

The Invention and Argumentative Function of Priestly Discourse in the Epistle to the Hebrews

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This article examines the rhetorical contribution of intertexture, particularly from the First Testament, to the development of “priestly discourse” in Hebrews. The rhetorical analysis of each instance of intertexture within sections evocative of priestly discourse is followed by the construction of an intertextual “map” of the Hebrew Scriptures, Jesus traditions, and Pauline traditions contributing to priestly discourse in Hebrews. The foregoing analysis and intertextual map provide the data for an analysis of the strategic selection from and re-presentation of the larger “story line” of priestly discourse and become the basis for concluding suggestions concerning the inner “logic” of priestly discourse. Hebrews nurtures the premises that initiative remains with the Deity to establish the space, name the priestly agents, determine what sacrifices are acceptable, and decide what benefits will be offered, making priestly discourse inherently “traditional” as it goes about legitimating sacerdotal arrangements in the authoritative expressions of the divine will. The retention of more ancient rites as archetypes for the newer also evidences this inherent conservatism, seen most baldly in the use of the topic of the “necessary” in Heb 9–10. Finally, argumentation in priestly discourse evinces the logic of social codes of reciprocity and of approaching social superiors for needed benefits.

Key Words: Hebrews, intertexture, priestly story, Aaron, Melchizedek, Levi, Levitical priesthood, Jesus, rhetorical strategy, Psalms, perfection, Torah, new covenant, tabernacle, heavenly tabernacle, animal sacrifices, sin offerings, covenant inauguration rite, 11QMelch

Sociorhetorical interpretation, as it has developed since Vernon Robbins's initial programmatic volumes,¹ invites detailed analysis of how early Christians created distinctive modes of discourse within the Greco-Roman world by means of their blending of rhetorical “dialects.” These rhetorical “dialects,” called “rhetorolects,” represent distinctive collections of stories and systems of reasoning linked historically with particular sociohistorical

1. V. K. Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse: Rhetoric, Society, Ideology* (London: Routledge, 1996); idem, *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to Socio-rhetorical Interpretation* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996).

settings. Each rhetorolect is rooted in particular social experiences where participants learn by observing the “logic” of each realm of experience at work, often as part of their primary socialization at a very young age.² “Wisdom discourse” has its historic home in the household, where parents instruct their children on how to negotiate life in this world profitably. “Prophetic discourse” has its historic home in the spaces of the kingdom, where prophets (whether Tiresias or Elijah) call kings and subjects to order their steps in line with the will of the gods or God. “Apocalyptic discourse” has its home in the empire, where vast resources and armies move at the command of one who sits on a central throne, for the benefit of the loyal and the destruction of the hostile.³

“Priestly discourse” has its historic home in the sacred spaces of temples and sanctuaries, where agents with special knowledge of how to approach divine beings for human advantage exercise their mediation through various rites and sacrifices.⁴ The “logic” of priestly discourse impresses itself upon participant observers from an early age, who also observe this logic in the home where the *paterfamilias* functions as the priest within the family, leading simple domestic prayers (*legoumena*) and rites (*dromena*) to evoke divine blessings upon the family.⁵ These repeated, observable experiences press into the minds of the participants the basic premises that will undergird argumentation in priestly discourse.

The NT text that can most illumine the evocation and inner argumentation of “priestly discourse” is the Letter to the Hebrews. Focusing on intertexture as a primary resource by which the author evokes priestly discourse, this article offers a (nonexhaustive) rhetorical analysis of the author’s use of intertexture within those verses of Hebrews that are evocative of priestly discourse (according to the above definition). Such an investigation enables the exploration of how the author of Hebrews reconfigures the specific “story line” of priestly discourse in the Jewish Scriptures and to what rhetorical ends he selects—and deselects—elements of that story. Finally, this study will theorize about the logic of the “inner rea-

2. For a fuller delineation and definition of these rhetorolects, see V. K. Robbins, “Beginnings and Developments in Socio-rhetorical Interpretation,” in *Blackwell Companion to the New Testament* (ed. D. E. Aune; London: Blackwell, forthcoming [http://www.emory.edu/COLLEGE/RELIGION/faculty/robbins/Pdfs/SRIBegDevRRA.pdf, accessed January 15, 2005]).

3. The Rhetoric and New Testament Section of the Society of Biblical Literature (and now the newly constituted Rhetoric of Religious Antiquity Seminar) has dedicated several of its sessions during the past five years to exploring these rhetorolects, publishing the proceedings in D. F. Watson, ed., *The Intertexture of Apocalyptic Discourse in the New Testament* (SBLSymS; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002); idem, ed., *The Role of Miracle Discourse in the Argumentation of the New Testament* (SBLSymS; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005); L. G. Bloomquist and Greg Carey, eds., *Vision and Persuasion: Rhetorical Dimensions of Apocalyptic Discourse* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice, 1999).

4. See also Robbins, “Beginnings and Developments,” 37; this statement represents an abbreviation and adaptation of Robbins’s p. 37.

5. The “home” as sacred space becomes the primary place of mediation of divine benefits for groups like the early church, displaced as it is from public spaces of “sacrificial life.”

soning” of priestly discourse as a mode of argumentation based on the analysis of Hebrews.

INTERTEXTURE AND THE INVOCATION OF PRIESTLY DISCOURSE IN HEBREWS

Priestly discourse is spare in the opening of Hebrews, given the way in which this rhetorolect dominates chs. 7–10. The author embeds a foretaste of this topic in the exordium, as is expected, speaking of the Son’s ‘having performed a purificatory rite for sins’ (καθαρισμὸν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ποιησάμενος), a modest rewriting of LXX Job 7:21, ‘Why did you not perform a purificatory rite for my sin?’ (διὰ τί οὐκ ἐποίησω . . . καθαρισμὸν τῆς ἁμαρτίας μου; notably, even the middle form of the verb is retained). Job 7:21 might be a rather obscure resource,⁶ but those who heard the intertextual conversation might have understood the author to present the Son as the one who answered the lament of Job (and, in him, every person longing for the enjoyment of the fullness of the divine presence), calling for an end to the feeling of alienation from God, which is certainly a major thrust of the priestly argument of Heb 9–10. Even the phrase from Job 7:21 *not* explicitly invoked here (the elided words τῆς ἀνομίας μου λήθην) emerges as the major concern of chs. 8–10, as the author develops the ritual means by which Jesus has at last “made forgetfulness of transgression” and fulfilled the promise of Jer 31:34: “[God] will remember their sins no more.”⁷

Reciting LXX Ps 103:4, Heb 1:7 might be heard to invoke priestly discourse in its reference to the angelic “minsters” in God’s presence (τοὺς λειτουργούς). Although the word can denote secular administrative servants, the cultic sense is clearly indicated in Ezra 7:24; Neh 10:40; Sir 7:30, 50:14; Isa 61:6; Rom 15:16; and Heb 8:2.⁸ Although ambiguous, then, this verse might introduce the image of God’s court as a heavenly temple, an image that will certainly become important and prominent throughout the letter and call to mind traditions about angels as priests (see *Jub.* 30:13, 31:14; *T. Levi* 3:5–6).⁹

In Heb 2:10 the author first introduces the concept of God’s ‘perfecting’ (τελειῶσαι) Jesus, and the interpretation of Jesus’ passion as the process of that ‘perfecting’. This is a term that is quite at home in priestly

6. H. W. Attridge (*The Epistle to the Hebrews* [Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989], 45–46); and C. R. Koester (*Hebrews* [AB 36; New York: Doubleday, 2001], 178–79, 188) pass over this resonance, though W. L. Lane (*Hebrews 1–8* [WBC 47A; Dallas: Word, 1991], 15) mentions it as a possible resource.

7. D. A. deSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle “to the Hebrews”* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2000), 89–90.

8. The cognates λειτουργέω and λειτουργία are used almost exclusively in cultic settings in the LXX (H. Strathmann and R. Meyer, “λειτουργέω, etc.,” *TDNT* 4:215–31, especially 219–22); see also the description of angels as οἱ λειτουργοῦντες in the heavenly cult (*T. Levi* 3:5).

9. See Attridge, *Hebrews*, 99–100; deSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude*, 93–94; Darrell J. Purssif, *The Cultic Motif in the Spirituality of the Book of Hebrews* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1993), 90–91.

discourse, as the remainder of the epistle bears out (see Heb 5:9). Although the author's use of the word group is multivalent,¹⁰ one of the uses is clearly cultic as in LXX Exod 29 (the "ordination" of Aaron and his sons) and LXX Lev 4:5, 8:33, 16:32, denoting the "consecration" of some person to priestly service or object to sacral use.¹¹ The word group is also used repeatedly in Hebrews to express transfer to the divine, permanent realm, a use that also belongs to priestly discourse since that realm is conceived, *in ter alia*, as a heavenly sanctuary in Hebrews (8:1–2; 9:11–12, 23–24). Jesus is "perfected" as he is brought before God in the heavenly Holy of Holies, a move for which his suffering and death (his making of the appropriate sacrifice prescribed for this ultimate Day of Atonement) was the necessary prerequisite, just as it was necessary for the Levitical high priest to sacrifice the goat prior to entering the earthly sanctuary's Holy of Holies.¹² In this verse, the author establishes a relationship between the "perfecting" of Jesus and the incorporation of the "many sons and daughters" into their heavenly destination, hinting here at something he will make explicit in Heb 12:1–11, namely that the many, like the One, will enter glory through suffering. The language of perfection and its particular link to entering into the heavenly sanctuary (which is the believers' destination as much as it was Jesus'; Heb 6:19–20) thus contribute to the normalizing of the experience of hostility and suffering and thus to the major paranetic purpose of the sermon.

The author draws on the Samuel tradition as he expresses the results of the Son's incarnation, passion, and death, which made him a 'merciful and faithful high priest' (ἐλεήμων γένηται καὶ πιστὸς ἀρχιερεὺς, Heb 2:17), the fulfillment of God's promise to 'raise up a faithful priest' (ἱερέα πιστόν, 1 Sam 2:35). The precedent of Samuel's succession to the priestly office of neglectful Eli and his wicked sons announces a topic that pervades the logic of priesthood: it is held and changed by God's appointment, which supercedes any hereditary claims to the office. This topic rises to prominence in ch. 7. The principal achievement of this new priest will be to secure at last the benefit frequently sought from God by means of prayer and sacrifice—namely, that he would "be propitiated in regard to the sins of the people" (Heb 2:18; see LXX Pss 24:11, 64:11, 77:38, 78:9; this topic is developed in Heb 8:1–10:18).

It is also significant that God promises to build for this "faithful priest" a "faithful house" (οἰκοδομήσω αὐτῷ οἶκον πιστόν, 1 Sam 2:35),¹³ an aspect of the Samuel tradition that the author appears to develop in Heb

10. See deSilva, *Perseverance*, 194–204, and the literature therein cited.

11. Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, 57.

12. So Marie Isaacs, *Sacred Space: An Approach to the Theology of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (JSNTSup 73; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 104; and Pursiful (*Cultic Motif*, 75–76), the latter drawing on the work of Victor Turner (*The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-structure* [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969]) to talk about "perfection" as the final stage of a rite of passage. See, further, my *Perseverance*, 70–71, 194–204.

13. Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, 65.

3:3–4 as he introduces the otherwise intrusive topic of God’s building the house that Moses occupies as a servant but over which Jesus presides as Son (recontextualizing Num 12:7 and 1 Chr 17:14).¹⁴ This context might lead one to hear “house” at first in terms of a sacred place (that is, the temple, as in 2 Sam 7:5–6, 13), though the author will develop this image here rather as the “household” or “family” that God is establishing for the new priest, a priestly house that includes the believers (Heb 3:6).¹⁵ Numbers 12:7 thus also introduces the point of comparison by which Jesus will be shown to enjoy a greater degree of intimacy with the founder of this house (as the Son of the *Paterfamilias*, who would be a better-placed broker than even a proven and trusted household servant) and thus provide superior mediation of God’s self-disclosure (as in Heb 1:1) and of God’s favor (Heb 7:28).¹⁶ The author is then able to exploit the image of the house, heard in the sense of “household” and informed by basic social knowledge of how benefits are mediated from a great person through members of that household, in an exhortation to the hearers to maintain their place in this new, illustrious house/household that God is building through his Son (Heb 3:6).

So far, the author has only lightly woven strands of priestly discourse into his sermon. From Heb 4:14 to 10:18 (interrupted by topics of wisdom discourse in Heb 5:11–6:20), priestly discourse becomes the prominent weave. The author recontextualizes the phrase τὰ πρὸς τὸν θεόν from Exod 4:16 and 18:19 in Heb 5:1 within his definition of the high priest’s activity, recalling Moses, the paradigmatic mediator appointed by God. He refers to the high priests’ practice of making a sin offering for themselves in addition to the sin offerings for the people (see Lev 9:7; 16:6, 15–16) in order to establish one inherent flaw in the priestly system that Jesus would overcome. The author develops the topic of the priests’ sacrifices for their own sins prior to their mediation once more in Heb 7:27, generalizing there from the Day of Atonement rite, where it is explicit, to the “daily” rites of the *tamid* (Exod 29:38–45), drawing perhaps on the tradition that the grain offering that accompanied the burnt offerings was a sin offering for the priests.¹⁷ These references to sin offerings introduce a point of contrast between Jesus (Heb 4:15) and the other available priestly mediators whose work is legitimated by the scriptural tradition: both offer the gift of “sympathetic” mediation (2:14–18, 4:15–16, 5:1–3), but Jesus attained sympathy for his clients without falling prey to the same weakness (sin) that besets

14. Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, 65; deSilva, *Perseverance*, 120; Koester, *Hebrews*, 241, 244; Attridge (*Hebrews*, 109 n. 53), however, finds the “allusions here to the key OT verses” to be “unconvincing,” though he does see it as a possibly valuable insight into “the development of priestly messianism.” The application of 1 Chr 17:14 to Jesus follows naturally upon so many other Messianic applications of Davidic promises (Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, 76).

15. On the potential ambiguity of the word *house* here, see Attridge, *Hebrews*, 108–9.

16. See my *Despising Shame: Honor Discourse and Community Maintenance in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (SBLDS 152; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 238–39.

17. Philo, *Her.* 174; see Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, 194.

them.¹⁸ He can therefore offer more effective brokerage of God's favor, since the obstacle of sin does not separate him from God as it does the Levitical line of priests.¹⁹ Jesus' sinlessness raises the question of how he might feel "sympathy" (now part of the priestly "template"). His experience of "flesh and blood" (2:14), of being "tested in every way" (4:15, drawing on traditions of the temptation in Matt 4:1–13//Luke 4:1–13?), and of anguish and learning to turn to God in prayer (Heb 5:7–8) provide sufficient connection with the "many sons and daughters" to provide effective help at their points of weakness.²⁰

The precedent of Aaron's appointment by God to the office of high priest (Exod 28:1) provides evidence for the major premise of a syllogism: no one can simply assume the office but must be appointed by God (Heb 5:4).²¹ Psalm 110:4 functions as an authoritative pronouncement naming Jesus to the office of high priest, though in the priestly line of Melchizedek rather than Aaron (Heb 5:6), thus providing the minor premise that God addressed such an appointment to Jesus. Psalm 2:7 is reintroduced here (see Heb 1:5) as a supporting proof, linking the "you" addressed in the more familiar text (Jesus as the Son of Ps 2:7) with the "you" of the more novel text (Jesus as the promised "priest after the order of Melchizedek" of Ps 110:4) by *gezera shawa*. Hebrews 5:10 announces Jesus' appointment by God to this line of high priests as a *quod erat demonstrandum*.²²

Having rooted Jesus' high priesthood in the priestly line of Melchizedek (Ps 110:4; Heb 2:17; 5:6, 10; 6:20), the author moves on to explore the implications of Ps 110:4 in earnest.²³ He recontextualizes several phrases from and paraphrases the action of Gen 14:17–20, elevating the following components: the name "Melchizedek" and his epithets ("king of Salem" and "priest of God Most High"); Melchizedek's meeting Abraham after the

18. *Sympathy* appears to be a topic introduced by the author rather than being derived from existing traditions (Lane, *Hebrews* 1–8, 116; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 144).

19. Most Jewish authors did not regard the high priest's potential for sin to be a liability for the system (see R. A. Stewart, "The Sinless High Priest," *NTS* 14 [1967–68]: 126–35, especially 126–31). Philo perceived the problem, which he solved by claiming that the high priest's humanity was suspended as he performed his mediatorial functions (Stewart, "Sinless," 126; Pursiful, *Cultic Motif*, 47).

20. The "concentric symmetry" of Heb 5:1–10 (Lane, *Hebrews* 1–8, 111; Westcott, *Hebrews*, 121) highlights the way in which 5:7–8 answers the (alleged) requirement of "sympathy" (Pursiful, *Cultic Motif*, 48). This depiction of Jesus' own deep piety draws on traditional language depicting the pious Jew in prayer, especially the pious priest's interceding for others (see Attridge, *Hebrews*, 150–51; deSilva, *Perseverance*, 190–91).

21. Pursiful (*Cultic Motif*, 50) also observes that the author strategically underscores the requirement of divine call or appointment even in the case of Aaron, when genealogical requirements were also clearly at work (but are, for the moment, muted). Thus divine appointment becomes the "bottom line" norm for legitimate priesthoods.

22. DeSilva, *Perseverance*, 188–89; Koester, *Hebrews*, 298.

23. Psalm 110, not alleged Essene influences or a tendency toward angel worship, necessitates the author's exploration of Melchizedek's significance (Dale F. Leschert, *Hermeneutical Foundations of Hebrews: A Study in the Validity of the Epistle's Interpretation of Some Core Citations from the Psalms* [National Association of Baptist Professors of Religion Dissertation Series 10; Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1994], 212).

massacre of the kings; Melchizedek's blessing Abraham; and Abraham's giving Melchizedek a tenth of the spoils (Heb 7:1–2). The author's translations of the name and the first epithet ("king of righteousness," "king of peace") are amenable to messianic interpretation, since messianic traditions prominently feature a king whose reign will be thus characterized.²⁴ The author understands the text's silence about Melchizedek's origins as a negation of a chief qualification for priesthood assumed throughout the vast majority of Jewish literature (Heb 7:3)—namely, the proper genealogy (see Lev 21:17–22:2, Num 3:5–13, 1 Esd 5:24–40).²⁵ It is, rather, endless life that provides the principal qualification for this priestly line (Heb 7:3, developed in 7:15, 23–25).²⁶ The blend of kingly and priestly authority that is so essential to the author's characterization of Jesus also enters the priestly story at this early point in Genesis with the priest-king Melchizedek.²⁷

The author uses the story in the Genesis passage to argue the superiority of Melchizedek to Abraham (a topic of amplification), a premise that will support the argument that Melchizedek's successor, Jesus, is a superior priest to those from the line of Levi that spring from Abraham. First, Abraham's apportioning of a tenth of the spoils to Melchizedek becomes the basis for establishing the latter's superiority over the Levitical priests, who receive tithes from their fellow descendants from Abraham. The argument assumes the validity of the principal of collective identity: Abraham's descendants are all, in some sense, "in" Abraham as he offers the tithe to Melchizedek, and therefore the descendants' relationship of inferiority to Melchizedek is established as well.²⁸ Second, Melchizedek's

24. See my *Perseverance*, 266 n. 8.

25. Against Otto Michel (*Der Brief an die Hebräer* [12th ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966], 259–63) and David M. Hay (*Glory at the Right Hand: Psalm 110 in Early Christianity* [SBLMS 18; Nashville: Abingdon, 1973], 142), the author's stylistic ability is sufficient to account for the poetic elaboration of Melchizedek, without recourse to alleging use of an existing Melchizedek tradition, all the more as the material introduces topics germane to the argument (see Leschert, *Hermeneutical Foundations*, 210–11).

26. J. W. Thompson argues that the author claims "that Melchizedek is a divine figure" (*The Beginnings of Christian Philosophy: The Epistle to the Hebrews* [CBQMS 13; Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association, 1982], 117). However, although the author of Hebrews uses language typically predicated of divinities (*ἀπάτωρ* and *ἀμήτωρ*; Thompson, *Beginnings*, 119), he focuses only on the predicate *ἀγενεαλόγητος* in order to affirm Melchizedek's ability to hold a priesthood superior to that of the sons of Levi without possessing the genealogical qualifications specified in Torah. Moreover, the author does not claim that Melchizedek is an "eternal" being (*ibid.*), since his main point is that Melchizedek now has his long-awaited successor in Jesus (and so cannot himself "remain a priest perpetually" [Heb 7:3]). With Isaacs (*Sacred Space*, 153), I regard the author's Melchizedek speculation to be rhetorical rather than ontological as Thompson does, using language that heightens the likeness of Melchizedek and Jesus (to legitimate the latter as "successor") as much as possible without laying any stress on those analogous elements' being ontologically true.

27. This blend is already well established in the tradition of the Jewish Scriptures (see Isaacs, *Sacred Space*, 155).

28. G. W. H. Lampe criticizes this as "fantasy" (G. W. E. Lampe and K. J. Woolcombe, *Essays on Typology* [London: Allenson, 1957], 34), overlooking both the author's own awareness that he is using a figure of speech (*ὡς ἔπος εἰπεῖν*, Heb 7:9) and the ancient conception of identity as not merely individual but collective, points that would have made the figure of speech acceptable.

blessing of Abraham is alleged to support the former's superiority over the latter (and his descendants) as well. This involves some hermeneutical sleight of hand, omitting the detail in Gen 14:20 that Melchizedek blessed God right after he blessed Abraham, a fact that would at once undermine his generalization that "without contradiction the inferior party is blessed by the better" (Heb 7:7).

The author's "exegesis" of Gen 14 has occasioned both trenchant critique and spirited defense.²⁹ Giving more attention to the argumentative substructure that undergirds the author's appeal to Melchizedek traditions helps correct some misperceptions concerning the author's exegesis of Gen 14 and Ps 110. For example, the author does not seek to remove "Melchizedek entirely from his historical setting,"³⁰ for Melchizedek has value specifically as a historical precedent for a non-Levitical priest of God, making the details of *his historical setting* of paramount importance. Melchizedek's temporal precedence in regard to all priesthoods that minister to the One God³¹ provides the means by which to present the line of Levitical priests as the "interruption" in a more ancient (and therefore venerable) line of priests, standing between Melchizedek and the successor named by Ps 110:4. The Levitical priests are thus "bracketed off" and set aside in the story of the mediation of God's benefits, much as Paul does with Torah in Gal 3:15–29 by identifying Jesus as the unique "seed" through whom the promises given to Abraham (prior to the giving of the Law) would become available. The event of Abraham's honoring Melchizedek with the tithes of the spoils provides the historical basis for the claim that a priest arose before Levi who commanded Abraham's respect and, in him, the deference of Abraham's whole people. The author draws out the implications of the "historical document's" presentation of Melchizedek in line with the reading practices of late Second Temple Period Jewish exegetes, finding clues in the text concerning the identity and nature of Melchizedek's successor (inquiring into the qualifications for this older order of priesthood). Here he is driven by his conviction that the words of the text were crafted in such a way that it would find its meaning when brought into connection with the Son, in whom God's complete and final word was spoken.³²

The author returns to drawing out the implications of Ps 110:4, with the superiority of the "priest after the order of Melchizedek" to the priest in the line of Aaron now firmly fixed in view. God's appointment of a new priest after the order of Melchizedek suggests that something was lacking

29. See Leschert, *Hermeneutical Foundations*, 229–41.

30. R. M. Grant, *The Bible in the Church: A Short History of Interpretation* (New York: Macmillan, 1954), 34.

31. See Fred L. Horton, *The Melchizedek Tradition: A Critical Evaluation of the Sources to the Fifth Century A.D. and in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (SNTSMS 30 [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976]), 153–60; Leschert, *Hermeneutical Foundations*, 202–3.

32. See Leschert's fine discussion (*Hermeneutical Foundations*, 232–34), drawing attention to similar convictions in Paul (Rom 15:4, 1 Cor 10:11).

in the priesthood after the order of Aaron. The author relies here on the chronological ordering of God's oracles and the unspoken assumption that the later supplants the earlier (an assumption given greater weight in Heb 8:6–13 in the author's use of Jer 31:31–34), something that he will make even more explicit in 7:28 ("the word of the oath" that came "after the law"). The fact that Jesus, who lacked the genealogical qualifications for the Levitical priesthood stipulated by the Torah, should be appointed a priest after the order of Melchizedek (something taken now as proven on the basis of Heb 5:5–6)³³ is taken as an indication that the Law upon which the Levitical priesthood was founded (and which, in turn, the Levitical priesthood maintained through the sacrificial system) has also been set aside (7:12–13, 18; Jer 31:31–34 functions as authoritative proof in this regard in Heb 8:7–13).

The author finds the primary fault with the Levitical priesthood to be its failure to effect "perfection" of the worshipers (Heb 7:11; similarly, "the Law perfected nothing," Heb 7:19). "Perfection" is here understood as "consecration" and as the process by which the people would be brought to their final destiny, the very presence of God. The author had already hinted at the need to overcome this flaw in 6:19–20 where, drawing on the layout of the tabernacle, he spoke of Jesus' "going into the inner side of the veil" (compare Lev 16:2, εἰς τὸ ἅγιον ἐσώτερον τοῦ καταπετάσματος, with Heb 6:19, εἰς τὸ ἐσώτερον τοῦ καταπετάσματος; also Lev 16:12, 15) specifically as a "forerunner" for the believers. This verse anticipates both the exposition of Jesus' replication of the known and established rites of the Day of Atonement³⁴ and his preparation of his followers for this unprecedented ritual journey into the Holy of Holies (renaming "glory," 2:10, and "rest," 3:7–4:11, in priestly terms). This is the point at which the Levitical priests failed and continued to fail (significantly, the recontextualized language recalls the verses that most strictly *limit* movement beyond the curtain). The divine appointment of another priestly order (again the argumentative importance of Ps 110:4 is apparent) demonstrates that the perpetual distance between the people and the Holy God maintained under the Levitical priesthood was not reflective of God's purposes for humankind.

Only at this point does the author recite the first half of Ps 110:4: "*The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind: You are a priest forever*" (Heb 7:21).³⁵ This facet of the psalm text was anticipated in Heb 6:17–20, although left tantalizingly unstated at that point, and serves as evidence for

33. Once again, I would suggest that Thompson overplays the author's metaphysics when claiming that "in Hebrews τὰς εἰς refers to two different spheres of existence" (*Beginnings*, 122 n. 25), paralleled in Plotinus and Gnostic literature. While it is true that Christ's priesthood has an "entirely different nature," being exercised beyond the limitations of death, the author is very much interested in the more basic sense of τὰς εἰς as a divinely legitimated priestly "order," without which Jesus' exaltation to heaven would not bring such benefits for human beings.

34. Attridge, *Hebrews*, 184; Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, 154; deSilva, *Perseverance*, 251 n. 98.

35. DeSilva, *Perseverance*, 273; Koester, *Hebrews*, 361.

the absolute reliability of Jesus' priestly mediation:³⁶ his is a priesthood upheld by God's own oath, and therefore the covenant he mediates is irrevocable (Heb 7:20–22), unlike the Levitical priests, whose covenant was found to be flawed and was replaced (Heb 7:12–19, 8:6–13). The summary statement in Heb 7:28 returns forcefully to the significance of this "word of the oath" for Jesus' priesthood's superior foundation.

The author completes his drawing out of inferences from Ps 110:4 by focusing on the scope of Jesus' priesthood: 'forever' (εις τὸν αἰῶνα).³⁷ The claim that Jesus holds 'the priesthood forever' (εις τὸν αἰῶνα . . . ἔχει τὴν ἱερωσύνην) rather directly recalls the declaration that the Levitical priesthood would have 'the anointing of priesthood forever throughout their generations' (εἶναι αὐτοῖς χρίσμα ἱερατείας εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα εἰς τὰς γενεὰς αὐτῶν, Exod 40:15). The mortality of the Levitical high priests severely qualifies this "forever" in a way that the "priest after the order of Melchizedek" was not limited. There was always (theoretically, at least) a dangerous interregnum during which the people were without a mediator. Jesus' resurrection places him beyond the reach of death and makes him a suitable incumbent for an eternal priesthood (Heb 7:16), always available to intercede on behalf of his household (7:23–25) without interruption (ἀπαράβατον, Heb 7:24).

With Heb 8:1–5, the author's focus shifts from the implications of Ps 110:4 back to the implications of Ps 110:1, the verse more frequently recited in the context of early Christian reflection about the significance of Jesus.³⁸ Now, however, the language of exaltation and session, introduced as early as Heb 1:3, will be heard more clearly as evocative of priestly discourse.³⁹ The author will draw out the implications of Jesus' being "seated" in 10:11–14; here he draws out the implications of the heavenly venue in which he fulfills his appointed ministry. The author paraphrases Ps 110:1 in such a way as to expand the simple 'of me' from Ps 110:1 (κάθου

36. So, rightly, Thompson, *Beginnings*, 124; see also G. L. Cockerill, *The Melchizedek Christology in Hebrews 7:1–28* (Ph.D. diss., Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, VA, 1979), 128–29, 224–26.

37. The importance of this phrase is already intimated in the author's paraphrase of the psalm text in Heb 7:3, where he speaks of Melchizedek as remaining a priest εἰς τὸ διηκεῖς (J. M. Scholer, *Proleptic Priests: Priesthood in the Epistle to the Hebrews* [JSNTSup 49; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991], 99–100).

38. Hebrews 8:1–13, like 12:4–11, comes very close to exhibiting the argumentative pattern known as "descanting on a theme" (Ps.-Cicero, *Rhet. Her.* 4.43.56–4.44.57) or the pattern of "elaboration" known from the *Progymnasmata* of Theon (see my *Perseverance*, 280–87), providing the argumentative substructure for the author's rich deployment of intertextual resources.

39. The author exploits fully the blending of regal and priestly topics in this psalm to develop the significance of the Son in both directions (see, for example, Heb 1:5, 8–9, which draw on traditions about the Davidic line to express the Son's significance in sacred history) and to conjoin these directions at key points (Melchizedek, the king-priest, in Heb 7:1–3; the appointment to Sonship, an enthronement topic, defined more precisely as an appointment to priesthood in Heb 5:5–10). In the context of this blending, the "anointing" of Heb 1:9, reciting LXX Ps 44:7–8 (another royal psalm), could sound overtones of consecration to priesthood as well as regal authority.

ἐκ δεξιῶν μου) into ‘who sat down at the right of the throne of the Majesty in the heavenly places’ (ὄς ἐκάθισεν ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ θρόνου τῆς μεγαλωσύνης ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς). He crafts this interpretive paraphrase to work together with the Christian cultural knowledge that Jesus ascended into heaven. When the psalm was pronounced over the Davidic monarchs, there was no presumption that they were removed to heaven: they could “sit” in authority and honor “at God’s right hand” perfectly well on their throne on earth. Jesus’ appointment to priesthood, however, is bound to his ascension from this realm into the lasting, divine realm.⁴⁰

The expansion, then, makes the transition from the psalm text to the traditions about the heavenly tabernacle that follow in Heb 8:2, 5 much smoother and more persuasive. The author combines the prophetic tradition that God cannot be localized in human-made buildings (Isa 66:1–2)⁴¹ with the reading of Exod 25:40 (Heb 8:5) that understands τὸν τύπον τὸν δειχθέντα σοι ἐν τῷ ὄρει as a revelation of a heavenly reality, God’s tabernacle, which Moses was to copy, rather than a mere blueprint. Wisdom and apocalyptic texts greatly nurtured this reading (see Wis 9:8; 1 En. 14:10–20; 2 Bar. 4:1–7; Rev 3:12, 6:9–11, 7:15, 8:3–5, 11:19, etc.).⁴² To express this distinction, the author chooses to recontextualize a phrase from LXX Num 24:6, in which Balaam blesses Israel by comparing it to ‘tents that God pitched’ (σκηναὶ ἃς ἔπηξεν κύριος; Heb 8:2: τῆς σκηνῆς . . . ἦν ἔπηξεν ὁ κύριος), now applying the phrase to the sanctuary that lies beyond the realm of present experience.

Returning to his earlier definition of high priest (Heb 8:3; see 5:1), the author draws the conclusion that Jesus, as priest, also had to have something to offer as a sacrifice, hinting in 8:4 that this would not be a traditional sacrifice prescribed by the Torah (which regulated the earthly priests’ activity). The author assumes that his hearers are familiar with the Christian cultural knowledge that Jesus’ death was an offering (see the

40. The prominence of enthronement psalms in establishing Jesus’ appointment to priesthood lead H. Windisch (*Der Hebräerbrief* [2nd ed.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1931], 42) and E. Käsemann (*The Wandering People of God: An Investigation of the Letter to the Hebrews* [Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984], 219–23) to identify Jesus’ ascension as his installation as high priest, but Jesus’ intercession on earth (Heb 5:7–9) and, most importantly, his priestly offering of himself as a sacrifice (Heb 10:5–14, 13:11–12; see David Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection: An Examination of the Concept of Perfection in the “Epistle to the Hebrews”* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982], 193) make it difficult to establish the author’s view of the timing of his appointment with any certainty (Scholer, *Proleptic Priests*, 83–89). Jesus’ ascension—his entrance into the heavenly holy places—at least marks the consummation of his high priestly ministry (Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection*, 192–93; Cody, *Heavenly Sanctuary*, 176–77; Pursiful, *Cultic Motif*, 81–82). Isaacs helpfully interprets the emphasis on Ps 110:1 and the exaltation of Jesus as a sign of the author’s desire to stress Jesus’ proximity to God (*Sacred Space*, 183), a proximity surpassing that of all other mediators and therefore offering his followers greater assurance in regard to their own access to God (deSilva, *Perserverance*, 180–84, 279–80).

41. This text was used in early Christian discourse as a counterweight to the spiritual gravity of the Jerusalem temple, as in Acts 7:48–50. The topic of God’s creation of all things (Isa 66:1–2) has already been invoked in Heb 3:4.

42. Cody, *Heavenly Sanctuary*, 9–46; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 222–24; Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, 205.

casual reference to Jesus' "offering himself once for all" in 7:27) but will soon ground this knowledge in an authoritative text (Ps 40, Heb 10:1–10). The sacrifice may not have been prescribed by Torah, but he will show how it was in fact prescribed by God. Interesting here is the unquestioned assumption that the new priest must act in ways analogous to known priestly orders (namely, "have something to offer," operating within some kind of system of prescribed sacrifices).

After an argument from the contrary (Heb 8:4–5) that further supports the topic of amplification that Jesus' priesthood is superior because it is exercised in a superior venue (Heb 8:6),⁴³ the author reintroduces the topic that this priesthood is founded upon a superior 'law' (νενομοθέτηται). Here he continues to emphasize the mutually supportive relationship between law and priesthood: the Law appoints priests and regulates their activity; the priests continue to repair breaches to the Law through gifts and offerings. The recitation of Jer 31:31–34 (Heb 8:7–12) establishes the essential "change of law" that is the necessary corollary to the "change of priesthood" (Heb 7:12),⁴⁴ a conclusion drawn in Heb 8:13 from the prophet's distinguishing the forthcoming covenant as "new." The Jeremiah text, however, also contributes to the author's understanding of the limited effectiveness of the sacrifices offered under the first covenant and his claims concerning the effects of Jesus' sacrifice of himself (see Heb 10:1–18). It is thus not accidental that recitations of Jer 31:31–34 form an inclusio around the central discourse of Hebrews.

Having established that the tabernacle was a model of God's realm, the author uses the layout of the former to establish the "geography" of the latter, which will be relevant both for Christ's priesthood and the Christians' destiny. Hebrews 9:1–10 is rich with references to the furnishings of the tabernacle and to the activities and regulations that distinguish the first holy place from the inner sanctum drawn from Exod 25–26, especially Exod 26:31–35. Since the author does not develop the significance of most of the accouterments (Heb 9:5b), we will not dwell on the intertexture here.⁴⁵ The important point for the author is the limitation of access to the Holy of Holies, into which only the high priest may go, and that but on one specified day each year with the appointed sacrificial blood for his own sins and those of the people (Heb 9:7). Because access to God was never broadened, the author concludes that the Levitical sacrifices were ineffective in dealing with sin. The pattern of the tabernacle also informs the author's cosmology and eschatology. He anticipates the removal of the "first tent," the visible earth and heavens, after which the "way into the Holy of Holies" would be evident. Thus the fact that the "first tent" impedes access to the inner sanctum is a symbol (a "parable") for the present time (Heb 9:8–9) until the second coming of Christ (9:28) and God's visitation to

43. DeSilva, *Perseverance*, 280–81.

44. Attridge, *Hebrews*, 226; deSilva, *Perseverance*, 284; Koester, *Hebrews*, 388–89.

45. See further Attridge, *Hebrews*, 232–38; Lane, *Hebrews* 9–13, 218–21; deSilva, *Perseverance*, 297–99.

“shake” and “remove” the earth and material heavens, at which point the Christians will be able to enter God’s place of “rest,” the eternal Holy of Holies where Christ entered as a forerunner (12:26–28; see also 1:10–12 for an anticipation of this cosmic shaking).⁴⁶

Even though the Day of Atonement rite is seen to be ineffective and superseded, it nevertheless provides the necessary template for the new rite in every regard save one—the new high priest does not offer up a sin offering on his own behalf. The pattern of the rite has such authority that it must still be filled in all its particulars, even if there will be considerable variation now from the original. Thus the author’s reference to the “blood of goats and cows” in Heb 9:12, the ritual substances carried into the earthly holy places by the Levitical high priest, sacralizes Jesus’ entrance into heaven “through his own blood,” that is, through his death. It leads to the expectation that Jesus’ ascension will have the same significance as the Levitical high priest’s entrance into the Holy Places with the blood of the sacrificial animals—only more effective for all the reasons hitherto explored.

A second reference to “the blood of goats and bulls” (9:13), now combined with references to the rite of the ashes of the red heifer (τὴν σποδὸν τῆς δαμάλεως . . . ῥαντισμοῦ, Num 19:9, 17; σποδὸς δαμάλεως ῥαντίζουσα, Heb 9:13), becomes the basis for a lesser-to-greater argument in Heb 9:13–14. Combining the ritual substances of the Day of Atonement and the red heifer ritual, performed for cleansing from corpse contamination, is very strategic: the material and external purification provided by the latter bleeds over into the former, limiting its sphere of effectiveness by association. If animal blood was sufficient to cleanse the body, how much more effective would more valuable blood—the life of Jesus, the Son—be? By means of the reference to the red heifer rite, the cleansing of defilement contracted by mere physical contact and thus left at the “sensory” and physical level of touch, the author is able to assert how, specifically, Jesus’ sacrifice would be more effective, “perfecting the conscience,” purifying the worshipers, and purging their sins more completely and pervasively than the endless cycle of Day of Atonement rites.⁴⁷

At this point (Heb 9:15), the author shifts his point of reference to the ritual that ratified the first covenant. Having introduced Jer 31:31–34 along with the assertion that the new covenant has arrived with the appointment of Jesus to be high priest, he must also demonstrate that this new

46. See my *Perseverance*, 301–3.

47. Philo (*Spec.* 1.259–69) distinguished between those (necessary) rites that cleansed the body and the more rational rites that cleansed the soul, namely, an ethical life accompanied by contemplation (Thompson, *Beginnings*, 114). The author of Hebrews adopts the contrast between cleansing the outer and inner person but posits a very different purificatory rite for the inner person (the “conscience”). The author speaks of “perfecting the conscience” in a cultic setting quite similar to the appearance of the phrase “perfecting the hands” in Exod 29, also with a view to preparing the believers to enter the very presence of God in the heavenly Holy Places. A strong cultic overtone to “perfection” is again heard here (see deSilva, *Perseverance*, 201 and n. 53).

covenant has been ratified by the appropriate rites. In Heb 9:18–19, the author summarizes the rite performed by Moses to ratify the first covenant (Exod 24:3–8, with additional ritual substances introduced from the purificatory rites of Lev 14:4, Num 19:6), reciting Moses' pronouncement concerning "the blood of the covenant which God commanded you" (Heb 9:20, reciting Exod 24:8 with minor variation). The author regards the covenant inauguration to be incomplete until the sanctuary and liturgical accouterments are consecrated as well, and so he weaves in a reference to Exod 40:9, where the tent and vessels are indeed sprinkled with a consecrating substance (χρίσεις τὴν σκηνὴν . . . καὶ πάντα τὰ σκεύη αὐτῆς, Exod 40:9; τὴν σκηνὴν δὲ καὶ πάντα τὰ σκεύη τῆς λειτουργίας τῷ αἵματι ὁμοίως ἐράντισεν, Heb 9:21). In Exodus, however, this medium was oil rather than blood. The author has here conformed the inauguration ceremonies to the Day of Atonement rite, which involved taking blood into the Holy of Holies and applying it to (other) interior furnishings, to make the parallels with Jesus' entrance into heaven after his death more evident in both cases. It is more important to him that a parallel should be evident to his hearers than that the report of the covenant inauguration rites be completely accurate, which may tell us something distinctive about the logic of priestly discourse (namely, it is inherently reiterative).

His innovative reconstruction leads him to conclude that "without shedding of blood, forgiveness does not happen" (9:22), a negative restatement of the foundational maxim of the Levitical sacrifices: "as life, it is the blood that makes atonement" (Lev 17:11).⁴⁸ The cultic analogies have now all been established for the author's exposition of the significance of Jesus' death: the offering of his life and shedding of his blood are necessary for forgiveness, for the ratification of the new covenant, and for the removal of the defilement of sins from the heavenly sancta.

Jesus' entrance into "heaven itself," then, completes both the covenant inauguration and the effective Day of Atonement rites, both seen here to involve application of the blood to the people *and* application of the blood to the sancta.⁴⁹ The differences between the old rites and the new are explained again by recourse to the qualitative differences between the earthly copy of the sanctuary and the heavenly reality (Heb 9:23, again building upon the groundwork established on the basis of Exod 25:40). The earthly copy is denigrated as 'made by hands' (χειροποίητα), a designation frequently used in early Christian discourse to relativize the Jerusalem temple (see Mark 14:58, Acts 7:48; applied to all temples generally in Acts 17:24) and associated in the LXX with idols. Hebrews 9:24 specifically recalls Isa 16:12, where "Moab" is said to go 'in to her handmade things' (idols are implied but not specified) to seek divine help but finding none

48. F. F. Bruce (*The Epistle to the Hebrews* [rev. ed.; NICNT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1990], 227 n. 144) suggests that this statement may have become proverbial in Jewish circles.

49. Concerning which, see deSilva, *Perseverance*, 311–14, and the literature therein cited.

(εἰς χειροποίητα εἰσῆλθεν, Heb 9:24; εἰσελεύσεται εἰς τὰ χειροποίητα, Isa 16:12).⁵⁰ Seen through Lev 16 and Exod 24, then, the datum of Christian cultural knowledge that Jesus ascended into heaven (see Mark 16:19, Luke 24:51, John 20:17, Acts 1:9–11, 1 Pet 3:22, Rev 12:5) becomes a liturgical act of incomparable significance, a single offering and once-for-all entrance into the heavenly sancta to deal decisively with the sin that kept the people at a distance from the holy God (the counterpart to his death sanctifying the people, Heb 13:12), the rite that ratifies the new covenant and inaugurates its promised new phase in human-divine relations (Jer 31:33–34, Heb 10:15–18).

One piece remains to be fitted into this argument—the divine legitimation not only of the new priest and the new covenant but of the strange offering itself. A recontextualization of three words (one slightly modified) from Isa 53:12 begins this process, identifying the divine pronouncement of a suffering and dying servant whose death will ‘bear the sins of many’ (πολλῶν ἀνενεγκεῖν ἁμαρτίας, Heb 9:28; ἁμαρτίας πολλῶν ἀνήνεγκεν, Isa 53:12),⁵¹ but the author has an even more impressive text upon which to ground his argument.

To make this case, he first needs to establish the inefficacy of the animal sacrifices. He proposes the thesis that the very repetition of the Day of Atonement ritual indicates its inability to deal with sin decisively (Heb 10:1). After an argument from the contrary (10:2), he generalizes from the result of the rite prescribed in Num 5:11–15 for the jealous husband who wishes to test his wife’s fidelity—“bringing sin to remembrance”—to the Day of Atonement ritual (10:3), perhaps supported by a more general awareness that a flawed conscience makes a sacrifice nothing more than a reminder of the sin rather than its expiation.⁵² This rhetorical move allows him to contrast that rite all the more forcefully with the promise of the new covenant under which God “would remember their sins no more” (Jer 31:34). By this path, he arrives at his conclusion: “it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins” (Heb 10:4).

How can the author make this conclusion “stick” in the face of the plain sense of Lev 17:11, where the blood of bulls and goats is precisely the ritual substance provided by God for atonement (see also Lev 16:11, 15–16, 21–22)? He began to accomplish this by drawing implications from the necessity of the annual repetition of the rite and the unchanging status of limited access to the Holy of Holies. He advances his cause further by drawing in Heb 10:4 on the prophetic critique and rejection of animal

50. See Thompson (*Beginnings*, 106 n. 21) on the widespread pejorative use of this term, whether for idols in Jewish literature, for the Jerusalem temple and pagan temples in Philo and early Christian literature, or for material things in contrast to Platonic ideal forms.

51. So B. F. Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (London: Macmillan, 1889), 277; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 223; Philip E. Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1977), 388.

52. Thompson (*Beginnings*, 113) presents an instructive parallel from Philo (*Mos.* 2.108), who may also have been inspired by Num 5:11–15.

sacrifices, recontextualizing four words from Isa 1:11–12: ‘I do not want the blood of bulls and goats (αἷμα ταύρων καὶ τράγων, Isa 1:11; αἷμα ταύρων καὶ τράγων, Heb 10:4) . . . bringing offerings is useless.’⁵³ The author’s maxim-like statement, then, represents the logical conclusion to be drawn from God’s explicit rejection of the use of animal blood as a medium of atonement as read in Is 1:11–12.⁵⁴ The appeal to the prophetic tradition remains thoroughly in keeping with the author’s use of more recent divine oracles or pronouncements to limit, correct, or replace older arrangements similarly established on divine authority.

The capstone in the author’s case, however, is LXX Ps 39:7–9 (MT 40:6–8), recited at length in Heb 10:5–7 and again in an abbreviated and strategically rearranged fashion in 10:8–9a. The author places this text on the lips of the Son (Heb 10:5a establishes this interpretive frame rather smoothly), who becomes the “I” of the psalm, bearing direct witness to evaluative decisions made by God concerning acceptable sacrifices. Although originally intended to express the superior desirability of obedience to God’s Law over the transgressions that necessitate sin offerings (which were nevertheless still probably deemed effective), the author of Hebrews uses it as an authoritative declaration of the absolute undesirability of animal sacrifices.⁵⁵ These sacrifices have been replaced by a “body” that God is said to “have prepared” for the Son.⁵⁶ The Son’s incarnation was God’s provision for an effective replacement for the repeated, rejected animal sacrifices. The animal sacrifices were indeed offered “according to the Law” (Heb 10:8b), but later directives and provisions from God can signal a legitimate and decisive change in policy. Even as the former arrangements are swept

53. Other texts, such as Jer 7:21–23, go even further in this regard, and could be read as denials that God himself ever called for animal sacrifice, calling only for obedience to God’s voice instead.

54. DeSilva, *Perseverance*, 319; surprisingly, neither Lane (*Hebrews 9–13* [WBC 47B; Dallas: Word, 1991], 261–62) nor Attridge (*Hebrews*, 273) draws attention to this particular prophetic text and its potential importance as an authoritative pronouncement undergirding his radical proposition.

55. So also Isaacs, *Sacred Space*, 92. Indeed, the psalmist seems to pursue a more thoroughly “rationalized” line of thinking in regard to sacrifice than the author of Hebrews, who uses the text not to suggest ethical action as the necessary accompaniment to (or superior religious offering to) sacrifice, as did Philo (see Thompson, *Beginnings*, 114) but to find the ritual prescription for an offering that was of a different quality from but like in kind with the material sacrifices prescribed by the Torah.

56. Karen Jobes and Moises Silva (*Invitation to the Septuagint* [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2000], 97) argue that the author of Hebrews himself introduced the generalization of the part (“ears”) for the whole (“body”). The fact that Alexandrinus, Sinaiticus, and Vaticanus all read “body,” however, and the tendency on the part of revisers of the Old Greek (whether Jewish, like Aquila, or Christian, like Origen) to bring the Old Greek closer in line with the Hebrew textual tradition (that is, to introduce “ears” here in place of “body” as a result of their revisionist tendencies), leads me to conclude that this change had already been introduced into the Greek translation of Ps 40. See my *Perseverance*, 320; following Attridge (*Hebrews*, 274) and Lane (*Hebrews 9–13*, 255 note m) and supported by the thorough discussion in Koester (*Hebrews*, 432–33).

aside to make room for the newer (Heb 10:9b; see 8:13), however, the former still provide the template for and give significance to the newer rites. The rubrics of the Day of Atonement liturgy make it possible to ascribe atoning significance to the death of Jesus and his ascension into heaven.

The author returns to Ps 110, now entirely within a priestly context, to draw out the implications of the session of the Son.⁵⁷ From Deuteronomy, priests and Levites are known to “stand” to minister before the Lord (παρεστάναι . . . λειτουργεῖν, Deut 10:8; τοῦ ἱερέως τοῦ παρεστηκότος λειτουργεῖν, 17:12; also 18:5, 7; ἱερεὺς ἔστηκεν . . . λειτουργῶν, Heb 10:11). Deuteronomy 10:8 is particularly amenable to the author’s conclusion that this “standing” is constant and unrelenting (παρεστάναι . . . λειτουργεῖν . . . ἕως τῆς ἡμέρας ταύτης, Deut 10:8). “Standing” represents the position of readiness to keep offering the sacrifices that must be repeated without end. God’s invitation to the “priest after the order of Melchizedek” to sit (Ps 110:1), then, proves that Jesus’ single sacrifice was decisively effective, with no need—and no possibility—of repetition (the author will exploit both sides of this in 10:18, 26). This, in turn, becomes a confirmation of the value that connection with Jesus has brought the hearers and of the loss that disconnection would entail.

Having shown that the death of Jesus was in fact a sacrifice prescribed by God (on the basis of Ps 40:6–8) and that this death was offered in conjunction with his appointment to a new order of priesthood (Ps 110:4), the author is ready to come full circle back to the promise of the new covenant and its winsome effects announced in Jer 31:31–34 (Heb 8:7–12). The change of priesthood means this new covenant has indeed come into effect; the death of Jesus has both ratified the new covenant and effected the level of atonement and removal of sins therein promised. A new recitation, then, of Jer 31:33–34 (Heb 10:16–17) functions as the authoritative proof (given the hearers’ conviction that the new covenant had in fact been ratified by Jesus) that the perfection of the believers’ conscience and the decisive cleansing of the heavenly Holy of Holies have indeed taken place.⁵⁸

Priestly discourse continues as the author calls the hearers to respond to the purification Jesus has wrought for them and to keep hold of the unprecedented privileges Jesus has won for them. The map of the earthly tabernacle provides the template for their own forthcoming rite of passage beyond the cosmic curtain into the eternal Holy of Holies (10:19–21). Their baptism is the ritual washing that prepared their bodies, corresponding to the Levitical priests’ washing of their bodies before entering the earthly Holy of Holies (compare λελουσμένοι τὸ σῶμα ὕδατι καθαρῶ, Heb 10:22b,

57. The paraphrase of Ps 110:1 in Heb 12:2 is once again removed from a priestly context.

58. The author’s earlier use of God’s self-identification as ἐγὼ κύριος ὁ ἀγιαζὼν ὑμᾶς (LXX Exod 31:13; Lev 20:8; 21:15; 22:9, 16, 32; Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, 58; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 88 n. 107; Koester, *Hebrews*, 229) in conjunction with a description of believers as οἱ ἀγιαζόμενοι in Heb 2:11 foreshadowed this fulsome treatment of how in Christ God fulfilled the promise inherent in that self-identification.

with λούσεται ὕδατι πᾶν τὸ σῶμα αὐτοῦ, Lev 16:4);⁵⁹ their faith in Jesus has applied his cleansing blood to their inner beings (Heb 10:22a). With such extravagant language, the author has provided a sacralizing interpretive frame for the mundane efforts to which he calls them: keeping their hope strong; seeing and responding to one another's needs; encouraging one another rather than eroding one another's commitment through desertion (Heb 10:23–25).

A privilege that has cost so much—that has necessitated the shedding of the lifeblood of so exalted and valued a person as the Son of God—cannot be set aside with impunity. Failing to honor the gift by persevering in one's forward movement toward God's eternal realm would amount to 'intentional sin' (Ἐκουσίως γὰρ ἁμαρτανόντων ἡμῶν, recalling the sin committed "with a high hand" that contrasts with unintentional sin in Num 15:22–31), for which there is no possibility of a sin offering (Heb 10:18, 26). The offense is expressed in sacral terms as regarding "as common 'the blood of the covenant,' by which you were consecrated" (Heb 10:29b; see Exod 24:8). The hortatory function of the priestly discourse in Heb 7:1–10:18 is here revealed: the rites of consecration have brought them into a liminal state between the profane world they left behind and the Holy of Holies, entrance into which lies before them. They cannot now turn back, since that would be to "undo" all that Jesus has done for them, a ritual process described at such length and in such absolute terms. It remains for them only to press on in their liminality, the same liminality that Jesus embraced (see 13:12–14), on to their ritually-appointed destiny.

Priestly discourse recedes as the author surveys the broad sweep of the faithful heroes of the Jewish Scriptures in ch. 11. His "encomium on faith" contrasts rather strikingly in this regard with the "hymn to the ancestors" in Ben Sira, which dwells at greatest length upon priestly figures (Aaron, Sir 45:6–22; Phinehas, who holds the priesthood εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας, Sir 45:23–25; Simon II, Sir 50:1–24), and which even ranks the two priests Aaron and Phinehas as "second" (by implication) and "third in honor" after Moses (Sir 45:23). By comparison there are relatively few and rather undeveloped evocations of priestly discourse as found in the epic of the Jewish Scriptures.

This priestly epic begins with the sacrifices of Abel and Cain (Gen 4:3–5), a story that also provides the first human example of faith (Heb 11:4). The author recontextualizes a phrase from Gen 4:4 (ἐπείδεν ὁ θεός ἐπὶ Ἀβὲλ καὶ ἐπὶ τοῖς δόροις αὐτοῦ, Gen 4:4; μαρτυροῦντος ἐπὶ τοῖς δόροις αὐτοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ, Heb 11:4). The new verb (μαρτυροῦντος τοῦ θεοῦ) potentially recalls Heb 2:4 (συνεπιμαρτυροῦντος τοῦ θεοῦ), where God "bears witness" alongside the proclamation of the Gospel, attesting to the truth of the proclamation through signs, wonders, and manifestations of the Holy Spirit. The story of Abel's offering, then, may function subtly as a precedent whereby

59. Attridge (*Hebrews*, 289 n. 61) helpfully suggests that "clean water" would direct the hearers' attention to Ezek 36:25–27, an oracle well aligned with the promises of Jer 31:31–34.

readers are instructed to see in Jesus' resurrection and their own experience of God's Spirit in their conversion evidence of God's "bearing witness" to the acceptability of Jesus' sacrifice. Abel's "greater sacrifice" (πλείονα θυσίαν) may also subtly function as a type for Jesus' "better sacrifices" (κρείττοσιν θυσίαις, Heb 9:23), a type that the author invokes again in Heb 12:24 as he compares the word spoken by Abel's blood (crying for vindication, Heb 11:4, Gen 4:10) with the "better thing" communicated by Jesus' sprinkled blood (the fulfillment of Jer 31:33–34).⁶⁰ The Abel tradition is used much the same way as other priestly "types," the author exploiting both points of similarity *and* points of superiority.

Beyond this, priestly discourse is conspicuously absent in Heb 11. Although he treats Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac (Heb 11:18), he is silent about its mediation of benefits to Israel.⁶¹ Similarly, the author leaves undeveloped his examples of Isaac (Gen 27:27–29, 38–40) and Jacob's blessing their offspring (Gen 47:31, 48:15–20) and thus engaged in mediating divine blessings within a domestic setting as the acting head of the household. He gives Moses more of a priestly role in "performing" the Passover and mediating divine benefits than one finds in Exod 12:21–23 (Heb 11:28) but again leaves the cultic aspects undeveloped, seeing here simply another reinforcement of the pattern of faith manifesting itself in acting in line with future advantage in accordance with God's revelation. Whereas the attention to priestly discourse in chs. 7–10 might have led the hearer to expect an encomium more like Sir 44–50, highlighting priestly figures and priestly actions, the author focuses far less on priestly discourse than "prophetic" discourse (which is more in line with the author's overarching hortatory goal, namely, the call to live faithfully within the [new] covenant).

Priestly discourse returns in Heb 12:14–15. "Sanctification" is required for standing in God's presence (the author may echo Jesus' words, "Favored are the pure in heart, for they will see God," Matt 5:9), which makes the sprouting of any disqualifying "defilement" within the community all more the dangerous (Heb 12:15).⁶² The "defilement" is identified by means of a slightly modified recontextualization of a clause from Deut 29:17 (μη τις ρίζα πικρίας ἄνω φύουσα ἐνοχλῆ, Heb 12:15; μη τις ἐστὶν ἐν ὑμῖν ρίζα ἄνω φύουσα ἐν χολῇ καὶ πικρίᾳ, Deut 29:17). The intertext labels those who cling to their idols in the midst of God's people as a "root of bitterness," and the author of Hebrews appropriately brings this into his exhortation against slipping back into idolatrous customs for the sake of

60. This last connection is commonly noted: see Attridge, *Hebrews*, 317; Lane, *Hebrews* 9–13, 473–74; Koester, *Hebrews*, 482 n. 379, with some reservations.

61. This aspect is emphasized, for example, in *L.A.B.* 18.5; 32.2–3; Tg. *Neof.* Gen 22:14. These and other texts are explored at length in Robert J. Daly, "The Soteriological Significance of the Sacrifice of Isaac," *CBQ* 39 (1977): 45–75.

62. Attridge, *Hebrews*, 367; Lane, *Hebrews* 9–13, 450–51; Koester, *Hebrews*, 531. On the danger of approaching God in a state of defilement and on the ethical interpretation of purity codes, see my *Honor, Patronage, Kinship, and Purity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 255–56, 273, 294–97.

peace with the non-Christian Gentile society.⁶³ Effectively elevating the believers to the status of priests who will themselves enter the heavenly Holy of Holies, the author can harness the power of purity codes and pollution taboos at this point to advance the responses to their situation that he favors (the same logic of pollution taboos undergirds his prohibition of violating the marriage covenant in Heb 13:4).

The diptych of contrasting scenes in Heb 12:18–24, which again invokes priestly discourse, is informed by intertexture at two major points.⁶⁴ First, the author refers to the boundaries drawn around Mount Sinai and the fearsome consequences of violating those boundaries by “touching” the mountain in Exod 19:12–13. Recalling Israel’s initial encounter with God at the giving of the Torah thus reinforces the concept of graded, limited access to God and the shadow of fear that buttressed those boundaries (see Heb 9:1–10), a shadow lengthened by the recitation of Moses’ confession of fear in Deut 9:19 at Heb 12:21 (though Moses actually spoke this in reference to a different event!). This is the point of contrast with the approach to God secured by Jesus, the “mediator of a new covenant” (Heb 12:24). A second reference to Abel (Heb 12:24) provides a second intertextual connection with priestly discourse in the Jewish Scriptures, as the author asserts that Jesus’ sprinkled blood “speaks a better thing” than Abel’s: the former announces the fulfillment of the promises of Jer 31:33–34 (see Heb 10:1–18), the latter calls for judgment upon the wrongdoer (Gen 4:10). Intertexture here, then, serves to amplify the benefits made available in Jesus, focusing mainly on the different “spirit” (or, to use a rhetorically more appropriate term, *pathos*) in which one may now approach God.

Priestly discourse appropriately returns to prominence near the conclusion of the sermon in Heb 13:9–16, the peroration being expected to return in some way to the key note of the speech. After an introduction of the topic of cultic foods (Heb 13:9b), the author asserts that the followers of Jesus “have an altar from which the ones ministering in the tabernacle do not have the authority to eat” (Heb 13:10). This verse reflects the stipulations in Leviticus concerning who has the right to eat what portions of which sacrifices and where (see, for example, Lev 24). The precedents do not demonstrate the author’s assertion but do render it plausible. That is, the “map” of Leviticus leads the hearers to regard differentiation of privileges as “normal” in regard to sacred things.

While it is by no means certain that the author intends this as a reference to the Lord’s Supper,⁶⁵ a number of factors make this increasingly plausible. First, the celebration of this ritual meal is a known part of the

63. Attridge, *Hebrews*, 368; Lane, *Hebrews 9–13*, 452–54; deSilva, *Perseverance*, 460; Koester, *Hebrews*, 531–32.

64. Attridge, *Hebrews*, 372–77; Lane, *Hebrews 9–13*, 459–74; deSilva, *Perseverance*, 463–69; Koester, *Hebrews*, 543–46, 549–51.

65. See the discussions in R. Williamson, “The Eucharist in the Epistle to the Hebrews,” *NTS* 21 (1975): 300–312; Jukka Thurén, *Lobopfer der Hebräer: Studien zum Aufbau und Anliegen von Hebräerbrief* (FRLANT 47; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1955), 83–91.

congregational life of the communities founded and nurtured by the Pauline mission (see, for example, 1 Cor 11:17–32, evidence that Paul instituted this rite as part of his founding work with churches). Second, the terms “eating,” “blood,” and “bodies” conjoined in the description of the Levitical priests’ lack of privilege (Heb 13:10–11) all have counterparts in the words of institution of the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor 11:24–27, Matt 26:26–28). Therefore, if the hearers were asked in what sense they were able to participate in their distinctive atonement sacrifice by “eating” in a way that the Levitical priests were prohibited from “eating” either the “blood” or “bodies” of the animals sacrificed on Yom Kippur, the Lord’s Supper would be the most immediate and accessible answer. The author’s emphasis, of course, is not the food per se but the privilege that it signals (and with which the rite will now be imbued). Christ’s followers have been so thoroughly consecrated by Jesus’ offering that they will go into the Holy Places not only closed to the worshipers under the old covenant but to the high priests as well!

This discussion has already anticipated the identification of intertexture in Heb 13:11, which refers to two important features of the Day of Atonement rite. Hebrews 13:11a refers to the high priest’s taking the blood into the Holy Places (Lev 16:14–15), while Heb 13:11b refers to the practice of taking the bodies of the bull and the goat (“the animals”) outside the camp (ἐξω τῆς παρεμβολῆς, Lev 16:27) and burning them with fire. The meat was thus unavailable for consumption by the priests, unlike most routine offerings. The old rite provides again the pattern for the new rite: here the phrase ἐξω τῆς παρεμβολῆς provides the point of comparison between the Day of Atonement and Jesus’ crucifixion ἐξω τῆς πυλῆς of Jerusalem (Heb 13:12; cf. Matt 21:39; John 19:17, 20; the author has already spoken of Jesus’ taking his own blood into the heavenly Holy Places to cleanse them in Heb 9:11–12). When the author enjoins the hearers to “go out to him ἐξω τῆς παρεμβολῆς,” however, the ambiguity of the space “outside the camp” begins to make itself known. This was a place in the margins where the unclean lived and flagrant sinners were executed (Lev 13:45–46; Num 5:2–4, 12:14–15, 31:19–20); but there are also “clean places” outside the camp, such as the places where the aforementioned bodies were to be burned (Lev 4:12, 6:11, 16:27) and, most strikingly, where God is to be sought by the one who would encounter him (Exod 33:1–7, where the tent of meeting is removed from the camp on account of the people’s sinfulness to a place ἐξω τῆς παρεμβολῆς).⁶⁶ This last text resonates closely with the movement for which the author is calling, since it is by moving toward Jesus that they move forward toward their heavenly destination, the “true” tent of God’s heavenly Holy of Holies. The intertextual ambiguity of the spaces ἐξω τῆς

66. Attridge (*Hebrews*, 399 n. 119) finds this resonance to be “of marginal significance,” which is surprising in light of its reinforcement of the movement for which the author calls and the colors in which he depicts it. Thompson (*Beginnings*, 147–50) more appropriately appreciates and develops the resonance; see also my *Perseverance*, 500–502.

παρεμβολῆς resolves the dissonance between the Christians' experience and hope: as they continue to move into places that bring them reproach and marginalization, they also move into the places where their hope will be realized.

In Heb 13:15–16, the author exhorts the audience to respond to Jesus' work of consecration by taking up the work of priests, offering "sacrifices" with which God will be "well pleased." The first kind of sacrificial rite is the "sacrifice of praise," recontextualizing four words from LXX Ps 49:14 (ἀναφέρωμεν θυσίαν αἰνέσεως διὰ παντὸς τῷ θεῷ, Heb 13:15; θύσον τῷ θεῷ θυσίαν αἰνέσεως, LXX Ps 49:14), a text that already moves in the direction of the "rationalization of sacrifices" embraced so fully by NT authors.⁶⁷ Within this emerging tradition, praise of God's name was even celebrated as "more acceptable" than animal sacrifices (αἰνέσω τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ θεοῦ . . . ἀρέσει τῷ θεῷ ὑπὲρ μόσχον νέον, LXX Ps 69:31–32). Praise is defined here as the "fruit of lips (καρπὸν χειλέων) confessing God's name," recontextualizing several words from Hos 14:3 (καρπὸν χειλέων ἡμῶν). The author identifies the "fruit of our lips" as the appropriate tribute to "give back to God" for the good things God sends. The author identifies public witness to one's connection with God and reception of good gifts from God as one component of the appropriate response of gratitude (Heb 12:28) that the addressees are to manifest—the very thing that the author understands to be at stake in their situation (see Heb 6:4–6; 10:24–25, 29). The translation of "thanksgiving offering" in LXX Lev 7:12 as θυσία αἰνέσεως 'sacrifice of praise' underscores the code of reciprocity undergirding this summons to priestly service.

The other sacrificial rites to which they are called involve acts of kindness and mutual support, the sharing of goods and extending of assistance, "for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (Heb 13:16). The author draws on the general import of many texts from the prophetic tradition criticizing animal sacrifices as a poor substitute for acts of justice and kindness (see Isa 1:10–16, Jer 14:11–12, Hos 8:13). The prophets call for just dealings instead of the ritual slaughter of animals (Amos 5:21–24), care for the poor and homeless instead of ascetic observances (Isa 58:3–9), and watchful care for the disenfranchised, which may lead to the ritual sacrifices' again becoming acceptable (Isa 1:11–17). Early Christian leaders, beginning with Jesus, located themselves firmly within this stream of prophetic critique of priestly practice, which also legitimated their increasing separation from the temple cult and sacralized their acts of mutual support. The author of Hebrews' language most closely reflects Pauline teaching at this point (compare his sacrifices "well-pleasing to God" with Rom 12:1, where Paul proposes yielding one's life in service to God and other believers as a 'living and holy sacrifice, well pleasing to God' θυσίαν . . . εὐάρεσ-

67. In the preceding verse, God is quoted as rejecting animal sacrifice: "Surely I don't eat the meat of bulls or drink the blood of goats, do I?!" (LXX Ps 49:13), notably naming the animals that feature prominently in the Day of Atonement rites.

τον τῷ θεῷ; and with Phil 4:18, where Paul praises the Philippians' gift as an 'acceptable offering, well pleasing to God' *θυσίαν . . . εὐάρεστον τῷ θεῷ*). The rhetorical contribution of intertexture in Heb 13:15–16 is to sacralize the believers' continued confession of association with Jesus and continued manifestations of mutual support in the midst of an unsupportive society as the noble rites and priestly prerogatives for which they have been set apart by Jesus' sacrifice. These actions also manifest the "gratitude" that leads to worshipful service conducted 'in a manner well-pleasing to God' (*εὐαρέστως τῷ θεῷ*, Heb 12:28), realize the disciples' status under the new covenant, and maintain their forward momentum on their momentous journey into the Heavenly Holy of Holies.

Intercession for fellow Christians is a frequently promoted activity (Eph 6:18, 1 Thess 5:17, Jas 5:14). The author continues to call for priestly activity from the hearers as he requests their intercession with God on his behalf for a specific favor, namely, God's making of a way for him to return to be present with the congregation addressed in person (13:18–19). Similar requests for prayer occur in other letters from the Pauline team (Col 4:3, 1 Thess 5:25, 2 Thess 3:1). The last two of these are identical in wording, suggesting that the author of Hebrews continues a well-established tradition and even form. He returns the favor, as it were, by pronouncing a prayer-benediction upon the audience (Heb 13:20–21), imitating the practice of priests invoking God's blessings over the people (for example, Num 6:22–27). Again this practice continues Paul's own (Rom 15:13, 33; 2 Cor 13:13; 1 Thess 5:23; 2 Thess 3:16).

AN INTERTEXTUAL MAP OF PRIESTLY DISCOURSE IN HEBREWS

The foregoing exploration of intertexture reveals how rich this particular NT text is in regard to the weaving together of Jewish scriptural and early Christian traditions in the invention of priestly discourse. Traditions to which the author explicitly refers, drawing on specific and identifiable passages, are listed in bold type. Passages that contribute to the phrasing of Hebrews but are not explicitly recited or named appear in italics. Regular type marks traditions that conceivably stand behind the author's invention of particular verses but where the author neither directs the audience's attention to a text beyond the discourse he creates nor recontextualizes strings of words that might trigger that connection for the attentive hearer.

1. **Abel's sacrifice and its effects (Gen 4:4–10; Heb 11:4, 12:24)**
2. **Melchizedek and Abraham (Gen 14:17–20; Heb 7:1–10)**
3. **Abraham's (near) sacrifice of Isaac (Gen 22; Heb 11:18)**
4. **Isaac's blessing of Jacob and Esau (Gen 27:27–29, 38–40; Heb 11:20)**
5. **Jacob's blessing of Joseph's sons (Gen 47:31, 48:15–20; Heb 11:21)**
6. *Moses mediates "the things pertaining to God" (Exod 4:16; also 18:19; Heb 2:17, 5:1)*

7. **Moses celebrates the Passover sacrifice** (Exod 12:21–23; Heb 11:28)
8. **Boundaries limiting the approach to God at Mount Sinai** (Exod 19:12–13; Heb 12:18–21)
9. **Moses ratifies the first covenant with sacrifice** (Exod 24:3–8, 40:9; Heb 9:18–22)
10. **The earthly sanctuary is a copy of the heavenly reality** (Exod 25:40 [as interpreted in 1 En. 14:10–20, Wis 9:8]; Heb 8:5, 9:23)
11. **The two-chambered layout of the sanctuary** (Exod 25–26, especially 26:31–35; Heb 9:1–10)
12. **Aaron and his line appointed as priests** (Exod 28:1; Heb 5:4)
13. *Aaron and his sons are “perfected” (ordained; Exod 29:9, 29, 33, 35; Heb 5:9, etc.)*
14. **The daily sacrifices performed by the priests** (Exod 29:38–39 and intertestamental traditions about the role of the grain offering as a sin offering for the priests; Heb 7:27)
15. *God as “the one sanctifying” (Exod 31:13; Heb 2:11)*
16. **Levites holding the priesthood forever** (Exod 40:15; compare with other traditions connecting Levi with the honor of priestly service, such as Exod 32:28–29; Heb 7:24)
17. *Scarlet wool and hyssop as ritual elements (Lev 14:4; also Num 19:6; Heb 9:19)*
18. **Day of Atonement rites (Lev 16)**
 - 18a. **Entering “inside the curtain” on this day only** (Lev 16:2, 12, 15; Heb 6:19)
 - 18b. **High Priest washing his body with water** (Lev 16:4; Heb 10:22)
 - 18c. **High Priest offering sacrifices first for his own sins** (Lev 9:7; 16:6, 15–16; Heb 5:3, 7:27)
 - 18d. **The blood of a bull and goat atones for the sanctuary in regard to the sins of the people** (Lev 16:14–16 [cf. Lev 17:11]; Heb 9:22, 13:11)
 - 18e. **The bodies of the bull and the goat are burned “outside the camp”** (Lev 16:27; leading to other resonances with activities “outside the camp,” especially meeting God; Exod 33:1–7; Heb 13:11–12)
 - 18f. **The rite is annual** (Lev 16:34; Heb 10:1, 3)
19. **Discussions about who has the right to eat what portions of what sacrifices** (e.g., Lev 24; Heb 13:10)
20. **Sacrifice for bringing sins to remembrance** (Num 5:11–15; Heb 10:3)
21. **Moses “faithful over God’s whole house”** (Num 12:7; Heb 3:2, 5)
22. **Sinning willfully and the impossibility of atonement** (Num 15:22–31; Heb 10:26)
23. **Levites commanded to accept tithes from their fellow-Israelites** (Num 18:21; Heb 7:5)
24. *The rite of the red heifer: scarlet material, hyssop, ashes of a cow* (Num 19:6, 9, 17; Heb 9:13–14, 18–19)

25. *Balaam's epithet for Israel: "tents which the Lord pitched"* (Num 24:6; Heb 8:2)
26. **Moses confesses his fear and trembling (Deut 9:19; Heb 12:21)**
27. **Levitical priests "stand ministering" (Deut 10:8, 17:12, etc.; Heb 10:11)**
28. *Warning about the bitter root springing up among the people (Deut 29:17; Heb 12:15)*
29. *God will appoint a faithful priest and give him a faithful house (1 Sam 2:35; Heb 2:17, 3:3–4)*
30. **God rejects animal sacrifices and prepares a "body" (Ps 40:6–8; Heb 10:5–10)**
31. *God accepts the "sacrifice of praise" (Ps 49:14; cf. LXX Lev 7:12 representing the "thank offering" as a "sacrifice of praise"; more pleasing to God than animal sacrifices: Ps 69:30–31; Heb 13:15)*
32. **Angels serve as God's ministers (Ps 104:4 [see Jub. 30:13, 31:14; T. Levi 3:5–6]; Heb 1:7, 14)**
33. **God appoints a "priest forever after the order of Melchizedek" (Ps 110:4; Heb 5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:11, 17, 21)**
34. *Job cries out for God to make purification for his sins (Job 7:21; Heb 1:3)*
35. *God rejects "the blood of bulls and goats" (Isa 1:11; Heb 10:4), preferring acts of justice and compassion (Isa 1:10–16, etc.; Heb 13:16)*
36. *Moab "enters into the handmade" things (Isa 16:12; Heb 9:24)*
37. *God's servant "bears the sins of many" (Isa 53:12; Heb 9:28)*
38. *God's real dwelling is not a sacred space "made by hands" (Isa 66:1–2?, Mark 14:58, Acts 7:48–50, Heb 9:24)*
39. **God promises a new covenant under which sins will no longer be remembered (Jer 31:31–34; Heb 8:7–13, 10:15–18)**
40. *Hosea urges Israel to return to the Lord and offer "the fruit of the lips" (Hos 14:3; Heb 13:15)*
41. *Jesus is tempted (Matt 4:1–13//Luke 4:1–13; Heb 2:18, 4:15)*
42. *Christians ingest the body and blood of their unique sacrificial victim (1 Cor 11:24–27, Matt 26:26–28; Heb 13:10)*
43. *Christians offer sacrifices "well-pleasing to God" (Rom 12:1, Phil 4:18; Heb 13:15–16)*
44. *Christian leaders in the Pauline circle ask for prayer (Col 4:3, 1 Thess 5:25, 2 Thess 3:1; Heb 13:18–19)*
45. *Christian leaders in the Pauline circle bestow blessings (Rom 15:13, 33; 2 Cor 13:13; 1 Thess 5:23; 2 Thess 3:16; Heb 13:20–21)*

While Greco-Roman philosophical influence is rather strong in passages of Hebrews evocative of other rhetorolects (for example, "wisdom discourse" in Heb 5:11–14; 6:7–8; 12:1–3, 5–11),⁶⁸ the author draws solely

68. See Attridge, *Hebrews*, ad loc.; deSilva, *Perseverance*, 211–12, 230–31, 361–64, 426–28, 449–53; N. Clayton Croy, *Endurance in Suffering: Hebrews 12.1–13 in Its Rhetorical, Religious, and Philosophical Context* (SNTSMS 98; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

on the Jewish Scriptures and Christian cultural knowledge in the invention of priestly discourse.⁶⁹ As a member of a monotheistic culture that has consistently contrasted its practice of “true” piety and genuine religious observances with the empty religious practices of their neighbors, the author appears not to have found the idolatrous rites of the Gentiles to have anything worthwhile to contribute to the invention of the rites performed by the priest “after the order of Melchizedek.” The author happily learned much from Greco-Roman moral exhortation but not much about interaction with the One God and the mediation of *this* God’s favor.

Hebrews takes in a broad sampling of priestly discourse from the Jewish Scriptures, especially from Exodus and Leviticus. The author is, however, clearly reconfiguring the priestly story. For example, he carefully avoids explicit reference to traditions that posit an “everlasting” priesthood for the Levitical line, such as the pronouncement that Aaron and his descendants would hold ‘the anointing of priesthood forever throughout their generations’ (χρῖσμα ἱερατείας εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα εἰς τὰς γενεὰς αὐτῶν, Exod 40:15). It may be significant that Jer 33:18–22, where God declares the Levitical line to be as unending as the cycle of day and night, is lacking in the Greek version (the text tradition upon which the author leans most heavily), whether it was unknown to the author or just conveniently invisible in his Greek-speaking audience’s Bible. The passage from Jeremiah would be more problematic than Exod 40:15 because it would postdate the oracle announcing a new covenant (Jer 31:31–34), which he cites as evidence for the new order of priesthood replacing Levi’s line. Also significant is the author’s complete silence regarding Phinehas and God’s gift of the διαθήκη ἱερατείας αἰωνία to him. This is surely strategic in an environment in which Phinehas is so widely celebrated for this very fact (1 Macc 2:54, Sir 45:7, Ps 106:30–31; cf. 4 Macc 18:12).

The author shifts the center of gravity in the priestly story, giving disproportionately far more weight to Melchizedek’s priesthood than Melchizedek enjoys in the Jewish Scriptures. Melchizedek appears in 5 verses in the Hebrew Bible (Gen 14:17–20, Ps 110:4). He receives more attention during the Second Temple Period, of course, with the Qumran community finding a cosmic role for him (11QMelch) and Ps 110’s possible use to legitimate the Hasmonean dynasty of priest-kings (see 1 Macc 14:41, which names Simon ἀρχιερεῦα εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα),⁷⁰ but Melchizedek remains on the

69. J. W. Thompson has shown that the author would have a natural ally in Greco-Roman philosophical and Hellenistic Jewish critiques of sacrificial cult (*Beginnings*, 103–15; see also Valentin Nikiprowetzky, “La Spiritualisation des sacrifices et le culte sacrificiel au Temple de Jérusalem chez Philon d’Alexandrie,” *Sem* 17 [1967]: 97–116, especially 98–99), but the author does not draw on these resources in the invention of priestly discourse in the same way that, for example, he draws on a common Greco-Roman maxim on the topic of education in the invention of wisdom discourse in Heb 12:5–11 (see especially the expanded paraphrase of Isocrates’ famous proverb in Heb 12:11; deSilva, *Perseverance*, 452–53).

70. See Attridge (*Hebrews*, 97) and see also Hay (*Glory at the Right Hand*, 19–20) for literature on the possible use of Ps 110 by the Hasmonean dynasty. The question of the psalm’s actual date is moot for this point, which requires only its *availability* for use during that period.

periphery of the priestly story. The author of Hebrews gives 15 verses to Melchizedek and his significance (5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:1–4, 6–10, 11, 15, 17). Moreover, when Melchizedek's priesthood is contrasted with the Levitical priesthood, both are given equal space. Attention is focused on Melchizedek as if his order is of comparable importance within the tradition of the mediation of God's favor with the Levitical priests.

The shift of gravity aids the author's argumentative goal, namely, promoting Jesus' high priesthood as more significant—"heavier"—than the ministry of the "other" order of priesthood. Psalm 110:4 is of decisive importance for the author's reconfiguration of the priestly story. The order of Melchizedek, which preceded and commanded greater dignity than the order of Levi, will have a successor whose priesthood will be "forever" and yield to no successor. The link between Melchizedek and Jesus accomplishes within priestly discourse what the link between Abraham and Jesus (as "seed") accomplished within prophetic discourse in Gal 3:15–29—the precursor and the successor bracket off the intervening vehicles for regulating the divine-human relationship (the Torah, the Levitical priesthood) and establish both *termini* for those vehicles. This priestly story, then, emphasizes not the continuity of the Levitical line but the discontinuity that resulted from the intrusion of the Levitical line, an intrusion that was resolved when the "priest after the order of Melchizedek" was appointed.⁷¹

The author allies himself with prophetic traditions (including the Psalms) that criticize the performances of the Levitical cultus. Oracles intended to revitalize the practice of the cult are now cited as explicit rejections by God of the Levitical cult. Oracles heard originally to refocus cult participants on works of justice and kindness or to name "supplements" to the Levitical priestly activity (like the Israelite king, the "priest after the order of Melchizedek") are now interpreted as divine pronouncements instituting a new priestly staff and a new system of rites. This merges the priestly story into the contemporary experience of the author and audience: their sect founder is the new, eternal priest; they are in fact inducted into priestly service, performing the proper rites (through witness, association, and acts of mutual support), offering intercession (praying for one another with the confidence of God's household), pronouncing benedictions, and awaiting their own entrance into God's Holy of Holies—where the priestly story and the apocalyptic story merge together in a single consummation.

HEBREWS AND ARGUMENTATION WITHIN PRIESTLY DISCOURSE

The foregoing study of Hebrews allows several suggestions concerning the inner "logic" of priestly discourse, which should be confirmed, refined, or

71. Though attention is not explicitly focused on Samuel, it is not surprising to find the author turning to the story of Samuel's calling, since it provides an example of God's initiative in bringing one line of priests to an end and instituting a new line (there, two distinct lines within the tribe of Levi).

discarded as representative of the idiosyncratic interests and methods of the author of Hebrews when set alongside the conclusions drawn from other texts. One fundamental presupposition within priestly discourse in Hebrews is that initiative remains with the Deity to establish the space, name the priestly agents, determine what sacrifices are acceptable, and decide what benefits will be offered. While the author of Hebrews exploits this logic in his appeal to Ps 110:4 and its terminal significance for the Levitical priests, he does not invent it. It was inherent already in the appointment of Aaron in Exod 28 and was provided narrative demonstration in Dathan, Abiram, and Korah's destruction in Num 16 and Aaron's budding rod in Num 17. First Maccabees provides corroborative evidence, "citing" a public decree in which Simon is named ἀρχιερέα εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα (possibly recontextualizing the phrase from Ps 110:4), a "forever" immediately qualified as lasting "until a trustworthy prophet should arise" to confirm or change this arrangement (1 Macc 14:41). Such an unwelcome proviso in a clearly pro-Maccabean document bears witness to this fundamental tenet of priestly discourse: it is God who appoints those who will mediate between God and the people. In light of this, any "forever" is potentially transitory, subject to termination at the pleasure of God. A text such as Exod 40:15 is not ultimately a problem for the priestly story woven by the author of Hebrews: if the Levites hold the priesthood forever until God says otherwise, he merely needs to find that "otherwise," whence the consistent importance of the chronological ordering of oracles in Hebrews, the later word revising the former word.

Priestly discourse is therefore intensely traditional. The author of Hebrews relies heavily on the authority of specific texts representing the expression of the divine will concerning mediation and builds his argumentation painstakingly upon these texts. The new order of priesthood must therefore also be appointed by God, and the author must find the authoritative text that stipulates this (whence the importance of the oft-recited Ps 110:4). It is a great bonus that this priestly line will prove to be more ancient than the Levitical priesthood, with the result that the Aaronid priests rather than Jesus will appear to be the innovation on established tradition. The former priesthood had sacrificial rites prescribed by God; the new must as well, and the author must find those in authoritative, traditional texts (whence the coup d'état of Ps 40:6–8).

The author interacts with intertexture much as a forensic orator examines legal documents, inferring which has the lasting force and superior jurisdiction. While this may not be distinctive to priestly discourse, it does appear to be important within priestly discourse, which is, after all, derived as a whole from the legal discourse of Torah. A point of distinction arises in that, while authority for "legal discourse" rests ultimately in the documents and their interpretation, authority for "priestly discourse" rests ultimately in the Deity, who determines how and how far human-kind may approach.

While the author is willing to discard the priestly rites of the first covenant, these remain authoritative templates for the new covenant rites. Their liturgies are archetypal, as are the arrangements of sacred space and the process of selecting the “staff.” The new rites, sacred spaces, and priestly staff *must* reenact those types, whence the argumentative uses of the topic of “necessity” in Heb 8:3 and 9:23. In the former, the unstated conviction that the new priest must in some sense reenact the rites of the old priests solely accounts for the “necessity.” In the latter, the archetypal cleansing of the earthly *sancta* from defilement necessitates that the heavenly sanctuary be cleansed as well. Rather than speak about prophecy and fulfillment, in Hebrews’ priestly discourse the relationship between Jesus’ priestly ministry and the Levitical priests’ ministry is better described in terms of reenactment, as is appropriate for ritual (in which the liturgical movements and acts have a deeply traditional authority of their own). The inner logic of ritual, according to which the repetition of *dromena* and *legomena* have assured and predictable consequences, make priestly discourse in Hebrews—even when it is most innovative—also inherently conservative.

Finally, argumentation in priestly discourse appears to be built upon the logic of social codes of reciprocity and of approaching social superiors for needed benefits.⁷² The latter activity usually involves brokers, and priests were universally regarded as the mediators who knew how to give laity access to the Divine Patron and to regulate that relationship to the worshipers’ advantage. The persistence of this basic social logic, learned from observing its codes at work in ten thousand social interactions from childhood to maturity, may help explain the ante-Nicene church’s speedy relinquishing of their equal access to God in favor of a return to a caste of priestly mediators.

72. On this point, see my *Despising Shame*, 226–44.