufus: The Roman Socrates," in *Yale Classical Studies*, Vol. 10 (edited by Alfred R. Bellinger; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1947).

He was a friend of Rubellius Plautus, whom emperor Nero saw as a threat. When Nero banished Rubellius around 60 C.E., Musonius accompanied him into exile in Asia Minor. After Rubellius died in 62 C.E. Musonius returned to Rome, where he taught and practiced Stoicism, which roused the suspicion of Nero. On discovery of the great conspiracy against Nero, led by Calpurnius Piso in 65 C.E., Nero banished Musonius to the arid, desolate island of Gyaros in the Aegean Sea. He returned to Rome under the reign of Galba in 68 C.E. and tried to advocate peace to the Flavian army approaching Rome. In 70 C.E. Musonius secured the conviction of the philosopher Publius Egnatius Celer, who had betrayed Barea Soranus, a friend of Rubellius Plautus. Musonius was exiled a second time, by Vespasian, but returned to Rome in the reign of Titus. Musonius was highly respected and had a considerable following during his life. He died before 101-2 C.E.⁴⁹⁵

Musonius practiced what he taught and suffered exile because of it. He even volunteered to suffer with his friend, Rubellius Plautus. He, however, avenged his friend by having Publius Egnatius convicted. The author of Hebrews commends his audience for their past endurance and support of those who were suffering (Heb. 10:32-34) and at the same time exhorts them to continue in faith and endurance, knowing that there is reward and judgment in the future (Heb. 10:35-39). While Musonius suffered for his stoic principles and practices, the community addressed in Hebrews suffered for their faith and faithful living.

Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* 2.11:

θάνατος δέ γε καὶ ζωή, δόξα καὶ ἀδοξία, πόνος καὶ ἡδονή, πλοῦτος καὶ πενία, πάντα ταῦτα ἐπίσης συμβαίνει ἀνθρώπων τοῖς τε ἀγαθοῖς καὶ τοῖς κακοῖς οὔτε καλὰ ὄντα οὔτε αἰσχρά. οὔτ' ἄρ' ἀγαθὰ οὔτε κακὰ ἐστίν.

Still it is a fact that death and life, honour and dishonour, pain and pleasure, riches and penury, do among men one and all betide the Good and the Evil alike, being in themselves neither honourable nor shameful. Consequently they are neither good nor evil.⁴⁹⁶

⁴⁹⁵ William O. Stephens, "Musonius Rufus," Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, <https://iep.utm.edu/musonius/> (accessed March 27, 2023).

⁴⁹⁶ Ma Loeb Classical Library, https://www.loebclassics.com/view/marcus_aurelius-meditations/1916/pb_LCL058.179.xml (accessed February 20, 2023).

Marcus Aurelius distinguishes what is truly evil and what appears to human beings as evil. He dismisses human suffering as of no consequence.

Marcus Aurelius *Meditations* 6.36:

Πάντα ἐκεῖθεν ἔρχεται, ἀπ’ ἐκείνου τοῦ κοινοῦ ἡγεμονικοῦ ὁρμήσαντα ἢ κατ’ ἐπακολούθησιν. καὶ τὸ χάσμα οὖν τοῦ λέοντος καὶ τὸ δηλητήριον καὶ πᾶσα κακουργία, ὡς ἄκανθα, ὡς βόρβορος, ἐκείνων ἐπιγεννήματα τῶν σεμνῶν καὶ καλῶν. μὴ οὖν αὐτὰ ἀλλότρια τούτου, οὐ σέβεις, φαντάζου· ἀλλὰ τὴν πάντων πηγὴν ἐπιλογίζου.

All things come from that one source, from that ruling Reason of the Universe, either under a primary impulse from it or by way of consequence. And therefore the gape of the lion’s jaws and poison and all noxious things, such as thorns and mire, are but after-results of the grand and the beautiful. Look not then on these as alien to that which thou dost reverence, but turn thy thoughts to the one source of all things.

If all things have one source, and that source is “grand and beautiful,” then even what appear to us as bad must come from the good. Marcus Aurelius encourages us to trace everything back to the good. True as this may be, there are things that cause us to suffer, and we have a problem tracing them to a good source. That, in Christianity, is the problem of theodicy. The author of Hebrews directs us to God as our father, and Jesus as our brother. Jesus suffered for a good cause, namely, that he may become our perfect high priest and example of endurance. God is represented as using the bad that happens to his children as a means of discipline. The discipline is not a punishment for evil done, but for training in godliness and righteousness (Hebrews 12).

Marcus Aurelius *Meditations* 7:33:

Περὶ πόνου· “τὸ μὲν ἀφόρητον ἐξάγει· τὸ δὲ χρονίζον, φορητόν·” καὶ ἡ διάνοια τὴν ἑαυτῆς γαλήνην κατὰ ἀπόληψιν διατηρεῖ, καὶ οὐ χεῖρον τὸ ἡγεμονικὸν γέγονεν. τὰ δὲ κακούμενα μέρη ὑπὸ τοῦ πόνου, εἴ τι δύναται, περὶ αὐτοῦ ἀποφηνάσθω.

Of Pain: When unbearable it destroys us, when lasting, it is bearable, and the mind safeguards its own calm by withdrawing itself, and the ruling Reason takes no hurt. As to the parts that are impaired by the pain, let them say their say about it as they can.

Marcus Aurelius contrasts what happens to the mind and what happens to the body, or “parts” as he calls them. To him, the mind can withdraw and be at peace. The author of Hebrews

encourages empathy for others and endurance for his audience since he is persuaded that God will use the pain for the good of the sufferer.

See Marcus Aurelius *Meditations* 8.23:

Πράσσω τι; πράσσω ἐπ’ ἀνθρώπων εὐποιάν ἀναφέρων· συμβαίνει τί μοι; δέχομαι ἐπὶ τοὺς θεοὺς ἀναφέρων καὶ τὴν πάντων πηγὴν, ἀφ’ ἧς πάντα τὰ γινόμενα συμμηρύεται.

Am I doing some thing? I do it with reference to the well-being of mankind. Does something befall me? I accept it with a reference to the Gods and to the Source of all things from which issue, linked together, the things that come into being.

Here Marcus is closer to Hebrews, except that the author of Hebrews is concerned, not with mankind in general, but with followers of Jesus in particular. The author of Hebrews refers to the creator God in his introductory chapter to show the high status of Jesus. But when he discusses suffering, he relates it to the human Jesus who suffered for others and who was an example to be followed. He uses the future perfection of Jesus’ followers after suffering to encourage his audience. In other words, he uses Christology and eschatology, not the notion of the connection of all things.

Marcus Aurelius *Meditations* 9.39:

Ἦτοι ἀπὸ μιᾶς πηγῆς νοερᾶς πάντα ὡς ἐνὶ σώματι ἐπισυμβαίνει, καὶ οὐ δεῖ τὸ μέρος τοῖς ὑπὲρ τοῦ ὅλου γινομένοις μέμφεσθαι· ἢ ἄτομοι καὶ οὐδὲν ἄλλο ἢ κυκεῶν καὶ σκεδασμός· τί οὖν ταράσσει; τῷ ἡγεμονικῷ λέγε· “Τέθνηκας, ἔφθαρσαι, τεθηρίωσαι, ὑποκρίνη, συναγελάζη, βόσκη.”

Either there is one intelligent source, from which as in one body all after things proceed—and the part ought not to grumble at what is done in the interests of the whole—or there are atoms, and nothing but a medley and a dispersion. Why then be harassed? Say to thy ruling Reason: Thou art dead! Thou art corrupt! Thou hast become a wild beast! Thou art a hypocrite! Thou art one of the herd! Thou battenest with them!⁴⁹⁷

⁴⁹⁷ Loeb Classical Library, https://www.loebclassics.com/view/marcus_aurelius-meditations/1916/pb_LCL058.253.xml (02/20/2023).

Marcus teaches that if people recognize how small they are in the total scheme of things, they will not complain. For people in pain, this is no real consolation. What do they care about the whole? A better consolation would be to show them a good purpose for their suffering. This is what the author of Hebrews accomplishes. He shows his audience why God's own Son suffered, and why the siblings of Jesus are suffering. He is training them for this life and the one to come.

Marcus Aurelius (121 A.D. – 180 A.D.) is far too late to be part of the background for the author of Hebrews and his audience but his Stoicism may reflect ideas from earlier times. At any rate, he did not write his meditations for the public but for private reflection. As emperor and military leader, he experienced many trials and disasters. Concerning his life, we learn the following:

Marcus Aurelius (121–180 C.E.), Roman emperor and Stoic philosopher, born at Rome, received training under his guardian and uncle emperor Antoninus Pius (reigned 138–161), who adopted him. He was converted to Stoicism and henceforward studied and practised philosophy and law. A gentle man, he lived in agreement and collaboration with Antoninus Pius. He married Pius's daughter and succeeded him as emperor in March 161, sharing some of the burdens with Lucius Verus.

Marcus's reign soon saw fearful national disasters from floods, earthquakes, epidemics, threatened revolt (in Britain), a Parthian war, and pressure of barbarians north of the Alps. From 169 onwards he had to struggle hard against the German Quadi, Marcomani, Vandals, and others until success came in 174. In 175 (when Faustina died) he pacified affairs in Asia after a revolt by Avidius. War with Germans was renewed during which he caught some disease and died by the Danube in March 180.

The famous *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius (not his title; he simply calls them 'The matters addressed to himself') represents reflections written in periods of solitude during the emperor's military campaigns. Originally intended for his private guidance and self-admonition, the *Meditations* has endured as a potent expression of Stoic belief. It is a

central text for students of Stoicism as well as a unique personal guide to the moral life.⁴⁹⁸

⁴⁹⁸ Charles Reginald, Haines, ed., trans., *Marcus Aurelius* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2024), in Loeb Classical Library, <https://www.loebclassics.com/view/LCL058/1916/volume.xml> (accessed May 4, 2023).