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ABSTRACT

ΚΑΤΑΠΑΥΣΙΣ AND ΣΑΒΒΑΤΙΣΜΟΣ IN HEBREWS 4

by

Erhard H. Gallos

Advisor: Robert M. Johnston

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: ΚΑΤΑΠΑΥΣΙΣ AND ΣΑΒΒΑΤΙΣΜΟΣ IN HEBREWS 4

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Date completed: April 2011

Problem

Enthusiasm for the subject has not resulted in a general consensus regarding the meaning of “rest” in Heb 4. The dissertation studies the meaning of *katapausis* and *sabbatismos* in Heb 4 together with its relation to the neglected gatherings in Heb 10.

Method

The study consists of an analysis of those passages in which the rest motif is found explicitly (Heb 3-4) as well as the unit (Heb 10) which exhibits cohesion to the rest motif in Heb 4, giving special attention to the use of the term *katapausis* in the Septuagint, *sabbatismos* in Christian and non-Christian literature, and *episyntagōgē* in the patristic literature. The dissertation is both exegetical and theological in nature.

Results

Chapter 1 deals with the introduction of the topic, stating the problem of no consensus with regard to the meaning of “rest” in Heb 3-4, and then describing the purpose and justification of the research.

Chapter 2 is dedicated to the examination of the audience of Hebrews. Pursuing the profile of the audience within the book itself, the evidence seems to support a mixed ethnic background. The author calls the ancestors “fathers” rather than “our fathers” (1:1). The epistle never mentions Jews or Christians, the Temple, or circumcision, never makes negative references to Jews or Gentiles, and refrains from divisive references to Jews or Gentiles. The group to which the audience is supposed to belong is the “people of God” (4:9).

Chapter 3 analyzes the structural relationship between Heb 4 and 10. Hebrews 4:11-16 and 10:19-25 display the most striking use of *inclusio* in Hebrews. Semantic threads in one discourse are woven with the same or related lexical items in the other, indicating a relationship between these passages. Besides formal and semantic correspondence, these two passages present also syntactical cohesion. Both furnish three hortatory subjunctives in close proximity. Finally, both units share the same genre. That means the units exhibit cohesion of form and function, and also a continuity of topic and content. The exhortation of a Sabbath observance in Heb 4 is shown to be complementary to the neglecting of the gathering in Heb 10.

Chapter 4 presents findings with regard to the term *katapausis* in the LXX where it refers to (1) the Promised Land (Deut 12:9); (2) the temple as the habitation desired by God (Ps 132:14); and finally (3) the Sabbath rest (Exod 35:2; 2 Macc 15:1). In Heb 3, a

midrash on Ps 94, the rest the Exodus generation failed to enter was the Promised Land. The formal parallelism between the *katapausis* of Heb 4:6 and the *sabbatismos* of 4:9 suggests that *sabbatismos* is meant to define more precisely the character of the rest. Etymologically *sabbatismos* derives from *sabbatizein* in much the same way that *baptismos* derives from *baptizein*. *Sabbatismos* in non-Christian as well as Christian literature is always used literally meaning Sabbath observance, although sometimes pejoratively, with the exception of Origen who uses the term twice figuratively. Hebrews 4:10 describes how the *sabbatismos* will become possible. The one entering it rested (aorist) from his works just as God rested from his on the first Sabbath in the primeval history of the world. The comparative conjunction defines clearly who is to be imitated when one enters the rest.

Chapter 5 analyzes Heb 10:19-25. The verb “forsake” (v. 25) implies negative connotations with dire results. Therefore the gathering must be more than just a social gathering. Verse 26 speaks about willful sinning if one neglects the gathering. The willful sin is defined in Num 15:30-36 and exemplified by the person who willfully neglected the Sabbath observance by picking up sticks on the Sabbath. The rest of the warning passage in Heb 10:26-31 also assumes the background of the person who willfully desecrated the Sabbath (no sacrifice available; two or three witnesses; nullifying the Law of Moses; and death without compassion). In view of these reasons, the gathering in Heb 10:25 seems most likely to be a Sabbath gathering. Assuming Num 15 as an intertext helps to foreground the coherent flow of Heb 10:19-25.

Chapter 6 summarizes the findings.

Conclusion

The audience of Hebrews does not relapse back into Judaism, but faces a waning commitment to the community's confessed faith. Since Heb 4:11-16 and Heb 10:19-25 share similar vocabulary, syntax, and genre one can assume that they share also a similar theme. The Sabbath observance remains for the people of God (4:9) and an invitation is extended to "rest" the way God rested from all his works on the seventh-day Sabbath after the six-day creation. Hebrews 10:25-26 seems to talk about an intentional neglect of the church gathering that is best explained by a Sabbath gathering since the background to the willful sin is a rebellious neglect of the Sabbath. Such continuing, willful, intentional neglect equates with trampling underfoot the Son of God (10:29). This is the reason why the author strikes such a serious tone in his elaboration of the matter.

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A Dissertation
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by
Erhard H. Gallos

April 2011

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
<i>AJT</i>	<i>Asian Journal of Theology</i>
ALGHJ	Arbeiten zur Literatur und Geschichte des hellenistischen Judentums
<i>ANF</i>	<i>Ante-Nicene Fathers</i>
AUMS	Andrews University Monograph Studies
<i>AUSS</i>	<i>Andrews University Seminary Studies</i>
BBB	Bonner biblische Beiträge
BFCT	Beiträge zur Förderung christlicher Theologie
BGBE	Beiträge zur Geschichte der biblischen Exegese
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
BIS	Biblical Interpretation Series
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BKAT	Biblicher Kommentar, Altes Testament. Edited by M. Noth and H. Wolff
<i>BN</i>	<i>Biblische Notizen</i>
<i>BSac</i>	<i>Bibliotheca sacra</i>
<i>BU</i>	<i>Biblische Untersuchungen</i>
<i>BZ</i>	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für neutestamentliche Wissenschaft

<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
<i>CJT</i>	<i>Canadian Journal of Theology</i>
ConBNT	Coniectanea Biblica: New Testament Series
CPNIVC	The College Press NIV Commentary
<i>Did</i>	<i>Didaskalia</i>
<i>DLNT</i>	<i>Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Development</i>
<i>EBib</i>	<i>Etudes bibliques</i>
EBS	Encountering Biblical Studies
<i>EDNT</i>	<i>Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament.</i>
EKKNT	Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
<i>ELS</i>	<i>Exploration in Language Study</i>
<i>Exp</i>	<i>Expositor</i>
<i>ExpTim</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
FC	Fathers of the Church. Washington, D.C., 1947—
<i>FN</i>	<i>Filologia Neotestamentaria</i>
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
<i>GTJ</i>	<i>Grace Theological Journal</i>
Hermeneia	Hermeneia—A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible
<i>HeyJ</i>	<i>Heythrop Journal</i>
HNT	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament

HNTC	Harper's New Testament Commentaries
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
IUSHTL	Indiana University Studies in the History and Theory of Linguistics
JAL	Jewish Apocalyptic Literature Series
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JE</i>	<i>The Jewish Encyclopedia</i> . Edited by I. Singer. 12 vols. New York, 1925
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>JJS</i>	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series
<i>JSP</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha</i>
JSPSup	Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha: Supplement Series
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
KAT	Kommentar zum Alten Testament
KEK	Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament (Meyer-Kommentar)
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LD	Lectio divina

LEC	Library of Early Christianity
LNTS	Library of New Testament Studies
MSS	Manuscripts
MTS	Marburger Theologische Studien
NAC	New American Commentary
NEchtB	Neue Echter Bibel
<i>Neot</i>	<i>Neotestamentica</i>
NHS	Nag Hammadi Studies
NHSS	The Nature of Human Society Series
<i>NIB</i>	<i>The New Interpreter's Bible</i>
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NICOT	New International Commentary of the Old Testament
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NovTSup	Novum Testamentum Supplements
<i>NRTh</i>	<i>La nouvelle revue théologique</i>
NTL	New Testament Library
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
NTTS	New Testament Tools and Studies
OECT	Oxford Early Christian Texts. Edited by H. Chadwick. Oxford, 1970—
OTL	Old Testament Library
<i>OTP</i>	<i>Old Testament Pseudepigrapha</i> . Edited by J. H. Charlesworth. 2 vols. New York, 1983

PG	Patrologia graeca [=Patrologiae cursus completus: Series graeca]. Edited by J.-P. Migne, 162 vols. Paris, 1857-1886
PVTG	Pseudepigrapha Veteris Testamenti Graece
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue biblique</i>
<i>RDT</i>	<i>Revue Diocésaine de Tournai</i>
<i>ResQ</i>	<i>Restoration Quarterly</i>
<i>RevExp</i>	<i>Review and Expositor</i>
<i>RevQ</i>	<i>Revue de Qumran</i>
<i>RevScRel</i>	<i>Revue des sciences religieuses</i>
<i>RGG</i>	<i>Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart</i> . Edited by K. Gallig. 7 vols. 3d ed. Tübingen, 1957-1965
<i>RSR</i>	<i>Recherches de science religieuse</i>
SBG	Studies in Biblical Greek
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLSCS	Society of Biblical Literature Septuagint and Cognate Studies
<i>SBLSP</i>	<i>Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers</i>
<i>ScEs</i>	<i>Science et esprit</i>
ScrHier	Scripta hierosolymitana
<i>SEÅ</i>	<i>Svensk exegetisk årsbok</i>
SFEG	Schriften der Finnischen Exegetischen Gesellschaft
SJLA	Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity
SNT	Studien zum Neuen Testament

SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SNTS	Society for New Testament Studies
SNTSU	Studien zum Neuen Testament und seiner Umwelt
<i>SPhilo</i>	<i>Studia philonica</i>
StPB	Studia post-biblica
<i>Str-B</i>	Strack, H. L., and P. Billerbeck. <i>Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch</i> . 6 vols. Munich, 1922-1961
StudNeot	Studia neotestamentica
<i>SubBi</i>	<i>Subsidai biblica</i>
SVTP	Studia in Veteris Testamenti pseudepigraphica
<i>SwJT</i>	<i>Southwestern Journal of Theology</i>
TB	Theologische Bücherei: Neudrucke und Berichte aus dem 20. Jahrhundert
<i>TDNT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> . Edited by G. Kittle and G. Friedrich. Translated by G. W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids, 1964-1976
THB	Theologisch-homiletisches Bibelwerk
THKNT	Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament
<i>TJ</i>	<i>Trinity Journal</i>
<i>TLNY</i>	<i>Theological Lexicon of the New Testament</i> . C. Spicq. Translated and edited by J. D. Ernest. 3 vols. Peabody, Mass., 1994
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
<i>TRu</i>	<i>Theologische Rundschau</i>
TU	Texte und Untersuchungen

UTB	Uni-Taschenbücher
<i>VD</i>	<i>Verbum domini</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WC	Westminster Commentaries
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
<i>WTJ</i>	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
YJS	Yale Judaica Series
<i>ZNW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche</i>

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In the book of Hebrews the concept of “rest” is the theme of chs. 3-4. The term for “rest” most often used is the verb καταπαύω (Heb 4:4, 8, 10) and its corresponding noun κατάπαυσις (Heb 3:11, 18; 4:1, 3, 5, 10, 11). Only once in these chapters does the term σαββατισμός appear (Heb 4:9).¹ Although the concept of “rest” has been important in the teaching of the church through the centuries,² after a period of silence, during the

¹ The word σαββατισμός occurs nowhere in Greek literature prior to Hebrews, prompting the suggestion that the author of Hebrews coined the term. See William L. Lane, *Hebrews 1-8* (WBC, ed. Ralph P. Martin, no. 47a; Dallas, Tex.: Word Books, 1991), 101; George H. Guthrie, *Hebrews* (The NIV Application Commentary; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1998), 154; James Moffatt, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (ICC, ed. Alfred Plummer; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1952), 53; Marie E. Isaacs, *Sacred Space: An Approach to the Theology of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (JSNTSS 73; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 84; Ceslas Spicq, *L'Épître aux Hébreux: II Commentaire* (EtBib; Paris: J. Gabalda, 1953), 83. Against σαββατισμός having been coined by the author is the fact that the noun occurs in the non-Christian writing of Plutarch (ca. A.D. 50-120). Plutarch uses the noun in a list of superstitious practices (cf. Plutarch *De Superstitione* 3, in *Moralia* 2. 166a). It also appears several times in later Christian literature independently of Hebrews. Cf. Justin *Dialogue with Trypho* 23; *Martyrium Petri et Pauli* 1; *Constitutiones Apostolorum* 2.36.2; Epiphanius *Pan* 30.2.2; all discussed by Otfried Hofius, *Katapausis. Die Vorstellung vom endzeitlichen Ruheort im Hebräerbrief* (WUNT, ed. Joachim Jeremias and Otto Michel, no. 11; Tübingen: Mohr, 1970), 103-6. Other appearances are found in Origen *Contra Celsum* 5.59; *Commentarii in Evangelium Joannis* 2.33.198; *De Oratione* 27.16; *Selecta in Exodum* 12.289; *Excerpta in Psalmos* 17.144.

² The “rest” motif was used extensively throughout the early church (e.g., *Die Oden Salomos* 11.12, 23; *Epistle of Barnabas* 15; *2 Clement* 5.5; Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 6.14, 108; 7.11.68). For a discussion of these and other examples in the

first part of the twentieth century³ it has again received considerable attention during recent decades.⁴ Unfortunately, enthusiasm for the subject has not resulted in a general consensus regarding the meaning of “rest” in Heb 3-4.⁵

One reason for this lack of consensus is the existence of competing

literature of the early church see Jon Laansma, *'I Will Give You Rest': The 'Rest' Motif in the New Testament with Special Reference to Mt 11 and Heb 3-4* (WUNT, ed. Martin Hengel and Otfried Hofius, no. 98; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 129-45; Judith Hoch Wray, *Rest as a Theological Metaphor in the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Gospel of Truth: Early Christian Homiletics of Rest* (SBL, ed. Michael V. Fox and E. Elizabeth Johnson, no. 166; Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1998), 25-32; Ernst Bammel, "Rest and Rule," *VC* 23 (1969): 88-90.

³ One considerable exception is Gerhard von Rad, "There Remains Still a Rest for the People of God: An Investigation of a Biblical Conception," in *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1933), 94-102.

⁴ Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., "Promise Theme and the Theology of Rest," *BSac* 130 (1973): 135-50; David D. Darnell, "Rebellion, Rest, and the Word of God: An Exegetical Study of Hebrews 3:1-4:13" (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 1974); A. T. Lincoln, "Sabbath, Rest, and Eschatology in the New Testament," in *From Sabbath to Lord's Day: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Investigation* (ed. D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1982), 197-220; Samuele Bacchiocchi, *Divine Rest for Human Restlessness* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University, 1988); Herman A. Lombard, "Katápausis in the Letter to the Hebrews," *Neot* 5 (1971): 60-71; Harold W. Attridge, "Let Us Strive to Enter That Rest": The Logic of Hebrews 4:1-11," *HTR* 73 (1980): 279-88; Thomas Kem Oberholtzer, "The Kingdom Rest in Hebrews 3:1-4:13," *BSac* 145 (1988): 185-96; John Brand, "Sabbath-Rest, Worship, and the Epistle to the Hebrews Celebrating the Rule of Yaweh," *Did* (1990): 3-13; Khiok-Khng Yeo, "The Meaning and Usage of the Theology of "Rest" (Καταπαυσις and Σαββατισμος) in Hebrews 3:7-4:13," *AJT* 5 (1991): 2-33; David E. Garland, "The Renewal of the Promise of Rest: A Canonical Reading of Hebrews 3:7-4:13," in *Reclaiming the Prophetic Mantle: Preaching the Old Testament Faithfully*, ed. George L. Klein (Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 203-21; Peter E. Enns, "Creation and Re-Creation: Psalm 95 and Its Interpretation in Hebrews 3:1-4:13," *WTJ* 55 (1993): 255-80; Robert Van Kooten, "Guarding the Entrance to the Place of Rest: Hebrews 4:12-13," *Kerux* 11 (1996): 29-33; David A. DeSilva, "Entering God's Rest: Eschatology and the Socio-Rhetorical Strategy of Hebrews," *TJ* (2000): 25-43.

⁵ Some of the debated issues include whether “rest” is best understood as a place or a state, a present reality or future promise, the heavenly temple, or an earthly Sabbath

understandings of the religio-historical provenance of “rest.”⁶ “Entry into the rest” has thus been seen in terms of political eschatology, as the liberation of the new Israel from foreign oppression,⁷ or in terms of other apocalyptic imagery, as entry into the eschatological temple,⁸ or in more metaphysical terms, as entry into the heavenly spiritual world,⁹ or the Gnostic Pleroma.¹⁰ As Attridge correctly remarks, the interpretations in terms of political eschatology or Gnosticism are forced and artificial¹¹ and both suffer

observance. For a survey and critique of the various views on the meaning of rest in Heb 3-4 see Laansma, *I Will Give You Rest*, 276-332.

⁶ Harold W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia, Pa.: Fortress Press, 1989), 128.

⁷ George Wesley Buchanan, *To the Hebrews* (AB, ed. William F. Albright and David N. Freedman; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1972), 9, 63-5, 71; George H. Lang, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (London: Paternoster Press, 1951), 73-5.

⁸ Hofius, *Katapausis*, 53-4.

⁹ James W. Thompson, *The Beginnings of Christian Philosophy: The Epistle to the Hebrews* (CBQMS, no. 13; Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1982), 99.

¹⁰ Ernst Käsemann, *Das Wandernde Gottesvolk: Eine Untersuchung zum Hebräerbrief* (4th ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961). Käsemann’s lead is followed by the published dissertation of Gerd Theissen, *Untersuchungen zum Hebräerbrief* (SNT, no. 2; Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1969), 127-8.

¹¹ Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 128. Loader describes Buchanan’s interpretation as “ganz abwegig.” William R. G. Loader, *Sohn und Hoherpriester: Eine Traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zur Christologie des Hebräerbriefes* (WMANT, no. 53; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1981), 52. Certain doctrinal systems (notably dispensationalism) insist upon a renewed rest in Canaan/Palestine and even a millennial kingdom of Christ centered in Jerusalem, but this is not a concept invoked by the author of Hebrews who, rather, calls attention consistently away from any such geographic and nationalistic conception of the believers’ destiny (Heb 11:10, 15; 13:14). He does not show interest in any inheritance in the material world. David Arthur DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle "to the Hebrews"* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W. B. Eerdmans, 2000), 159. Some of the main arguments against Gnosticism in Hebrews are the following: The readers are described as

from inadequate religio-historical constructs.¹² The interpretations of entering into the eschatological temple¹³ and the one of entering into the heavenly spiritual world have not

νωθοροί, which in Heb 5:11 might be understood as “sluggish,” or “insensitive”; yet there is no idea that one group of human beings might be by nature earthly, and another spiritual. The recognition that the devil “has the power of death” (2:14) falls short of radical dualism. The subordination of angels is affirmed, not in opposition to statements about their cosmic role, but in continuity with the traditional Jewish belief that angels were mediators in the giving of the Law (2:2). The bodies of Jesus (10:5) and of believers (10:22) are given positive significance. Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC, ed. I. Howard Marshall and W. Ward Gasque; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1993), 43-5. Concerning Käsemann, who argued that the notion of Heb 3:7-4:11 was that of a heavenly place of rest conceived according to the hebdomadal schema; such a place, the κατάπαυσις, formed the destination of the soul’s heavenly journey. Such a notion is foreign to the Old Testament, but was reminiscent of certain ideas of Philo (Laansma, *I Will Give You Rest*,’ 338). Moreover, the word σαββατισμός does not suggest that the κατάπαυσις is the “seventh aeon” (or even that it is “aeon-like”), whether that is construed gnostically or apocalyptically (Laansma, *I Will Give You Rest*,’ 277).

¹² For a detailed response to Käsemann see Hofius’s dissertation.

¹³ Laansma criticizes Hofius for reading into the “rest” of Heb 3-4 the identification of the heavenly temple based on 4 Ezra. Laansma says: “Just as the Gnostic and Philonic parallels should never have been taken as a license to align Heb 3-4 with those usages of the motif more than the language allows, so the same is true of apocalyptic parallels” (Laansma, *I Will Give You Rest*,’ 343). Hofius argues that the κατάπαυσις in Hebrews has as its referent the Most Holy Place of the heavenly temple (Hofius, *Katapausis*, 53). Neither *Jos. Asen.* nor *4 Ezra*—both receive special emphasis in Hofius—make a connection between the resting place and the temple. The *Midrash* on Ps 95 makes the connection, but it is a solitary instance and considerably later than Hebrews. Hofius bases this thesis on the metaphor of “entering in” the Most Holy Place of the heavenly temple (6:20; 10:19). However, this thesis bears a twofold problem. First, κατάπαυσις is not a technical term for the temple in Hebrews. Second, when the author speaks of entrance into a temple he is consistent in building a typology of priesthoods (Levitical vs. Jesus’) and their entrances (6:19, 20; 9:6-14; 13:11, 12). This pattern is broken in Heb 4:8, which recalls Joshua. If the author had been thinking in terms of the “entrance” theology of later passages (entrance into a temple) then the Old Testament counterpart to Jesus would not have been Joshua but naturally the Levitical high priest (Laansma, *I Will Give You Rest*,’ 315). Finally, Wray states, “We find nothing in Heb to verify any expectation of this author [*Auctor ad Hebraeos*] that the end-time activity of the people of God will be eternal praise around the throne,” as Hofius suggested (Wray,

remained undisputed either.¹⁴ There are a number of scholars who take the *crux interpretum*, the promised rest, to be spiritual bliss.¹⁵ Others say that the rest is the

Rest as a Theological Metaphor in the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Gospel of Truth, 82).

¹⁴ For a discussion on Philonic derivation see Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 45-8; Ronald Williamson, *Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews* (ALGHJ, ed. K. H. Rengstorff, no. 4; Leiden: Brill, 1970), 133, 494. It has to be pointed out that Philo calls the Sabbath which being translated 'rest' (ἀνάπαυσις) the "σάββατον θεοῦ" (Philo, *Cher.* 26.87). Interpreted by the principles of natural philosophy, God being the source of all energy can never rest in the sense of "inaction" (ibid.) because the whole universe is in motion even on the Sabbath. Such a rest, for Philo, is the appropriate attribute to God alone (ibid.). Though it is obvious that 'rest' as understood by Philo is different from 'rest' understood by the author of Hebrews since the audience is invited to join God's rest (Heb 4:10), this might be one of the so-called "undeniable parallels that suggests that Philo and our author are indebted to similar traditions of Greek-speaking and -thinking Judaism" (Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 29). Besides the fact that in the context of Heb 3:7-4:11 we have similarities between Hebrews and Philo such as: both describe the rest as God's, both look upon the rest desirable, both employ Gen 2:2 as proof text etc.—something due to the author's Jewish heritage (Williamson, *Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 556)—we also have striking differences. They employ Gen 2:2 quite differently, and Philo nowhere uses Ps 95, which was so important to Hebrews. Nor does Philo use in connection with the theme of rest the passages in Exodus to which Hebrews refers. There is in Philo no reference to Joshua and rest. In Hebrews no reference is made to Philo's peculiar interpretation of Noah, though Noah is mentioned in ch. 11 of the Epistle. For Philo, rest means something moral or intellectual, something that can be almost equated with virtue, or it can be thought of as the practice of philosophy βίος θεωρητικός. The word κατάπαυσις is not used at all by Philo, even in the section where he is commenting on Gen 2:2 but always invariably ἀνάπαυσις (ibid., 544). There is no number speculation in Hebrews (ibid., 556). There is no equation of rest and the metaphysical stability of the immaterial world, no assumption that humans return to the κατάπαυσις from which they emerged (Laansma, 'I Will Give You Rest,' 331). The picture of rest we get in Hebrews has far more in common with the Old Testament than with Philo (Williamson, *Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 557). Barrett affirms, "Between Philo and Hebrews there is no resemblance at all." C. K. Barrett, "The Eschatology of the Epistle to the Hebrews," in *The Background of the New Testament and Its Eschatology: Essays in Honour of C. H. Dodd* (ed. William David Davies and David Daube; Cambridge: University Press, 1956), 371.

¹⁵ Representatives of this group are F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition, and Notes* (NICNT, ed. F. F. Bruce; Grand Rapids, Mich.: W. B. Eerdmans, 1964), 77-9; Thomas Hewitt, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*

present Christian experience of peace.¹⁶ A third interpretation takes the rest of Heb 3:7-4:13 to anticipate the coming millennial kingdom age.¹⁷ A more adequate view would

(Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1960), 89; Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W. B. Eerdmans, 1977), 161-2; Homer Austin Kent Jr., *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1972), 86-7; Neil R. Lightfoot, *Jesus Christ Today: A Commentary on the Book of Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1976), 96-7; Brooke Foss Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: The Greek Text with Notes and Essays* (2nd ed; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1984; reprint, 1892), 98-9. Several factors support this position. First, the promise of entering the rest (Heb 4:1) implies that the blessing is a future one. Second, the heavenly estate described in Rev 14:13 refers to rest. Against this view speak the present tense of the verb εἰσερχόμεθα in 4:3, the aorist of καταπαύω (4:10), and the fact that Rev 14:13 uses a form of the verb ἀναπαύω and the subject of the verb are the dead.

¹⁶ Representatives of this group are W. H. Griffith Thomas, *Let Us Go On: The Secret of Christian Progress in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1944), 45-50; Clarence S. Roddy, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1962), 46-8; Charles C. Ryrie, *The Ryrie Study Bible: New American Standard Translation* (Chicago, Ill.: Moody, 1976), 1841. Support for this interpretation lies in the present tense of the verb εἰσερχόμεθα in 4:3, which implies a present experience of believers who walk with God. The second line of support is drawn by the assumption that Matt 11:28-30 parallels this passage. The third line of support is taken from typology. The shortcomings of this interpretation are pointed out by Stanley D. Toussaint, "The Eschatology of the Warning Passages in the Book of Hebrews," *GTJ* 3 (1982): 71-2. The present tense of εἰσερχόμεθα in 4:3 may well be a futuristic present such as one finds in Matt 17:11; John 14:3; and 1 Cor 16:5. The Lord's solicitation in Matt 11 is a call to rest, but does that prove that this is the meaning in Hebrews? Finally, the typology argument in Heb 4:10 fails too because if the peace of the Christian comes by ceasing from law-works, his strivings, his fleshly labors, then God's rest was also carnal and fleshly strivings.

¹⁷ Representatives of this viewpoint are Buchanan, *To the Hebrews*, 64-74; Kaiser, "Promise Theme and the Theology of Rest," 130-50; Lang, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 75-80; Toussaint, "The Eschatology of the Warning Passages in the Book of Hebrews," 72-4. Walter Kaiser championed this view in his 1973 article, and Toussaint builds on the work of Kaiser in his 1982 article promoting the same reading of "rest" as the millennial, terrestrial kingdom. Kaiser goes on to link Heb 9:15 and 11:9 (based on the appearance of the word "inheritance" in both) in an attempt to prove that the "promise of an eternal inheritance" is the same as "the firm possession of the land" (Kaiser, "Promise Theme and the Theology of Rest," 149.). Because of this focus on the "geographical land" and "firm possession of the land [Canaan]," Kaiser considers "final realization" of rest to be "that millennial reign of the world's new sabbath" (ibid.).

prove more defensible within the religious and philosophical framework provided by Hebrews itself. That is the aim of this work.

Problem

My research seeks to answer the following questions: What is the meaning of both κατάπαυσις and σαββατισμός in Heb 3:7-4:16? Is Heb 3-4 connected to other parts of the book of Hebrews¹⁸ that would illuminate the ambiguity of “rest” described in Heb

Toussaint sees in 4:8 another prophetic “day.” This for him is a period of time, namely the millennium (Toussaint, “The Eschatology of the Warning Passages in the Book of Hebrews,” 73). DeSilva forcefully rejects this view by pointing out that the author of Hebrews “calls attention consistently away from any such geographic and nationalistic conception of the believer’s destiny.” The author of Hebrews does not show interest in any inheritance in the material world (DeSilva, “Entering God’s Rest,” 34). At the same time DeSilva rejects what he calls a misunderstanding of the meaning of “Today.” He correctly points out that this new “Today” and every “today” is “the day for responding to God’s promise, to God’s voice, with trust and obedience.” Ibid., 30.

¹⁸ Research shows that Heb 3-4 has extensive verbal parallels to Heb 10:19-39. The common verbal links are: ἀδελφοί 10:19; 3:1; παρρησίαν 10:19; 3:6; 4:16; Ἰησοῦ 10:19; 4:14; ὁδὸν 10:20; 3:9; ἱερέα μέγαν 10:21, ἀρχιερέα 3:1; 4:14; προσερχώμεθα 10:22; 4:16; καρδίας 10:22; 3:8, 10; 4:7 (in 10 we have true and clean hearts; in 3 and 4 we have hardened and erring hearts); κατέχωμεν 10:23; 3:6-14; ὁμολογίαν 10:23; 3:1; 4:14; ἐλπίδος 10:23; 3:6; πιστὸς 10:23; 4:2, 3; ἐπαγγελία 10:23; 4:1; ἔργων 10:24; 3:9; 4:4, 10; ἡμέραν 10:25, 32; 3:13; 4:4, 7, 8; βλέπω 10:25; 3:12, 19; ἁμαρτανόντων 10:26; 3:13, 17; ἀπολείπεται 10:26; 4:6, 9; φοβερὰ 10:27, 31; 4:1; κατανοῶμεν 10:24; 3:1; ἐμπεσεῖν/πίπτω 10:31; 4:11. Conceptual and/or thematic links would be: ἐπὶ τὸν οἶκον 10:21; 3:6; τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ 10:29; 4:14; θεοῦ ζῶντος 10: 31; 3:12 (parallel to these, one could view the Ζῶν ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ in 4:12); παρακαλέω 10:25; 3:13 (in ch. 10 the encouragement is motivated by the “day” whereas in ch. 3 it is motivated by the “today”); the danger of apostasy 10:25; 3:12; 4:11 (these connections are seen by Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 283-96; Koester, *Hebrews*, 442-58; William L. Lane, *Hebrews 9-13* [vol. 47b, WBC, ed. Ralph P. Martin, Dallas, Tex.: Word Books, 1991], 285-94; Harold W. Attridge, “Paraenesis in a Homily [λογος παρακλησεως]: The Possible Location of, and Socialization in, the ‘Epistle to the Hebrews’,” *Semeia* 50 [1990]: 211-26).

4:1-11? If such connections exist,¹⁹ how extensive are they and to what degree do they illuminate Heb 3-4? From the perspective of the original addressees, what might have been potential threats, which the homilist addresses in order to help the audience? Despite the fact that connections of Heb 3-4 with Heb 10:19-39 and Heb 10:26-36 with Heb 6:4-12²⁰ have been acknowledged by many scholars,²¹ to my knowledge no detailed, systematic, and sustained work has been done to interpret the “rest/Sabbath rest” of Heb 3-4 as suggested above and in the light of the linguistic connections mentioned, nor has the socio-religious setting of the audience been employed in helping to connect these chapters.

Purpose

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine the meaning of “rest/Sabbath rest” in Heb 4:1-11. In this attempt, I will look beyond this chapter at the LXX background and analyze the evident verbal, conceptual, and/or thematic links with Heb 10:19-36. A close exegetical analysis of Heb 10:19-31 within the context is also required. The working hypothesis concerning Heb 10:25 is that the τὴν ἐπισυναγωγὴν (the gathering) refers to

¹⁹ This repetition of characteristic expressions is acknowledged by Albert Vanhoye, *La Structure Littéraire de l'“Épître aux Hébreux”* (2nd ed.; StudNeo 1; Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1976), 228-30, 56-7.

²⁰ The degree of parallelism between the two sections of Heb 6:4-12 and Heb 10:26-36 is displayed in a chart by Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, 296-7.

²¹ Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 283-96; Koester, *Hebrews*, 442-58; Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, 285-94, and others.

Sabbath gathering(s), neglected by the community the author of Hebrews addresses.²²

²² The following evidence is in favor of acknowledging that the issue of Sabbath observance is present in Heb 4 and seeing Heb 3-4 connected to Heb 10:19-39: (1) Etymologically ἐπισυναγωγή is “scarcely to be differentiated from συναγωγή” (Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* [ed. Frederick W. Danker, William Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich, 3rd ed.; Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 2000], 382); cf. 2 Macc 2:7, ἄγνωστος ὁ τόπος ἔσται ἕως ἂν συναγάγη ὁ θεὸς ἐπισυναγωγῆν τοῦ λαοῦ “The place shall remain unknown until God gathers his people together again”), but perhaps avoided as a Jewish technical term in this context (Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 528). (2) ἐπισυναγωγῆν (Heb 10:25) is understood as “the congregation gathered for worship” (W. Schrage, “ἐπισυναγωγῆν,” *TDNT* 7:841-842), “worshiping community” (Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 290), and “the act of gathering and the church itself” (Michel, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 348). (3) As far as patristic literature is concerned ἐπισυναγωγή is defined as “assembling,” “gathering of Christian congregations” (G. W. H. Lampe, ed., *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961], 536). Eusebius describes the favor the church enjoyed by all the governors and procurators before the persecution of his time. In this context he speaks of the multitudes of the ‘gatherings’ (τὰς μυριάνδρους ἐκείνας ἐπισυναγωγὰς) in every city, and the glorious concourses in the houses of prayer (Eusebius *Hist. eccl.*, 8.5.1). The “gatherings” are here closely associated with the “concourses in the houses of prayer” (ἐν τοῖς προσευκτηρίοις συνδρομάς). (4) Even ἐγκαταλείπω “is very common in the LXX, especially of abandoning God and his ways” (Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 528; cf. Deut 28:20; 31:16; 32:15,18; Judg 2:12,13,20; 10:6,10,13; 1 Sam 8:8; 12:10; 1 Kgs 19:10,14, etc.). In 1 Macc 1 the author describes how Antiochus Epiphanes, Son of King Antiochus, came to power and ruled heavy-handed over Israel. Antiochus Epiphanes was sending a collector of tribute to Israel who conquered the city of Jerusalem by deceit and forced the Jewish people to abandon their particular customs (νόμιμα). Some of the Jews sacrificed to idols, profaned the Sabbath, and defiled the sanctuary (1 Macc 1:42-52). In the passage mentioned, ἐγκαταλείπω is connected specifically with Jewish customs (among others the Sabbath). (5) Heb 10:26 is connected to vs. 25 by a γὰρ. Though omitted in P⁴⁶ and vg^{ms} it is confirmed by Ɱ, A, D, E, I, K, L, P, ψ which gives it a strong support. Besides that, many scholars (Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 292, and others) suggest an *inclusio* on the basis of “fear” from vv. 27 and 31, which leaves v. 26 connected to v. 25. Lane calls it an explanatory γὰρ which sustains an intimate relationship to the preceding admonition in v. 25 (Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, 290). (6) Ἐκουσίως (v. 26) means “willingly” (Bauer, 307), “deliberately” (RSV, NIV, REB). The concept of deliberate sin derives from Num 15:22-31 (so Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 292; Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 531; Koester, *Hebrews*, 451; Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, 292, and others). Immediately following the distinction between unintentional and deliberate sins, one can find the account of the man who picks up sticks on the Sabbath (Num 15:32-36). This intertextual evidence seems to support the idea that

Over all, a reading of the text will be proposed that shows it is consistent with the evidence provided within the book of Hebrews itself. Such a reading is possible and has the advantage that it does not rely on foreign concepts imported into the book, such as a rest in terms of political eschatology for resolving the problem.

Justification

This study will be significant for several reasons. First, there seem to be several unresolved issues in interpreting “rest/Sabbath rest” (Heb 4:1-11) in the current literature. Second, there is no scholarly consensus as to what the background of the warning (Heb 10:25) might have been.²³ Third, while the question is often asked about why some members of the community had stopped taking an active part in the meetings, the question regarding the time (when the meeting took place) is very seldom asked and

willful sin and the Sabbath are closely connected. (7) μετὰ τὸ λαβεῖν (v. 26 “after receiving”) “refers to the initial act of Christian enlightenment” (so Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 532). In other words, the audience at a certain point in time has become familiar with the Christian teaching (Heb 6:4). Among the basics or the word of the beginning of Christ (Heb 6:1) the audience has been enlightened with the importance of gathering together. (8) The phrase τὴν ἐπίγνωσιν τῆς ἀληθείας (v. 26 “the knowledge of truth”) resembles “conversion” in the Pastoral Epistles (1 Tim 2:4; 4:3; 2 Tim 2:25; 3:7) and an “intellectual element of faith” (Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 293). The compound term ἐπίγνωσις “has become almost a technical term for the decisive knowledge of God which is implied in conversion to the Christian faith” (R. Bultmann, “γινώσκω” *TDNT* 1:707). (9) ἀθετήσας τις νόμον Μωϋσέως (v. 28 “Anyone who violates the law of Moses”). Maurer calls attention to a reference in the LXX, Ezek 22:26, where “its priests have done violence (ἠθέτησαν) to my law (νόμος).” The reference in Ezek 22:26 concerns priests, who profane holy things, who make no distinction between clean and unclean and disregarded the Sabbath (C. Maurer, “ἀθετέω,” *TDNT* 8:158).

²³ For an enumeration of suggested possibilities see Schrage, “ἐπισυναγωγὴν,” 843. For a more elaborate history of interpretation of ἐπισυναγωγὴν see Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 417-8.

when answered, in my opinion, it is answered only unsatisfactorily.²⁴ The second and third point beg the question of a close connection between Heb 4 and Heb 10. Fourth, if the study can support the thought that Heb 4:1-16 speaks about a present Sabbath observance in which some of the audience is participating and they are also urged to imitate God, this would have significant implications for the interpretation of Hebrews. Finally, if it can be affirmed that the gathering(s) in Heb 10:25 is referring to the Sabbath gathering—connected with answering the question why it was neglected, from within the context of Hebrews itself—this would be justification enough.

Scope and Delimitations

In order to more reasonably manage my research, I focus primarily on the exegesis of certain key passages. Although the whole of Heb 3-4 is considered, only Heb 4:1-11 is closely examined, with due consideration given to the OT background and the structure of the larger context.²⁵

²⁴ Concerning the time of the meeting, Hughes (*A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 418) thinks that it refers to the practice that first took place daily (Acts 2:46), but subsequently weekly, on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor 16:2). Lane follows him also by assuming that the gatherings took place daily and supports it by quoting Heb 3:13 (Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, 290). If that is true, it makes Heb 10:26, 28 difficult to understand, because we do not have evidence of the daily gatherings as a compulsory event for the Christian community. Since daily gatherings were not compulsory assemblies, it is also difficult to understand what the phrase means “to willfully persist in sin” if the weekly Sabbath is no longer given any consideration.

²⁵ Notice how Grässer describes Heb 4:1-11, compared with the midrashic interpretation of Ps 95, in the previous chapter of Hebrews: “Das Argumentationsziel dieser beiden Unterabschnitte (vss. 1-5 and vss. 6-11) hat sich gegenüber 3,12-19 nicht geändert, wohl aber der Tenor: Aus der Drohbotschaft ist eine Frohbotschaft geworden” (Grässer, *Hebr 1-6*, 199). In similar words, Pfitzner views the pericope of Heb 4:1-11. “Warnings now turn into promise; imperatives (13:12-13) give way to cohortatives (‘let

A similar approach is taken with Heb 10. In this chapter the core of the exegetical interest will be vv. 19-31 without ignoring the context in which this passage is embedded and the structure that holds the wider passage together.

Methodology

Throughout the entire dissertation, primary and secondary sources (whether books, articles, or dissertations) are the basis for my examination. The procedure that I follow in this study is generally threefold, focusing on historical-grammatical exegesis, background concepts, and theology.²⁶

In the second chapter, I discuss the socio-religious, geographic-chronological background of the audience in the book of Hebrews. This is important in order to understand the theology of the book itself and its exhortation and warning passages.

In the third chapter the focus is on the structure of the book in order to find out why some themes, concepts, and expressions recur, and how the passages under special attention hold together structurally. In relationship to this study, the structure of Heb 4:1-16 and 10:19-31 is examined.

The fourth and fifth chapters are exegetical in nature. Chapter 4 examines the meaning of “rest/Sabbath rest” in Heb 4:1-16 for its original readers. This passage will be read in view of a careful exegesis of the warning given in Heb 10:19-31 (fifth chapter).

Drawing on a summary provided at the end of each chapter, I conclude with an

us;’ 4:1, 11) at the beginning and end of the section” (V. C. Pfitzner, *Hebrews* [Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1997], 79).

²⁶ Based on the steps suggested by Gordon D. Fee, *New Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors* (2nd ed.; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002).

overall summation of the findings of the research. The bibliography will conclude the research.

CHAPTER II

THE ADDRESSEES

Introduction

The anonymous epistle to the Hebrews provides the interpreter with neither the identity of the author nor that of the recipients.¹ A reconstruction of the community's history, the ethnic background, and the life situation of the audience that makes Hebrews intelligible must be advanced as a working proposal. Since the evidence is ambiguous and open to multiple interpretations, the concern to establish a social and historical context for an early Christian community is legitimate.² Methodologically, the initial step toward establishing a social context for Hebrews must be the sketching of a profile of the audience addressed, on the basis of the details in the text.

The History of the Community

Most of the hypotheses about the addressees are based on inferences from the Epistle to the Hebrews. These may come from either the doctrinal section or the paraenetic section with their advocacy of specific behavior.³ Generally it is recognized

¹ David Arthur DeSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament: Contexts, Methods, and Ministry Formation* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 776.

² Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, liii.

³ Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 12.

that the title “To the Hebrews” (πρὸς Ἑβραίους), which was current already in second-century Alexandria prior to any manuscript attestation of Hebrews, is an ancient conjecture about the addressees which is *communis opinio*, according to Grässer.⁴ Those who gave the composition this title obviously did not have a precise idea of its original destination, otherwise they would have chosen a local term, because the writing is intended for a special community. The very fact that such a vague and misleading title was added proves that by the second century all traces of the original destination of the writing had been lost.⁵

The specific reference to the addressees indicates that they were “second-

⁴ Erich Grässer, “Der Hebräerbrief 1938-1963,” *TRu* 30 (1964): 147; Weiss, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 69. Similar scribal conjectures are found in the titular subscripts of various MSS (so A, P, and a few minuscules: “To the Hebrews, written from Rome [ItalyP]”; m: “To the Hebrews, written from Italy through Timothy”; 81: “To the Hebrews written from Rome by Paul to those in Jerusalem”; 104: “To the Hebrews, written in Hebrew from Italy anonymously” [Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 12]). In the Chester Beatty-Papyrus P⁴⁶, dating from about 200, Hebrews occurs as the second writing between Romans and 1 Corinthians. The heading “To the Hebrews” is attested also by Clement of Alexandria (according to Eusebius) and Tertullian. Donald Alfred Hagner, *Encountering the Book of Hebrews: An Exposition* (EBS, ed. Walter A. Elwell and Eugene H. Merrill; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2002), 23. See also Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, xxiii.

⁵ Moffatt, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, xv. Weiss adds: “Zur Frage nach den ursprünglichen Adressaten leistet die sekundäre Inscriptio, zumal sie durch das interne Zeugnis des Hebr in keine Weise bestätigt wird, keinen unmittelbaren Beitrag” (Weiss, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 69). Furthermore, the author never mentions Jews or Christians. He never refers to the temple or to circumcision. It is the tabernacle of the Pentateuch which interests him, not the temple. F. Delitzsch infers without discussion a location near the temple because of the author’s interest in the levitical cult (Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* [trans. Thomas L. Kingsbury, vol. 1, 2 vols.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1868], 1:20-21). Ellingworth states that there is a gap between the writing of Hebrews and the first mention of its title to provide evidence of an original title (Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 21). Therefore not much weight should be placed on “external attestation” on this point.

generation” Christians,⁶ dependent on the testimony of earlier eyewitnesses and implies that the community had grown lax in their commitment to the Christian message (2:1-4). However, the source of the distraction is not specified at this point. They had been Christians for some time and might therefore have been expected to play a leading role in inculcating the faith (5:12). Apparently they had received basic instructions (6:1-2), maybe in some liturgical setting in the form of a “confession” (cf. 3:1; 4:14; 10:23). Their inauguration into the Christian community (6:4-5) included a baptismal ritual (10:22).⁷ In earlier times they had experienced persecution, which included public ridicule and imprisonment (10:32-34), but this persecution did not involve bloodshed (12:4). They had given practical evidence of their faith by serving their fellow-Christians and especially by caring for those of their number who suffered most in the time of persecution (6:10; 10:34). Whatever the reasons for troubling the addressees of the epistle, some of them were apparently not maintaining their regular attendance at the communal assembly (10:25).

From the response the author gives to the problem, it appears that the author conceives of the threat to the community in two interrelated categories, external pressure or “persecution” (10:36-12:13) and a waning commitment to the community’s confessed faith. To the first he responds with stern warnings and exhortations to faithful discipleship. To the second he proposes a renewed and deepened understanding of the

⁶ Grässer, "Der Hebräerbrief 1938-1963," 149; Weiss, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 72.

⁷ Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 12.

community's confession that will inspire covenant fidelity.⁸

At several points the author refers to the group's history, allowing one to discern three phases.⁹ First, the community was established when Christian evangelists preached the message of salvation, performing miracles to validate their preaching. Second, non-Christians instigated hostility against the community by denouncing them before local authorities, who imprisoned them and allowed Christian property to be plundered. Third, overt persecution gave way to a lower level of conflict in which non-Christians continued to verbally harass Christians. Some from the community were in prison, and others felt the effects of being marginalized in society. While some still continued to show faith, others experienced a malaise that was evident in tendencies to neglect the faith and community gatherings. Hebrews was written during this third phase.¹⁰ Each phase will be considered in turn.

Phase One: Proclamation and Conversion

To say that the message of Jesus was conveyed “by those who heard” (2:3-4) implies that neither the author¹¹ nor his audience were eyewitnesses to the ministry of Jesus. They learned of the message from ear-witnesses of Jesus (τῶν ἀκουσάντων), which

⁸ Ibid., 13.

⁹ The taxonomy is adopted from Koester, *Hebrews*, 64.

¹⁰ Ibid., 65.

¹¹ DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude*, 7.

implies that two or more evangelists worked together.¹² The message that the evangelists preached focused on “salvation” (2:3), which was accompanied by visible confirmation through “signs and wonders and various powerful deeds” (2:4a).¹³ For those addressed by Hebrews, the Spirit’s work (2:3-4; 6:4-5) was apparently understood to have led to repentance and faith (6:1), followed by baptism and the laying on of hands (6:2).¹⁴ Those who came to faith are those who have been “enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift and became partakers of the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come” (6:4-5). The confession of faith (3:1; 4:14; 10:23) had the double function of uniting the group, since the confession was what they had in common, while distinguishing the Christian community from groups that did not have the same beliefs.¹⁵ Undergoing baptism¹⁶ meant not only purification from sin but identification with a group of people that was set apart from others (10:22, 25).

¹² This was a common practice in the early church, Acts 13:2-3; 15:39-40; 16:1-3; 1 Cor 1:1; 2 Cor 1:1. Scriptural and non-scriptural evidence for solitary traveling evangelists is found in Acts 8:4-8, 26-40; *Did.* 11:3-13:7.

¹³ The brief account is similar to the founding of Paul’s churches in Galatia and Corinth, where ecstatic or miraculous phenomena are emphasized as God’s confirmation of the validity of the message (Gal 3:2-5; 1 Cor 2:1-5).

¹⁴ Koester, *Hebrews*, 66.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ The author’s reference to βαπτισμῶν in the plural makes it possible that “baptisms” include forms of “ablutions” which persisted in the early church from its Jewish heritage. It remains also probable that the hearers would recall their own baptism, which was the initiation rite into the Christian movement. Since partaking of the Holy Spirit (Heb 6:4) is in close proximity to baptisms, it reminds one of the water and the baptism of Holy Spirit prominent in the epistles and in Acts. John’s baptism and the baptism in Acts (2:38) are related to the forgiveness of sins. In Hebrews it is at least a

Hebrews twice calls conversion “enlightenment” (6:4; 10:32), which implies that the unconverted remain in darkness with its connotations of sin, ignorance, and death.¹⁷

Conversion evidently planted the seed of conflict between the community addressed and the wider society.¹⁸

sign of the washing away of past sins (10:22). For more details on the rite of baptisms, see DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude*, 9-11.

¹⁷ The metaphor φωτισθέντας is a common image for the reception of a salvific message (Judg 13:8; 2 Kgs 12:3; Pss 34:5 [33:6]; 119:130 [118:130]; Isa 60:1, 19; Mic 7:8; *1 Enoch* 5:8; 1QS 4:2; 11:2; Philo *Fug.* 139; 1 Cor 4:5; 2 Cor 4:4-6; Eph 1:18; 3:9; 2 Tim 1:10; John 1:9; 1 Pet 2:9; Jas 1:17; *1 Clem.* 36.2; 59.2; Ignatius *Rom.* passim). Although the Syriac Peshitta translated the expression in Heb 6:4 as “they who have once descended to baptism,” and in Heb 10:32 “those [days] in which ye received baptism” it stands alone among the Syriac and other older versions in this understanding. Later, however, φωτισμός and φωτίζειν become common designations of baptism (Justin *I Apol.* 61.12; 65.1 [PG 6:421, 429]; *Dial.* 122.5 [PG 6:760]; Clement of Alexandria *Paed.* 1.6.26,2 [PG 8:280, 281]). Lane asserts that “prior to the middle of the second century there is no clear evidence that φωτίζειν means ‘to baptize,’” while Attridge claims that at the time of Hebrews “enlightened” did “not yet function as a technical designation for the ritual” of baptism. Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 141. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 169. Similar words are used by Hans Conzelmann when he states that “illumination takes place at baptism, but the verb does not denote this technically; it simply refers to the process of illumination as such.” Hans Conzelmann, “φῶς, κτλ,” *TDNT* 9:355. Contra Spicq and Liddell who equate illumination and baptism. C. Spicq, “φῶς, κτλ,” *TLNT* 3:487, and Henry G. Liddell, Robert Scott, and Henry S. Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 1969. In both Hebrew texts (6:4; 10:32) the illumination is imbedded in the context of tasting the word of God (6:5) or having received the knowledge of truth (10:26). Illumination is not effected, but rather attested, by baptism. Dunn concludes: “That φωτισθέντας = βαπτισθέντας is wholly improbable.” James D. G. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit: Re-examination of the New Testament Teaching on the Gift of the Spirit in Relation to Pentecostalism Today* (London: SCM Press, 1970), 210.

¹⁸ Greco-Roman religious tradition assumed that people could move with relative ease from the worship of one deity to another. Since conversion to Judaism or Christianity did not mean venerating a new deity along with others, it brought a break with the dominant pattern (Koester, *Hebrews*, 67). Christians adopted a lifestyle that, in the eyes of their pagan neighbors, would have been considered antisocial. Loyalty to the gods, expressed in pious attendance at sacrifices and the like, was viewed as a symbol for loyalty to the state, authorities, friends, and family. Worship of the deities was a symbol

Phase Two: Persecution and Solidarity

The second phase was marked by conflict with those outside the community and solidarity among those inside the community (10:32-34). Although physical abuse and loss of property¹⁹ could have resulted from mob action and/or imprisonment (10:34; 13:3), it required the involvement of a person in authority, such as a governor or magistrate.²⁰ The extent to which one or more officials participated in the actions taken against Christians is not clear. Public animosity seems to have been aroused by the distinctive commitments of the Christian community.²¹

for one's dedication to the relationship that kept society stable and prosperous. By abstaining from the former, Christians were regarded with suspicion as potential violators of the laws and subversive members of the empire. It was thus both dishonoring and dangerous to be associated with the name of "Christians." For a detailed analysis of the dishonorable stigma attached to the label "Christians" in the first-century Greco-Roman world, see David A. DeSilva, *Despising Shame: Honor Discourse and Community Maintenance in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (SBLDS, no. 152; Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1995), 146-54.

¹⁹ We know from Tacitus and other historians that local or imperial authorities tended to seek out the well-propertied with poor social networks for confiscation. DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude*, 8.

²⁰ The idea that Hebrews refers to a local outburst rather than to a systematic persecution of Christians and that it involved some of the non-Christians attacking Christians and denouncing them to the authorities fits with what is known from other sources (for a convincing reasoning in favor of the expelling edict of Claudius rather than the persecution of Nero or the persecution in Jerusalem, see Koester, *Hebrews*, 51-2.). In Rome the emperor Claudius in A.D. 49 apparently took action against Jews or Jewish Christians by expelling them from the city in response to disturbances in local synagogues, but he did not initiate any campaign against the Christian church as such. See Suetonius *Claud.* 25.4.

²¹ With the mention of the loss of the audience's possessions, Hebrews provides further evidence that the old dictum that sects "are connected with the lower class" and that Christianity is recruiting mainly members of the lower strata is incorrect or at least overdrawn (Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, [trans. Olive Wyon, 2 vols., 1st Harper Torchbook ed.; New York: Harper, 1960], 1:331. Extensive critique of this earlier view can be found in Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban*

Hebrews portrays this in an anachronistic depiction of Moses and Christ. First, Hebrews connects the loss of possessions with being denounced for Christ. Moses gave up wealth in Egypt in the hope of a future reward (11:26b) just as the listeners gave up their possessions in the hope of a heavenly inheritance (10:34), and Moses accepted “denunciation” for Christ (11:26a) just as the Christian community must bear “denunciation” for Christ (13:13). Second, Hebrews contrasts belonging to the community of faith with fitting in to the wider society. Moses left the royal household “to be maltreated with the people of God,” and by identifying with God’s people, he rejected “the fleeting pleasure of sin” (11:25). The implication is that belonging to the people of God sets one apart from sinful society.

Conflict with outsiders helps to establish and reaffirm the group’s distinctive identity, while promoting internal unity. Attacks by outsiders help to define loyalties and mobilize the energies of people within the group to support one another, but it can also weaken affiliation to a religious group.²² This seems to be the case for the addressees of Hebrews in the third phase.

Phase Three: Friction and Malaise

The epistle to the Hebrews assumes that members of the community could expect a continuation of shame (13:13), and some members of the community were still in

Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983], 51-73, and Gerd Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982], 36-8). The author of Hebrews uses extensive vocabulary and writes with syntax more independent of word order than that of other NT authors. This suggests an audience capable of attending meaningfully to such language and syntax.

²² Koester, *Hebrews*, 70.

prison (13:3), which burdened morale and material resources.²³ While some continued to care for the others in the community (6:10; 13:1), others showed signs of malaise. The author cautions against “drift” (παραρρέω), a term that suggests a gradual unconscious movement away from the faith (2:1). He points to the danger of “neglecting” the Christian faith and community (2:3; 10:25), and reproves his listeners for their sluggishness (5:11; 6:12). According to the author, apostasy could be the culmination of these tendencies (3:12; 6:4-6; 10:26; 12:16-17). The exhortation to “hold fast” and not to abandon the Christian hope and confession of faith (3:6; 4:14; 10:23, 35) assumes that the listeners have not yet relinquished their beliefs altogether.

The author recognizes that one response to continued reproach would be to “shrink back” (10:39) from the Christian community in the hope of obtaining a more favorable judgment from the non-Christian society. If confessing faith in Christ meant losing their possessions, one might seek greater economic security by abandoning one’s confession. If meeting with Christians meant being treated with contempt, one might hope for more honorable treatment by abandoning the Christian community (10:25). As a response the author places the audience before an alternative court in which God reverses the judgments of society. Koester summarizes it well when he says:

The world pronounced a negative judgment against Jesus, subjecting him to disgrace and death (12:2), but God overturned the verdict of the lower court by raising Jesus from the dead and exalting him to everlasting glory (1:2-4; 2:8-9). God will do the same for his people, so that listeners are to hope for

²³ Cultural anthropologists have noted the close connection between a person’s honor and the treatment of that person’s body. For more detail see Julian Pitt-Rivers, “Honour and Social Status,” in *Honour and Shame: The Values of Mediterranean Society* (ed. John G. Peristiany; NHSS, ed. Julian Pitt-Rivers and Ernest Gellner; Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1966), 25.

the glory (2:10) and to fear the judgment that come from God (4:12-13), not from unbelieving society.²⁴

In the eyes of non-Christians, the faithful are dishonored, but in the eyes of God faith is truly valued. Public rejection, humiliation, and dispossession belong to the community's past, but the author perceives that the community must recover the same dedication and endurance that they displayed then but lack now. The present moment calls for perseverance rather than for despair.

The Profile of the Audience

The most important question in this area, and the one about which there is deep division among scholars, is whether the original readers of Hebrews were Christians of Jewish or of Gentile origin. Until modern times, the general assumption was that their background was Jewish. This was much influenced by the title.

E. M. Röth in 1836 was the first to whom credit or blame goes, as Attridge states it,²⁵ to propose the thesis of Gentile addressees.²⁶ He has had many successors, but the traditional view, that the readers were of Jewish origin, is still widespread.²⁷ The question

²⁴ Koester, *Hebrews*, 72.

²⁵ Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 11.

²⁶ Eduard M. Röth, *Epistolam vulgo "ad Hebraeos" inscriptam non ad Hebraeos, id est Christianos genere Judaeos sed ad Christianos genere gentiles et quidem ad Ephesios datam esse demonstrare conatur* (Frankfurt am Main: Schmerber, 1836).

²⁷ Among others, the following scholars argue for a Jewish Christian readership: F. J. Badcock, *The Pauline Epistles and the Epistle to the Hebrews in Their Historical Setting* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1937), 185; George A. Barton, "The Date of the Epistle to the Hebrews," *JBL* 57 (1938): 206; Raymond Brown, *The Message of Hebrews: Christ above All* (BST, ed. John R. W. Stott; Leicester, Eng.; Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1984), 16; Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, xxix; John V.

Dahms, "First Readers of Hebrews," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 20 (1977): 365; John Dunnill, *Covenant and Sacrifice in the Letter to the Hebrews* (SNTSMS 75; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 13-39; Georg Gäbel, *Die Kulttheologie des Hebräerbriefes: Eine Exegetisch-Religionsgeschichtliche Studie* (WUNT 2. Reihe, no. 212; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 488; D. W. Gooding, *An Unshakeable Kingdom: The Letter to the Hebrews for Today* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1989), 11; R. P. Gordon, *Hebrews* (Readings: A New Biblical Commentary; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 14; Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 19; Hagner, *Encountering the Book of Hebrews*, 23; Joachim Jeremias and August Strobel, *Die Briefe an Timotheus und Titus. Der Brief an die Hebräer* (11 ed.; Das Neue Testament Deutsch; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975), 82; Luke Timothy Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary* (NTL, ed. C. Clifton Black and John T. Carroll; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 33; Simon Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1984), 17; Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, liv; William L. Lane, "Hebrews: A Sermon in Search of a Setting," *SWJT* 28 (1985): 17; William L. Lane, "Social Perspectives on Roman Christianity during the Formative Years from Nero to Nerva: Romans, Hebrews, 1 Clement," in *Judaism and Christianity in First-Century Rome* (ed. Karl P. Donfried and Peter Richardson; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 216; Thomas D. Lea, *Hebrews and James* (Holman New Testament Commentary, ed. Max E. Anders; Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman and Holman, 1999), 1; Barnabas Lindars, *The Theology of the Letter to the Hebrews* (New Testament Theology Series, ed. James D. G. Dunn; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); John McRay, "Atonement and Apocalyptic in the Book of Hebrews," *ResQ* 23 (1980): 9; Pfitzner, *Hebrews*, 29; Darrell J. Pursiful, *The Cultic Motif in the Spirituality of the Book of Hebrews* (Lewiston: Mellen Biblical Press, 1993), 32; Eduard Riggenbach, *Der Brief an die Hebräer* (Wuppertal: R. Brockhaus, 1987; reprint, Leipzig: A. Deichertsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1922), xxiii; H. C. Waddell, "The Readers of the Epistle to the Hebrews," *Exp* 26 (1923): 210; Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, xxxvi. Nestle, leaning on Zahn, finds the mention of συναγωγή Ἑβραίων in two inscriptions "more than accidental," considering the fact that Zahn places the readers in Rome. Eberhard Nestle, "On the Address of the Epistle to the Hebrews," *ExpTim* 10 (1898-99): 422. For a list of more European scholars see Grässer, "Der Hebräerbrief 1938-1963," 148. The following scholars are arguing for Gentile Christian readers: Herbert Braun, *An die Hebräer* (vol. 14; HNT, ed. Andreas Lindemann; Tübingen: Mohr, 1984), 2; Leonhard Goppelt, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975), 574; Grässer, "Der Hebräerbrief 1938-1963," 148; Harald Hegermann, *Der Brief an die Hebräer* (THNT, ed. Erich Fascher, Joachim Rohde, and Christian Wolff; Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1988), 10; Martin Karrer, *Der Brief an die Hebräer* (ed. Rudolf Hoppe and Michael Wolter; Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2002), 100; Weiss, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 71; Moffatt, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, xvii; Kenneth Schenck, *Understanding the Book of Hebrews: The Story Behind the Sermon* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 109; Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "Der Anführer und Vollender unseres Glaubens: Zum theologischen

is almost inseparable from the problem of whether the author's own thought-world was predominantly Jewish or Greek.²⁸

A further difficulty is the fact that the NT probably contains no writing addressed to an entirely Gentile church.²⁹ The argument that Galatians teaches the Gentile Christians freedom from the law of Moses, and that Hebrews could therefore similarly use OT evidence in writing to Gentiles, rests on the questionable presupposition that the Galatian Christians were all of Gentile origin.³⁰ Before drawing premature conclusions, an investigation of the arguments in favor of each ethnic group would be appropriate.

Jewish Christian Readership

In Hebrews the evidence is overwhelming that the author expected his readers to

Verständnis des Hebräerbriefes,” in *Gestalt und Anspruch des Neuen Testaments* (ed. Johannes Schreiner and Gerhard Dautzenberg; Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1969), 271; E. F. Scott, “The Epistle to the Hebrews and Roman Christianity,” *HTR* 13, no. 3 (1920); Ceslas Spicq, *L'Épître aux Hébreux: Introduction I* (EtBib; Paris: J. Gabalda, 1952), 222-23; Andreas Stadelmann, “Zur Christologie des Hebräerbriefs in der neueren Diskussion,” *Theologische Berichte* 2 (1973): 137. Other scholars perceive the audience as a community of mixed background: DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude*, 7; Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 12; Montefiore, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 16; DeSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 778; Andrew H. Trotter, Jr., *Interpreting the Epistle to the Hebrews*; (Guides to New Testament Exegesis, ed. Scot McKnight; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1997), 30; David A. DeSilva, “The Epistle to the Hebrews in Social-Scientific Perspective,” *ResQ* 36 (1994): 3; Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 22.

²⁸ How the Scriptures are handled in Hebrews says more about the author's background and training than the recipient's ethnic origin, claims DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude*, 5.

²⁹ Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 23.

³⁰ Cf. Helmut Feld, *Der Hebräerbrief* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1985), 10.

be thoroughly acquainted with OT persons, institutions,³¹ texts, the Mosaic law,³² and to accept unquestionably the divine authority of the OT.³³ It is probable that the writer also expected his audience to recognize allusions to the OT deuterocanon, though he does not quote them as Scripture.³⁴ Numerous details tend to substantiate the view that the audience of Hebrews had been nurtured spiritually and intellectually in the Hellenistic synagogue. They have an easy familiarity with the Esau story, to which the writer can refer without elaboration (cf. 12:17, “for you know” who was deprived of Isaac’s blessing).

In Heb 2:2, for example, the author alludes to the angels as the heavenly mediators of the Sinai revelation. There is no indication in Exod 19 and 20 that angels were present at the giving of the law. In Deut 33:2, in a passage celebrating the theophany at Sinai, Moses declares that God came with “myriads of holy ones.” Sometime before the first century, the conviction spread, especially among hellenistic Jews, that angels had played a mediatorial role in the transmission of the law (cf. Acts

³¹ Especially cultic institutions like shedding or sprinkling of blood (9:22), the purification (9:23), the sacrifice of bulls and goats (10:4), the priesthood (7:23), Day of Atonement (9:70), the Tabernacle (9:2), etc. For more details see Pursiful, *The Cultic Motif in the Spirituality of the Book of Hebrews*, 41-64; William G. Johnsson, “Cultus of Hebrews in Twentieth-Century Scholarship,” *ExpTim* 89 (1978): 106-8; William G. Johnsson, “Defilement and Purgation in the Book of Hebrews” (Ph.D. diss., Vanderbilt, 1973), 27-90; Aelred Cody, *Heavenly Sanctuary and Liturgy in the Epistle to the Hebrews: The Achievement of Salvation in the Epistle's Perspective* (St. Meinrad, Ind.: Grail Publications, 1960), 77-167.

³² Usually referred to as νόμος: 7:5, 12, 16, 19, 28; 8:4; 9:19, 22; 10:1, 8; only in 10:28 as νόμον Μωϋσέως.

³³ Riggenbach, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, xxi.

³⁴ Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 23.

7:38, 53; Gal 3:19; *Jub.* 1.27,29; 2.1; *Sifre Num.* 102; *Pesiq. Rab.* 21; *Jos., Ant.* 15.136).

Furthermore, the opening lines of Hebrews introduce the transcendent Son of God in categories of divine Wisdom. According to Lane the writer's formulation is clearly informed by the Hellenistic-Jewish wisdom tradition.³⁵

The argument of Hebrews is marked at many places by typical rabbinic procedures, such as the argument from the silence of Scripture, the *qal wahomer* or *a minori ad maius* (10:28-29), the *gezera shawa* (4:4), *binyan ab mikathub echad* (9:20), *binyan ab mishene kethubim* (1:5), *kayotze bo mimekom akhar* (1:10).³⁶ It is admitted that some of these arguments are not exclusively rabbinic.³⁷

Phrases such as "every high priest" (5:1) clearly do not envisage any other than the Jewish cultic tradition. The institution of sacrifices is very widespread, but in some non-Jewish traditions such statements as "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins" (9:22) would be either contested or incomprehensible.³⁸ Riggenbach goes so far as to claim that the author could not ask his hearers to go "outside the camp" (13:13) if they were not at home in the camp of Israel.³⁹

³⁵ Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, liv; William L. Lane, "Detecting Divine Wisdom in Hebrews 1:14," *NTS* 5 (1982): 150-58.

³⁶ For a more elaborate treatment of the seven exegetical rules of Hillel emerging in the book of Hebrews, see Herbert W. Bateman IV, *Early Jewish Hermeneutics and Hebrews 1:5-13: The Impact of Early Jewish Exegesis on the Interpretation of a Significant New Testament Passage* (American University Studies, no. 193; New York: P. Lang, 1997), 9, 239-46.

³⁷ Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 23.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 24.

³⁹ Riggenbach, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, xxi.

Recently, Barnabas Lindars has offered a thoughtfully articulated defense of the position that the readers were Jewish-Christians. His main argument revolves around a heightened consciousness of sin.⁴⁰ The people believed that while their sins were washed away at their baptism, they had no means of atoning for post-baptismal sins. Initially this was not a problem, since they thought the time would be short between the baptism and the parousia. As time went on, a return or partial return to Judaism became attractive because Jewish worship is predicated on a system of atonement. Thus the author has to convince the audience that Christ's sacrifice is efficacious once and for all.

Pamela Eisenbaum refutes the argument as tenuous because of the absence of any mention of Jews or synagogues in Hebrews. Moreover, she sees Lindars's problem in the fact that he bases his argument on ch. 13, which is very pastoral and encouraging in nature. Taking into consideration the severity of the warning against the problem of post-baptismal sins in Heb 6:4-6; 10:26-27; 12:25 the argument of Lindars, she asserts, does not make sense.⁴¹

If a heightened consciousness of sin is the problem of the audience, it is also very difficult to understand why the author cautions against drifting away (2:1), neglecting salvation (2:3), hardened by the deceitfulness of sin (3:13), sinning willfully (10:26), shrinking back (10:28), etc. Overall, Eisenbaum's assessment of Lindars's attempt to identify the audience has value.

⁴⁰ Lindars, *The Theology of the Letter to the Hebrews*, 10-5.

⁴¹ Pamela M. Eisenbaum, *The Jewish Heroes of Christian History: Hebrews 11 in Literary Context* (SBLDS, no. 156; Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1997), 9.

Luke T. Johnson,⁴² following the argument and terminology of Williamson⁴³ and Anderson,⁴⁴ states that the composition lacks any element of supersessionism in the proper sense of the term, that is, the replacement of Israel by Gentiles as God's people. Therefore the audience is the seed of Abraham not metaphorically, but as descendants of Abraham, and they are the primary heirs of the promise.⁴⁵

Comparing Paul with the author of Hebrews, Anderson rightly observes that *auctor ad Hebraeos* has no difficulty in picturing God as a rewarder of faithful deeds.⁴⁶ Paul, on the other hand, reveals some ambivalence about the wage image. In 1 Cor 3:8, 14 and 9:17-18, μισθός appears in a positive light, first as a reward given to Apollos and himself by God. However, when it comes to the question of Abraham and justification, Paul considers the wage image to be theologically inappropriate (Rom 4:1-5). Furthermore, Anderson sees no hint of the faith/works controversy evident in Paul being present in Hebrews.⁴⁷

⁴² Johnson, *Hebrews*, 33.

⁴³ Clark M. Williamson, "Anti-Judaism in Hebrews?" *Int* 57 (2003): 266-79.

⁴⁴ Charles P. Anderson, "Who Are the Heirs of the New Age in the Epistle to the Hebrews?" in *Apocalyptic and the New Testament* (ed. Joel Marcus and Marion L. Soards; JSNTSS 24; Sheffield, Eng.: Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Press, 1989), 258-68.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 274.

⁴⁶ The wage-payer image is applied twice to God, positively in 11:6 and negatively in 2:2.

⁴⁷ Out of the eight instances of ἔργα in Hebrews all but two are portrayed in a positive light, i.e., the good works of the readers, both past (6:10) and future (10:24), and God's works (1:10; 3:9; 4:3-4).

Works and faith are never contrasted in Hebrews. Since this concern of Paul with Gentiles is conspicuously absent from Hebrews, Anderson concludes that the epistle “was directed to no other than the children of Abraham.”⁴⁸

Anderson misreads the text because of his presupposition that the tensions in Hebrews have to be generated by the people within the church as in Romans and Corinthians. In Hebrews, however, the tensions are generated not from within the community, but from outside.⁴⁹ Koester describes this aspect of Hebrew’s audience as “marked by conflict with those outside the community and solidarity among those inside the community.”⁵⁰

Williamson, who argues philosophically against anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism, and warns against a supersessionism of Jews by Gentiles, repeats the statement several times in his article that Jews and Gentiles are never in opposition in the book of Hebrews and furthermore these designations are not even mentioned.⁵¹ Thus, there is no supersessionism in Hebrews since Jews and Gentiles are not portrayed as polar entities.⁵²

⁴⁸ Anderson, “Who Are the Heirs of the New Age in the Epistle to the Hebrews?” 268.

⁴⁹ To mention a few: suffering, public exposure and abuse, confiscation of property (10:32-34).

⁵⁰ Koester, *Hebrews*, 67.

⁵¹ Williamson, “Anti-Judaism in Hebrews?” 272-74.

⁵² However, arguing from the fact that the title “To the Hebrews” is a second-century conjecture about the original audience of Hebrews, DeSilva hypothesizes that Christians in the second century might have viewed this letter as addressing Jews precisely because they needed some kind of canonical response to the parent religion that had rejected them, a manifesto of supersessionism that legitimated the Christian movement. DeSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 777.

This, however, does not settle the matter in favor of a Jewish Christian readership.

Gentile Christian Readership

Some interpreters find evidence that Hebrews was written for Gentile Christians. Repentance from dead works, faith toward God (6:1), and enlightenment (6:4; 10:32) were ways of speaking about conversion from paganism to Christianity.⁵³ Weiss claims that the *topoi* of the basic Christian teachings quoted in Heb 6:1-2 reflect a kind of Jewish *Proselytenkatechismus* with topics traditionally used by Jews in their mission to the Gentiles and thus making sense only addressed to a Gentile Christian readership.⁵⁴

Similarly the reference to the need for basic religious knowledge (5:11-14), as well as the fact that the author uses the expression the “living God” (10:31), is being used to argue for predominantly Gentile readership. While these elements are “standard fare” of preaching to Gentiles,⁵⁵ they may be due to rhetorical effect.⁵⁶ It is often urged that the appeal not to fall away from the living God (3:12) can be addressed only to Gentiles,⁵⁷ since for Jews to abandon the distinctive doctrines of Christianity and return to Judaism

⁵³ Hegermann, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 10; Koester, *Hebrews*, 47.

⁵⁴ Weiss, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 71, and also Otto Michel, *Der Brief an die Hebräer* (12th ed.; KEKNT; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966), 49. This is especially true for repentance from death works and faith toward God. For more details on the catechism, see Alfred Seeberg, *Der Katechismus der Urchristenheit* (TB, no. 26; Munich: Kaiser, 1966), 248-52; Theissen, *Untersuchungen zum Hebräerbrief*, 53-5.

⁵⁵ Cf. 1 Thess 1:9.

⁵⁶ Eisenbaum, *The Jewish Heroes of Christian History*, 9.

⁵⁷ Michel, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 49.

would still leave them firm monotheists.⁵⁸ Warnings about avoiding strange teachings (13:9) might mean that listeners were attached to the strange teachings of Hellenistic syncretism, while the exhortation to honor marriage (13:4) could counter the ascetic tendencies of some Hellenistic groups.⁵⁹ The admonition that fornicators (πόρνος) will be judged by God is interpreted by Montefiore as referring to pre-marital and extra-marital sexual relationships, which could hardly be intended for Jewish Christians but for former pagans.⁶⁰

Although much of the argument of Hebrews is based on material from the OT, the fact that Paul makes extensive use of the OT⁶¹ in his letters to Rome, Corinth,⁶² and

⁵⁸ Hagner, *Encountering the Book of Hebrews*, 23. However, there is no evidence in Hebrews that the author or his readers envisaged such a falling back. Ellingworth proposes that to “fall away from the living God” might probably be synonymous with hardening of the heart (3:8, 13, 15), a phrase used in the exegesis of an OT passage. Cf. Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 24.

⁵⁹ Koester, *Hebrews*, 47.

⁶⁰ Montefiore, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 16, 240.

⁶¹ Riggenbach thinks that the argument is not weakened by pointing to Paul’s use of the OT in his letters. He assumes that Paul could not expect the Gentiles to be familiar with the details of the OT if the issues were not brought up by what he calls the “Judaistic agitation.” Unfortunately, Riggenbach dismisses Heb 13:9 as just a mention in passing. Riggenbach, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, xxii. Since we have only one record of the “phone conversation,” so to speak, it is dangerous to infer so much from so little evidence.

⁶² First Corinthians 10:1-13 derives moral instruction from a string of events connected with the exodus generation but does so in an allusive manner that presumes a high degree of familiarity with the stories on the part of the largely Gentile Christian audience.

Galatia⁶³ shows that an author could use such OT arguments when writing to predominantly Gentile congregations.⁶⁴ The use of the OT in Hebrews, then, does not necessitate or even suggest an audience made up primarily of Jewish Christians.⁶⁵ Gentile Christians would also be familiar with those texts and keenly interested in their interpretation.⁶⁶ Since they were instructed to read them by such Jewish Christians as Paul and his team, one should consider the likelihood that Gentile Christians would have been exposed, at least inductively, to rules of interpretation such as *gezera shawa* or *qal wahomer* in the course of this instruction.⁶⁷

⁶³ That letter employs an extended exposition from the story of Abraham in Genesis, as well as texts from Deuteronomy, Habakkuk, Leviticus, and Isaiah, and expounds these texts according to rules familiar from rabbinic exegeses. Furthermore, one can observe that the author of Hebrews puts the angels in a place subordinate to Christ (1:5-14; 2:2), much as Paul did in writing to the Galatians (Gal 3:19; 4:9) and Colossians (Col 1:16; 2:18). But we cannot conclude that the readers of Hebrews had any particular interest in angels as such, whether as objects of worship or companions of worship. Likewise, Hebrews puts Moses in his place below Christ (Heb 3:2-6), as Paul did in writing to the Galatians (Gal 3:19) and Corinthians (2 Cor 3:7-18). But one cannot conclude that the readers were particular admirers of Moses. Johnson, *Hebrews*, 34-5.

⁶⁴ This point is broadened by DeSilva when he states: “1 Peter, addressing those who ‘no longer join’ in with their Gentile neighbors, is even richer in oral-scribal intertexture with the OT, as well as allusions and references to OT figures and stories.” DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude*, 4.

⁶⁵ One has to agree with DeSilva who states that the way that Scriptures are handled says more about the author’s background and training than the recipients’ ethnic origin. *Ibid.*, 5, n. 15. In this context Johnson observes: “Origen and Augustine, to name only two, did things with texts that perhaps few of their congregants could fully appreciate.” Johnson, *Hebrews*, 34.

⁶⁶ Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 12. A fact acknowledged even by supporters of a Jewish Christian readership such as Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 20.

⁶⁷ The *gezera shawa* rule became a staple of early Christian exegesis and the *qal wahomer* argument was also a staple of Greco-Roman rhetoric. DeSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 778.

Moreover, the interest in the levitical cultus in Hebrews, contrary to common opinion, does not leave Gentile Christians cold. Both Jewish and Gentile Christians, says DeSilva, “were socialized into a sect that required both an acceptance of the OT as a record of divine revelation *and* a rejection of the contemporary validity of the covenant and priesthood therein described.”⁶⁸ The Gentile entering the Christian community became an “heir of the promise,” a “child of Abraham,” the “Israel of God,” the “circumcision,” and the “royal priesthood, God’s holy nation.”⁶⁹

The LXX is for the author as well as for his readers the scripture of their religion. How much the LXX meant to Gentile Christians may be seen in the case of a man like Tatian, for example, who explicitly declares that he owed his conversion to Christianity to reading the OT.⁷⁰ The author never refers to the temple, any more than to circumcision.⁷¹ It is the tabernacle of the Pentateuch which interests him, and all his knowledge of the Jewish ritual is gained from the LXX and later tradition.⁷² Looking at

⁶⁸ DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude*, 5.

⁶⁹ Gal 3:29; 6:16; Phil 3:3; 1 Pet 2:9. This does not mean that every Christian was introduced to all these epithets, but it shows how the identity of the new sect grew out of terms and concepts of the parent religion.

⁷⁰ Tatian, *Oratio ad Graecos*, 29.

⁷¹ Randall C. Gleason, "The Old Testament Background of the Warning in Hebrews 6:4-8," *BSac* 155 (1998): 67. Gleason overstates the nonmention of circumcision when he claims that “the lack of any reference to circumcision rules out the possibility that he [the author] was addressing Gentile Christians attracted to Judaism.” Beside the problematic assumption that all forms of Judaizing involved circumcision of Gentiles, Gleason’s commitment to the view that Hebrews attempts to hinder a reversion to non-Christian Judaism is doubtful as will be shown later on.

⁷² Moffatt, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, xvi.

these arguments one has to say that they are not conclusive either.

Mixed Ethnic Background

Hebrews contains some information and illustrations which could be understood and accepted by both Jewish and Gentile readers: appeals to axioms such as members of the same family share the same flesh and blood (2:14), learning through suffering (5:8), the contrast between milk and solid food (5:13), agricultural analogies (6:7), the power of oaths (6:16), a superior blessing an inferior one (7:7), and that children should submit to the discipline of their parents (12:5-11).⁷³ The use of typology in the large central section of the book (7-10) does not point to an exclusive Gentile readership either, as we know from the techniques attributed to Philo.⁷⁴ None of these references, therefore, absolutely require an exclusive Jewish or Gentile readership.

If Hebrews was in fact addressed to a mixed community, like most of Paul's letters, this would explain some otherwise slightly puzzling features of the epistle. These include general expressions such as "word of righteousness" (5:13) or "the fathers"⁷⁵ (1:1). The most likely explanation in the latter verse is that the writer avoids speaking of

⁷³ Grouped together by Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 24.

⁷⁴ Trotter, *Interpreting the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 31.

⁷⁵ Not "our fathers" as ESV, NRS, NIV, etc. After τοῖς πατέράσιν, p¹² p^{46c} pc and a few non-Greek witnesses (Euthalian manuscripts 181 1836 1898; the Latin t and v, vg^{mss}; some Fathers like Clement, Priscillian) add ἡμῶν or its equivalent. This, however, is so obvious a gloss that no safe conclusions can be based upon its occurrence at various places, states Günther Zuntz, *The Text of the Epistles: A Disquisition upon the Corpus Paulinum* (London: Oxford University Press, 1953), 258. Attridge defines it as an "unnecessary correction disturbing the balance of the first two clauses and the alliterative effect of this clause." Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 35. Metzger does not even

“our” fathers because there are some Gentiles among his addressees.⁷⁶ This, however, is balanced by the fact that the author when retelling the exodus story speaks of the ancient exodus generation as οἱ πατέρες ὑμῶν (3:9) in the quotation from Ps 94 (LXX).

Raymond Brown speaks of the commonly made distinction between Jewish Christianity or Gentile Christianity as being “imprecise and poorly designated,” and schematizes Christianity in four discernible types of Jewish/Gentile Christianity.⁷⁷ The fourth type of Christianity, evident in the Gospel of John and the Epistle to the Hebrews, is a more widespread and more radicalized variety of Christianity. At the same time, Jewish Christians and their Gentile converts do not insist on circumcision and Jewish food laws and saw no abiding significance in the cult of the Jerusalem Temple.⁷⁸ For Brown, only this type is properly Hellenist in contrast to the three preceding varieties of “Hebrew Christianity.”⁷⁹ Levitical sacrifices and priesthood are considered abrogated and the feasts have become alien “feasts of the Jews,” so that Judaism has become another religion belonging to the old covenant. This type of Christianity is encountered in the Fourth Gospel and in the Epistle to the Hebrews. It is germane in this context to observe that Brown perceives all four types of Christianity as “Jewish Christians and their Gentile

mention the gloss. Bruce Manning Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Biblegesellschaft, 2002).

⁷⁶ So Albert Vanhoye, *Situation du Christ: Hébreux 1-2* (LD, no. 58; Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1969).

⁷⁷ Raymond E. Brown, "Not Jewish Christianity and Gentile Christianity but Types of Jewish/Gentile Christianity," *CBQ* 45 (1983): 75.

⁷⁸ For both the Gospel of John (1:14) and Hebrews, Jesus replaces the Tabernacle, asserts Brown.

⁷⁹ Brown, "Not Jewish Christianity and Gentile Christianity," 78.

converts” rather than ethnic Jewish Christians or purely Gentile Christians.⁸⁰

Karrer also mentions the fact that the house of Christ is the house of the only God (3:4-6) and what remains of importance is to belong to the people of God (2:17; 4:9 λαός).⁸¹ Consequently the common differentiation between Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians becomes obsolete.⁸² Moffatt points out that the writer never mentions Jews or Christians in Hebrews, which suggests that he viewed his readers without any distinction of this kind. He never refers to the temple, any more than to circumcision; it is the tabernacle that interests him.⁸³

The argument in favor of a mixed Jewish and Gentile readership is strengthened by the systematic exclusion, from the author’s OT quotations and verbal allusions, of negative references to Israel or to Gentiles, present in the OT context.⁸⁴ The evidence for such exclusion, though by its nature negative, is cumulatively very strong. In other

⁸⁰ Even though such a distinction may be justifiable in the second century. Ibid., 74.

⁸¹ Schiele is convinced that Hebrews more than any other writing in the New Testament emphasizes the idea that its readers are the “people of God” (λαός θεοῦ 2:17; 4:9; 13:12). This for him “signifies not the nationality, but the *religion* of the readers.” In this sense the addressees in the Epistle to the Hebrews applied to themselves the name Ἑβραῖους in a symbolic and allegorical understanding. Friedrich Michael Schiele, "Harnack's 'Probabilia' Concerning the Address and the Author of the Epistle to the Hebrews," *AJT* 9 (1905): 304-5.

⁸² Karrer, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 101.

⁸³ Moffatt, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, xvi.

⁸⁴ Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 25.

words, rather than describing the Jews⁸⁵ as troublemakers or some equivalent (cf. Gal 1:7) or the Gentiles as barbarians or some equivalent (cf. Paul's description in Rom 1:14), the author avoids describing them at all.⁸⁶ Furthermore, in the Pauline letters, especially those addressed to churches in the Eastern part of the Mediterranean world, one finds regular allusion to the beliefs, the practices, and the moral aberrations of the Hellenistic society.⁸⁷

With regard to Hebrews there is silence concerning pagan rites and mysteries, or about the "tables" and "cups" of demons.⁸⁸ One could argue that the writer also avoids negative references to Israel because he does not want to offend his Jewish readers. This, however, would not explain the fact that he does not hesitate to point out the failings of the earlier generations of Israelites, and the inadequacy of the institutions of the old covenant (cf. 3:16-19; 4:6; chap. 9).⁸⁹ Ellingworth thinks it more likely that the author avoids references which might reawaken earlier tensions, now resolved, between Jews

⁸⁵ Israel and Judah appear only by means of employing the Jer 31 quotation in Heb 8:9-12.

⁸⁶ Trotter, *Interpreting the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 31.

⁸⁷ Even the word ἐκκλησία appears only in the Ps 22 quotation of Heb 2:12 and in 12:23 where the author uses the phrase ἐκκλησία πρωτοτόκων in a synonymous parallelism with the immediately preceding phrase πανηγύρει (festival assembly). The imagery deployed here probably refers to all men and women of faith in distinction from angels. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 375.

⁸⁸ William Manson, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: An Historical and Theological Reconsideration* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1951), 22.

⁸⁹ Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 25.

and Gentiles in the Christian community.⁹⁰

However, the consistent avoidance of potentially divisive references and the avoidance of both distinctively Jewish⁹¹ and distinctively Gentile⁹² language suggest as addressees a group of mixed ethnic background.⁹³ Because the arguments on both sides, the Jewish Christian and the Gentile Christian readership, keep a balance, an intermediate ethnic background seems to be the best choice at present. The weight of the evidence, though not explicit but only inferential, tends toward a congregation of mixed background or, as Brown describes them, as Jewish Christians and their Gentile converts. What can be asserted confidently is the fact that the author writes to “Christians as Christians.”⁹⁴

The Essene Hypothesis

Some who argue that the people addressed were Jews have gone farther and identified them with a particular class of Jews. Karl Bornhäuser inferred from passages such as Heb 5:12, where the author expects the audience to be teachers of others, that they were not just Jewish Christians, but more probably converts from the Jewish priesthood, who were obedient to the faith, in the period before the expulsion of

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ For example: περιτομή, συναγωγή, Ἰσραήλ outside of quotations (Heb 8:8, 10) and historical reference (11:22).

⁹² For example: ἔθνη.

⁹³ “... un auditoire chrétien d’origine variée.” Vanhoye, *Situation du Christ*, 58.

⁹⁴ Werner Georg Kümmel, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament* (21st ed.; Heidelberg: Quelle & Meyer, 1983), 289.

Hellenistic believers from Jerusalem (Acts 6:7).⁹⁵

C. Spicq brought arguments of varying weight in support of the hypothesis that the intended readers of Hebrews were converted Jewish priests,⁹⁶ more precisely, Jerusalem priests.⁹⁷ Spicq claims that the πολὺς . . . ὄχλος of converted priests mentioned in Acts 6:7 may have numbered hundreds or even thousands, and finds it strange that they should not have left any trace in the New Testament.

However, as Ellingworth correctly remarks, the argument from silence is weak, and it is at least possible that they had no special status or function in the church, any more than converted landowners (Acts 4:37; 5:1), magicians (8:9-24), or army officers (10:1-11:18).⁹⁸ The writer's reproach that the readers should be teachers by this time is compatible with the audience being former priests, but does not require it. There is no specific significance to see the reference to Jesus as "our" high priest (Heb 3:1) as implying necessarily fellow priests, but could as naturally been used by laypeople.

Some years later Spicq further elaborated his thesis by arguing that these converted priests were "Esseno-Christian," including former members of the Qumran sect, whose doctrinal and biblical formation, intellectual preoccupation, and religious

⁹⁵ Karl Bernhard Bornhäuser, *Empfänger und Verfasser des Briefs an die Hebräer* (BFCT, ed. Adolf Schlatter and W. Lütgert, no. 35/3; Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1932), 320-22.

⁹⁶ Spicq, *L'Épître aux Hébreux: I Introduction*, 226-31.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 238-42.

⁹⁸ Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 27.

presuppositions were well known to our author.⁹⁹ Since the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls repeated attempts have been made to connect them with the Epistle to the Hebrews.

F. M. Braun expressed the view that “of all the New Testament writings, the Epistle to the Hebrews is the one which answers most fully to the basic tendencies of the [Qumran] sect.”¹⁰⁰ Similarly, Kosmala thinks “it is probable that the term ‘Hebrew’ as an ethnic description was common among Essenes, not so much the term ‘Jew,’ since the New Testament shows the term ‘Jew,’ or ‘Jews’ restricted to the representatives of the orthodox and official branch.”¹⁰¹ For Hans Kosmala the people addressed in the epistle were not yet Christians,¹⁰² but Jews who came so far on the way to Christianity that they had stopped short of the goal.¹⁰³ They were people who held views that are identical with those of the Essenes.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁹ Ceslas Spicq, "L'Épître aux Hébreux, Apollos, Jean-Baptiste, les Hellénistes et Qumrân," *RevQ* 1 (1959): 390.

¹⁰⁰ “De tous les écrits du Nouveau Testament, l'épître aux Hébreux est celui qui répond le plus pleinement aux tendances foncières de la secte.” François Marie Braun, “L'Arrière-Fond Judaïque du Quatrième Évangile et la Communauté de L'Alliance,” *RB* 62 (1955): 37.

¹⁰¹ “Es ist sehr wahrscheinlich, daß das Wort ‚Hebräer‘ als Stammesbezeichnung unter den hellenistischen Essenern geläufig war, nicht das Wort ‚Jude‘, denn wie das NT zeigt, war die Bezeichnung ‚Jude‘ oder ‚die Juden‘ durchaus den Vertretern der orthodoxen und offiziellen Richtung vorbehalten.” Hans Kosmala, ed., *Hebräer, Essener, Christen: Studien zur Vorgeschichte der Frühchristlichen Verkündigung* (StPB, ed. P. A. H. Boer, no. 1; Leiden: Brill, 1959), 345.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 69.

¹⁰³ So the condensed summary of Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, xxviii.

¹⁰⁴ Kosmala, ed., *Hebräer, Essener, Christen*, 38.

Y. Yadin went so far as to claim that the purpose of Hebrews was to convert Qumran members to full Christianity¹⁰⁵ because they had not given up their favorite theological ideas. For him, Hebrews is an attempt to expose these rival concepts. That is the reason why the epistle deals with the prophets (1:1-2), the polemic against angels (1:3-2:18), the large discussion about Aaron (4:14-10:23), etc. In sum, with these ex-Qumranites, Yadin claims to have found the “missing link movement in Judaism” against the beliefs of which the epistle is directed.¹⁰⁶

J. W. Bowmann maintains that the recipients of the epistle were members of the Hellenistic-Jewish Christian community of Palestine who had come under the influence of the Qumran sect.¹⁰⁷ There were serious defects in their understanding of the gospel, and these are the targets the author sets out to correct.¹⁰⁸ Against a facile identification of the two groups, F. F. Bruce states:

The most that can be said on this score, however, is that the recipients of the epistle were probably Jewish believers in Jesus whose background was not so

¹⁰⁵ Yigael Yadin, "The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Epistle to the Hebrews," in *Aspects of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (ed. Chaim Rabin and Yigael Yadin, ScrHier, no. 4; Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1965), 37-8.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 38.

¹⁰⁷ John Wick Bowman, *Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter, Jude, Revelation* (ed. Balmer H. Kelly and others; vol. 24; The Layman's Bible Commentary; Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), 13-6.

¹⁰⁸ Among others the Qumran sect looked forward to the appearance of two messiahs: one who would be of the House of Aaron, from the tribe of Levi; the other the messiah of David. The author of Hebrews, however, shows that Christ was from the tribe of Judah of whom nothing is said about the priesthood (7:14). In consequence, Jesus' high priesthood depends not upon his earthly connections. Another difference was the sacrifices to be offered. The Qumran sect did not ban animal sacrifices, but nothing in their scrolls suggests that the Messianic High Priest will secure eternal redemption with his own blood, not that of goats and calves (9:12).

much the normative Judaism represented by rabbinical tradition as the nonconformist Judaism of which the Essenes and the Qumran community are outstanding representatives, but not the only representatives.¹⁰⁹

In a paper read in 1962 in Münster, and later published in NTS, prior to publishing his commentary on Hebrews, Bruce would be even more restrictive in his assertion by saying “it would be outstripping the evidence to call them Essenes or spiritual brethren to the men of Qumran.”¹¹⁰

J. Coppens has subjected the list of correspondences and similarities between Hebrews and the Qumran literature to critical examination.¹¹¹ I endorse his conclusions. He states that the analogies are few and unspecific and asks if these affinities of thought and vocabulary transcend the common inheritance shared by all Jewish circles.¹¹² More specifically, Coppens misses certain Qumran distinctives¹¹³ such as: the dualism between Christ and Belial, the contrast between the sons of light and the sons of darkness, the double predestination of humans to salvation and to damnation, the theological opposition between flesh and spirit, the cleansing power of the spirit, and the equivalence

¹⁰⁹ Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, xxix.

¹¹⁰ Frederick Fyvie Bruce, “‘To the Hebrews’ or ‘To the Essenes,’” *NTS* 9 (1963): 232.

¹¹¹ The two articles appeared in February and March of the same year. J. Coppens, “Les Affinités Qumrâniennes De L'Épître Aux Hébreux,” *NRTh* 94 (1962): 128-21; *ibid.*, 257-82.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 271.

¹¹³ Coppens finds support with David Flusser, “The Dead Sea Sect and Pre-Pauline Christianity,” in *Aspects of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (ed. Chaim Rabin and Yigael Yadin, *ScrHier*, no. 4; Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1965), 217-18.

of the community with the spiritual temple.¹¹⁴

Probably the most thorough survey of possible points of contact between Hebrews and the Qumran corpus comes from Herbert Braun.¹¹⁵ In an almost verse-by-verse analysis he discusses points of contact, but also points of difference between Hebrews and Qumran. Mostly he is in dialogue with Spicq, F. M. Braun, and others. The conviction of living in the last days (Heb 1:2) is, according to F. M. Braun, a clear indication of the Qumran background of the audience. In fact, the Qumran community had a strong eschatological orientation (cf. 1QSa; and 1QpHab). However, argues H. Braun, since an explicit *Naheschatologie* is also present in the different Christian literature of the apostolic time, a relationship between Qumran and Hebrews cannot be presupposed.

The term καθαρίζειν, according to Spicq, shows a clear John the Baptist or Qumran background of the Hebrew audience, because the Baptist cleansed while in Paul the Spirit sanctifies. H. Braun counters by questioning the *a priori* that John the Baptist and Qumran are equated¹¹⁶ and refers Spicq to the fact that Hebrews speaks of ἀγιάζειν as often as of καθαρίζειν while the Qumran texts speak of װדק no less than of רחב. In Heb 9:13, 14 “sanctifying” and “cleansing” are used synonymously as in 1QS III, 4 and

¹¹⁴ Coppens, “Les Affinités Qumrâniennes De L'Épître Aux Hébreux,” 273.

¹¹⁵ Herbert Braun, *Qumran und das Neue Testament* (vol. 1; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1966), 241-178.

¹¹⁶ Jean Daniélou is a scholar who takes the silence of John the Baptist regarding the Essenes—compared to the Pharisees and Sadducees he opposed—as an indication that he himself was deeply influenced by Essenism. Jean Daniélou, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and Primitive Christianity* (trans. Salvator Attanasio; Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1958), 18-20.

III, 8, 9. Furthermore, Spicq compared the interchangeability of “angels,” “winds,” and “spirits” in Heb 1:7 with 1QH I, 10-12 and 1QM X, 12. The same is done in Heb 1:14, where angels are described as ministering spirits, compared to 1QM I, 16; VII, 6; IX, 15,16; XII, 8, 9.¹¹⁷ However, this is not an occurrence only in Qumran and Hebrews, but is a general Jewish phenomena.¹¹⁸

There is indeed a superficial resemblance, as H. Braun correctly observes in his comprehensive study, between Qumran and Hebrews. While Qumran reacts against the corruption of the contemporary Jerusalem priesthood, Hebrews shows the inadequacy and temporality of the levitical institutions themselves.¹¹⁹ Hebrews rejects the laws of purity and diet about which the sectarians were obsessively concerned (1QS 1:11-12; 6:17-22); has no mythic explanation for the world’s division into good and evil (1QS 3:13-4:260); does not advocate a withdrawal from the godless or an absolute community of possessions (1QS 3:2; 5:2-3).¹²⁰ Most of all, Johnson correctly remarks, “Qumran does not really help us to grasp Hebrews’ most basic conviction concerning what constitutes ‘the better.’”¹²¹ Ellingworth sees Qumran as a reform movement, whereas Hebrews is revolutionary.¹²²

¹¹⁷ Braun, *Qumran und das NT*, 241-44.

¹¹⁸ See the discussion on Heb 1:7 and 1:14 in Str-B 3:678-681.

¹¹⁹ Braun, *Qumran und das NT*, 278.

¹²⁰ Johnson, *Hebrews*, 28.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 48.

The Essene Hypothesis¹²³ has found little support in recent years. While some scholars have judged the hypothesis to be well founded,¹²⁴ most see it failed,¹²⁵ strained and artificial,¹²⁶ the resemblance as impossible,¹²⁷ and the differences more important than the similarities.¹²⁸ The many parallel points adduced to Qumran, says Hurst, are also parallel to Philo and other backgrounds, which make it more likely that all the similarities are due to a common background—traditional exegesis of the Old Testament.¹²⁹

Situation of the Addressees

As described above, the audience went through the three phases of conversion,

¹²³ The publication in the mid-1960s of 11QMelch revived the discussion about Hebrews and Qumran once again. Marinus de Jonge and Adam S. van der Woude, "11Q Melchizedek and the New Testament," *NTS* 12 (1966): 301-26. In the concluding remarks of his article, Fitzmyer states that it is not possible to say that the presentation of Melchizedek, which is found in 11 QMelchizedek, directly influenced the midrash on him in Heb 7 because the latter is developed almost exclusively in terms of the classic OT loci, Gen 14 and Ps 110. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "Further Light on Melchizedek from Qumran Cave 11," *JBL* 86 (1967): 41. Nevertheless, the discussion of Melchizedek and Qumran has been stimulated by the kind of speculation found at Qumran. Paul Ellingworth, "'Like the Son of God:' Form and Content in Hebrews 7:1-10," *Bib* 64 (1983): 254.

¹²⁴ L. D. Hurst, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: Its Background of Thought* (ed. G. N. Stanton; *SNTMS*, ed. G. N. Stanton, no. 65; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 66.

¹²⁵ Grässer, "Der Hebräerbrief 1938-1963," 176.

¹²⁶ Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 10n.82.

¹²⁷ Grässer, "Der Hebräerbrief 1938-1963," 176.

¹²⁸ Montefiore, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 18.

¹²⁹ Hurst, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 66.

conflict, and a waning commitment.¹³⁰ The question to be asked at this point is: What could have brought about this change in the audience within the third phase? Scholars have engaged in various degrees of “mirror reading”¹³¹ of the evidence in the letter and have offered a huge range of possible situations which could have occasioned such a response as Hebrews.

Some have suggested a situation of persecution in which the recipients are considering abandoning their faith in favor of Judaism, a *religio licita*,¹³² a tolerated religion within the Empire.¹³³ This theory is also called the “relapse theory,”¹³⁴ a relapse back into Judaism supported by the attention given to it thematically within the sermon.

The theory has various shades which include the idea that the audience was not only on the verge of relapsing back into Judaism, but failed to move completely out of

¹³⁰ A series of verbs describes this danger of the waning commitment while using different metaphors: παραρρέω (2:1); ἀμελέω (2:3); ἀποστῆναι (3:12); ὑστερέω (4:1; 12:15); παραπίπτω (6:6); ἀποβάλλω (10:35); ὑποστέλλω (10:38).

¹³¹ DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude*, 17.

¹³² See Loader, *Sohn und Hohepriester*, 258; John A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1976), 212.

¹³³ So Hagner, *Encountering the Book of Hebrews*, 23; Donald Alfred Hagner, *Hebrews* (Good News Commentaries; ed. W. Ward Gasque; San Francisco, Calif.: Harper & Row, 1983), xxii; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 36; Gooding, *An Unshakeable Kingdom*, 20; Brown, *The Message of Hebrews*, 14; Pfitzner, *Hebrews*, 29.

¹³⁴ Graham Hughes, *Hebrews and Hermeneutics: The Epistle to the Hebrews as a New Testament Example of Biblical Interpretation* (SNTSMS, ed. R. McL. Wilson, no. 36; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 2; Lutisone Salevao, *Legitimation in the Letter to the Hebrews: The Construction and Maintenance of a Symbolic Universe* (JSNTSup, no. 219; ed. Stanley E. Porter; London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 109.

Judaism.¹³⁵ Thus the letter is seen as “intending a polemical confrontation with Judaism,”¹³⁶ arguing the impossibility of returning to Jewish forms of worship totally outmoded by the advent of Jesus, and earnestly encouraging a persevering allegiance to the confession. As to why this tendency to relapse had arisen, there is no agreement among scholars except the threat of impending persecution which might be forcing the readers to find refuge in the shelter of Judaism as *religio licita*. Those scholars who accept the relapse theory tend to advocate a Jewish Christian readership as the audience of Hebrews. In this respect, they view the danger of relapsing as precipitated by socio-political pressure.¹³⁷

Other scholars have proposed different reasons for the rising despair among the readers. The delay of the parousia could have been another factor. G. W. Buchanan creatively suggests that the letter was sent to a group of Jewish Christians of the Diaspora who had returned to Jerusalem to observe the establishment of the reign of God.¹³⁸ Since the delay of the parousia had caused them to lose hope, so Buchanan, they might have been tempted to hasten the coming redemption by engaging in the Day of Atonement with other Jews in Jerusalem.¹³⁹ Here the danger of relapse was occasioned by the theological perceptions of the readers, which gave rise to the “social issue of

¹³⁵ Salevao, *Legitimation in the Letter to the Hebrews*, 109.

¹³⁶ Hughes, *Hebrews and Hermeneutics*, 2.

¹³⁷ Salevao, *Legitimation in the Letter to the Hebrews*, 109.

¹³⁸ Buchanan, *To the Hebrews*, 264.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 266.

disillusionment as a result of the continued delay of the parousia.”¹⁴⁰

Barnabas Lindars, deviating slightly from Buchanan, sees the whole point at issue to be a felt need on the part of the readers to resort to Jewish customs in order to come to terms with their sense of sin against God and the need for atonement. Therefore the central argument of the letter, according to Lindars, is a compelling case for the complete and abiding efficacy of Jesus’ death as an atoning sacrifice.¹⁴¹

Other scholars advocate different reasons than the relapse theory for the situation in Hebrews. Jewett compares Colossians with Hebrews and detects important indications of a unique Jewish-Gnostic heresy prevalent in the Lycus Valley. He then concludes that the parallels between Hebrews and Colossians raise the possibility that they were written by different authors to the same situation at approximately the same time.¹⁴² Thus Jewett favors the situation of danger from heretical teaching.

McCown and Schmidt suggest that the primary problem is the addressees’ spiritual “anemia and fatigue”¹⁴³ or their “personal or corporate laxity.”¹⁴⁴ This is also the position of Weiss who talks about “Glaubensmüdigkeit und Leidensscheu vielmehr, ja sogar ‚Abstumpfung’ (5,11; 6,12) bestimmen die Situation und mit alledem zugleich die

¹⁴⁰ Salevao, *Legitimation in the Letter to the Hebrews*, 110.

¹⁴¹ Lindars, *The Theology of the Letter to the Hebrews*, 10.

¹⁴² Robert Jewett, *Letter to Pilgrims: A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1981), 6-7.

¹⁴³ W. G. McCown, “*Ho Logos Tes Parakleseos*: The Nature and Function of the Hortatory Sections in the Epistle to the Hebrews” (Ph.D. diss., Union Theological Seminary in Virginia, 1970), quoted in DeSilva, “The Epistle to the Hebrews,” 9.

Gefahr des Abfalls vom Glauben.”¹⁴⁵ In other words, the eschatological hope of the addressees has become exhausted (10:23, 35); patience and perseverance in their faith no longer characterizes the addressees but they are shrinking back and are in danger of throwing away their *παρησία* (10:35-39).¹⁴⁶ This presupposed situation seems to be characteristic for the second-generation Christians.¹⁴⁷

Moffatt describes the trouble the readers had not as a theoretical doubt, but a “practical failure to be loyal to their principles,” which the writer seeks to meet by recalling them to the full meaning and responsibility of their faith.¹⁴⁸ George H. Guthrie calls it a struggle against “spiritual lethargy,” which, if not addressed, could lead them to abandoning their Christian confession.¹⁴⁹ Underlining this facet of the readers’ experience, the following comment by McFadyen is instructive:

¹⁴⁴ Thomas E. Schmidt, "Moral Lethargy and the Epistle to the Hebrews," *WTJ* 54 (1992): 173.

¹⁴⁵ Weiss, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 72.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ Grässer discusses this issue in more detail while engaging in discussions with L. Goppelt who raises the important question of: How can the tension be kept over time between the eschatological existence and the historical existence? There is hardly a more pressing problem in the literature of the church during the second and third Christian generation, asserts Grässer. For a fuller treatment of this problem see Erich Grässer, *Der Glaube im Hebräerbrief* (ed. Hans Grass and Werner Kümmel; Marburg: N. G. Elwert, 1965), 200; Leonhard Goppelt, *Die Apostolische und Nachapostolische Zeit* (2nd ed.; Die Kirche in ihrer Geschichte, no. 1; ed. Kurt Dietrich Schmidt and Ernst Wolf; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966), 94.

¹⁴⁸ Moffatt, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, xvii.

¹⁴⁹ Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 21.

The readers, as we have said, are experiencing the temptations that beset advancing age. The enthusiasm of youth has gone; the splendour of the dawn has faded, and the swinging step of the young man has changed to the prosaic tramp of the aging. The magic wand has lost its power, and life has become a thing of dull and drab routine. ‘What does it matter?’ they are beginning to ask. ‘We have struggled and suffered, and we are no whit better off than those who have refused to struggle and suffer.’¹⁵⁰

Some scholars prefer to see a number of co-existing factors that determine the situation of the audience, understanding the author to respond to a variety of concerns.

Allowing for pluricausal factors, Attridge argues:

From the response he gives to the problem, it would appear that the author conceives of the threat to the community in two broad but interrelated categories, external pressure or ‘persecution’ (10:36-12:13) and a waning commitment to the community’s confessed faith. To the first he responds with his stern warnings and his exhortations to faithful discipleship. To the second he proposes a renewed and deepened understanding of the community’s confession that will inspire covenant fidelity.¹⁵¹

Of all these suggestions, that of Harold Attridge appears to be closest to the target, claims deSilva.¹⁵²

Looking at the textual evidence one can see that the classification of passive¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰ J. F. McFadyen, “The Message of the Epistles: Hebrews,” *ExpTim* 45 (1934): 316. M. Dibelius further reinforces this by pointing out that these situations are what he calls the “typischen Erscheinungen einer Christlichkeit, die ihre erste Begeisterung verloren hat.” Martin Dibelius, “Der Himmlische Kultus nach dem Hebräerbrief,” in *Botschaft und Geschichte: Gesammelte Aufsätze* (ed. Günther Bornkamm, vol. 2; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1956), 160.

¹⁵¹ Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 13. Robert Gordon, Jim Girdwood, and Peter Verkruyse emphasize just one of the two causes mentioned above in their commentaries, namely the effect of hardship and suffering under persecution. See Gordon, *Hebrews*, 16, and James Girdwood and Peter Verkruyse, *Hebrews* (The College Press NIV Commentary; Joplin, Mo.: College Press, 1997), 16.

¹⁵² DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude*, 18.

¹⁵³ Not in terms of grammatical morphology.

expressions, passages which refer to the possibility of active rebellion against the will of God, and references to outward pressure described by Ellingworth has value.¹⁵⁴ First, the predominately passive expressions seem to denote weariness in pursuing the Christian goal.¹⁵⁵ The audience is encouraged not to “drift away” (2:1); not to “neglect” (2:3) salvation; not to “fail to reach” his rest (4:1); not to lose hold on the faith they confess (4:14); not to lose their confidence (10:19,23); not to become “dull of understanding” (5:11); not to become “sluggish” (6:12); in parabolic speech, not to prove unproductive (6:7); not to grow weary and lose heart (12:3); not to “be carried away by all kinds of strange teaching” (13:9).

Second, there are passages which indicate at least the possibility too of active rebellion against God. Some of the audience are in danger of having an evil, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God (3:12); to disobey like the exodus generation (4:11); to fall away, crucifying the Son of God, and holding him up to contempt (6:6); to willfully persist in sin (10:26); to spurn the Son of God, to profane the blood of the covenant and to insult the Spirit of grace (12:29); not to let a bitter root spring up (12:15); to refuse to listen to God’s voice (12:25). While it is true that the author never states that his audience has committed apostasy, Ellingworth is right when he concludes that “the language in places is so strong that the author must have considered it a real danger.”¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴ Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 78-9.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 78.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 79.

Third, there are references to outward pressure amounting to persecution. The readers are being tested like Jesus was tested (2:18; 4:15); as the community had experienced trials in earlier times (10:32) they seem likely to increase in severity (12:4).¹⁵⁷ While outward pressure was an element in the situation, the writer does not place resistance to persecution at the center of his appeal. “Inner weakness may have been a chronic condition predisposing some of the readers to abandon, at some critical point, their faith in Christ, but the writer stresses in the strongest terms the personal responsibility of those who (almost by definition wilfully [*sic*]) apostatize.”¹⁵⁸

Viewing Hebrews against the cultural background of a society that takes as its pivotal values honor and shame¹⁵⁹ leads to a new insight into both the nature of “external

¹⁵⁷ While past trials and persecution were a fact in the experience of the readers, the allusion in 12:4 (“you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood”) which is often taken to mean that the addressees are currently experiencing persecution which is not yet violent, has been challenged by Thomas E. Schmidt, who thinks that this might be a simple reference to their earlier trial (10:32-34), which did not involve bloodshed, but says nothing about their current experience of persecution. This view is supported by the generality of the terms of struggle: both in 12:1 and 12:4. The opponent is sin, not sinners (contrasted with the case of Jesus in v. 3). Schmidt, 168.

¹⁵⁸ Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 80.

¹⁵⁹ In Greco-Roman culture, honor and shame served as powerful motivators for action. One’s reputation before the court of human opinion was important. Even philosophers who challenged conventional norms appealed to notions of honor and shame according to their alternative value systems. For a general introduction see David Arthur DeSilva, *The Hope of Glory: Honor Discourse and New Testament Interpretation* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1999). In his dissertation the same author argues that the Letter to the Hebrews urges the Christians to “despise shame” before the eyes of the dominant culture whose values differ from or oppose those of the minority culture. The representatives of the dominant culture sought to exercise social control in the form of the negative sanctions of ascribed disgrace and marginalization, by means of which they sought to bring the Christians back into conformity with society’s values and to the behaviors which maintain society’s world-view. The author urges the addressees to seek honor before the alternate court of opinion formed by God and the believing community,

pressure” and the cause of the “waning commitment” to Christian involvement, asserts deSilva.¹⁶⁰ Thus the situation appears to be “a crisis not of impending persecution, nor of heretical subversion, but rather of commitment occasioned as a result of the difficulties of remaining long without honor in the world.”¹⁶¹ The danger of falling away stems from the loss of status and esteem in the dominant culture without yet receiving the promised rewards of the sect. Such a situation makes the readers grow disillusioned with the promise of the sect.¹⁶²

In terms of explanatory value the suggestion proposed by Attridge and expanded by deSilva makes the most sense and deserves much more attention than the relapse theory. Lane concludes that the writer’s “concern was not that members of the community would simply return to the synagogue, but that they would turn away from the living God altogether (3:12-13)!”¹⁶³

However, as described above many scholars accept the relapse theory because

which is superior to the societal court by virtue of the former’s belonging to the realm of that which remains fixed and eternal, while the latter belongs to the transitory realm of that which shall one day be shaken and removed (12:26-28). Within the Christian minority culture, honor and dishonor now function to motivate the pursuit of Christian virtues, the performance of deeds which demonstrate obedience to Christ, and to deter the wavering from falling away from his place in God’s favor. “Disgrace before the world’s court as the price of honor before God’s court is a price well paid, whereas the reverse transaction is as foolish as Esau’s trade with Jacob (12:16-17).” DeSilva, *Despising Shame*, 314-120.

¹⁶⁰ DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude*, 54.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

¹⁶³ Robert W. Wall and William L. Lane, “Polemic in Hebrews and the Catholic Epistles,” in *Anti-Semitism and Early Christianity: Issues of Polemic and Faith* (ed. Craig A. Evans and Donald Alfred Hagner; Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1993), 184.

they feel it makes sense of features such as the superiority of Christianity versus the inferiority of Judaism. Further, it explains why the author was extremely harsh in his warnings. For instance, the warning in 6:4-6 and related texts should be understood and explained in terms of the horror of apostasy back into Judaism.¹⁶⁴

There are of course objections which undermine, legitimately, the cogency of the relapse theory.¹⁶⁵ In Ernst Käsemann's evaluation, that Hebrews constitutes a historically conditioned dispute with the Jewish religion is an "old prejudice."¹⁶⁶ This prejudice has given rise to much exegetical confusion that leads Käsemann to firmly assert: "It is a product of fantasy to read from our letter a Judaizing disintegration threatening the Christian community or the danger of apostasy toward Judaism."¹⁶⁷ He would even claim that "relapse into Judaism [is] superimposed on the entire letter."¹⁶⁸ For Käsemann, Heb 13:9f. are too obscure to furnish an anti-Jewish character on the part of Hebrews, but the real danger that threatens the community is none other than "weariness and weakness of faith."¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁴ Salevao, *Legitimation in the Letter to the Hebrews*, 113.

¹⁶⁵ Salevao calls the alternative to the relapse theory "an untenable alternative." Ibid., 115.

¹⁶⁶ Ernst Käsemann, *The Wandering People of God: An Investigation of the Letter to the Hebrews* (trans. Roy A. Harrisville and Irving L. Sandberg; Minneapolis: Augsburg Pub. House, 1984), 24.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 25, n. 12.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 25. Käsemann's suggestion, that the letter is presented within the framework of the opposition between the heavenly and the earthly according to Gnostic speculation, has come under critique. In his view, Judaism was used by the author merely

John V. Dahms, though taking the assumption that the readers of Hebrews are Jewish Christians, argues against a relapse into Judaism.¹⁷⁰ That the readers were not in danger of relapsing into Judaism is evident first of all from the way in which the author refers to Jesus as Christ. He argues a variety of things about him, but he never argues his messiahship or that Jesus is the Son of God. He takes it for granted (cf. 3:6; 4:14; 5:5, a messianic Psalm addressed to “the Christ,” a designation used as an alternative to “Jesus,” 4:14; 6:1).

In 3:14 (we have become partakers of Christ, if indeed we hold fast the first confidence until the end) the author does not exhort the audience to hold fast the “confidence in Christ” but “the first confidence in Christ.” Indeed τὴν ἀρχὴν is in the emphatic position at the beginning of that conditional clause. That means the author is not so much concerned about the confidence in Jesus as their Christ as he is concerned about the *first* confidence, or the first commitment to Christ which they are about to lose.

In 1:6, Jesus is introduced as “the firstborn,” a well-recognized designation for the Messiah (Rom 8:29; Col 1:15, 18; Rev 1:5). That such a name can be introduced without any attempt to justify its use supports the view that the readers were not questioning the

as a symbol of the earthly. Contra Käsemann, it is argued that his hypothesis is faulted because it unfairly reduces the significance of Judaism to mere symbolism. Salevao, *Legitimation in the Letter to the Hebrews*, 116; Hughes, *Hebrews and Hermeneutics*, 26, 42; Brevard S. Childs, *The New Testament as Canon: An Introduction* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 409; Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 25, n. 201. While Salevao criticizes Käsemann’s imposing Gnostic thought on the author’s realm of ideas, he gives him credit for the fact that the pilgrimage concept proposed by Käsemann provides, at least from a social point of view, the community with a way of dealing with their alienated status. Salevao, *Legitimation in the Letter to the Hebrews*, 137.

¹⁷⁰ Dahms, “First Readers of Hebrews,” 365. Since I endorse most of Dahms’s arguments, what follows is a summary of his most forceful reasons against a relapse into Judaism.

messiahship of Jesus and consequently relapsing into Judaism.

One has to ask if the exhortation and warning passages are compatible with this view. In Heb 2:3-4 the author does not warn against “neglect” of the “Lord,” but neglect of the “salvation . . . declared first through the Lord . . . confirmed to us by those who heard him.” In accord with this is to be noted that the exhortation in 3:1 is not “consider that Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession,” as RSV has it, but to “consider the apostle and high priest of our confession, Jesus.”¹⁷¹ The readers did not need to consider Jesus, but his apostleship and high priesthood. Evidently the danger of neglecting the salvation Christ provided involved neglect of his high priesthood.

The warning in 6:6—since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God—does not make sense if the audience is in danger of relapsing into Judaism. Their response would be, ‘But we doubt that Jesus is the Son of God.’

After setting forth the faith that the readers need in Heb 11 the audience is in danger of “growing weary and losing heart” (12:3). If the readers were in danger of relapsing into Judaism, it would be useless to describe Christ’s sufferings as the endurance of the hostility of sinners against himself (“For consider him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself,” 12:3). If relapsing was the situation, they would have thought that Jesus was the sinner who deserved to be destroyed. Likewise it would be inappropriate to describe Jesus as “the pioneer and perfecter of the faith” (not *our* faith).

The emphasis in 13:7, 8 on the changelessness of Jesus Christ is quite irrelevant if

¹⁷¹ Cf. the Elberfelder Übersetzung: “. . . betrachtet den Apostel und Hohenpriester unseres Bekenntnisses, Jesus . . .”

the danger was a lapse into Judaism. It is relevant if the danger is in accepting a view different from the one that was presented by their leaders who told them the word of God.

Furthermore, if the “strange teachings” in 13:9 are Jewish teachings, as the context seems to suggest, then “strange” must mean ‘strange to Christianity,’ which would not be most fitting if the danger were that of lapsing into Judaism.¹⁷²

Lastly, the “better than-motif” constitutes a problem for some scholars to accept an attraction to Judaism as a viable option. In Hebrews one finds the contrast of the old with the new—“in the past . . . in these days” (1:1-2). Here the author argues that the new revelation is superior to the old because it comes through one who is Son rather than through prophets, and because it comes perfectly rather than fragmentarily. The key word Hebrews uses to describe this superiority motif is the comparative adjective *κρείττων*. The term occurs thirteen times in the Epistle (1:4; 6:9; 7:7, 19, 22; 8:6; 9:23; 10:34; 11:16, 35, 40; 12:24). The argument is structured around a series of comparisons.

The old and the new run together throughout the composition, with the new growing out of the old, building upon it, but also surpassing it. So, apart from the better revelation of 1:1-4, we find the better name (1:5-14), the better leader (3:1-6), the better priest (4:14-5:10), the better priesthood (7:1-28), the better sanctuary (8:1-6), the better covenant (8:6-13), the better blood (9:1-10:18), the better country (11:13-16), and the better city (12:18-24; 13:14). If relapse into Judaism would be the problem the author addresses then the supra-prophetic, the supra-angelical, the supra-mosaic, the supra-levitical dignity of Christ would be contrary to the concern of the audience.

¹⁷² See also Hughes, *Hebrews and Hermeneutics*, 27.

As argued above, if the audience was of mixed ethnic background, the fact that circumcision is not mentioned at all makes it even less probable that the readers are in danger of relapsing into Judaism. McFadyen boldly asserts that in Hebrews “there is no suggestion that the readers were practicing, or were being tempted to practice, the ancient Jewish or any other ritual of sacrifice.”¹⁷³

The evidence between relapsing or disaffection from an earlier commitment to the community tilts, for Luke T. Johnson, toward disaffection because of negative experience rather than apostasy because of a stronger attraction. “Little in the composition suggests powerful positive attraction from another source.”¹⁷⁴

Along the same lines deSilva reasons that neither “the threat of violent persecution nor a new attraction to Judaism motivates this apostasy, but rather the more pedestrian inability to live within the lower status that Christian associations had forced upon them, the less-than-dramatic (yet potent) desire once more to enjoy the goods and esteem of their society.”¹⁷⁵

Commenting on this phenomenon Koester wrote that when “the author points out the parallels between the wilderness generation and the Christian community, he faults those who do not faithfully adhere to the company of ‘those who actually listened’ (4:2),

¹⁷³ McFadyen, “The Message of the Epistles: Hebrews,” 313.

¹⁷⁴ Johnson, *Hebrews*, 36. Craig R. Koester rightly concludes that the dissatisfaction of the audience seems to emerge from their negative experience as Christians rather than from a positive attraction to the synagogue. Craig R. Koester, review of *Hebrews: A Commentary*, by Luke Timothy Johnson, *Review of Biblical Literature* (2007): 2. Cited 10 February 2007. Online: <http://www.bookreviews.org>.

¹⁷⁵ DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude*, 19.

but he does not warn about joining another community.”¹⁷⁶ The situation thus presented appears to be a crisis neither of impending persecution¹⁷⁷ nor of heretical subversion, but rather a crisis of commitment.

The impression given by the text is that the earlier fervor of those Christians had cooled. The author speaks of the danger of “drifting away” (2:1) from the message heard, of “neglecting salvation,” which had its beginnings with Jesus (2:3), of “turning away from the living God” (3:12), of “failing to reach the rest” (4:1), of “falling through disobedience” like the wilderness generation (4:11), of becoming “dull in hearing” (5:11), of not being mature enough after the given time (5:12), of the dangers of falling away (6:6), of forsaking the own assembling together (10:25),¹⁷⁸ of “trampling underfoot

¹⁷⁶ Koester, *Hebrews*, 72.

¹⁷⁷ Contra Hughes, *Hebrews and Hermeneutics*, 28. The implication of growing persecution is not likely because first, the major examples invoked throughout the letter have to do with internal faltering or commitment, not with bloody persecution. Second, we should expect far more to have been made with Daniel, the young men in the furnace, and the Maccabean-era martyrs, were these the case. DeSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 781.

¹⁷⁸ Salevao reads out of this passage “disunity in the community,” a “situation of conflict in the house church,” or “dissension among them.” Salevao, *Legitimation in the Letter to the Hebrews*, 141-3. While this is a creative reading, the context does not seem to support it. The three hortatory subjunctives seem not to have internal conflicts as their object of discussion. The appeal προσερχώμεθα (10:22), with a “true heart,” a metaphor suggesting sincerity and loyalty, refers to the access to God made available in Christ (cf. 4:16). The next exhortation, κατέχωμεν (10:23), has as object the “confidence” characterized by hope. For Attridge this characterization is evocative of the eschatological elements associated with the confession of one whose lordship is yet to be fully realized. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 289. The last hortatory appeal, κατανοῶμεν (10:24), aims at mutual stimulation to “love and good works,” probably a hendiadys since love is not a vague principle or emotion, but is shown by the doing of good deeds. Johnson, *Hebrews*, 259-60. None of these exhortations give even a clue to internal conflicts of the community. Furthermore, the ultimate motive given in 10:25 is the “day” that draws nearer. DeSilva underlines the importance of this point and

the Son of God, regarding as profane the blood by which you are sanctified, and affronting the Spirit of grace (10:29) and sees the readers as a group not “shrinking back” (10:39). “In general,” states deSilva, “the author sees the possibility of a faltering commitment (Heb 10:35-36; 12:12).”¹⁷⁹ Hence his call for mutual encouragement (3:13; 10:25) stems from the external pressure, defined by deSilva as a “longing for a certain ‘at-homeness’ with the larger society,”¹⁸⁰ and the waning commitment to the community’s confessed faith rather than relapsing into Judaism.

Summary and Conclusion

The textual evidence indicates that the Epistle to the Hebrews has been addressed to a community of Christians who underwent at least a three-phase development. The first phase encompassed the proclamation by the ear-witnesses of the Lord’s message who later conveyed it to the audience of Hebrews. This proclamation of the message was accompanied by both signs and miracles and the distribution of the Holy Spirit. Those who came to faith were those who were enlightened, led to repentance and faith, tasted of the heavenly gift and the good word of God, followed by baptism and the laying on of

concludes: “As the eschatological clock ticks on, the believers should become more fervent rather than less fervent.” DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude*, 342. What caused a distancing of self from the community is a sense of discouragement and lack of hope. Johnson, *Hebrews*, 261. Thus, a reading of internal disunity seems to be rather improbable. In addition, Salevao speculates that the internal conflict could have a theological cause like the strange teachings in 13:9. To support his theory Salevao has to assume that the adjective “strange” was a political strategy of social domination, stigmatization, and control, externalizing those who advocated non-conformist views of reality. Salevao, *Legitimation in the Letter to the Hebrews*, 142. However, this chain of presupposition extends too far and is vague, a fact that he himself admits.

¹⁷⁹ DeSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 780.

¹⁸⁰ DeSilva, "The Epistle to the Hebrews," 10.

hands. By the confession of their faith the community received its group identity and distinguished itself from the outside world.

The second phase was characterized by conflict with those outside the community and solidarity among those inside the community. These phenomena helped reaffirm the group's distinctive identity, while promoting support for one another. It can also weaken the affiliation to the group.

This seems to be, at least, partially the problem in the third phase of this group's history. While some members continued to care for the others in the community, some showed signs of malaise. The culmination of these tendencies could be apostasy, according to the author. Therefore the sermon encourages perseverance rather than shrinking back.

Pursuing the profile of the audience it seems that a shift in approaching Hebrews has taken place away from a Jewish readership to a Gentile one and back to a mixed audience. In favor of a Jewish Christian readership is the fact that the author moves easily through the Old Testament Scripture and its rabbinic methods of interpretation, which presuppose that the audience must have been familiar with them to a certain degree. In favor of a Gentile Christian readership are phrases such as 'repentance from dead works,' 'faith toward God,' and 'enlightenment,' which were ways of expressing conversion from paganism to Christianity. Also the basic teachings mentioned in Heb 6:1-2 are seen by proponents of this view as topics used by Jews in their proselytizing mission to Gentiles. The acquaintance with the LXX and rabbinic methods of interpreting Scripture were due to the socializing process into the sect, according to scholars who prefer this view. The best reasons seem to support a mixed ethnic background. This is the view adopted in the

present work. The author calls the ancestors “fathers” rather than ‘our fathers.’ The epistle never mentions Jews or Christians, the Temple or circumcision, never makes negative references to Jews or Gentiles, and refrains from divisive references to Jews or Gentiles. The important group to belong to is the *λαός* of God. If credibility is attributed to R. Brown, then all types of Christianity were a mixture of Jewish Christians and their Gentile converts.

The Essene hypothesis has been dismissed mostly because certain Qumran specifics are missing in Hebrews such as the dualism between Christ and Belial, the contrast between the sons of light and the sons of darkness, the opposition between flesh and spirit, and the corruption of the Jerusalem priesthood contrasted with the inadequacy of the levitical priesthood in Hebrews.

Regarding the situation of the addressees, many scholars have adopted the relapse theory, believing the addressees to have relapsed for socio-political reasons, the delay of the parousia, or a heightened consciousness of sin. Others advocate danger from heretical teachings, spiritual lethargy, or a combination of external pressure and waning commitment.

That the relapse theory has little support in the text itself is evident from the introduction of Christ as firstborn (1:6; a messianic term) without justifying its use or talking about Christ without arguing his messiahship. Furthermore, if the audience would be in danger of relapsing they would neglect their Lord, but Heb 2:3 warns not of neglecting the Lord, but the salvation declared through the Lord. The issue in Heb 3-4 is the antithesis of unfaithfulness and obedience, not joining another community. Therefore external pressure, linked to a loss of honor or esteem in their society, while deprived of

the promised rewards and the waning commitment to the community's confessed faith, seems to best describe the situation of the audience.

Given the conclusion I reached that the profile of the audience is a mixed ethnic background, the absence of any mention of what happens to those among the community who are Gentile Christians makes the relapse theory fade even more. Thus we have to find out what a waning commitment encompasses in terms of fidelity to the Christian message and what the audience gives up to gain better status within their society. Before answering the previous questions, let us look at how the book is structured and what passages are linked together because these insights might give us clues to better identify the consequences of a waning commitment.

CHAPTER III

THE STRUCTURAL RELATIONSHIP OF HEBREWS 4 AND 10

Introduction

The structure of the book of Hebrews has been the subject of an ongoing debate with little agreement on the major and minor divisions of the book or the development of its argument. Even a casual perusal of recently published commentaries on Hebrews demonstrates the vast disparity between current approaches to the book's organization of material.¹

There are almost as many outlines set forth as there are scholars who take up the task. David A. Black states, "If the common man has found it difficult to follow the author's movement of thought in Hebrews, the NT specialist has not fared any better."² This is not very surprising, since the reader comes to the texts with structural expectations that have their source in their culture. It is common for a text to be misunderstood or misinterpreted because there are differences in culture and background

¹ George H. Guthrie, *The Structure of Hebrews: A Text-Linguistic Analysis* (NovTSup, no. 73; ed. A. J. Malherbe and D. P. Moessner; Leiden, New York: E.J. Brill, 1994), xvii.

² David A. Black, "The Problem of the Literary Structure of Hebrews: An Evaluation and a Proposal," *GTJ* 7 (1986): 164.

between contemporary readers and the original author/speaker and intended recipients.³

That is why George H. Guthrie presents the question:

If a scholar is confused, uncertain, or incorrect in evaluating the structure of an author's discourse, is that scholar not destined to flounder at points when presenting propositions concerning the author's intended meanings in the various sections of that discourse? Stated another way, can accurate exegesis of a given passage be carried out without a proper understanding of the broader literary context in which that passage is found?⁴

Therefore, the questions concerning the structure of Hebrews are important for understanding the message of the book.

The purpose of this chapter is to give an overview of the history of investigating the structure of Hebrews and a brief evaluation of approaches to New Testament criticism that form the basis of the various proposals of the structure of Hebrews in order to disclose the structure, the form, and the lexical cohesion of Heb 4 and Heb 10, since these chapters are relevant for this study.⁵ A general structure of the whole book of Hebrews is beyond the purpose and the scope of this research.

History of Investigation

Early Attempts

Earliest commentators did not use formal divisions but simply included an

³ Robert A. Dooley and Stephen H. Levinsohn, *Analyzing Discourse: A Manual of Basic Concepts* (Dallas, Tex.: SIL International, 2001), 24, 52.

⁴ Guthrie, *Structure of Hebrews*, xvii.

⁵ For the history of proposed structures in the book of Hebrews the published dissertation of George H. Guthrie (mentioned above) was taken as a guide. Regarding the evaluation of approaches to New Testament criticism that form the basis for various proposals, the published dissertation of Cynthia L. Westfall was extensively consulted, since she has covered preliminary work.

overview of the author's argument in either the introductions or expositions. John Chrysostom, the bishop of Constantinople and fourth-century preacher, did this very thing. At the beginning of his twelfth sermon on Heb 7 he delivers a very short review of chs. 1-6 and comments on their role in preparing the way for the homily that follows.⁶

Theodoret of Cyrus, bishop and theologian of the fifth century, did a similar thing in his *Argumentum* (introduction) on Hebrews by giving a broad overview of the book while emphasizing Christ's superiority over various Old Testament institutions.⁷

Medieval and Reformation Periods

Similarly to Theodoret, Thomas Aquinas also focused on the superiority-of-Christ theme. Aquinas's evaluation divided Hebrews into two main parts, the first on the superiority of Christ (chs. 1-10) and the second on how members should join the leader (chs. 11-13). Aquinas subdivided the first part into three movements: Christ's superiority over the angels (Heb 1-2), over Moses (Heb 3-4), and over the Old Testament priesthood (Heb 5-10). The subdivision of the second part falls into two movements: members should join the leader in faith (Heb 11) and in works of faith (Heb 12-13).⁸

In medieval *argumenta*, a prefatory section in which the author summarizes the general importance of the Epistle, the theme of *excellentia Christi* was developed by

⁶ John Chrysostom, *Homiliae XII in Epistolam ad Hebraeos* (PG 12:316-7). See also the translation in John Chrysostom, *Homily on Hebrews* 12.1 (NPNF 14:423).

⁷ Theodoret, *Interpretatio Epistolae ad Hebraeos* (PG 82:677-8).

⁸ Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (trans. Chrysostom Baer and others; South Bend, Ind.: St. Augustine's Press, 2006), 18.

comparing Christ with the angels, Moses, and the priesthood of the Old Testament.⁹

During the medieval and reformation periods most writers on Hebrews commented on the contents chapter by chapter.¹⁰ However, there were exceptions to that.

Heinrich Bullinger differed from the others in that he divided the book into a tripartite scheme. His literary division has part one (chs. 1-4) and part three (chs. 10:19-13) characterized as *deliberativum*, a determined admonition to the Jews not to reject Christ, but to hold on to him. Part two (chs. 5:1-10:18) is characterized as a *didacticum* that Christ is the true priest.¹¹ He also identified the author's method of argumentation in the book of Hebrews as *maior et melior*.¹²

⁹ Kenneth Hagen, *Hebrews Commenting from Erasmus to Bèze 1516-1598* (BGBE, ed. Oscar Cullmann, Ernst Käsemann, and others, no. 23; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1981), 8. However, Luther's introduction did not mention the standard theme of *excellētia Christi*. Ibid., 8. Both H. Zwingli and J. Calvin built their expositions of the book around this commonly cited motif. See Ulrich Zwingli and Christoph Froschauer, *In evangelicam historiam de Domino nostro Iesu Christo, per Matthaeum, Marcum, Lucam, et Joannem conscriptam, Epistolasque aliquot Pauli, annotationes D. Huldrychi Zvinglii per Leonem Iudæ excerptæ et æditæ. Adiecta est Epistola Pauli ad Hebræos, et Joannis Apostoli Epistola per Gasparem Megrandum* (Zürich: Christophorus Froschourus, 1539). Cf. Jean Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews* (trans. John Owen; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1948), xxviii-xxix. See also Spicq, *L'Épître aux Hébreux: I Introduction*, 28.

¹⁰ Erasmus at the beginning of each chapter gave a one-sentence paraphrase. Cf. Desiderius Erasmus, *In Epistolam Pauli ad Hebraeos paraphrasis* (Basileae: Apud Ioannem Frobenivm, 1521).

¹¹ H. Bullinger, *In Piam et Eruditam Pauli ad Hebraeos Epistolam, Henrychi Bullingeri Commentarius* (Zürich: Christoph Froschouer, 1532), 490-91. Guthrie correctly remarks that the break in the middle of ch. 10 departs from grouping the contents of the book by chapter divisions. Guthrie, *Structure of Hebrews*, 4.

¹² Cf. Hagen, *Hebrews Commenting from Erasmus to Bèze 1516-1598*, 27.

Niels Hemmingsen, in his section entitled *Ordo, seu Tractationis Methodus*, suggests that the author of Hebrews orders his discourse based on the rule of ancient rhetoricians. He puts in first place the *narratio* concerning the person and office of the Son of God. Afterwards, because it is said in the *narratio* that the purgation of sins was made through Christ, the author begins a *disputatio* on the priesthood of Christ. Hence, because the application of the sacrifice of Christ is made through faith, he exhorts to faith, with many examples of saints, and ends the epistle by adding common principles of life.¹³

The thematic approach of the κρείττων motif, the tripartite scheme of Bullinger, as well as the rhetorical approach of Hemmingsen throughout the book of Hebrews will be championed into the modern era.

Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries

In the introduction to his work *Gnomon*, Johann Albrecht Bengel proposed fresh suggestions on the structure of Hebrews. Based on rigorous exegesis of the text, Bengel's outline divides the book into two sections. This bipartite division was different from earlier bipartite schemes. It focused on the comparison of Christ with the prophets and the angels on the one hand and the comparison of his suffering and consummation on the other.¹⁴ Although Bengel's outline is somewhat cumbersome, as Guthrie correctly

¹³ Niels Hemmingsen, *Commentaria in Omnes Epistolas Apostolorum, Pauli, Petri, Iudae, Iohannes, Iacobi, Et In Eam Quae Ad Hebraeos inscribitur* (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Georg Corvinus), quoted and commented upon in Hagen, *Hebrews Commenting from Erasmus to Bèze 1516-1598*, 81-2.

¹⁴ For the spelled out outline see Johann Albrecht Bengel, *Gnomon of the New Testament* (trans. James Bryce; 7th ed.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1877), 4:335-6.

remarks, it contained characteristics that provide insights into the structure of Hebrews.¹⁵ He drew attention to the fact that there is “doctrine” and “practice” in the epistle and that the hortatory passages are set apart and introduced with “therefore.”¹⁶ Further, the function of three words at the end of ch. 2 – “faithful,” “merciful,” and “high priest” – was cited by Bengel as key words upon which the author would build the arguments which followed.¹⁷ Finally, Bengel underlined the use of Old Testament texts in development of the author’s discussion, especially Pss 2, 8, and 110. He observed that these form on several occasions the point of departure for the author’s discussion.¹⁸

During the nineteenth century, scholars organized the book around the author’s development of assorted themes. They variously presented their understanding of the book’s configuration in paragraph form in the introduction,¹⁹ in an outline in the introduction, or in a table of contents.²⁰

¹⁵ Guthrie, *Structure of Hebrews*, 7.

¹⁶ Bengel, *Gnomon of the New Testament*, 335.

¹⁷ Spelled out under II 2. Ibid.

¹⁸ Guthrie correctly emphasizes a proper understanding of the uses of the Old Testament in Hebrews as of fundamental importance for understanding the structure of the book. *The Structure of Hebrews*.

¹⁹ E.g., Moses Stuart, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (4th ed.; Andover: W. Draper, 1860), 257-61. Stuart emphasizes the theme of comparison between Jesus and the angels, Jesus and Moses, and Jesus and the mosaic institutions which constitutes the main object of the writer, namely the superiority of Christianity over Judaism. Cf. *ibid.*, 260. See also Bernhard Weiss, *Kritisch Exegetisches Handbuch über den Brief an die Hebräer* (KEK; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1888), 34.

²⁰ Frederic Rendall, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (London: Macmillan, 1883), 1-6. Karl Bernhard Moll, *Der Brief an die Hebräer* (9 vols.; 2nd ed., THB; Bielefeld: Velhagen und Klasing, 1865), 8:16-8. Moll’s division follows a tripartite scheme with

Heinrich F. von Soden not only presented a thematic arrangement of Hebrews but he also analyzed the construction of Hebrews according to the rhetoric of classical Greek. In his commentary on Hebrews von Soden suggests a four-part scheme involving a προοίμιον with a presentation of the πρόθεσις (Heb 1-4), διήγησις πρὸς πιθανότητα (5-6), ἀπόδειξις πρὸς πειθῶ (7:1-10:18), and ἐπίλογος (10:19-13).²¹

The Twentieth and the Early Twenty-First Centuries

Although some scholars continue to utilize methods of the past centuries, new methods accompanied by new proposals have appeared. From introductory remarks on the structure of Hebrews in the introduction of a commentary or remarks concerning the structure in the outline, the debates have taken an independent section in commentaries in which one scholar comments on the proposals of other scholars.²²

In broad terms, the twentieth century is different from past centuries because it puts its focus more on linguistics and semantic analysis, paying attention to formal features and to links and transitions signaled by the text's language, whereas earlier approaches focused largely on the topics treated. These earlier treatments tended to

three "Hauptteile" and a conclusion of the Epistle. Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (trans. Thomas L. Kingsbury, 2 vols.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1868), 1:v-vii; *ibid.*, 2:v-vii.

²¹ Hermann Soden, *Hebräerbrief, Briefe des Petrus, Jakobus, Judas* (3rd ed.; Hand-Kommentar zum Neuen Testament; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1899), 8-11. Later von Soden would be followed by Thomas Haering, "Gedankengang und Grundgedanken des Hebräerbriefs," *ZNW* 18 (1917-18): 153-63.

²² Weiss, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 42-51; Hegermann, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 4-8; Pfitzner, *Hebrews*, 22-4; Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 27-31; Michel, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 29-35; Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 50-62; Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 14-21; Hagner, *Encountering the Book of Hebrews*, 26-9; Lane, *Hebrews 1-*

divide the epistle topically, often with headings about Christ's superiority, offering appropriate thematic analyses, as Lincoln remarks.²³ Such headings simplify the content of the sections, failing to do justice to the variety of material in them and to the way in which sections overlap in their treatment of themes and development of the argument.²⁴

The three streams of discussion that brought fresh insights to the debate were: (1) "Genre Differentiation" as carried out by F. Büchsel and Rafael Gyllenberg, (2) the "Literary Analysis" of Leon Vaganay, Albert Vanhoye, and others, and (3) the "tripartite scheme" advanced especially by Wolfgang Nauck.

In 1928 F. Büchsel set forth a proposal concerning the structure of Hebrews based on the author's differentiated use of exposition and exhortation, something he calls *Darlegungen* and *Mahnungen*.²⁵ According to F. Büchsel the rhythmic interplay between these genres marks five movements in Hebrews. All the expositions, except the second,

8, lxxxiv-xcviii. DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude*, 71-5; Hughes, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 2-4. Et al.

²³ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Hebrews: A Guide* (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 23.

²⁴ Even during the twentieth century commentators focused on the content of Hebrews, and their outlines show a simple topical concern rather than a concern for a literary structure of Hebrews. For instance, F. F. Bruce's original commentary on Hebrews (1967) had this approach. In the revised edition of his commentary, however, Bruce does include a footnote on the literary structure of Hebrews. Cf. F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (NICNT, ed. Gordon D. Fee; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1990), xxii, n.1. The downside of extensive literary structures is the fact that fine nuances of the text that enrich our understanding of the major themes are often minimized by the structural divisions suggested by various authors. For an overview of how Bruce has approached the structure of Hebrews from the perspective of content and Dussaut from the perspective of form, and of Vanhoye who falls between these two, see Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 50-8.

²⁵ F. Büchsel, "Hebräerbrief," in *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (ed. Hermann Gunkel and Leopold Zscharnack; RGG; Tübingen: J C B Mohr, 1928), 2:1670.

are followed by exhortations as outlined by Guthrie's scheme.²⁶

I. exposition: 1:1-14	exhortation: 2:1-4
II. exposition: 2:5-18	None
III. exposition: 3:1-6	exhortation: 3:7-4:13
IV. exposition: 4:14-10:18	exhortation: 10:19-39
V. exposition: 11:1-40	exhortation: 12:1-29

For Büchsel Heb 13:1-17 offered "single admonitions"²⁷ and ch. 13:18-25 constituted the epistolary ending.²⁸

The insights of Büchsel have been sharpened and slightly modified by Rafael Gyllenberg.²⁹ George Guthrie discerns weaknesses in the structural assessments offered by both Büchsel and Gyllenberg.³⁰ The exact role of the hortatory vs. the expository material in Hebrews has become an issue of heated debate, while some scholars are seeing damage being done to the integrity of the book by those who hold the exposition and the exhortation sections apart.³¹ However, Büchsel and Gyllenberg have advanced

²⁶ Guthrie, *Structure of Hebrews*, 9.

²⁷ Which he calls: *Einzelmahnungen*.

²⁸ Büchsel, "Hebräerbrief," 1671.

²⁹ Rafael Gyllenberg, "Die Komposition des Hebräerbriefs," *SEÅ* 22-23 (1957-58): 137-47. For an outline see also Guthrie, *Structure of Hebrews*, 10.

³⁰ Guthrie, *Structure of Hebrews*, 10.

³¹ Weiss concludes the long-standing discussion regarding the issue of the main emphasis in Hebrews being on the exposition or exhortation with the following words: "Die 'Lehre' ist auf die 'Paränese' ausgerichtet, und die letztere ist nichts anderes als Schlußfolgerung aus der ersteren." Weiss, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 46. Dahl expresses it this way: "The doctrine leads to the exhortation, the exhortations are based on the

the discussion on the structure of Hebrews by emphasizing the two distinct genres which dominate the major part of the book. By doing that, Gyllenberg observed an interesting phenomenon, namely that the exhortatory material in the book seems to return again and again to a similar theme.³²

Near the turn of the twentieth century F. Thien set forth proposals which have influenced the latter half of that century.³³ He observed that most commentators divided the book into two main parts: 1:1-10:18 and 10:19-13:23.³⁴ His goal was to offer a new

doctrine.” Nils Alstrup Dahl, "A New and Living Way: The Approach to God According to Heb 10:19-25," *Int* 5, no. 4 (1951): 401. Vanhoye confirms it by expressing it as follows: “Cette réflexion prend plus de force encore, si on remarque que les exhortations de l’épître insistent avant tout sur la confession de foi, comme Gyllenberg et Thurén le soulignent eux-mêmes. Elles sont donc orientées vers la doctrine.” Albert Vanhoye, "Discussions sur la Structure de l’Épître aux Hébreux," *Bib* 55 (1974): 368.

³² Gyllenberg, “Die Komposition des Hebräerbriefs,” 139-40.

³³ Two of the most prominent are Leon Vaganay and Albert Vanhoye, who will be discussed in greater detail further on. Most of the modern commentaries ground their structure based on the works of these three groundbreaking scholars.

³⁴ The bipartite division of Hebrews was imported from the classical division of the Pauline letters like Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians where the books are divided into a dogmatic and parenetic/ethical section. This division was common in the letters of antiquity. The difference between the letters of antiquity and the Pauline corpus is of course the fact that the “narration” is being transformed into the teaching of the addressees regarding the present and future salvation and the “petition” is being changed into an apostolic admonition. Cf. Klaus Berger, *Exegese des Neuen Testaments: Neue Wege vom Text zur Auslegung* (UTB; Heidelberg: Quelle und Meyer, 1977), 69. David A. Black labels the bipartite scheme of Hebrews the “traditional division.” “The Problem of the Literary Structure of Hebrews,” 164. This scheme was supported by such scholars as John Brown, and by many conservative Protestants such as Homer Kent, Edmond Hiebert, and Donald Guthrie. See John Brown, *An Exposition of the Epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Hebrews* (New York: R. Carter, 1862), 8; Kent Jr., *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 197; David Edmond Hiebert, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (3 vols.; Chicago, Ill.: Moody, 1977), 3:92-100; Donald Guthrie, *The Letter to the Hebrews: An Introduction and Commentary* (TNTC, ed. Canon L. Morris; Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1983), 58-9, 210. Regarding the bipartite division of Hebrews, scholars today seem to have moved away from it. Weiss summarizes it this way: “Beim

division of the book that is based on the author's organization of the material.³⁵ Thien recognized that the author of Hebrews announces his primary themes just prior to the introduction of the unit in which they are to be developed in reverse order. Accordingly, in Heb 2:17 Jesus is designated a "merciful and faithful high priest in the service to God." In 3:1-5:10 the writer directs attention to Jesus as "faithful" (3:1-4:13) and then to Jesus as "merciful" (4:14-5:10). This procedure is repeated in 7:1-10:39. In 5:9-10 Jesus is described as "the source of an eternal salvation" and as "a priest like Melchizedek." Following a hortatory introduction to the next major division (5:11-6:20), the writer develops the notion of Jesus as a priest like Melchizedek (7:1-28) before developing the theme of Jesus as the source of eternal salvation (8:1-10:18). In ch. 10:36-39 the author announces the themes to be developed in 11:1-12:29, namely, endurance (10:36) and faith (10:38-39). Hebrews 11 deals with the theme of faith whereas ch. 12 with that of endurance.³⁶ Thien considered 1:1-4 the introduction to the discourse and 13:1-25 its conclusion.

The suggestions made by Thien were taken up and developed in 1940 by Leon Vaganay in his article which has been heralded as the beginning of the modern discussion

gegenwärtigen Stand der Struktur- und Kompositionsanalyse des Hebr, die durch die entsprechenden Ansätze bei F. Thien und [*sic*] L. Vaganay in Gang gesetzt worden ist und in den Arbeiten von A. Vanhoye und L. Dussaut ihren Höhepunkt erreicht hat, besteht darin jedenfalls weitgehende Übereinstimmung, daß eine am Aufbau einiger Paulusbrieve orientierte Gliederung des Hebr in einen 'dogmatisch-lehrhaften' (1,10-10,18) und einen 'ethisch-paränetischen' Teil (10,19-13,21) dem auf eine planmäßige durchdachte Komposition zielenden Gestaltungswillen des Autors nicht gerecht wird." Weiss, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 42.

³⁵ F. Thien, "Analyse de L'Épître aux Hébreux," *RB* (1902): 74-5.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 80-1, 85.

of the literary structure of Hebrews.³⁷ Although influenced by Thien's broad outline of Hebrews, Vaganay moved beyond Thien on at least two issues.

Focusing on the problem of the distribution of the units of discourse in Hebrews, Vaganay advanced the discussion of the structure of the document with his recognition of *mot-crochets*, "hook-words," throughout the composition. Hook-words were a rhetorical device developed in antiquity to tie together two blocks of material. The introduction of a key word at the end of a section and its repetition at the beginning of the next served to mark formally the transition between the two units. The process is sustained throughout Hebrews, tying each section of discourse to the one that follows.³⁸ For example, in Heb 1:1-4 the author mentions τῶν ἀγγέλων. For Vaganay, the author hooks the introduction to the next section on "Jesus Superior to the Angels" (1:5-2:18) by using τῶν ἀγγέλων again in v. 5. Similarly, at the end of the section on "Jesus Superior to the Angels" the author refers to ἀρχιερεύς (2:17) for the first time. Then at the beginning of the following section (3:1-5:10) Jesus is referred to as ἀρχιερέα (3:1). This pattern continues throughout the book, tying each section to the next.

Further, Vaganay built on Thien's work but slightly changed his predecessor's division. Vaganay understood just Heb 1:1-4 to be the introduction and 1:5-2:18 to be the first major theme of Hebrews titled: "Jesus Superior to the Angels." Thien's central

³⁷ Leon Vaganay, "Le Plan de L'Épître aux Hébreux," in *Mémorial Lagrange* (ed. Louis-Hugues Vincent; Paris: J. Gabalda, 1940), 269-77. Otto Michel acknowledges the modest beginnings of Vaganay but also the importance his work has received as time has gone by when he states: "Hier ist zunächst die Untersuchung von L. Vaganay . . . zu nennen, die zwar zunächst wenig Aufsehen erregte, aber doch in der Folgezeit von Wichtigkeit wurde." Michel, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 29.

³⁸ Vaganay, "Le Plan de L'Épître aux Hébreux," 271-72.

section had two movements, “Jesus a priest like Melchizedek” and “Jesus author of eternal salvation.” Vaganay saw in between these two sections a third one called “Jesus perfect pontiff” (8:1-9:28). The last development in Vaganay’s outline, compared to that of Thien, was his fifth section before the conclusion which he called “The Great Duty of Holiness with Peace” (12:14-13:21). Vaganay’s first and fifth themes are treated within one section, the second and fourth within two sections, and the third within three sections. Vaganay’s approach opened a new era in structural assessments of Hebrews.³⁹ Another critic would build upon Vaganay’s suggestions and take center stage in the debate on the structure of Hebrews.⁴⁰

Albert Vanhoye’s landmark monograph, *La structure littéraire de l’Épître aux Hébreux*, endures as the most influential and debated work ever written on the structure of Hebrews.⁴¹ Besides the monograph that appeared in two editions Vanhoye attempted a detailed analysis of the literary devices used in Hebrews in other publications.⁴² He

³⁹ So Guthrie, *Structure of Hebrews*, 13.

⁴⁰ Besides Albert Vanhoye, who will be discussed below, Vaganay influenced Spicq to a large extent. Spicq’s outline is similar to that of Vaganay’s. He believed that Hebrews develops around four reprises found in 1:1-4; 4:14-16; 8:1-2; and 10:19-22, which he compares in parallel columns. Spicq, *L’Épître aux Hébreux: I Introduction*, 33-4.

⁴¹ So Guthrie, *Structure of Hebrews*, 14.

⁴² His preliminary essays: Albert Vanhoye, “l’Épître aux Hébreux,” *RSR* (1959): 44-60; Albert Vanhoye, “Les indices de la Structure Littéraire de l’Épître aux Hébreux,” in *Studia Evangelica II* (TU, no. 87; ed. F. L. Cross; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1964), 2:493-507; Albert Vanhoye, “De Structura Litteraria Epistolae ad Hebraeos,” *VD* (1962): 73-80, culminated in Albert Vanhoye, *La Structure Littéraire de l’Épître aux Hébreux* (2nd reviewed and augmented ed.; StudNeot, no. 1; Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1976). Vanhoye dealt with the issue of structure in additional publications. Cf. Albert Vanhoye, *Épître aux Hébreux: Texte Grec Structuré* (Rome: Institut Biblique Pontifical, 1967);

synthesized the insights of F. Thien, R. Gyllenberg, A. Descamps, and especially L. Vaganay with his own meticulous research and set forth five *critères littéraires*, literary devices that the author of Hebrews used to mark the beginnings and endings of sections in the book.⁴³ The literary devices of Vanhoye are: (1) the announcement of the subject (a phrase or sentence which prepares for the next major section by presenting the theme to be discussed); (2) transitional hook-words (used at the end of one section and at the beginning of the next in order to tie the two together); (3) change of genre (interchange of exposition and exhortation); (4) characteristic terms (used a number of times in a passage); (5) inclusions (bracketing of a unit of discourse by the repetition of a striking expression).

The first four devices have already been discussed in considering the works of R. Gyllenberg, F. Thien, L. Vaganay, and A. Descamps. The use of *inclusion*, the final

Albert Vanhoye, *Situation du Christ: Hébreux 1-2* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1969); Albert Vanhoye, "Literarische Struktur und theologische Botschaft des Hebräerbriefs (1. Teil)," in *Studien zum Neuen Testament und seiner Umwelt* (SNTU; ed. Albert Fuchs; Linz, Austria: Plöchl, 1979), 4:119-47; Albert Vanhoye, "Literarische Struktur und theologische Botschaft des Hebräerbriefs (2. Teil)," in *Studien zum Neuen Testament und seiner Umwelt* (SNTU; ed. Albert Fuchs; Linz, Austria: 1980), 5:18-49; Vanhoye, "Discussions sur la structure," 349-80.

⁴³ Albert Vanhoye, *La Structure Littéraire de l'Épître aux Hébreux* (StudNeot, no. 1; Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1963), 37. With regard to A. Descamps's approach he called the attention of the scholarly world to the writer's conscious use of *mots thématiques*, characteristic terms. The expression characteristic terms refers to the concentration of key vocabulary or of cognate terms within a section of discourse that serves to articulate and develop a primary theme. Descamps observed, for example, that the writer introduced the term "angels" eleven times in 1:5 to 2:16, and only twice after that point in the remainder of the discourse. The density of the concentration of this characteristic term serves to identify the thematic limits of a block of material. See A. Descamps, "La structure de l'Épître aux Hébreux," *RDT* (1954): 252. The use of characteristic terms is a literary device by which the writer builds semantic cohesion into the several sections of the discourse. So Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, lxxxvii.

device, is well documented in a variety of ancient literary traditions.⁴⁴ In an *inclusion* the same components begin and end a passage. Vanhoye suggested the author of Hebrews used this device to mark the beginnings and endings of each pericope throughout the book.⁴⁵

In the lively debate that followed the publication of Vanhoye's monograph, he proved to be an indefatigable conversation-partner. He has shown openness to modify details of his proposal but has remained convinced of its essential correctness.⁴⁶

Vanhoye's scheme has not remained without its critics yet it continues to be influential and significant.⁴⁷ While his approach was not spared criticism there are many modern

⁴⁴ For an extensive bibliography on the use of the *inclusio* in ancient Greek literature as well as in biblical literature see Guthrie, *Structure of Hebrews*, 15, n. 38.

⁴⁵ Vanhoye, *La Structure*, 223, 71-303.

⁴⁶ See especially Vanhoye, "Discussions sur la structure," 349-80. For a good summary of Vanhoye's approach to the structure of Hebrews see Black, "The Problem of the Literary Structure of Hebrews," 168-75.

⁴⁷ T. C. G. Thornton accuses Vanhoye of being overconfident in his literary pointers and doubts whether the writer of Hebrews had the zeal for such a large scale of chiasmic pattern as Vanhoye attributes to him. T. C. G. Thornton, review of *La structure littéraire de l'Épître aux Hébreux*, by Albert Vanhoye, *JTS* 15 (1964): 138-41. John Bligh, not satisfied with Vanhoye's analysis of the structure of Hebrews, attempts a division of this book by a series of chiasms. Cf. John Bligh, *Chiasmic Analysis of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Oxon: Atheneum Press, 1966). Vanhoye's reaction to Bligh's effort is that he accomplishes nothing, because he ignores the literary "indices," as well as the development of thought within the epistle itself. Vanhoye, "Discussions sur la structure," 370. Jukka Thurén, a student of Gyllenberg, declares Vanhoye's analyses of small sections fruitful for interpretation, but the same cannot be said about his analysis of the structure of the whole book. Thurén compares Vanhoye's work on Hebrews with that of Gyllenberg, and favors Gyllenberg. Jukka Thurén, *Das Lobopfer der Hebräer: Studien zum Aufbau und Anliegen von Hebräerbrief 13* (vol. 47/1; AAA; Åbo: Åbo akademi, 1973), 44-9. Vanhoye concludes that after unsatisfactory responses to his objections Thurén is not able to play judge between Gyllenberg and him since from the beginning it was clear that Thurén was biased towards his teacher. Vanhoye, "Discussions sur la

scholars today who substantially follow Vanhoye because they find his literary devices convincing.⁴⁸

Those who have been less convinced of the value of Vanhoye's proposal have tended to align themselves with the modified tripartite scheme of W. Nauck. In an article in the Joachim Jeremias *Festschrift*, W. Nauck set out to consider the latest proposals on the structure of Hebrews as given by Otto Michel and Ceslas Spicq.⁴⁹ Otto Michel offered a tripartite scheme: I, chs. 1:1-4:13; II, chs. 4:14-10:18; III, chs. 10:19-13:14.⁵⁰

Nauck found himself attracted to the tripartite scheme championed by Michel, who found points of division in Hebrews after 4:13 and 10:18. The strength of this approach was that it recognized the organization of Hebrews in terms of the primacy of

structure," 364-5. Swetnam, in evaluating Vanhoye's work, states that the structure of Hebrews is worthy of attention, but he sees danger in separating formal structure from content. James Swetnam, "Form and Content in Hebrews 1-6," *Bib* 53 (1972): 369. Vanhoye responded to Swetnam's suggestion that he establishes his structure at the expense of content as being "absolutely not the case." Vanhoye, "Discussions sur la structure," 369. Swetnam's discussion continues with the observation that content, above all, must be included in any formulation of structure. James Swetman, "Form and Content in Hebrews 7-13," *Bib* (1974): 333-4. Vanhoye insists that all five of his literary indices take the context into account and therefore Swetnam's suggestions are personal opinions not scientific demonstration. Vanhoye, "Discussions sur la structure," 369.

⁴⁸ E.g., Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 16-27; Black, "The Problem of the Literary Structure of Hebrews," 168-77; Paul Ellingworth and Eugene A. Nida, *A Translator's Handbook on the Letter to the Hebrews* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1983), 341-2; Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, lxxxvii; Montefiore, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 31.

⁴⁹ Wolfgang Nauck, "Zum Aufbau des Hebräerbriefes," in *Judentum Christentum Kirche: Festschrift für Joachim Jeremias* (BZNW, no. 26; ed. Walter Eltester; Berlin: Verlag Alfred Töpelmann, 1964), 199-206.

⁵⁰ Michel, *Hebräer*, v. The outline is given in the table of contents and the first section is called "Die Offenbarung Gottes im Sohn und ihre Überlegenheit über den Alten Bund," the second "Jesus der rechte Hohepriester," and the third "Ermahnung zur Glaubenstreue." Michel, *Hebräer*, v.

parenthesis. Nauck noted that hortatory blocks of material are assigned the dominant role in framing structurally the three major divisions in Hebrews. He proposed that 1:1-4:13 should be seen as an integrated unit framed by the logos-hymn in 1:2b-3 at the opening and the sophia-hymn in 4:12-13 at the close of the division. He then modified Michel's proposal concerning the central division, extending it from 4:14-10:18 to 4:14-10:31. He contended that the writer of Hebrews marked the central division of the discourse with strikingly parallel formulation at the beginning (4:14-16) and at the end (10:19-23) and that this indicated that there could not be a divisional break at 10:18.⁵¹ The final division (10:32-13:17), he argued, begins and ends with a similar type of exhortation. Based on this understanding, Hebrews is a discourse composed of three major divisions, each identifiable by the presence of parallel passages at each opening and closing of the divisions.⁵²

Contrary to Otto Michel, Spicq does not see Hebrews as a sermon but a "traité d'apologétique" which has "éloquence d'un discours et la forme d'une homélie."⁵³ Based on Jewish tradition Spicq sees the connection of passages carried out by "accrochage des mots" and an "enchaînement des idées."⁵⁴ The connection functions in such a way that the end of the passage introduces the next motif whereas the beginning of

⁵¹ Nauck, "Zum Aufbau des Hebräerbriefes," 203-4. This identification of parallels by Wolfgang Nauck in Heb 4:14-16 and 10:19-23 will be discussed later and schematically outlined. This is a major achievement of Nauck in opposing breaks proposed by Michel when verbal parallels demand coherence.

⁵² Ibid., 200-3.

⁵³ Spicq, *L'Épître aux Hébreux: I Introduction*, 21.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 31.

the passage carries again the motif of the prior passage. The whole is characterized by a “progression du développement.”⁵⁵ Consequently Spicq has an outline divided into four themes with a prologue, an appendix, and an epilogue.⁵⁶ Nauck calls Spicq’s argumentation “bestechend” yet he remains unconvinced by it.⁵⁷ His two reasons are that the hook-words are merely a rhetorical device rather than the basis for his argument.

Second, Spicq had built his understanding of the book from the Christological sections rather than from the hortatory material. Nauck understood the book to be organized around its paraenetical sections.⁵⁸ Nauck’s proposal of the structure of Hebrews has been accepted by several scholars.⁵⁹

G. H. Guthrie offers a text-linguistic analysis of Hebrews that is unique.⁶⁰ He isolates the individual units of the text by locating “cohesion shifts” and “inclusions.”⁶¹

⁵⁵ Ibid., 34.

⁵⁶ The prologue encompasses ch. 1:1-4; the first theme, 1:5-2:18; the second theme, 3:1-5:10; the third theme, 7:1-10:18; the fourth theme, 10:19-12:29; the appendix, 13:1-19 and the epilogue, 13:20-25. Ibid., 33-8.

⁵⁷ Nauck, “Zum Aufbau des Hebräerbriefes,” 200-1.

⁵⁸ “Einerseits müssen die paränetischen Abschnitte als die Ziel- und Höhepunkte des Hebräerbriefes anerkannt und es muß von ihnen her die Gliederung begriffen werden. Und andererseits ist auf die Methode der Verkettung und den Gedankenfortschritt zu achten.” Ibid., 203.

⁵⁹ Michel, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 31; Heinrich Zimmermann, *Das Bekenntnis der Hoffnung* (BBB, no. 47; ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Heinrich Zimmermann; Cologne: Peter Hanstein Verlag, 1977), 21-4.

⁶⁰ Guthrie, *Structure of Hebrews*.

⁶¹ Ibid., 49-55.

Next, he analyzes the interrelationship of the units in the discourse.⁶² He determines how the units are grouped and the logic behind their relationship. Guthrie concludes that the discourse is characterized by inclusions.⁶³ Guthrie's concern has been to discern those elements in the discourse that are transitional in character and to determine the types of transitions generated by those elements. He has identified nine transitional techniques that he groups under two broad categories.

“Constituent transitions” are those located in one or more of the constituents of the two blocks of material joined by the transition.⁶⁴ The constituents will always be an introduction or a conclusion.

“Intermediary transitions” are those effected by a unit of text positioned between two major sections of the discourse.⁶⁵ In this case the transitional unit belongs neither to the unit of discourse that proceeds it nor to the one that follows, but contains elements of both.

He categorizes the text according to “genre” as either exposition or exhortation, and then analyzes each genre separately.⁶⁶ He identifies a spatial and logical “step-by-

⁶² Ibid., 55-8.

⁶³ Ibid., 67-89.

⁶⁴ The five constituent transitions are: hook-words, distant hook-words, hooked by key words, overlapping constituents, and parallel introductions. These are described and diagrammed in *ibid.*, 96-105.

⁶⁵ The four intermediary transitions are: the direct intermediary transition, the inverted intermediary transition, the woven intermediary transition, and the ingressive intermediary transition. These transitions are described and diagrammed in *ibid.*, 105-11.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 113-21.

step” progression in the exposition text, and a chiasmus in the exhortation text.⁶⁷

The twenty-first century has seen further development of discourse analysis, a discipline that analyzes discourse above the sentence level by utilizing contemporary principles of linguistic study, pioneered in the study of Hebrews by L. Dussaut, followed by L. L. Neeley and continued most recently with C. L. Westfall.⁶⁸ Although this attempt has yet to win a wide acceptance, it must be seriously considered as presenting an alternative perspective on the text.

There is at the present time no consensus regarding the literary structure of Hebrews. David Aune has put it frankly, “The structure of Hebrews remains an unsolved problem.”⁶⁹ While the discussion of the structure continues, the above history of investigation has shown that scholars have made decisions, either consciously or subconsciously, about where the author of Hebrews ended one section and started the next. These decisions were the result of a variety of methodologies, which invite an analysis and evaluation.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 121-26, 36.

⁶⁸ Louis Dussaut, *Synopse Structurale de l'Épître aux Hébreux: Approche d'Analyse Structurale* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1981); Linda L. Neeley, “A Discourse Analysis of Hebrews,” *OPTAT*, no. 3-4 (1987): 1-146; Cynthia Long Westfall, *A Discourse Analysis of the Letter to the Hebrews: The Relationship Between Form and Meaning* (LNTS, no. 2971, ed. Mark Goodacre; London: T&T Clark, 2005).

⁶⁹ David Edward Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment* (LEC, no. 8; ed. Wayne A. Meeks; Philadelphia, Pa.: Westminster Press, 1987), 213.

Categorization and Evaluation of Approaches to the Structure of Hebrews

In recent years six distinct approaches to the book of Hebrews have been utilized in proposing a structure. These approaches can be categorized as “structural agnosticism,” “theme analysis,” “rhetorical criticism,” “literary analysis,” and “linguistic analysis.” In the discussion following, these approaches are assessed for both strengths and weaknesses.

Structural agnosticism is an approach taken by some scholars who are reluctant to propose any structure of Hebrews due to the complexity of the book. James Moffatt objects to any structure because it would be artificial to divide up a writing of this kind since it is not a treatise on theology. Thus, he deliberately abstained from any formal division or subdivision in his commentary. Moffatt made the following observation about the organization of Hebrews: “The flow of thought, with its turns and windings, is best followed from point to point.”⁷⁰

Using a similar approach, T. C. G. Thornton speaks of cohesion in the text and resists the proposal that suggests clear-cut breaks, divisions, or boundaries. He criticizes Vanhoye for forcing “later European literary conventions” on the author.⁷¹ Thornton sees the author making smooth transitions from one topic to the next without a significant break in the flow of the discourse.⁷²

⁷⁰ Moffatt, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, xxiv. However, Moffatt formally divides the book into four main divisions, but these do not add anything to the proper understanding of the text because the divisions are thematically outlined for commentary purposes.

⁷¹ Thornton, review of *La structure littéraire l'Épître aux Hébreux*, 139.

⁷² *Ibid.*

The strength of Moffatt's assertion lies in the fact that he accurately describes the discourse as circular or repetitive, one that is best followed from point to point rather than forcing a step-by-step progression.⁷³ Thornton's description of Hebrews as a cohesive discourse also has validity.

The weakness of Moffatt's approach is that it is what Guthrie calls "an argument based on ignorance (i.e., what the commentator has yet to understand). That the commentator has failed to discern an organizational structure which he feels adequately portrays the development of the author's argument does not necessarily mean no discernible structure exists."⁷⁴ Thornton's critique falters too. While it is true that the author did not have to worry about "later European literary conventions," it should not be overlooked that there were ancient literary conventions for arranging the material. Also, when Thornton speaks of smooth transitions from one topic to the next he basically defines what Guthrie calls literary transitions which do not exclude clearly defined turning points in the argument.⁷⁵ In this sense the approach does not offer a valid alternative.

Theme analysis, sometimes also called content analysis, refers to a structure of Hebrews based on the one or more prominent themes around which the book is

⁷³ Cf. Guthrie, *Structure of Hebrews*, 25; Westfall, *A Discourse Analysis of the Letter to the Hebrews*, 15.

⁷⁴ Guthrie, *Structure of Hebrews*, 26.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 25.

organized.⁷⁶ Theme analysis is based on the exposition passages, which are sections in the discourse that are characterized by the indicative mood. The result is a linear outline characterized by a clear progression in an argument that reflects the principles of traditional Western composition.⁷⁷ Proponents of themes in Hebrews recognize that Hebrews is characterized by an alternation between indicative spans and spans of command or exhortation, often labeled digressions, interruptions, or inserted warnings.⁷⁸

An example of this approach may be seen in the work of Philip E. Hughes:

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

⁷⁶ As already seen this was a very popular approach prior to the twentieth century, but also afterwards. E.g., Delitzsch, *Hebrews*, 1:iii, 39, 2:iii, 1; Johannes Heinrich August Ebrard, *Biblical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews, in Continuation of the Work of Olshausen* (trans. John Fulton; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1853), v-vii; Riggenbach, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 27; Richard Charles Henry Lenski, *The Interpretation of the Epistle to the Hebrews and of the Epistle of James* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg Publishing House, 1966), 27; Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, xlviiii-li; Rendall, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 1-6; Kistemaker, *Exposition to the Epistle to the Hebrews*, vi.

⁷⁷ Westfall, *A Discourse Analysis of the Letter to the Hebrews*, 1.

⁷⁸ If the book is approached as a theological treatise, as a dogmatic treatment of the nature of Christ, the expository sections of Hebrews will be highlighted. The reader will be prepared by the beginning of Hebrews to see in the book as a whole an exposition of Jesus as superior to significant Old Testament characters and institutions. Scholars who have emphasized exhortation, on the other hand, see Hebrews fall into a tripartite division—even though they disagree on the precise division breaks. Edgar V. McKnight,

The outline supports the assertion that Hebrews is a dogmatic apology and that the recipients are Jewish converts who were tempted to revert to Judaism or to judaize the gospel.⁷⁹

The strength of theme analysis lies, first of all, in the two-part division of Hebrews into a doctrinal section and an exhortation section. One is characterized by the third-person indicative, the other characterized by the use of the second-person plural and commands. Second, spans of the author's material do bond around recognizable themes. If this were not the case, comprehension of any aspect of the argument would be impossible.

The weakness of theme analysis resides in the fact that it often forces the outline to maintain the theme of superiority.⁸⁰ Further it fails to account for the patterned use of repetition throughout the discourse.⁸¹ The author mentions a topic and then leaves it, only to pick it up at a later point in the argument.⁸² Likewise the analysis fails to account for

“Literary and Rhetorical Form and Structure in the ‘Epistle to the Hebrews’,” *RevExp* 102 (2005): 263-4. See Westfall, *A Discourse Analysis of the Letter to the Hebrews*, 2.

⁷⁹ Hughes, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, ix-x, 10-1.

⁸⁰ Guthrie correctly accuses Hughes of forcing the outline at points. For example, the first main section has been given the title “Christ Superior to the Prophets” (1:1-3). Yet, is Christ's superiority to the prophets the main point of that passage? The second section is “Christ Is Superior to Angels” (1:4-2:18). Yet, 2:5-18 has to do with Christ becoming lower than the angels in order to suffer and die. Again, Hughes has designated 3:1-4:13, “Christ Superior to Moses.” However, Moses is discussed only in 3:2-19 and even there it is questionable whether he is the main topic of discussion. Thus, blocks of material are forcibly subsumed under a thematic designation that does not adequately reflect the content of that section of material. Guthrie, *Structure of Hebrews*, 26, n. 14.

⁸¹ Westfall, *A Discourse Analysis of the Letter to the Hebrews*, 3.

⁸² E.g., Jesus is called “high priest” at 2:17 and 3:1. The designation temporarily falls to the side and reenters at 4:14-5:10. It is dropped again until its appearance in 6:20.

the semantic content and formal significance of the commands in the first six chapters. The commands are either ignored or labeled as digressions, interruptions, or deviations.⁸³ Finally, theme analysis often represents Hebrews as a dogmatic apologetic and theological treatise that targets Jews who are about to revert to Judaism.⁸⁴ However, the discourse lacks polemic overtones of attacks on theological error against Judaizers such as are present in Galatians.⁸⁵ The presentation of Hebrews as a dogmatic apology fits

Where then, asks Guthrie, begins the section “The High Priesthood”? An adequate approach to the structure of Hebrews must include the means of assessing the use of repetition since the author’s argument appears to be more a tapestry than a step-by-step progression of ideas. Guthrie, *Structure of Hebrews*, 28. The author of Hebrews, Buchanan says, was a literary artist who did not say all that he had to say on a subject in one place, even though his units were well structured. Instead he “composed his documents as intricately and as carefully as a musical composer might, with many themes woven throughout. . . . This is true both of running commentaries, such as Sifra, Sifré, Mekilta, and some of the writings of Philo, and of homiletical midrashim, such as Pesikta de Rav Kahana and Prov 2-7.” George Wesley Buchanan, “The Present State of Scholarship on Hebrews,” in *Christianity, Judaism and Other Greco-Roman Cults: Studies for Morton Smith at Sixty* (ed. Jacob Neusner, SJLA; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975), 12:316.

⁸³ E.g., John Brown asserts Heb 2:1-4 as “plainly parenthetical.” John Brown, *Hebrews* (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1862; reprint, 1972), 70.

⁸⁴ This is the case with George E. Rice’s article which is based on that very assumption of Stanley D. Toussaint, namely that the eschatology of the five warning passages in Hebrews is concerned with the danger of the audience who were about to abandon Christianity and slip back in the works system of Judaism. See Toussaint, “The Eschatology of the Warning Passages in the Book of Hebrews,” 68. Rice embraces Toussaint’s argument and delivers a forced structure on Hebrews that has not gained much attention in the scholarly world. Each section is subdivided into three parts: (1) theological exposé, (2) warning, and (3) statement of judgment. In Heb 6:9-10:39 his subdivision no longer works so he simply inserts a second warning and judgment section. George E. Rice, “Apostasy as a Motif and Its Effect on the Structure of Hebrews,” *AUSS* 23 (1985): 33-5.

⁸⁵ Attridge correctly remarks: “If it is the work’s aim to wean the addressees from Judaism, it is remarkable how small a role an appeal to keep free from the Israel of the flesh plays in the explicit hortatory segments of the text.” Attridge, “Paraenesis,” 220. This is not to say that the institutions of Judaism, such as the covenant and high

neither the text nor the context.

Rhetorical criticism is associated with the Greek and Roman discipline of human discourse. The reason for analyzing these traditions comes from the fact that the New Testament was crafted in the context of Greek culture. Classical rhetoric was highly systematized in the education system of the Hellenistic period. Formal education included training in rhetoric with handbooks that standardized the discipline.⁸⁶ Even those authors of the New Testament who had no formal training would have been exposed to and influenced by public speeches.⁸⁷ Many scholars infer that the author of Hebrews had formal Hellenistic training including an education in formal rhetoric.⁸⁸

There are at least three currents of rhetorical criticism in biblical studies: the analysis of the New Testament according to the canons of classical rhetoric, the analysis of the social aspect of the language, and the study of literary artistry.⁸⁹

priesthood, are not relativized in Hebrews. Westfall, *A Discourse Analysis of the Letter to the Hebrews*, 3, n. 10.

⁸⁶ The training of rhetoric in the primary and secondary schools of Alexandria is described in Robert Wayne Smith, *The Art of Rhetoric in Alexandria: Its Theory and Practice in the Ancient World* (Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974), 110-54.

⁸⁷ In Palestine alone there were over thirty Hellenistic cities during the time of Jesus, twelve within a twenty-five-mile radius of Nazareth. Greek cities had gymnasias and theaters. The gymnasium, theater, and market were all traditional and popular places for speech making. Hellenistic culture was a culture of rhetoric, and rhetoric was clearly a public affair. Burton L. Mack, *Rhetoric and the New Testament* (NTS; ed. Dan O. Via; Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1990), 29.

⁸⁸ Michael R. Cosby, "The Rhetorical Composition and Function of Hebrews 11 in Light of Example-Lists in Antiquity" (Ph.D. diss., Emory University, 1985), 2; Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, xlv-xlvi.

⁸⁹ C. Clifton Black, "Rhetorical Criticism," in *Hearing the New Testament* (ed. Joel B. Green; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1995), 259-65.

Aristotle distinguished three basic forms of rhetoric: the forensic, which asks of the hearers a judgment concerning past actions; the deliberative, which urges hearers to make a decision concerning future actions; and the epideictic, which asks readers to respond with a judgment of praise or blame for the subject being displayed.⁹⁰ Hebrews is clearly not forensic, claims Johnson, since it is neither prosecuting nor defending a case.⁹¹ In favor of epideictic is the pervasive use of honor and shame language, the use of *synkrisis* or comparison, which is a frequent feature of epideictic oratory, and the encomium in praise of the heroes of faith in ch. 11.⁹² In favor of deliberative rhetoric, however, is the clear hortatory purpose of the composition as a whole. Since each exposition turns to exhortation, and the entire last section of the discourse calls for a commitment from the hearers to act in a certain way, it is best to think of Hebrews, according to Johnson, as deliberative rhetoric with epideictic features.⁹³

⁹⁰ Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1.3.3.

⁹¹ Johnson, *Hebrews*, 13.

⁹² Timothy W. Seid sees much literary evidence for *synkrisis* during the time of Hebrews. He expresses his point in the following terms: "Descriptions of *synkrisis* are to be found in Aristotle's *Ars Rhetorica* (e.g. 1368a 19-29), *Rhet. ad Alex.* 1441a 28-30, and Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria* 2.4.21, as well as the *Progymnasmata* of Theon, Hermogenes and Aphthonius." Seid defines *synkrisis* as the comparison of two subjects of similar quality and is characterized by comparative exchanges which praise one subject by drawing parallels to a model subject often using the common topics of encomium in order to persuade the audience to modify their character and behavior accordingly. What some label in Hebrews as exposition/exhortation Seid calls *synkrisis/paranesis*. Timothy W. Seid, "Synkrisis in Hebrews 7: The Rhetorical Structure and Strategy," in *The Rhetorical Interpretation of Scripture: Essays from the 1996 Malibu Conference* (JSNTSup. 180; ed. Stanley E. Porter; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 325.

⁹³ Johnson, *Hebrews*, 13, 5.

In like manner, K. Nissilä and W. G. Überlacker are two other scholars who have classified Hebrews as deliberative rhetoric and analyzed the structure of Hebrews with a classical rhetorical outline.⁹⁴ Harold W. Attridge, David E. Aune, C. Clifton Black, and Thomas H. Olbricht suggest that Hebrews is epideictic rhetoric, because the comparison of Christ with highly respected persons and entities is a distinctive feature of the discourse.⁹⁵

Other scholars have suggested that Hebrews should be understood in light of its oral nature. The author characterizes his work in 13:22 as a brief “word of exhortation,” which is best understood as a form of oral discourse or speech.⁹⁶ H. Thyen suggested that Hebrews represents a Jewish-Hellenistic synagogue homily.⁹⁷ Lawrence Wills developed Thyen’s thesis further.⁹⁸ He suggested that the word of exhortation is a technical term

⁹⁴ Keijo Nissilä, *Das Hohepriestermotiv im Hebräerbrief: Eine Exegetische Untersuchung* (SFEG, no. 33; Helsinki: Ov Liiton Kirjapaino, 1979), 1-5; Walter G. Überlacker, *Der Hebräerbrief als Appell: Untersuchungen zu Exordium, Narratio und Postscriptum (Hebr 1-2 und 13, 22-25)* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1989), 21:66-138.

⁹⁵ Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 14; Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment*, 212; C. Clifton Black, “The Rhetorical Form of the Hellenistic Jewish and Early Christian Sermon: A Response to Lawrence Wills,” *HTR* 81 (1988): 5; Thomas H. Olbricht; “Hebrews as Amplification,” in *Rhetoric and the New Testament: Essays from the 1992 Heidelberg Conference* (ed. Stanley E. Porter and Thomas H. Olbricht; JSNTSS 90, ed. Stanley E. Porter; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 387.

⁹⁶ Cf. Acts 13:15, where Paul is invited to give a λόγος παρακλήσεως at worship.

⁹⁷ H. Thyen, *Stiel der jüdisch-hellenistischen Homilie* (FRLANT, no. 65; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1955); Grässer, “Der Hebräerbrief 1938-1963,” 159-60.

⁹⁸ Lawrence M. Wills, “The Form of the Sermon in Hellenistic Judaism and Early Christianity,” *HTR* 77 (1984): 280-3.

with an established pattern of three elements: *exempla*, a conclusion, and an exhortation that describe the form of the sermon in Hellenistic Judaism and early Christianity.

Rhetorical analysis also deals with the social aspect of language. Two more recent commentaries disclose insights from all three areas of rhetorical analysis.⁹⁹ DeSilva urges the reader to push beyond the rhetorical strategy to the ideological and social strategies employed by the author to accomplish his goals for the community addressed. The aim of the knowledge of classical rhetoric is to lay bare the techniques and strategies of the author, never to force his text to wear misleading labels for the sake of preserving some “textbook” scheme.¹⁰⁰

Koester warns against categorizing Hebrews as either deliberative or epideictic, but to view Hebrews as epideictic for those in the audience who remain committed to God, and deliberative, since it seeks to dissuade from apostasy, for those who are in the danger of drifting away from faith. Koester, however, uses the classical rhetorical outline to identify the general structure of Hebrews.¹⁰¹

The strength of rhetorical analysis has the advantage that it corresponds with the approach taken by ancient rhetoricians.¹⁰² Rhetorical analysis has also persuaded many concerning the oral nature of the discourse so that its sermonic nature is today a presupposition for many studies. Likewise, the role of the emotional appeal to the readers

⁹⁹ DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude*; Koester, *Hebrews*.

¹⁰⁰ DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude*, 46.

¹⁰¹ Koester, *Hebrews*, 82, ix-xii.

¹⁰² Johnson, *Hebrews*, 14.

is weighted equally with the appeal to logic.¹⁰³

The weakness of rhetorical analysis lies in the fact that Hebrews is resistant to being divided neatly into the four or five parts of the Greco-Roman speech.¹⁰⁴ The linear outlines of deliberative or epideictic rhetoric do not do justice to the patterns of repetition of phrases and themes in the discourse.¹⁰⁵ Besides the fact that Hebrews contains elements of both deliberative and epideictic rhetoric, the general pattern used by both Überlacker and Koester is primarily applicable to forensic rhetoric.¹⁰⁶ Moreover, the rhetoric in the classical handbooks was crafted in the judicial and political spheres, and the book of Hebrews has the characteristics of the Hellenistic synagogue homily, as noted already. This form cannot be forced into the mold of a classical speech, although it contains a wide range of features described in the Greek handbooks.¹⁰⁷ However, the structural analysis should be informed by rhetorical analysis, but based on the formal and semantic features of the text.

Literary analysis refers to an examination of the text which focuses on literary characteristics by which the author crafted his work. These include characteristics that mark the structure (*inclusio*, hook-words, chiasms, etc.), use of diverse genres, repetition,

¹⁰³ Westfall, *A Discourse Analysis of the Letter to the Hebrews*, 6.

¹⁰⁴ DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude*, 46.

¹⁰⁵ Westfall, *A Discourse Analysis of the Letter to the Hebrews*, 6.

¹⁰⁶ Guthrie, *Structure of Hebrews*, 32.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

and vocabulary.¹⁰⁸ In contrast to rhetorical criticism, literary analysis is more ahistorical in nature with interpretation of the text as the main goal.

The most respected approach to the structure of Hebrews, as already noted, is the literary analysis of A. Vanhoye and W. Nauck.¹⁰⁹ Vanhoye synthesizes the insights of A. Descamps, F. Gyllenberg, F. Thien, and L. Vaganay, and produced a structure that was second to none at the time.¹¹⁰ He had an immense influence on H. Attridge, D. Black, P. Ellingworth, G. H. Guthrie, and W. Lane. For D. Black, Vanhoye's thesis must be the departing point of any discussion on Hebrews.¹¹¹ As noted before, Vanhoye uses the following literary indicators for structuring Hebrews: announcement of a theme, hook-words, change in genre, characteristic words, inclusion, and symmetrical alignment (chiasms).¹¹²

The strength of Vanhoye's methodology is partly due to identifying the literary devices mentioned above, which were all used in the ancient world.¹¹³ Such devices have

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 33.

¹⁰⁹ Vanhoye, *La Structure*. For a good representation of his work on the structure of Hebrews see also Albert Vanhoye, *Structure and Message of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (SubBi, no. 12; Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1989); Nauck, "Zum Aufbau des Hebräerbriefes."

¹¹⁰ Descamps, "La structure de l'Épître aux Hébreux"; Gyllenberg, "Die Komposition des Hebräerbriefes"; Thien, "Analyse de l'Épître aux Hébreux"; Vaganay, "Le Plan de l'Épître aux Hébreux."

¹¹¹ Black, "Problem of the Literary Structure of Hebrews," 176.

¹¹² These literary devices are called the "joints" of the epistle's structure by David J. MacLeod, "The Literary Structure of the Book of Hebrews," *BSac* 146 (1989): 197.

¹¹³ G. H. Guthrie, however, does not think that Vanhoye has accurately detected the use of such literary devices in Hebrews. Guthrie, *Structure of Hebrews*, 34.

to be considered as viable tools since writers of the time had them at their disposal. Furthermore, Vanhoye has emphasized the change of different genres in Hebrews. A change in genre between exposition and exhortation might mark a shift in the author's discourse.¹¹⁴ Finally, Vanhoye's observation of repetition throughout the discourse, categorized as inclusions, hook-words, and characteristic words, has convinced many concerning the building of semantic cohesion in various sections of the discourse. Especially since the author builds and develops his message partially on the basis of lexical choices, the use of vocabulary might be a factor through which a shift in the discourse might be demonstrated.

One weakness of Vanhoye's literary analysis has been detected by Swetnam who criticizes him for forcing his identification of literary devices at points and giving "form" priority over "content" in his structural assessment of Hebrews.¹¹⁵ Swetnam states: "But worthy as this attention to form is, there is a concomitant danger which should not be overlooked: if form is too much divorced from content it can lead to a distortion of content, not a clarification."¹¹⁶ Swetnam's correction, then, must be taken, that the structure of Hebrews must be analyzed "with attention being paid to both form and content."¹¹⁷ Vanhoye has also failed to adequately answer Nauck's parallels found in

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Swetnam, "Form and Content in Hebrews 7-13," 369.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

4:14-16 and 10:19-23.¹¹⁸

Concluding the literary analysis, one has to remark that this method does not necessarily conflict with the use of the thematic analysis or the rhetorical criticism, but rather, these methods have complementary concerns. For example, identification of “characteristic terms” in literary analysis touches upon the thematic interest of thematic analysis. With rhetorical criticism, literary analysis shares an interest in matters of style and the milieu in which the book was originally written. Literary analysis avoids the subjectivity of thematic analysis and the rhetorical-critical pitfall of forcing a work in the pattern of a particular Greco-Roman oratory form.¹¹⁹ In other words, none of these methods holds the master key for unlocking Hebrews, but each of these methodologies has a single key that might fit a small door in one of the corners of the labyrinth of Hebrews.

The last approach to analyzing the structure of Hebrews concerns discourse analysis. Discourse analysis is a relatively new discipline that analyzes the discourse above the sentence level using contemporary principles of linguistic study.¹²⁰ Several

¹¹⁸ Vanhoye, “Discussions sur la structure,” 365. These two passages, discovered by Nauck, contain the most prominent use of parallelism in the whole book. The two passages are parallel in theme and form and they are prominent semantically and formally. However, Nauck’s weakness is that he places a major division between 4:13 and 4:14 as well as 10:23 and 10:24. There are triplets of hortatory subjunctives in 4:11-16 and 10:19-25, which form spans that should not be divided. So Westfall, *A Discourse Analysis of the Letter to the Hebrews*, 13-4. This point will be further developed under the heading: Cohesion in Hebrews 4 and 10.

¹¹⁹ Guthrie, *Structure of Hebrews*, 35.

¹²⁰ The development of discourse analysis in biblical studies is only in the beginning stages. S. E. Porter has identified four major schools of thought in New Testament studies that do not necessarily correspond to the major schools of thought in

works have presented full-scale analysis of the book of Hebrews.

Linda L. Neeley applies the linguistic approach developed by Robert E. Longacre to the text of Hebrews. Longacre suggests four major systems of organizing a discourse which are universal and relevant to all languages.

These systems are (1) the combining of shorter grammatical units, such as sentences or clauses, into larger discourse units, such as paragraphs, (2) the use of these larger units for some particular function in the discourse, e.g., introduction or climax, (3) the distinction between developmental (backbone) material and material which supports it, and (4) semantic organization (involving such things as choice of words and theme development).¹²¹

Neeley analyzes Hebrews on the basis of each of these systems of information organization.

Neeley proposes four major criteria which should be used in determining discourse divisions. These are (1) a change in genre; (2) transition introductions or conclusions; (3) use of relatively rare linguistic devices; (4) evidence of the unity of the preceding embedded discourse (its lexical and semantic cohesion).¹²² Her first three criteria parallel those of Vanhoye's analysis of literary devices. The change in genre refers to the exchange between exposition and exhortation.¹²³ Back references (one

the field of linguistics. For further details see Stanley E. Porter, "Discourse Analysis and New Testament Studies: An Introductory Survey," in *Discourse Analysis and Other Topics in Biblical Greek* (JSNTSS 113, ed. Stanley E. Porter; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 24-35.

¹²¹ Neeley, "A Discourse Analysis of Hebrews," 1-2. Neeley's approach is primarily based on Longacre's class notes.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 6.

¹²³ The distinction between these two genres is indicated especially by the verbal system. Hortatory genre is characterized by imperative verbs or subjunctives with imperative intent and first- and second-person predominate. In expository genre, verbs are generally indicative, and third person has greater frequency. *Ibid.*

category of them being hook-words), reiterations, and summaries are subsumed under “transition introductions or conclusions.”¹²⁴ Under rare linguistic devices she mentions rhetorical questions, rare particles, and the use of vocatives. As evidence for the unity of the preceding embedded discourse, Neeley uses characteristic words or phrases, chiasmic arrangements of constructions or lexical items, and what Vanhoye calls inclusions even though Neeley borrows the term “sandwich structures” for the same phenomena.¹²⁵

For Neeley the most developed discourses have an introduction, various points which develop the author’s point, a peak, and a conclusion. She differentiates between backbone and support material by noting particles, determining grammatical subordination, and classifying material according to categories of information. The particles οὖν (therefore), διὰ τοῦτο (therefore, for this reason), ὅθεν (and so, for which reason), ἄρα (therefore, then, so), and διό (therefore, for this reason) always show backbone without exception. One particle γάρ (for) always shows subordination. Material that is supported by γάρ is always backbone.¹²⁶

The strength of Neeley’s analysis and for that matter of discourse analysis lies in the attempt to analyze the text as a coherent communication. She introduces criteria to determine thematic backbone and subordination material. The association of discourse markers with prominence (peaks), discourse themes, and background in the discourse

¹²⁴ Ibid., 8, 10-3.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 13-7.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 26.

may be her most important contribution to the debate.¹²⁷

Westfall, though, sees Neeley's analysis of the particles as a weakness of her argument. Neeley claims that some inferential particles indicate backbone without exception. However, the emphatic function of particles must be determined by their context as well as the collocation with other emphatic markers.¹²⁸ Neeley categorizes several sentences as introductions that are marked with inferential conjunctions (2:1-4; 3:1-6; 10:19-25; 12:1-3; 12:28; 13:13).¹²⁹ Westfall denies that and thinks that "these inferential conjunctions can be shown to have a summarizing function in relationship with the preceding co-text and they are better categorized as conclusions."¹³⁰ She also accuses Neeley of mixing up backbone material with support material, and obviously Neeley prefers content analysis over linguistic indicators.

Another weakness of Neeley is disclosed by G. H. Guthrie when she identifies Heb 11 as expository.¹³¹ The use of *exempla* was a hortatory device used extensively in the ancient world to persuade the reader to take action.¹³² Thus Guthrie concludes that Neeley misunderstands the import of the passage due to a lack of understanding the

¹²⁷ Westfall, *A Discourse Analysis of the Letter to the Hebrews*, 17.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 17-8.

¹²⁹ Neeley, "A Discourse Analysis of Hebrews," 66, 86, 114.

¹³⁰ Westfall, *A Discourse Analysis of the Letter to the Hebrews*, 18.

¹³¹ Neeley, "A Discourse Analysis of Hebrews," 8.

¹³² Michael R. Cosby, "The Rhetorical Composition of Hebrews 11," *JBL* 107 (1988): 268.

historical context.¹³³

G. H. Guthrie himself offers a text-linguistic analysis of Hebrews that is based on the assumption that written texts begin with the author's conception of the theme which he wishes to communicate.¹³⁴ He isolates the units of the text by locating "cohesion shifts" and inclusions. Next, he analyzes the interrelationship between the discourse units. Finally, he sets markers which indicate relationships between the individual units. Besides inclusions he mentions identification of lexical or pronominal items used throughout a section, and identification of specific transition techniques used by the author.¹³⁵ The text is categorized, for Guthrie, according to genre as either exposition or exhortation.¹³⁶ Analyzing each genre separately, he describes the structure as something like two parallel discourses.

The strength of Guthrie's approach lies first of all in distinguishing between exposition and exhortation, and the observation that each genre has a different function.¹³⁷ Also to be mentioned is the fact that he determines the units in the discourse

¹³³ Guthrie, *Structure of Hebrews*, 40.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 46.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 90.

¹³⁶ Formal distinctions in the hortatory materials of Hebrews are: (1) the use of the communal "we," (2) the use of the second-person plural verbs and pronouns, (3) the use of ἀδελφοί as a vocative to address the hearers directly, (4) the use of warnings, promises, encouragement, and *exempla*, (5) the prominence of inferential particles or phrases to strengthen the hortatory units: διό, διὰ, τοῦτο, οὖν, etc. So George H. Guthrie, "Formal Distinctions in the Hortatory Materials of Hebrews" (Washington, D.C.: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 1.

¹³⁷ So Westfall, *A Discourse Analysis of the Letter to the Hebrews*, 19.

by charting cohesion shifts.¹³⁸

The weakness that results from this dissection of the discourse is described by Westfall as follows: “With some revision, a computer program could designate likely locations for shifts in the discourse based on similar criteria.”¹³⁹ Furthermore, Westfall accuses Guthrie of offering no analysis of cohesion, neglecting the function of conjunctions which are the main resources that the Hellenistic speaker/writer had to signal continuity and discontinuity in a discourse, and omitting to address prominence, which she finds strange in a discourse analysis. Finally, Westfall considers Guthrie’s categorization of Heb 11 as exhortation to be arbitrary.¹⁴⁰ She asserts that auditory impact does not equal exhortation.¹⁴¹ Concluding, Westfall estimates Guthrie’s proposal of two independent but interrelated backbones which run side by side as an incoherent representation of the discourse, as a misrepresentation of the discourse that originates from a confusion of central and support material.

The most recent extended work in the area of discourse analysis for the book of Hebrews has been done by Westfall in her published dissertation *A Discourse Analysis of the Letter to the Hebrews: The Relationship between Form and Meaning*. Her work

¹³⁸ Cohesion, as used in linguistics, may be defined as a semantic property of a text which gives the text unity. Guthrie operates with twelve cohesion fields: genre, topic, temporal indicators, spatial indicators, actor, subject, verb tense, mood, person and number, reference, and lexical items. All of these may serve in making a discourse cohesive. Cf. Guthrie, *Structure of Hebrews*, 49-53.

¹³⁹ Westfall, *A Discourse Analysis of the Letter to the Hebrews*, 19.

¹⁴⁰ Guthrie, *Structure of Hebrews*, 40, 144.

¹⁴¹ Westfall, *A Discourse Analysis of the Letter to the Hebrews*, 20, n. 77.

draws on the prior research of Stanley E. Porter, a promoter of discourse analysis, who has identified four major schools of thought in New Testament studies that do not necessarily correspond to the major schools of thought in the field of linguistics: Continental European Discourse Analysis, South African Discourse Analysis, the Summer Institute of Linguistics Discourse Analysis (SIL), and Systemic-Functional Linguistics.¹⁴² The Systemic-Functional Linguistics model, also known as the English school or the Birmingham school of linguistics, is primarily based on the work of Michael A. K. Halliday and Ruqaiya Hasan, who were inspired by the work of J. R. Firth.¹⁴³ Porter and Reed have been primarily responsible for applying the Systemic-Functional model to the New Testament.¹⁴⁴ Compared with the previous studies, Westfall adds a perspective based on Systemic-Functional Linguistics. The model includes a theory of grouping or chunking to form units, a view of prominence or the author's highlighting procedure, a further development of connectives by conjunctions and

¹⁴² Porter, "Discourse Analysis and New Testament Studies," 24-34.

¹⁴³ Michael A. K. Halliday, *An Introduction to Functional Grammar* (London: Edward Arnold, 1985); Michael A. K. Halliday, *Explorations in the Functions of Language* (ELS; ed. Peter Doughty and Geoffrey Thornton; London: Edward Arnold, 1973); Michael A. K. Halliday, *Language as Social Semiotic: The Social Interpretation of Language and Meaning* (Baltimore, Md.: University Park Press, 1978); Michael A. K. Halliday and Ruqaiya Hasan, *Cohesion in English* (London: Longman, 1976). See J. R. Firth, *Papers in Linguistics, 1934-1951* (London: Oxford University Press, 1957); F. R. Palmer, ed., *Selected Papers of J. R. Firth, 1952-59* (IUSHTL, ed. Thomas A. Sebeok; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968).

¹⁴⁴ Stanley E. Porter, *Verbal Aspect in the Greek of the New Testament: With Reference to Tense and Mood* (SBG, no. 1; New York: P. Lang, 1989). Porter and Reed summarized discourse analysis in Stanley E. Porter and Jeffrey T. Reed, "Greek Grammar since BDF: A Retrospective and Prospective Analysis," *FN* 4 (1991): 143-64.

particles, and criteria for determining a topic that goes beyond the genre shifts.¹⁴⁵

The strength of Westfall's approach consists in the cohesion analysis, the place she gives to prominence; the markedness by tense, mood, person and number, voice and case; and the use of conjunctions, which are very important to signal continuity or discontinuity in a discourse.¹⁴⁶ The advantage of this approach is that it pays close attention to the form of the Greek text.

The weakness of Westfall's approach lies perhaps partially in its strength, namely that her rigorous application of discourse analysis treats the text as a static, visual phenomenon, rather than as a dynamic oral presentation.¹⁴⁷ After all the labor spent on detailed and sophisticated examination of the text, its actual structure of the composition ends up being rather close to the tripartite structure.¹⁴⁸

The discipline of discourse analysis does not automatically yield a fool-proof result, but it offers a unique and linguistically informed perspective. It is the approach taken in this dissertation because of its careful dealing with the Greek text. By doing that it groups units together, includes a view of prominence, and consists in cohesion analysis. Especially cohesion analysis will be stressed when looking at both pericopes under investigation in Heb 4 and Heb 10.

¹⁴⁵ Westfall, *A Discourse Analysis of the Letter to the Hebrews*, 20.

¹⁴⁶ See especially chapter 2 in *ibid.*, 22-87.

¹⁴⁷ Johnson, *Hebrews*, 12.

¹⁴⁸ However, Westfall does not place major divisions between 4:13 and 4:14 as well as 10:23 and 10:24 like Nauck because there are triplets of hortatory subjunctives in 4:11-16 and 10:19-25, which form spans that should not be divided. See Westfall, *A Discourse Analysis of the Letter to the Hebrews*, 13.

As mentioned earlier, none of these approaches mentioned above holds the master key to unlock Hebrews, but each one of them offers an avenue from which to view the text while being aware of the strength and weaknesses of each one of these approaches.

Attridge is certainly correct when he states:

Some of the difficulty in analyzing the structure of Hebrews is due not to the lack of structural indices, but to their overabundance. Hebrews constantly foreshadows themes that receive fuller treatment elsewhere and frequently provides brief summaries that resume and refocus earlier developments. Any structural scheme captures only a portion of this web of interrelationships and does only partial justice to the complexity of the work.¹⁴⁹

Based on the work of G. Guthrie, who isolated individual units and located “cohesion shifts” and “inclusions,” and the work of C. Westfall in the area of discourse analysis we should turn our attention to the passages of Hebrews which are under investigation and look for markers of interrelationship between the discourse units.

Cohesion between Hebrews 4 and 10

An author has several means by which he may indicate relationships between the individual units which make up his discourse. *Inclusio* plays a part in the grouping of embedded discourse units besides identification of lexical or pronominal items used throughout a section, and identification of specific transition techniques used by the author.¹⁵⁰

Nauck is credited with first recognizing the *inclusio*, the parallels between Heb

¹⁴⁹ Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 16-7.

¹⁵⁰ Guthrie, *Structure of Hebrews*, 90.

4:11-16 and 10:19-25, but detects only two parallel commands.¹⁵¹ Vanhoye misses these parallels.¹⁵² G. Guthrie labels the parallels as “the most striking use of *inclusio*” in Hebrews.¹⁵³ That Albert Vanhoye has failed to deal with such obvious parallels remains a glaring weakness in his approach, asserts Guthrie, regarding the structure of Hebrews.¹⁵⁴

Lexical cohesion occurs between the discourse units mentioned: ἔρχοντες οὖν (4:14; 10:19), ἀρχιερέα μέγαν (4:14) and ἱερέα μέγαν (10:21), Ἰησοῦν (4:14) and Ἰησοῦ (10:19), τοῦ θεοῦ (4:14; 10:21), κρατῶμεν τῆς ὁμολογίας (4:14) and κατέχωμεν τὴν ὁμολογίαν (10:23), προσερχώμεθα . . . μετὰ (4:16) and προσερχώμεθα μετὰ (10:22), and finally παρρησίας (4:16) and παρρησίαν (10:19).¹⁵⁵ The lexical ties are demonstrated in

¹⁵¹ Ronald H. Nash, “Notion of Mediator in Alexandrian Judaism and the Epistle to the Hebrews,” *WTJ* 40 (1977): 203-4. Nauck rejects Spicq’s approach in this article based on two reasons. First, he depends too much on the Semitic hook-word method which Nauck thinks is too simplistic for a well-educated and rhetorically skilled writer as the author of Hebrews. Second, he does not give proper consideration to the exhortation passages in Hebrews. For Nauck, the exhortation passages are the peak points of Hebrews and the chain of thoughts throughout the book which need appropriate attention. He states: “Einerseits müssen die paränetischen Abschnitte als die Ziel- und Höhepunkte des Hebräerbriefes anerkannt und es muß von ihnen her die Gliederung begriffen werden. Und andererseits ist auf die Methode der Verkettung und den Gedankenfortschritt zu achten.“ Nauck, *Zum Aufbau des Hebräerbriefes*, 203.

¹⁵² Vanhoye, *Structure and Message*, 29, 40a-b.

¹⁵³ Guthrie, *Structure of Hebrews*, 79.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ Heb 4 reinforces the connection to Heb 3 by the repeated projections/quotation and expansions of Ps 95:7-11, the common theme of rest and the repetition of the phrase “today if you hear his voice.” That implies an even higher level of lexical and semantic cohesion between Heb 3-4 and Heb 10. Lexical cohesion is based on the following common vocabulary: ἀδελφοὶ (3:1, 12; 10:19), τὰς ὁδοὺς (3:10) and ὁδὸν (10:20), καρδία (3:8, 10; 4:7; 10:22), τῆς ἐλπίδος (3:6; 10: 23), πιστεῦω, πίστις, and πιστός (4:2,3; 10:23), ἐπαγγελία and ἐπαγγέλομαι (4:1; 10:23), ἔργα in the singular and plural (3:9; 4:4, 10; 10:24), ἡμέρα (3:13; 4:4, 7, 8; 10:25, 32), βλέπω (3:12, 19; 10:25), ἀμαρτία (3:13,

Guthrie's chart as follows:¹⁵⁶

Heb 4:14-16	Heb 10:19-23
ἔχοντες οὖν	ἔχοντες οὖν
ἀρχιερέα μέγαν	ἱερέα μέγαν
διεληλυθότα τοὺς οὐρανοὺς	διὰ τοῦ καταπετάσματος
Ἰησοῦν	Ἰησοῦ
τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ	τὸν οἶκον τοῦ θεοῦ
κρατῶμεν τῆς ὁμολογίας	κατέχωμεν τὴν ὁμολογίαν
προσερχώμεθα . . . μετὰ	προσερχώμεθα μετὰ
παρρησίας	παρρησίαν

Westfall includes in the lexical ties of Heb 4 also v. 11. She sees marked parallels between Heb 4:11-16 and Heb 10:19-25 in formal structure and lexis by diagramming them as follows:¹⁵⁷

17; 10:26), ἀπολείπω (4:6, 9; 10:26), φοβέομαι and φοβερός (4:1; 10:27, 31), κατανοέω (3:1; 10:24), and ἐπίπτω/πίπτω (4:11; 10:31). Weiss talks about a remarkable accumulation of certain hook-words (“hier finden sich in auffälliger Häufung bestimmte Stichworte”) in these two discourse units. Weiss, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 48. Thurén criticizes Nauck for not seeing that the *inclusio* of 4:14-16 and 10:19-23 contains similar vocables also found in Heb 3:1-6. For Thurén this observation is all the more important since for Hebrews significant expressions (κατέχω, ὁμολογία, παρρησία, ἐλπίς) appear in ch. 3 for the first time. For him, the main paraenetical theme receives its first introduction in Heb 3:1, 6. Thurén, *Das Lobopfer der Hebräer*, 31, n. 116. See also S.J. John Bligh, “The Structure of Hebrews,” *HeyJ* 5 (1964): 173.

¹⁵⁶ Guthrie, *Structure of Hebrews*, 80. Some of these lexical ties have been observed by others too. Worthy of mention is the following observation by F.-H. Weiss: “Dem ἔχοντες οὖν in 4,14 entspricht dieselbe Wendung in 10,19, dem κρατῶμεν τῆς ὁμολογίας in 4,14 das κατέχωμεν τὴν ὁμολογίαν in 10,23, dem προσερχώμεθα μετὰ παρρησίας in 4, 16 [*sic*] das προσερχώμεθα μετὰ ἀληθινῆς καρδίας in 10,22.” Weiss, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 47.

¹⁵⁷ Westfall, *A Discourse Analysis of the Letter to the Hebrews*, 238.

- 4:11 σπουδάσωμεν οὖν εἰσελθεῖν εἰς ἐκείνην τὴν κατάπαυσιν
therefore, let's make every effort to enter that rest
- 4:14 ἔχοντες οὖν ἀρχιερέα ... κρατῶμεν τῆς ὁμολογίας
therefore, having a great high priest, let's hold on to the confession
- 4:16 προσερχώμεθα οὖν μετὰ παρρησίας τῷ θρόνῳ τῆς χάριτος
therefore, let's draw near to the throne of grace with confidence
- 10:19-22 ἔχοντες οὖν, . . . παρρησίαν . . . καὶ ἱερέα . . . προσερχώμεθα
therefore, having confidence . . . and a high priest . . . let's draw
near
- 10:23 κατέχωμεν τὴν ὁμολογίαν τῆς ἐλπίδος ἀκλινηῖ
let's hold on to the confession of hope without wavering
- 10:24 καὶ κατανοῶμεν ἀλλήλους εἰς παροξυσμὸν
and let's consider how to stimulate one another

Text-linguistic analysis seeks in part to uncover semantic threads which relate sections of a discourse. Guthrie asserts: "Semantic threads in a discourse most often are woven with the same, or related, lexical items. Such items may be used repeatedly in two or more units, enhancing the semantic relationship between those units."¹⁵⁸ What Vanhoye labeled "characteristic terms" Guthrie calls "lexical cohesion." However, lexical elements may play a unifying role in individual units of a discourse, but also may span several units, indicating a relationship between those units.

Among the nine transition techniques used by the author of Hebrews and detected

¹⁵⁸ Guthrie, *Structure of Hebrews*, 90.

by Guthrie, the “overlapping constituent” as he calls it is the most relevant for this study.¹⁵⁹ Overlapping constituents refers to a passage used simultaneously as the conclusion of one block of material and the introduction to the next. According to Guthrie the two occurrences of overlapping constituents in Hebrews are found at 4:14-16 and 10:19-25.¹⁶⁰ The initial unit, 4:14-16, furnishes the conclusion to 3:1-4:16. The terms “Jesus,” “high priest,” and “confession” in 4:14-15 form an *inclusio* with the formulation in 3:1. Moreover, 4:14-16 shares with 3:1-4:13 the genre of exhortation, admonishing the audience to a specific action. It is thus an integral element of a larger unit of discourse extending from 3:1 to 4:16.

Simultaneously, 4:14-16 is integral to the exposition in 5:10-10:18 and provides the opening of a triple *inclusio*, which serves to mark out the boundaries of that great block of discourse. The reference to “Jesus” as the “high priest” who has passed “through the heavens” links 4:14-16 conceptually with the two main thematic movements of 5:10-10:18, i.e., the Son’s appointment as high priest (5:1-7:28) and his unique, fully sufficient sacrifice offering in heaven (8:3-10:18). In this manner 4:14-16 furnishes an appropriate conclusion to 3:1-4:16 and an equally appropriate introduction to 4:14-10:18. Hebrews 10:19-25 is conceptually both the conclusion to 4:14-10:18 as well as the hortatory introduction, furnishing a bridge to the rest of the book.¹⁶¹ This is why Westfall

¹⁵⁹ For a discussion of all nine transition techniques see *ibid.*, 96-111.

¹⁶⁰ For a detailed discussion on overlapping constituents see *ibid.*, 102-4.

¹⁶¹ Attridge also noticed that the opening verses of 10:19-39 verbally echo the remarks that followed the previous little homily (4:14-16). However, the earlier section provided a transition from exhortation to the exposition of the theme of Christ’s priesthood. A similar transition takes place in 10:19-25, but in the opposite direction,

concludes: “The two passages in 4:11-16 and 10:19-25 are clear peaks in the discourse due to the use of semantic and formal repetition of discourse themes, their function of summarizing, concluding and introducing new information, and their formal and semantic prominence.”¹⁶²

In Heb 4:11-16, three hortatory subjunctives occur in close proximity, and each one is joined with οὖν (4:11 σπουδάσωμεν οὖν; 4:14 ῥεχοντες οὖν; 4:16 προσερχώμεθα οὖν).¹⁶³ The functional unity is that each of these hortatory subjunctives is signaled as a high-level clause, according to Westfall.¹⁶⁴ The most marked relationship between 4:11-16 and the co-text is the formal and semantic parallels that are formed with 10:19-25 and concisely diagrammed by her:¹⁶⁵

4:11-16	10:19-25
Let’s make every effort to enter	Let’s draw near
Let’s hold on to the confession	Let’s hold on to the confession
Let’s draw near to the throne	Let’s consider how to stimulate

from the elaborate exposition to the paraenetic movements that conclude the work. Like its counterpart, these two units look in both directions and could be associated with either what precedes or what follows. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 18.

¹⁶² Westfall, *A Discourse Analysis of the Letter to the Hebrews*, 137.

¹⁶³ That is the reason why Westfall sees the unit extending from 4:11-16 rather than 4:14-16 as Guthrie.

¹⁶⁴ Westfall, *A Discourse Analysis of the Letter to the Hebrews*, 137. When οὖν occurs as a cluster, it creates a cohesive discourse peak. This is the reason why Westfall marks both of these units as peaks in her structure. *Ibid.*, 299-301.

¹⁶⁵ This unit reveals, compared to Heb 4:11-16, several common discourse markers of prominence. The inferential conjunction οὖν, the use of the hortatory subjunctives, and, unlike Heb 4:11-16 but very much like Heb 3:1, the use of the vocative ἀδελφοί.

The discourse peaks of 4:11-16 and 10:19-25 provide the three themes that account for the entire discourse: move forward spiritually, hold on to the confession, and draw near to the presence of God.¹⁶⁶ As is evident from the diagram, the triad of hortatory subjunctives in 10:19-25 is parallel to the triad of subjunctives in 4:11-16. The command to draw near to God is in 10:22 and 4:16, and the command to hold on to the confession is in 10:23 and 4:14.¹⁶⁷ The command to consider how to stimulate one another to love and good works in 10:24 corresponds to the command to make every effort to enter the rest so that no one will fall in 4:11. The three commandments of 10:19-25 form a cohesive unit on the basis of formal repetition, the repetition of the three themes from 4:11-16, and the relationship of the motions of drawing near, holding on, and moving forward.

Summary and Conclusion

The history of investigating the structure of Hebrews has been divided into four divisions: Early attempts, Medieval and Reformation periods, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and the twentieth century with at least one more extensive reference to the twenty-first century. The main focus has been of course on the twentieth century since it shows the greatest diversity.

¹⁶⁶ Attridge calls the similarly worded units “summary or transitional paragraphs.” Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 15. Similarly does Lincoln, *Hebrews*, 27.

¹⁶⁷ The use of the word *command* for the hortatory subjunctive is legitimate since there is no first-person imperative and the hortatory subjunctive is used to do roughly the same task. Wallace affirms: “The [hortatory] subjunctive is commonly used to exhort or command oneself and one’s associates. Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1996), 464. Blass and Debrunner assert that the hortatory subjunctive “supplements the imperative (as in Latin, etc.) in the first person plural.” Blass and Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament*, 183.

Earliest commentators did not use formal divisions but simply included an overview of the author's argument either in the introductions or the expositions of their commentaries.

From the fifth century on into the Medieval and Reformation time, the superiority of the Christ-theme gained popularity. A bipartite scheme with the focus on Christ's superiority and joining the leaders preceded the tripartite scheme introduced by Heinrich Bullinger with parts one and three admonishing the audience not to reject Christ and the middle section characterized by Christ as the true priest. Following Bullinger, Niels Hemmingsen introduced the rhetorical approach. All three approaches, the thematic approach, the tripartite scheme, and the rhetorical approach, have been pursued well into the modern era.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the bipartite division of Hebrews by Bengel was different from earlier attempts. It drew attention to the fact that Hebrews has doctrinal but also practical passages. The later ones are introduced with "therefore," according to Bengel. Based on thorough exegesis, Bengel detected three major key words in Hebrews (faithful, merciful, and high priest) around which the author builds his arguments. He also found out that especially Pss 2, 8, and 110 form the point of departure for the author on several occasions. Heinrich F. von Soden presented a thematic arrangement but according to the rhetoric of classical Greek.

The twentieth and twenty-first centuries put the focus more on linguistics, paying attention to formal features, to links and transitions signaled by the text. The three streams of discussion that brought fresh insights to the debate were: (1) "Genre Differentiation" as carried out by F. Büchsel and Rafael Gyllenberg, (2) the "Literary

Analysis” of Leon Vaganay, Albert Vanhoye, and others, and (3) the “tripartite scheme” advanced by Wolfgang Nauck.

F. Thien recognized that the author announces his primary themes just prior to the introduction of the unit in which they are to be developed in reverse order. Vaganay, however, moved beyond Thien and advanced the discussion by recognizing *mot-crochets*, which connect the end of one section with the next by repeating the same hook-word. They function as transitions between two units.

A. Vanhoye synthesized the insights of F. Thien, R. Gyllenberg, A. Descamps, and L. Vaganay with his own research and came up with his set of literary devices that have influenced to this very day the structure of Hebrews. Those who were less convinced by Vanhoye’s proposal have tended to align themselves with the modified scheme of Wolfgang Nauck. He noted that hortatory blocks of material are assigned the dominant role in framing structurally the three major divisions in Hebrews.

Succeeding W. Nauck, George Guthrie worked elaborately on the structure of Hebrews. He offered a text-linguistic analysis of Hebrews by isolating individual units and locating “cohesion shifts” and “inclusions.” Next, he analyzed their interrelationship, determined transitional elements, and categorized the text according to genre either exposition or exhortation while analyzing each genre separately.

Building on the work of L. Dussaut and L. L. Neeley, discourse analysis has been continued most recently with the work of C. L. Westfall. This is the approach used in the present dissertation. Up to this point the issue of the structure of Hebrews as a whole remains an unsolved problem.

After laying out the history of the structure of Hebrews we turned our attention to

the evaluation of the different approaches. The agnostic approach accurately describes the discourse as circular and repetitive, but fails to discern an organizational structure of the author, though ancient literature used conventions for arranging such material.

Theme or content analysis has the advantage of recognizing that the author of Hebrews emphasizes recognizable themes. The downside is, it fails to account for the repetitive nature of the discourse and assumes the homily to be a dogmatic apologetic treatise that targets Jews, who are about to revert back into Judaism.

Rhetorical analysis has unified scholars of Hebrews in at least one area, namely the oral nature of the discourse so that the sermonic nature of Hebrews is widely accepted. The homily cannot, however, be forced into the mold of a classical speech although it has several features described in the Greek handbooks of rhetoric.

In favor of literary analysis speaks the fact that it identifies literary devices which were used in the ancient world. The danger of this analysis is that form divorced from content can lead to a distortion of the initial intention of the author.

The strength of discourse analysis consists in the attempt to analyze the text as a coherent material. Also to be mentioned are the markers that indicate interrelationship between the discourse units. But since this approach does not yield a fool-proof result, one has to be aware of its weaknesses also; especially the fact that it treats the text as a visual phenomena rather than an oral presentation. Furthermore, the approach tends to be subjective since each discourse analyst defines the functions of particles slightly different from the next.

After such a perplexing chapter that deals with the structure of Hebrews and its literary analysis, one may wonder about the benefit of this dissertation. In other words,

what is useful from all of this in understanding Heb 4 and Heb 10? Regarding the cohesion between Heb 4 and 10, we have seen that 4:11-16 and 10:19-25 reveal the most striking use of *inclusio* in Hebrews. Lexical and semantic cohesion ties the two units even more together and connects them also to Heb 3:1, 6. Semantic threads in a discourse are woven with the same or related lexical items, indicating a relationship between those units. The two units function as overlapping constituents, meaning that they have a two-directional function. In other words these units are furnishing the conclusion of the previous section but also an introduction to the following section.

Besides formal and semantic cohesion, these two units also provide syntactical cohesion. Both furnish three hortatory subjunctives in close proximity and in Heb 4:11-16 we find three times the inferential conjunction οὖν, a marker of prominence, connected to the hortatory subjunctives. The same marker of prominence is also found in the Heb 10:19-25 unit.

Finally, both units share the same genre. The two units share structural features, lexical and semantic cohesion, formal constituents, syntactical elements, and the same genre. This means that the units exhibit cohesion of form and function, but also a continuity of topic and content.¹⁶⁸ If both units share structural features, lexical and

¹⁶⁸ Contra Westfall, who dismisses continuity in topic and content. Westfall, *A Discourse of the Letter to the Hebrews*, 239. The use of ὁμολογία appears in Heb 4:14 where Jesus, the “Son of God,” is portrayed as the object of the ὁμολογία which the Christians should conserve. The association of the word ὁμολογία with words denoting the content of Christian faith in 4:14 and with words which seem to imply that content in 10:23 has led one authority to see this basic meaning also in 3:1. Vernon H. Neufeld, *The Earliest Christian Confessions* (NTTS; ed. Bruce M. Metzger; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1963), 143. The ὁμολογία in Hebrews seems to have a different function, he says. It is not the expression or the acknowledgment of the ὁμολογία that is important, but

semantic cohesion, formal constituents, syntactical elements, and the same genre could it be that these units are related on a deeper level as well, namely on the level of content and theme?

This is something that is investigated and researched further in the following chapters. Once the cohesion between the two units in Heb 4 and Heb 10 has been established on the bases of structural features, both these units need to be investigated on the bases of exegetical grounds. The logical suspicion would lead the exegete to assume that these units are not just formally cohesive but also as far as the content is concerned. However, this assumption needs to be investigated in the following chapters.

the adherence to the ὁμολογία already known or expressed. Neufeld states: “The readers are *to consider* (κατανοήσατε, 3.1), *to cling* (κρατῶμεν, 4.14), or *to hold fast to* (κατέχωμεν, 10.23) the *homologia*, whereas verbs referring to ‘believing,’ ‘confessing,’ or ‘acknowledging’ the *homologia* do not occur.” Neufeld, *The Earliest Christian Confessions*, 134. Since little clue is given to its content except “Jesus the Son of God” (Heb 4:14) could it be that as Kelly suggests the *Sitz im Leben* determines to some extent the style, the substance, and the structure of the confession? J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds* (3rd ed.; New York: David McKay Co., 1972), 14.

CHAPTER IV

HEBREWS 4:1-16

Introduction

The focus of this chapter is on Heb 4. In 1933 Gerhard von Rad aptly observed that: "Among the many benefits of redemption offered to man by Holy Scripture, that of 'rest' has been almost overlooked in biblical theology."¹ Seventy years of scholarship have to a certain degree changed that assessment of the situation. Unfortunately, enthusiasm for the subject has not resulted in a general consensus regarding its meaning in Hebrews. The question is why? While the reasons may vary, the overriding cause lies in the sheer complexity of the concept. Added to this obstacle are the problems of one's hermeneutical posture and his solution to the boundaries placed by the *Auctor ad Hebraeos* on the lines of the concept of rest in the Old Testament as well as in the broader context of Heb 4. Precisely for these reasons the expositors of Scripture should be willing to re-examine once again this obscure concept in Heb 4, since it promises to provide rewarding results.

The purpose of this chapter is to give careful considerations to the meaning of rest

¹ Gerhard von Rad, "There Remains Still a Rest for the People of God," in *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays* (trans. E. W. Trueman Dicken; New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), 94.

in the Old Testament Septuagint (LXX) used by our author.² Then it explores the meaning of the rest motif in extrabiblical literature. Further, it reconsiders the broader context of Heb 4 and the eschatological and soteriological predominance in interpreting the meaning of rest in the passage under consideration. Finally, it focuses on Heb 4:1-16 to make sense of the κατάπαυσις/σαββατισμός-idea with the background knowledge acquired.³

² It can be argued that in several cases the divergence of the Hebrew and the Greek text was to some degree exploited in the epistle's argument and consequently it left discernable Septuagintal traces on the epistle's use of quotations. The more noteworthy examples include Pss 8, 39, and 94 LXX. This is at least one of the reasons why the LXX is seen as the source of Scripture for the author of Hebrews. The reason for fusing the texts primarily by the Greek OT text in a way in which the corresponding Hebrew texts would have been less suitable is very evident in the association of Ps 94:11 and Gen 2:3 in Heb 4:3. The stringing together of these two verses was probably enhanced by the cognates κατάπαυσις in Ps 94:11 and κατέπαυσεν in Gen 2:3 LXX. In other cases the quotation reveals that the Septuagintal influences go beyond the mere insertion of the LXX text in the epistle. The Greek text finds reverberations in the argument of the epistle. For more details on the Septuagintal influence on Hebrews see: Radu Gheorghita, *The Role of the Septuagint in Hebrews: An Investigation of Its Influence with Special Consideration to the Use of Hab 2:3-4 in Heb 10:378-38* (WUNT; ed. Jörg Frey, Maritin Hengel and Otfried Hofius, no. II/160; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 32-56; Susan E. Docherty, *The Use of the Old Testament in Hebrews: A Case Study in Early Jewish Bible Interpretation* (WUNT; ed. Jörg Frey; no. II/260; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 121-142.

³ The quest for this background knowledge is thus set forth. As a reminder I will summarize here the two main opposite views for which, of course, exist numerous mediating positions. In an essentially pastoral work which is remarkable for the circumstances in which it was composed, Käsemann's *Wandering People of God* set the agenda for subsequent discussions of the κατάπαυσις-idea. The motif of the "wandering people of God" is grounded in the heavenly journey of the gnostic *Urmensch* (Käsemann, *Wandering People of God*, 87). It was not Käsemann's thesis that Hebrews is a gnostic document, but rather that the author of Hebrews developed his message in thoughts familiar to his reader, though the gap between his message and the gnostic one was great. The κατάπαυσις is to be understood as a *spatially conceived* goal of the Christian journey, portrayed against the backdrop of the wilderness generation. Such a hope of a heavenly resting *place* combined with speculations about the seventh day struck Käsemann as foreign to the Old Testament and yet strangely reminiscent of certain ideas in Philo.

The κατάπαυσις Motif in the LXX

The rest motif in the LXX is of great importance for my study since the author of Hebrews knew the Old Testament only in Greek.⁴ It is necessary to ascertain how the rest tradition fared in the Greek version in terms of noteworthy developments and omissions.

Käsemann surmised that both Philo and Hebrews were independently drawing on gnostic patterns of thought. Käsemann's basic thesis has its adherents to this day. Gerd Theissen argued that two strands of thought about ἀνάπαυσις are to be found in Philo, one being a more "gnostic" conception which Philo ultimately rejected in favor of a more "Jewish" understanding (*Untersuchungen zum Hebräerbrief*, 124-7). Theissen believes that the κατάπαυσις-speculation of Hebrews is dependent on traditions with gnostic character (*Untersuchungen zum Hebräerbrief*, 128). Among others see, Thompson, *The Beginnings of Christian Philosophy*; Braun, *Hebräer*; and Grässer, *Hebr 1-6*, who have taken up variations on Käsemann's thesis.

A frontal assault on this line of argumentation expressed by Käsemann was made by Hofius. At about the same time R. Williamson argued against a Philonic understanding of κατάπαυσις in Heb 3-4 (*Philo and Hebrews*, 539-57). Hofius's response to Käsemann was threefold. First, against Käsemann's assumption that the idea of a resting *place* (a local idea) is paralleled only in Gnosticism, Hofius argued that this is the very meaning of ἡχώνημ/κατάπαυσις in Ps 95 (LXX 94), both in the Old Testament and in subsequent Jewish apocalyptic literature. Confronted by two religious historical candidates, Hofius judged the Jewish apocalyptic conception as the closer parallel. He thinks that the ἡχώνημ/κατάπαυσις in Ps 95 is best understood as a reference to the temple, God's resting place (Hofius, *Katapausis*, 53-4). Second, Käsemann assumed that the word σαββατισμός in Heb 4:9 was essentially synonymous with κατάπαυσις and thus had as its referent a heavenly expanse, the seventh "aeon" or Hebdomas. Hofius argued that for *Auctor ad Hebraeos* the σαββατισμός was the event to take place in the κατάπαυσις, namely a Sabbath celebration. Such a notion was anticipated in Judaism and was a widespread hope for the "world to-come," a day wholly Sabbath and rest, and thus it indicated no indebtedness to Gnosticism (*ibid.*, 106). Finally, Hofius argued that the theme of Heb 3-4 is not that of the *traveling* people of God, but rather that of the *waiting* people of God, since *Auctor ad Hebraeos* refers in his Psalm text only to Num 14, not Exod 17 and Exod 20. Instead of a mythologically conceived journey through the cosmos as in Gnosticism, one should envisage a people waiting expectantly to enter the land on the verge of Kadesh Barnea (*ibid.*, 140-4). In sum, the debate between Käsemann et al. and Hofius et al. has controlled the discussion of the κατάπαυσις-idea in Heb 3-4. This discussion has provoked studies on the use of the Old Testament and the issue of typology, as well as the issue of eschatology and the Sabbath in Heb 3-4. For more details and bibliographic references see Laansma, *'I Will Give You Rest,'* 10-3.

⁴ So Laansma, *'I Will Give You Rest,'* 77-8.

The word *κατάπαυσις* appears in the Septuagint eleven times,⁵ apart from the four times it appears as a variant.⁶ However, the Greek word “rest” that appears much more often is the word *ἀνάπαυσις*, which is also more common in the New Testament as well as in the post-canonical Christian literature and especially in the Gnostic literature.⁷ Since the debate concerning Heb 3-4 has centered on the meaning and use of the word *κατάπαυσις* in the LXX it will be necessary to examine these occurrences to find out what the ‘rest’ refers to.⁸ The purpose of this examination is to find out what “rest” refers to in the Septuagint. Only by understanding the LXX background of the *κατάπαυσις* can a proper exegesis of Heb 3 and 4 be given.

⁵ Exod 35:2; Num 10:35 [MT 10:36]; Deut 12:9; 1 Kgs 8:56; 1 Chr 6:16 [MT 6:31]; 2 Chr 6:41; Jdt 9:8; 2 Macc 15:1; Pss 94:11; 131:14 [MT 132:14]; Isa 66:1.

⁶ The word appears two times in Exod 34:21 (B); Lev 25:28 (B*, A); Judg 20:43 (A).

⁷ For the occurrences in the Old Testament see Edwin Hatch and Henry A. Redpath, *A Concordance to the Septuagint and the Other Greek Versions of the Old Testament (Including the Apocryphal Books)* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1998), 80-1, and for the New Testament see Matt 11:29; 12:34; Luke 11:24; Rev 4:8; 14:11. Besides *ἀνάπαυσις* the New Testament uses also the word *ἄνεσις* for “rest” in 2 Cor 2:13; 7:5; 2 Thess 1:7.

⁸ The verb *καταπαύω* also occurs three times in Heb 4:4, 8, and 10. Twice it is used in connection with the seventh-day Sabbath on which God rested from his works (v. 4) or the audience of Hebrews is encouraged to imitate God (v. 10). The remaining occurrence deals with the rest of Canaan which Joshua did not give the people of Israel (v. 8). In the LXX the verb *καταπαύειν* can be used as an intransitive verb with the meaning “to cease,” “to rest” (Gen 2:2, 3; Exod 20:11), or as a transitive verb meaning “cause to rest,” “to prevent” (Num 25:11; Deut 12:10; Josh 21:44; 22:4). With regard to the rest in the promised Land, God or his commissioner is the subject of the *καταπαύειν*. Especially in Joshua giving rest is the fulfillment of God’s promise given in Deut 12:9, 10 and connected to “rest from war” (Josh 11:23), and “Israel’s rest from all their enemies” (21:44; 23:1). See also O. Bauernfeind, “καταπαύω, κατάπαυσις,” *TDNT* 3:629.

Exodus 35:2

The injunction of Exod 35:2-3 is a verbatim repetition of Exod 31:15 with the addition of prohibiting the kindling of fire.⁹ It is remarkable that the first command after the sin of worshiping the golden calf of chs. 32-34 concerns the Sabbath (35:2-3). In the section of chs. 25-31, Sabbath is the final concern (31:12-17).¹⁰ Thus Sabbath is the last command and now the first reiteration. In other words, Sabbath concerns bracket the material of chs. 32-34. The community of Israel is preoccupied with Sabbath as the quintessential mark of obedience, for in the Sabbath, life is willingly handed back to Yahweh in grateful rest.¹¹ The term for rest in the LXX is κατάπαυσις. The text reads: ἕξ ἡμέρας ποιήσεις ἔργα, τῇ δὲ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ ἑβδόμῃ κατάπαυσις, ἅγιον, σάββατα, ἀνάπαυσις κυρίῳ (“Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day shall be a rest—a holy

⁹ The manner in which the prohibition was worded led the rabbis of the Talmud to understand that fire may not be kindled on the Sabbath itself; however, fire lit before the Sabbath and not refueled on the Sabbath is permitted. The Jewish sectarians known as Karaites rejected this interpretation and spent the day in darkness. Nahum M. Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Exodus* (ed. Nahum M. Sarna and Chaim Potok; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1991), 222. Similarly the Samaritans, the Sadducees, and the Essenes.

¹⁰ The passage that precedes Exod 31:12-17 is concerned with the appointment of craftsmen for the construction of all that pertained to the tabernacle (31:1-11). In relation to both passages Walter Kaiser Jr. states: “Even though the construction of the tabernacle and its furnishings was a sacred work, the workmen were not to overlook the sacred institution of the Sabbath. ‘You must observe my Sabbaths’ is emphatic (v. 13). To violate the Sabbath even for the sake of working on the tabernacle would result in death (vv. 14-15).” See Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Exodus* (The Expositor's Bible Commentary: With the New International Version of the Holy Bible; ed. Frank E. Gaebelien and Richard P. Polcyn; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1990), 2:476.

¹¹ So Walter Brueggemann, *Exodus* (The New Interpreter's Bible; ed. Leander E. Keck; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 1:960.

Sabbath—a rest for the Lord”).¹² The κατάπαυσις was supposed to be a holy Sabbath of complete rest. In this passage κατάπαυσις is associated with the Sabbath day.

Numbers 10:35 [MT 10:36]

Israel’s travel route through the wilderness is described in vv. 33-34. Israel departs from Mt. Yahweh on a three-day journey, with the ark leading them an additional three days. The cloud also hovers over them during the day (v. 33). No destination is provided (Num 10:12). The aim of the ark is “to seek out” a resting place (κατάπαυσις). The ark represents God’s power as a holy warrior who scatters enemies before returning to Israel.

The second line of the poem (in vv. 35-36) envisions the successful return of Yahweh from battle along with the Israelite army. The verb “return” (bwv) indicates that Yahweh rests on the ark.¹³ It is the divine throne, which symbolizes God’s presence with Israel. In this context the κατάπαυσις is brought in connection with the ark (κιβωτός) when it sets out and when it comes to rest. When the ark rested, Moses would call God

¹² Laansma (*I Will Give You Rest*, 97-8) asserts that one should not suggest that the nouns (κατάπαυσις/ἀνάπαυσις) are simply synonymous, yet a glance at the passages in the LXX bring to light a large degree of overlap and several examples indicate that the terms appear to be interchangeable. This passage seems to be one of those. Attridge opposes Hofius who maintains a sharp distinction between κατάπαυσις and ἀνάπαυσις. Yet the semantic range of κατάπαυσις, particularly in the command to keep the Sabbath in Exod 35:2, indicates that the two terms are virtually synonymous. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 127, n. 55.

¹³ Thomas B. Dozeman, *The Book of Numbers* (The New Interpreter's Bible; ed. Leander E. Keck; Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1998), 2:96.

back to his temporary “resting place.”¹⁴ The text reads: καὶ ἐν τῇ καταπαύσει εἶπεν ἐπίστρεφε κύριε ... (“and in the resting he said, return Lord ...”). Since vv. 35-36 are considered a prayer song and the two imperatives in the Hebrew are not in their usual form but lengthened to hmwq/hbww they might be expressing a wish without any assurance that God will do either.¹⁵ At any rate, for the purpose of my study it should suffice that κατάπαυσις is associated with the κιβωτός.

Deuteronomy 12:9

Deuteronomy 12:1 starts a new beginning of laws, designed to regulate the ecclesiastical, civil, and domestic life of Israel in the land of Canaan, which is evident from the introductory formula: “These are the statutes and ordinances . . .” It marks the commencement of a law corpus that extends as far as 26:15. The most prominent feature of this law corpus revolves around the prescription for one single sanctuary where officially approved sacrifices and burnt offerings were to be made to the Lord of Israel, a location where his name would be established (vv. 1-7). Verses 8-12 offer a further explanation why the Israelites had not restricted holy offerings to the one designated sanctuary chosen by God. The reason for this was the fact that they did not enter and occupy the land as a nation. Only then would they enjoy the “rest” that God had promised

¹⁴ According to Milgrom, the Lord does not permanently but only temporarily resides in the Tabernacle between the wings of cherubim and only descends upon it from the suspended cloud whenever he wishes to speak to Moses (e.g., Num 17:7; 20:6) or appear to Israel (e.g., 14:10; 16:19). Whenever Moses and Aaron seek an audience on their own initiative, the *kavod* must appear before they can be sure that the Deity has descended onto his throne and will grant them an audience (17:7-8; 20:6-7). Jacob Milgrom, *Numbers* (The JPS Torah Commentary; ed. Nahum M. Sarna; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1990), 374.

them.¹⁶ The text reads: οὐ γὰρ ἤκατε ἕως τοῦ νῦν εἰς τὴν κατάπαυσιν καὶ εἰς τὴν κληρονομίαν ἣν κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὑμῶν δίδωσιν ὑμῖν (“for you have not come yet into the rest and the inheritance that the Lord your God is giving you”). When God has fulfilled his promise and the people are settled in their land, then Israel will serve the one God at one altar. As v. 10 indicates, the Israelites must enter their allotted territory, west of the Jordan, and must hold it securely. Security is necessary so that pilgrims may travel safely to the chosen place.¹⁷ This state of fulfillment is expressed by the two words “inheritance” and “rest.”¹⁸ Gerhard von Rad comments on this rest as follows:

It is the rest that comes after prolonged wanderings. In the conception of Deuteronomy this rest is undoubtedly a condition existing completely within

¹⁵ Ibid., 375.

¹⁶ Ronald E. Clements, *The Book of Deuteronomy* (NIB; ed. Leander E. Keck; Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1998), 2:386.

¹⁷ According to Josh 21:42, these conditions were met when Joshua conquered the land, and Shiloh was considered the chosen place for a time. The later historical books imply that they were met once and for all in the days of David and Solomon, when the Canaanites in the promised land had been overcome and Israel ruled over the neighboring territories, and Solomon build the Temple. It is from that point on that the book of Kings judges each king in accordance with whether or not he enforced centralization. So Jeffrey H. Tigay, *Deuteronomy: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation* (The JPS Torah Commentary, ed. Nahum M. Sarna and Chaim Potok; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996), 123.

¹⁸ The words “to the resting place (hxwnmh-la) and to the inheritance (hlxnh-la)” function as the first half of an inclusio around the collection of laws in 12:1-25:19; for the collection concludes in 25:19 with the repetition of the same two Hebrew roots: “when YHWH causes you to rest (xynhb) from all you enemies ... in the land which YHWH your God is giving to you as an inheritance (' ; hlxn).” Duane L. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1:1-21:9, revised* (vol. 6A, WBC, ed. Bruce M. Metzger, David A. Hubbard, and Glenn Barker; Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 248. Christensen owes this observation to a note by Carmichael, who stated that “the Deuteronomic legislation in general is designed for the time when the land is at rest from warfare.” Calum M. Carmichael, “Time for War and a Time for Peace: The Influence of the Distinction upon some Legal and Literary Material,” *JJS* 25 (1974): 56.

history; it is the rest ‘from all thine enemies round about’ (Deut. 25.19), a rest which guarantees untroubled enjoyment of all the natural blessings bestowed by the land. But nevertheless at the same time it is certainly, according to Deuteronomy’s conception, a condition in which Israel will belong altogether to its God and be wholly in his safe keeping.¹⁹

The κατάπαυσις in this passage has undoubtedly a direct connection with inheriting and resting in the land of Canaan. Then the legislation given could be applicable to the people of Israel.

First Kings 8:56 (3 Reg 8: 56 LXX)

The context in which κατάπαυσις surfaces here is the temple dedication of Solomon. In the most solemn hour of Solomon’s reign, during his dedicatory prayer, he can come before the people and point to the complete fulfillment of God’s promise. The text reads: εὐλογητὸς κύριος σήμερον ὃς ἔδωκεν κατάπαυσιν τῷ λαῷ αὐτοῦ Ἰσραηλ κατὰ πάντα ὅσα ἐλάλησεν οὐ διεφώνησεν λόγος εἰς ἐν πᾶσιν τοῖς λόγοις αὐτοῦ τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς οἷς ἐλάλησεν ἐν χειρὶ Μωυσῆ δούλου αὐτοῦ (“Blessed be the Lord this day, who has given rest to his people Israel, according to all that he said: there has not failed one word among all his good words which he spoke by the hand of his servant Moses”).

The question arises: When did this “rest” begin? Was it in Joshua’s time when God said: “So the Lord gave Israel all the land which He had sworn to give to their fathers . . . and the Lord gave them rest (καταπαύω) on every side.” (Josh 21:43-44)? Was it in David’s time when tranquility surrounded him and he became aware that his dwelling place was superior to that of the ark and planned on building a house for God?

¹⁹ Gerhard von Rad, *Deuteronomy: A Commentary* (OTL; ed. Peter Ackroyd and James Barr; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966), 93.

“Now it came about when the king lived in his house, and the Lord had given him rest on every side from all his enemies . . .”²⁰ Or did the rest begin with David’s son Solomon?

Gerhard von Rad’s comment is instructive:

Joshua, David, Solomon: it can be said of all of them that God gave rest to the nation in their day, and hence the gift of rest can no longer be something which happened once and for all.²¹

As King Solomon spoke of God’s faithfulness in fulfilling all his promises at the end of his dedicatory prayer, he alludes to Deut 12:9, the “rest,” as living securely in the land of promise. There is no doubt for Patterson that Solomon saw the temple as the completion of the picture of “rest” as portrayed in Deut 12. Not only was Israel living in peace and security, enjoying the fruitfulness of the land, but God was formally dwelling in their midst.²² While this interpretation may seem plausible since the text is in close proximity to the dedicatory temple prayer, the obvious reference of *κατάπαυσις* is not the temple but the Land of Promise.

First Chronicles 6:16 (MT 6:31)

Verses 31-32 (LXX 16-17) introduce the genealogical trees of the three-head singers, and explain why, in addition to the three main lines of the Levites, the singers are listed separately. This explanation is based on one of the Chronicler’s fundamental

²⁰ The MT uses the verb *xwn* for rest. The LXX uses neither the noun form nor the verb *καταπαύω*, but instead it uses *κατακληρονομέω* (make someone the owner).

²¹ von Rad, “There Remains Still a Rest for the People of God,” 97.

²² Richard D. Patterson and Hermann Austel, *1, 2 Kings* (The Expositor's Bible Commentary: With the New International Version of the Holy Bible; ed. Frank E. Gaebelin and Richard P. Polcyn; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Pub. House, 1988), 90.

concepts regarding the development of the clergy: With the coming to “rest” of the ark in Jerusalem, an overall transformation of the levitical functions was decreed by David.²³

The text reads: καὶ οὗτοι οὗς κατέστησεν Δαυιδ ἐπὶ χεῖρας ᾄδόντων ἐν οἴκῳ κυρίου ἐν τῇ καταπαύσει τῆς κιβωτοῦ (“and these are those whom David appointed over the hands of the singers in the Lord’s house when the ark was at rest”). Freed now from the task of carrying the ark, the Levites were assigned other roles, of which the most important was the song service. The singers were entrusted with the “service of song in the house of the Lord” (v. 31), but until the Temple was built, they would serve temporarily “before the tabernacle of the tent of meeting” (v. 32). In the desert sanctuary of Moses there was obviously no place for choral music.²⁴ The service of song is made possible by the fact that the ark has come to rest. The κατάπαυσις in this chapter is temporarily that of the tabernacle, but eventually the Temple in Jerusalem.

Second Chronicles 6:41

The context is again the dedication prayer of the Temple uttered by Solomon.

²³ The ark came to rest when it was brought up from the house of Obed-Edom to Jerusalem (2 Sam 6:2, 17).

²⁴ So Sara Japhet, *I & II Chronicles: A Commentary* (OTL; ed. James L. Mays, Carol A. Newsom, and David L. Petersen; Louisville, Ky.: John Knox Press, 1993), 156. Kleinig in his dissertation says: “Despite the lack of reference to choral music in the Pentateuch, David not only established it before the ark in Jerusalem but also prescribed its performance during the presentation of the burnt offering, first at Gibeon (1 Chron. 16.40-41), and then at Solomon’s temple in Jerusalem (1 Chron. 23.30-31).” John W. Kleinig, *The Lord’s Song: The Basis, Function and Significance of Choral Music in Chronicles* (ed. David J.A. Clines and Philip R. Davis; JSOTSS 156; Sheffield, Eng.: JSOT Press, 1993), 32. The Chronicler deals with the justification of this innovation in two ways. First he affirms the prophetic institution of the choral rite (2 Chr 29:25). Secondly, he supports this prophetic innovation by the exegesis of three pieces of ritual legislation in the Pentateuch (Deut 10:8; Num 10:10; and Deut 12:6-7). For an elaborate treatment of the topic see *ibid.*, 30-9.

Compared to the dedicatory Temple prayer in 1 Kgs 8, Solomon omits the allusion to the fulfillment of “rest” given in Deut 12:9 to Moses, but drew the last two verses of his prayer in 2 Chr 6:41-42 from Ps 132:8-10 (131:8-10 LXX).²⁵ In place of a reference to the themes of election and redemption in the Exodus, Solomon finds an adequate basis of appeal to God in Ps 132. God is called upon to arise and come to his resting place.²⁶ The text reads: καὶ νῦν ἀνάστηθι κύριε ὁ θεός εἰς τὴν κατάπαυσίν σου σὺ καὶ ἡ κιβωτὸς τῆς ἰσχύος (“And now, O Lord God, arise to your resting place and the ark of your strength”).²⁷ God and his mighty ark have come to their resting place. God’s presence enters the Temple as the ark at last comes to its resting place—with all due implications for the well-being of Israel. The Chronicler then explicitly describes God’s presence in 2 Chr 7:1-3. Once the glory of God entered the Temple it prevented the priests from entering to perform their services. God answered the prayer of Solomon and found his κατάπαυσις together with the ark in the Temple.

Judith 9:8

Having resolved to aid her people, Judith calls upon the Lord in prayer. Her prayer is the only fitting preparation for her action against Holofernes and the Assyrians.

²⁵ For more details and some of the reasons why the Chronicler omits certain things that are inserted in the 1 Kgs 8 account of the dedicatory prayer of Salomon, see Edward L. Curtis and Albert A. Madsen, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Chronicles* (ICC; ed. S. R. Driver, A. Plummer, and C. A. Briggs; Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 1952), 347.

²⁶ John A. Thompson, *1, 2 Chronicles* (NAC; ed. E. Ray Clendenen; Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 231.

²⁷ The MT text employs for “rest” the verb *xwn*.

The weakness/strength motif appears in Judith's prayer. Verse 7 captures the Assyrian source of strength: horses, rider, shield, spear, etc. In the following verse the author contrasts such a display of power with Yahweh's awesome might: "Throw down their strength in your power, and bring down their force in your wrath." The reason for such an action resides in the fact that they have decided to defile the sanctuary, pollute the tabernacle, and break off the horns of the altar (v. 8). The text reads: ἐβουλεύσαντο γὰρ βεβηλῶσαι τὰ ἅγια σου μιᾶναι τὸ σκῆνωμα τῆς καταπαύσεως τοῦ ὀνόματος τῆς δόξης σου καταβαλεῖν σιδήρῳ κέρασ θυσιαστηρίου σου ("for they intend to defile your sanctuary and to pollute the tabernacle, the resting place of your glorious name and to break down the iron horns of the alter with the sword"). The stress on the sanctuary, tabernacle, and altar indicates the unspeakable effrontery of the enemy in their godless attempt, not against Israel but against Israel's God.²⁸ Judith emphasizes the fact that God's glorious name rests in the sanctuary/tabernacle that is to be soon polluted, the κατάπανσις being again associated with the sanctuary.

Second Maccabees 15:1

The story of Nicanor's (the general of the Syrian king Demetrius) last battle is prefaced by a dialogue which the author of 2 Maccabees puts into the mouth of Nicanor and the Jews who were forced to accompany his army (v. 2). Judas Maccabaeus has moved north from Jerusalem, held by Nicanor and the citadel garrison, to the region of Samaria (v. 1). Nicanor threatens to attack the Jews on the day of rest, the Sabbath day.

²⁸ Morton S. Enslin and Solomon Zeitlin, *The Book of Judith: Greek Text with an English Translation, Commentary and Critical Notes* (JAL, no. 7; ed. Solomon Zeitlin; Leiden: E. J. Brill for Dropsie University, Philadelphia, 1972), 124.

The text reads: δὲ Νικάνωρ μεταλαβὼν τοὺς περὶ τὸν Ἰουδαν ὄντας ἐν τοῖς κατὰ Σαμάρειαν τόποις ἐβουλεύσατο τῇ τῆς καταπαύσεως ἡμέρᾳ μετὰ πάσης ἀσφαλείας αὐτοῖς ἐπιβαλεῖν (“but when Nicanor heard that Judas was in the region of Samaria, he made plans to attack them in all safety on the day of rest”). Nicanor in his deceitfulness is mistaken because the Maccabees had agreed to defend themselves if need be even on the Sabbath day (1 Macc 2:41).²⁹ Nicanor’s somewhat contemptuous reference to a ruler in the sky (v. 3) is answered by the Jewish reference to the “living Lord” and to the fourth commandment (Exod 20:8-11).³⁰ Zeitlin states:

The appeal of the Jews to Nicanor not to act so ‘savagely and barbarously’ was in reference to the Sabbath, the day which God hallowed. The author says that the appeal to Nicanor came from the Jews who were forced to accompany him. It is quite probable that Jews willingly joined Nicanor’s army against Judah. Demetrius’ policy was not like that of Antiochus Epiphanes, to suppress the Jewish religion, but to suppress the revolt of Judah.³¹

The *κατάπαυσις* in this context is the day of rest, the Sabbath day on which Nicanor planned to attack Judas and his army.

²⁹ However, in a previous victory over Nicanor’s army, the Jews chased the enemy a considerable distance after which they abandoned the chasing because the Sabbath day was approaching. During the Sabbath day they offered thanks and praises loud and long to the Lord (2 Macc 12:22-28).

³⁰ In regard to the reference to the “living Lord” by the Jews to Nicanor, Dommershausen thinks that they tried to appeal to the honor of a Soldier and to his respect of foreign religious persuasions. (“Mit diesen Ausdrücken wird an die Soldatenehre des Nikanor appelliert und an seine Achtung vor fremder religiöser Überzeugung.”) See Werner Dommershausen, *1 Makkabäer 2 Makkabäer* (NEchtB; ed. Joachim Gnilka and Rudolf Schnackenburg; Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1985), 176.

³¹ Solomon Zeitlin, *The Second Book of Maccabees* (trans. Sidney Tedesche; JAL; ed. Solomon Zeitlin and Abraham A. Neuman; New York: Harper & Brothers, 1954), 239.

Psalm 94:11 (MT 95:11)

This psalm has two parts, the first (vv. 1-7a), a hymn celebrating God's kingship, and the second (vv. 7b-11), containing an admonishing warning for the congregation not to disobey and harden their hearts. Psalm 95 is often categorized as an enthronement psalm because of the song of praise to God, the great King (v. 3), and because it adjoins a collection of similar psalms (Pss 93; 96-99).³² The sudden change from the joyous celebration of God's kingship to the stern warning for the congregation has led many scholars to believe that there is no organic relationship between the two parts and thus to treat them as two separate compositions.³³ Hermann Gunkel, however, has convincingly demonstrated that the two parts belong together and that we encounter a liturgical composition, which he calls *prophetische Liturgie*.³⁴

The part that concerns this study is the second, which has been labeled prophetic exhortation or liturgy of divine judgment.³⁵ The prophetic exhortation begins with a call for attention, "Today if you would listen to his voice" (v. 7b), and continues with the

³² J. Clinton McCann, Jr., *Psalms* (NIB; ed. Leander E. Keck; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 1060.

³³ Willem A. VanGemeren, *Psalms-Song of Songs* (Expositor's Bible Commentary; ed. Frank Ely Gaebelien and Richard P. Polcyn; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 5:616. See also Charles A. Briggs and Emilie G. Briggs, *The Book of Psalms* (ICC; ed. Charles A. Briggs, S. R. Driver, and Alfred Plummer; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907), 2:292.

³⁴ Gunkel speaks of a genre, which has its origin in the Temple worship where prophets filled with the spirit were speaking. Hermann Gunkel, *Ausgewählte Psalmen* (4th ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1917), 130.

³⁵ McCann, *Psalms*, 1060.

word of God uttered through the mouth of the prophet (vv. 8-11). Mention is being made in the MT of the incident at Massah and Meribah where the fathers tested the Lord saying: “Is the Lord among us, or not?” (Exod 17:7).³⁶ This event happened at the beginning of the desert wandering in Rephidim (v. 1). Psalm 95 alludes to it and speaks also of the punishment resulting from this attitude (“For forty years I was angry with that generation,” v. 10a). The forty years of God’s anger were the forty years of wandering through the desert in which that generation saw the marvelous signs of God’s intervention on their behalf at the Red Sea, the miracle of Mara, and the feeding with Manna (Exod 11-16). Verse 11 in Ps 95 spells out the manifestation of God’s anger: ὥμοσα ἐν τῇ ὀργῇ μου εἰ εἰσελεύσονται εἰς τὴν κατάπαυσίν μου (“as I swore in my anger they shall not enter my rest”). The question to be answered: What does “my rest” mean?

To pursue this question reveals a similar picture as if one would pursue the meaning of κατάπαυσις in Hebrews. That is the reason why we will look at the Hebrew term *hxwnm*. Rudolf Kittel admits that *hxwnm* has the meaning of resting place (*Ruhestatt*), but in the same breath he asserts that with v. 11 Ps 95 takes an “eschatological twist.” Thus, *hxwnm* is the promised fulfillment of all the physical and

³⁶ The LXX translates these names abstractly (παραπικρασμός “rebellion,” πειρασμός “test”), imitating the etymological play in Hebrew (Massah derived from *hsn* “to test,” and Meribah from *byr* “to find fault”), but obscuring the geographical reference. See Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 115.

spiritual blessings which it encompasses.³⁷

Gerhard von Rad while elaborating on Ps 95 insists that especially with regard to the “today,” the psalm “offers new hope of salvation set over against the one lost by the folly of those who took part in the desert wandering.”³⁸ He further elaborates that the subject of this transition from disturbance to rest is still the nation, but the resting place is now different: “It is God’s rest. Surely this does not refer to some eschatological benefit, but to a gift which Israel will find only by a wholly personal entering into its God.”³⁹

Hans-Joachim Krauss acknowledges that the *hxwnm* of v. 11 is the possession of land, as it turns up especially in Deuteronomic writings (Deut 12:9). However, he endorses von Rad’s position unaltered when he writes: “But it is more than that: Yahweh’s rest—a salvific blessing that is not material but personal, and that has its root and center in God himself.”⁴⁰

Hofius, on the other hand, vehemently rejects this interpretation and convincingly argues for a deuteronomistic understanding of the term *hxwnm*. There are close connections between Deut 12:9 and Pss 95:11b. The expression *hxwnm-la awb* (“to go in the rest”) is found only in these passages. This shows that there is a connection between these two passages and that the *hxwnm* of Ps 95 presupposes a local understanding,

³⁷ “Die *m^enucha* ist die verheißene Vollendung mit allem, was sie leiblich und geistig an Segen in sich schließt.” Rudolf Kittel, *Die Psalmen* (3rd and 4th ed.; KAT; ed. Ernst Sellin; Leipzig: A. Deichert, 1922), 314.

³⁸ von Rad, “There Remains Still a Rest for the People of God,” 99.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 60-150: A Commentary* (trans. Hilton C. Oswald; Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg Pub. House, 1989), 248.

namely the land of Canaan.⁴¹ Further, Hofius argues that the local understanding is strengthened by the fact that the oath of Ps 95:11 refers to Num 20:12, according to which Moses and Aaron shall not bring the people into the land (crah-la . . . waybt al). The form ytxwnm “my resting place” in Ps 95:11 is best explained from the background of Deut 12:11. Canaan as the resting place of the people of God is at the same time the place where Yahweh wants to live, “the place in which the Lord your God shall choose for His name to dwell” (v. 11). That means that the ytxwnm of Ps 95:11 is “the Holy Land as the place of the resting of Yahweh as well as of His people after their long wandering in the wilderness.”⁴² Hofius sums up by stating: “Ytxwnm ist im 95. Psalm somit nicht Ausdruck für das Heilsgut der Ruhe und des Friedens, sondern für den Heilsort, an dem Gottes Volk beides genießen sollen.”⁴³

So far in my analyses of the meaning of *κατάπαυσις* in the LXX we have encountered three different associations: (1) the Sabbath day, (2) the Temple or

⁴¹ Hofius, *Katapausis*, 40.

⁴² Briggs and Briggs, *The Book of Psalms*, 296.

⁴³ “ytxwnm is in Ps 95 not an expression for the salvation *good* of rest and peace, but the salvation *place* in which the people of God are to enjoy both.” Hofius, *Katapausis*, 40. A similar conclusion is found by McCann when he affirms: “Verses 10-11 conclude the sermon with a reminder of past consequences for disobedience—namely, God’s displeasure (see Num 14:33-35) and failure to enter the land (see “rest” in Deut 12:9; see also Num 10:33) – which is intended to serve as a warning for the present.” McCann, *Psalms*, 1062. VanGemerren also summarizes: “The objects of God’s loathing were the rebels, ‘that generation’ that perished in the wilderness. They could not and did not enter into the Promised Land.” VanGemerren, *Psalms—Song of Songs*, 619. Dahood merely equates “my rest” with the Promised Land. Mitchell Dahood, S.J., *Psalms II 51-100* (AB; ed. William F. Albright and David N. Freedman; New York: Doubleday, 1983), 17:355. After demonstrating that ytxwnm in Ps 95 in the MT bears local understanding, Hofius goes on to show that the same holds true for the rabbinic exegesis and the

Sanctuary, and (3) the Promised Land. According to the context of Ps 95:11 there seems to be no reason why κατάπαυσις could/should not have the local meaning of the Promised Land, especially when taken into consideration its connection to Deut 12:9.⁴⁴

Psalm 131:14 (MT 132:14)

This is one of the “Songs of Ascents,” as the title suggests, celebrating the bringing of the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem (cf. 2 Sam 6:12-19; Ps 132:6-10).⁴⁵ The procession from the house of Obed-Edom to Jerusalem lies in the background of this poetic version of that grand moment in the history of redemption, when Zion was chosen as the capital of David’s kingdom and the center of worship. The Chronicler incorporates

understandings of the Targum. They all give ytxwnm a local interpretation. For details see Hofius, *Katapausis*, 41-8.

⁴⁴ It is remarkable that κατάπαυσις revolves just around these three associations. Hofius remarks that whenever the LXX speaks about resting place under different considerations one always finds the term ἀνάπαυσις (see Gen 8:9; Num 10:33; Ruth 3:1; Sir 24:7). He assumes that the local understanding of the term κατάπαυσις in the LXX might be something like a theological *Terminus technicus*. Hofius, *Katapausis*, 49-50. This is forcefully and correctly rejected by Laansma who considers it misleading to consider κατάπαυσις a technical term for the temple. Laansma, *I Will Give You Rest*, 100.

⁴⁵ Ps 120 is the first of fifteen consecutive psalms that bear the title “A Song of Ascents.” While certainty is not possible, it is likely that this collection was originally used by pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem or as part of a festal celebration in Jerusalem. Each psalm is relatively short (except 132) and thus capable of being memorized. The noun translated “ascents” comes from the Hebrew verb “to go up,” and the noun can also mean “steps,” or “stairs.” The likelihood that Pss 120-134 were used by pilgrims on the journey to Jerusalem or during a celebration in Jerusalem is increased by the frequent references to Jerusalem and Zion (Pss 122; 125-126; 128-129; 132-134). Some scholars detected evidence of a pilgrimage orientation in the shape of the collection, especially the beginning and the end. Ps 120:5 locates the speaker geographically outside Jerusalem. The joyful tone of Ps 122 gives the impression of just having arrived at Jerusalem, and Pss 134 would have served well as a benediction upon departure. For further details see McCann, *Psalms*, 1176-7.

vv. 8-10 in Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple (cf. 2 Chr 6:41-42). The structure of the Psalm is that of a prayer (vv. 1-10) and a response to the supplication (vv. 11-18).⁴⁶

The Psalm begins with a supplication addressed to God, asking him to remember all the hardships which David had to endure until he found a dwelling-place for Yahweh. Once this place was found, the psalmist calls in piety to the Lord to arise to the resting place together with the ark (v. 8). With the choice of Jerusalem and the final transportation of the ark to Jerusalem, the period of the desert wanderings came to an end. The placement of the ark in Jerusalem ushered in a new era in God's rule over Israel: the Davidic era.⁴⁷ When David captured the city it was nothing more than a small Canaanite town. But when the psalmist records that the Lord has chosen Zion (v. 13) the same word is used in the MT (rhb) as Moses did in Deut 16:6.⁴⁸ This is the place where God desired his habitation, this is "my resting place forever" (v. 14). The text in the Septuagint reads: αὕτη ἡ κατάπαυσις μου εἰς αἰῶνα αἰῶνος ("This is my rest forever").

⁴⁶ Ibid., 1211. However, other scholars divide the Psalm into three stanzas (vv. 1-5, 6-10, 11-18), with the last one as a further development in response to the prayer of David. VanGemeren, *Psalms—Song of Songs*, 804.

⁴⁷ VanGemeren, *Psalms—Song of Songs*, 807.

⁴⁸ Weiser remarks: The ultimate ground on which this divine covenant rests is, however, not the faithfulness and the obedience of men, but the election which God has decreed and which has its cause in his incomprehensible grace. It is this election alone which imparts to the tradition its legitimacy and which puts the divine seal on the measures taken by David in pursuance of his policy in the cultic sphere, whose object was the transfer of the Ark, the central shrine of the confederacy of the tribes, and the removal of the covenant cult to Jerusalem. And this prevents a misunderstanding [*sic*], to which not only man in the ancient world is liable, the idea that God's presence and the worship of God are inevitably bound up with the sanctuary in which the cult is

The αἰῶνα αἰῶνος shows that Yahweh stays with and above the ark in Zion.⁴⁹

Because the temple in Zion is the resting place of God, the consequences are abundant blessings for the people, the priest, and the Davidic kingship (vv. 15-18). Whereas in the first part of the psalm, the supplication, the psalmist invites God to rise up to the resting place (v. 8), in the second part the Lord answers the plea (v. 14). It is noteworthy that in both texts the Hebrew uses *hxwnm* for resting place. The LXX, however, uses ἀνάπαυσις in v. 8 and κατάπαυσις in v. 14 for the same Hebrew term, which means that the terms are here used interchangeably. Psalm 132 is another example of the use of κατάπαυσις with reference to the Temple in Jerusalem.

Isaiah 66:1

This unit begins with a polemical tone in which Yahweh calls into question the kind of house that some would build for him. “Thus says the Lord, Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Where then is a house you could build for me? And where is a place that I may rest?” (v. 1; the LXX reads: οὕτως λέγει κύριος ὁ οὐρανός μοι θρόνος ἢ δὲ γῆ ὑποπόδιον τῶν ποδῶν μου ποῖον οἶκον οἰκοδομήσατέ μοι ἢ ποῖος τόπος τῆς καταπαύσεώς μου).

The problem of this unit is obvious: Do we have a condemnation, without further ado, of a theology of presence in God’s house? This would amount to a rejection of previous theologies of presence (cf. Ps 132), as these took root in Israel, and would be

celebrated. Artur Weiser, *The Psalms: A Commentary* (trans. Herbert Hartwell; OTL; ed. Peter Ackroyd and James Barr; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), 782.

⁴⁹ Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalmen* (vol. 2; 2nd ed.; BKAT, ed. Martin Noth; Neukirchen Kreis Moers: Neukirchener Verlag, 1961), 885.

consistent with the sharp condemnation of false worship in, for example, Isa 1 and 65. The force of the unit would be, then, that God dwells not in “houses made with human hands” (Acts 7:48). In the debate over building God’s dwelling one can hear the resonance from 2 Sam 7 and from Solomon’s prayer in 1 Kgs 8:22ff.

The issue within the Old Testament, and precisely here in ch. 66, is not whether God is too exalted to tolerate an earthly dwelling place, but the motivation of those desiring to construct a temple. Those arrogant people who feel that God is thereby beholden to them are flatly rejected. God asserts his complete sovereignty over all creation and its entire works.⁵⁰ Grogan rightly affirms that “no edifice made by human hands could be more than a symbol; and the symbol could, as Stephen made clear, come to be cherished above the reality.”⁵¹ In contrast to his objection to a house and a place, Yahweh affirms his attention to a particular kind of person, namely one who is humble and contrite in spirit (v. 2).

In the process of defining the rest in Isa 66:1 the term should be first contrasted to the last two passages considered. The term τὴν κατάπαυσίν μου in Ps 95:11 [94:11] referred, as we saw, to the Promised Land, the land of Canaan, which was denied to the wilderness generation. This passage presents the same tension between a rebellious generation and God’s sovereign rule over heavens and earth (Isa 66:3-4). Psalm 132:14 [131:14] relates the term to Zion, the temple in Jerusalem, to stress the permanency of his

⁵⁰ So Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah* (OTL, ed. James L. Mays, Carol A. Newsom, and David L. Petersen; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 540.

⁵¹ Geoffrey W. Grogan, *Isaiah* (Expositor's Bible Commentary; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1986), 6:351. The term *metaphor* rather than *symbol* would probably

presence there.

The phrase τῆς καταπαύσεώς μου in Isa 66:1 can be taken as a descriptive genitive, “a place characterized by my rest,” or as a genitive of apposition, “a place that/which is my rest.”⁵² The nominative noun τόπος further described by the genitive construction τῆς καταπαύσεώς μου lends the term a local meaning, referring most probably to the Temple in Jerusalem.⁵³ Thus κατάπαυσις in Isa 66:1 describes the resting place of God in the temple which he himself chose. Yahweh’s objection, thinks Watts, lies precisely in that emphasis on a *place* which can claim exclusive rights to Yahweh’s presence, when he is the one who has made all things and presumably goes wherever he chooses.⁵⁴

A look in the Greek lexica confirms these findings. The noun κατάπαυσις is

be more adequate in this context since the heaven is his throne and the earth is his footstool (v. 1) and both are his creation.

⁵² Hofius takes it as a “Genitivus epexegeticus” translating it: “Welcher Ort (sollte) zu meiner Ruhestätte (dienen können)?” Which place should serve me as a resting place? Hofius, *Katapausis*, 49.

⁵³ Attridge correctly remarks against Hofius that phrases such as τόπος τῆς καταπαύσεώς would be extraordinarily awkward if κατάπαυσις itself meant “place of rest.” Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 127, n. 55. Blenkinsopp disagrees with the view of the radical rejection of the temple as the *locus* of sacrificial cult read into Isa 66:1. He points out that such an interpretation is implausible in view of what is said elsewhere about Yahweh’s holy mountain (56:7; 57:13; 65:11), his holy and beautiful house (64:11; 60:7, 13), and the place where his feet rest (60:13). The image of divine judgment emanating from the temple in 66:6 constitutes an additional problem for this interpretation. Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56-66: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 19B; New York: Doubleday, 2003), 294. A similar position is also taken by Christopher R. Seitz, *The Book of Isaiah 40-66* (NIB; ed. Leander E. Keck; Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 2001), 6:546.

⁵⁴ John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 34-66* (WBC; ed. David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker; Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1987), 25:354.

always intransitive in the LXX, where it means, corresponding to the Hebrew equivalent, *hxwnm*, both “rest” (e.g., 1 Kgs 8:56 [3 Kgdms 8:56]) and “place of rest” (Deut 12:9; Pss 95:11 [94:11]; 132:14 [131:14], etc.).⁵⁵ On the one hand it conveys the meaning of a “state of cessation of work or activity” (2 Macc 15:1) and on the other it refers to a place of rest (Deut 12:9; Ps 132:14 [131:14]).⁵⁶ Bauernfeind reiterates this when he agrees that *κατάπαυσις* in the LXX has the meaning of the rest with the people, the Sabbath (Exod 35:2), or the rest of God in the sense of his presence with the people (Isa 66:1). Even without the noun *τόπος*, *κατάπαυσις* can mean the place of rest (cf. Ps 95:11 [94:11]).⁵⁷ Summarizing with Schierse I have determined that *κατάπαυσις* in the Septuagint refers (1) to the Promised Land (Deut 12:9), which was not just the resting place for the people of God after their pilgrimage through the desert but, as seen from Deut 12:11, also the place chosen by God himself, (2) the temple, the sanctuary, the habitation desired by God (Ps 132:14 [131:14]), and finally (3) the Sabbath rest (Exod 35:2; 2 Macc 15:1).⁵⁸

⁵⁵ O. Hofius, “*κατάπαυσις*,” *EDNT* 2:266.

⁵⁶ Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 523. The insistence by Käsemann (*Wandering People*, 68) and Hofius (*Katapausis*, 29-32) that *κατάπαυσις* can mean only “resting place” is unconvincing, as noted by Vanhoye. Albert Vanhoye, “Trois ouvrages récents sur l'Épître aux Hébreux,” *Bib* 52 (1971): 68.

⁵⁷ O. Bauernfeind, “*κατάπαυσις*,” *TDNT* 3:628.

⁵⁸ Franz Joseph Schierse, *Verheissung und Heilsvollendung: Zur theologischen Grundfrage des Hebräerbriefes* (Munich: Karl Zink, 1955), 112-3. Laansma in his dissertation analyzes the rest motif in the MT as well as the LXX considering not just *hxwnm* as a noun and verb but also *ἀνάπαυσις* as noun and verb next to *κατάπαυσις* as noun and verb. After his research he adds one more reference to the ones I discovered, namely, the rest in the Davidic dynasty (cf. Isa 11:10; Sir 47:13). Laansma, *I Will Give You Rest*, '59-60, 88.

The Rest Motif in Other Jewish and Christian Literature

The term *κατάπαυσις* is completely absent when one looks at the New Testament Apocryphal Books. In the Apostolic Fathers and in the writings of the Early Apologists the term is found once in both sets of writings.⁵⁹ When one turns to Philo the term is completely missing.⁶⁰ Josephus uses the term only once.⁶¹ With regard to the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha the book *Joseph and Aseneth* harbors the term twice.⁶² I will analyze the term in its different contexts to find out what it refers to.

Barnabas 16.2

The anonymous author of the Epistle of Barnabas writes at a time when the level of antagonism between church and synagogue still ran high, seeking to show by means of an allegorical interpretation of Scripture that Christians are the true and intended heirs of God's covenant.⁶³

In ch. 15 the author interprets the Sabbath as the seventh millennium in which “the Lord will bring everything to an end, for with him a day signifies a thousand years” (15.4). With this allegorical meaning the author seeks to uncover the hidden spiritual

⁵⁹ *Barn.* 16.2; Athenagoras, *Leg.* 9.2.

⁶⁰ However, since Philo's speculation on rest arises more often from his interpretation of Gen 2:2 rather than texts such as Ps 95 [94], which equates the promise of rest with the land, he will receive some consideration.

⁶¹ Josephus, *Ant.* 17.43.

⁶² *Jos. Asen.* 8.9; 22.13.

⁶³ Michael W. Holmes, ed., *The Apostolic Fathers: Revised Texts with Short Introductions and English Translations* (trans. J. B Lightfoot and J. R. Harmer; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1999), 270.

meaning of a text, which may be quite different from the apparent meaning.

The same holds true when he interprets the temple in ch. 16. According to the writer of the document the Jews set their hope on the building, as if it were God's house and not their God who created them (16.1). The text of v. 2 reads: ποῖον οἶκον οἰκοδομήσετε μοι, ἢ τίς ποῖος τόπος τῆς καταπαύσεώς μου ("What kind of a house will you build for me or what place that I may rest?"). This is a quotation of Isa 66:1. The author tries to legitimize the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem by replacing it with the body of the believing Christian in whom God dwells (16.5, 8). Since *Barn.* 16.2 uses the term κατάπαυσις in a direct quotation from the Septuagint it is unquestionable that it refers, as previously seen, to the temple in Jerusalem.

Athenagoras *Legatio pro Christianis* 9.2

The *Plea* may be dated between A.D. 176 (the beginning of the co-rulership of M. Aurelius and Commodus) and A.D. 180 (the death of M. Aurelius). The document appears to be like an open letter to the emperors destined for the general public. In it Athenagoras asks the emperors not to permit persecution just because they carry the Christian name but to base it only on illegitimate behavior (2.1). By Athenagoras's time hostile popular sentiments may have forced governors to take the profession of Christianity as proof in itself to behavior inimical to good social order and dangerous to the state.⁶⁴

In *Leg.* 9 Athenagoras draws the conclusion from his argument of ch. 8 that

⁶⁴ Athenagoras, *Legatio and De Resurrectione* (trans. William R. Schoedel; OECT, ed. Henry Chadwick; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), xv.

Christianity would be a human-made doctrine if God were not the singular creator and thus could not exercise providence over anything. By referring to the prophets of the Old Testament, Athenagoras proves his argument. Among other Isaiah quotations he also quotes Isa 66:1 from the LXX to highlight the greatness of God. The reference of *κατάπαυσις* in *Leg.* 9.2 is like that in *Barn.* 16.2 to the sanctuary in Jerusalem.

Josephus *The Jewish Antiquities* 17.43

The narrative of the last days of Herod is recorded in *Antiquities* 17. Among other plots against King Herod, Josephus records one done by the Jewish group of the Pharisees who intended to injure the king. While the whole Jewish people affirm loyalty to Caesar and to the king's government, these men, over six thousand in number, refused to take this oath. King Herod finds out about it and punishes them with a fine. However, the wife of Pheroras, Herod's younger brother, paid the fine for them. In return for her friendliness the Pharisees foretold—since they were believed to have foreknowledge of things through God's appearances to them—that by God's decree Herod's throne would cease, rest. The text reads: προὔλεγον, ὡς Ἡρώδη μὲν καταπαύσεως ἀρχῆς ὑπο Θεοῦ. It seems obvious that the use of *κατάπαυσις* here has to do with the cessation of Herod's kingship.⁶⁵ The prediction was that Herod's rulership would rest, or come to an end.

⁶⁵ The English translation by Ralph Marcus of *Ant.* 17.43 reads: "In return for her friendliness they foretold—for they were believed to have foreknowledge of things through God's appearances to them—that by God's decree Herod's throne would be taken from him, both from himself and his descendants, and the royal power would fall to her and Pheroras and to any children that they might have." Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities: Book XV-XVIII* (trans. Ralph Marcus; 9 vols.; LCL, ed. T. E. Page; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1963), 393.

Joseph and Aseneth 8.9; 22.13

The book attempts to explain how it was that Joseph, the most righteous of all the sons of Jacob, married Aseneth, the daughter of a heathen priest. The reason that this book gives is that Aseneth rejected the idolatry of her father and people and came to place her faith in the God of the Hebrews.⁶⁶ *Joseph and Aseneth* has often been called a missionary tract, a *Missionsschrift*, meaning that it was written to promote Jewish mission among non-Jews, or Jews, or both.⁶⁷ C. Burchard, in his introduction to the book, thinks that this assumption is a mistake because Judaism is not depicted as mission-minded in the book itself.⁶⁸

The term *κατάπαυσις*⁶⁹ appears twice in this document. It appears the first time in the prayer of conversion uttered by Joseph. Aseneth is asked by her father to kiss Joseph, but he thinks it is not fitting to do so for a man who worships God, who will bless with his mouth the living God to kiss a strange woman, who will bless with her mouth dead and dumb idols and eats from their table the bread of strangulation (8.5). Joseph opposes Aseneth but at the same time he has mercy on her while she is crying and he prays for her conversion the following prayer (v. 9):

⁶⁶ Craig A. Evans, *Ancient Texts for New Testament Studies: A Guide to the Background Literature* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2005), 48.

⁶⁷ Kaufmann Kohler, "Life and Confession or Prayer of Aseneth," in *The Jewish Encyclopedia* (JE, ed. Isidore Singer; New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1902), 2:176.

⁶⁸ C. Burchard, *Joseph and Aseneth: A New Translation and Introduction* (OTP, ed. James H. Charlesworth; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1985), 2:195.

⁶⁹ The Greek text is taken from Christoph Burchard, ed., *Joseph und Aseneth* (PVTG, no. 5; ed. H. J. DeJonge and M. A. Knibb; Leiden: Brill, 2003), whereas the

Lord God of my father Israel,
the Most High, the Powerful One of Jacob,
who gave life to all (things)
and called (them) from the darkness to the light,
and from the error to the truth,
and from the dead to the life;
you, Lord, bless this virgin,
and renew her by your spirit,
and form her anew by your hidden hand,
and make her alive again by your life,
and let her eat your bread of life,
and drink your cup of blessing,
and number her among your people
that you have chosen before all (things) came into being,
and let her enter your rest
which you have prepared for your chosen ones,
and live in your eternal life for ever (and) ever.

Hofius thinks that the background for *Jos. Asen.* 8.9 is Ps 95:11 (94:11) because both passages use a similar phrase εἰσελθέτω εἰς τὴν κατάπαυσίν σου/εἰσελεύσονται εἰς τὴν κατάπαυσίν μου.⁷⁰ Further, he assumes that the κατάπαυσις is a transcendental place in heaven in which the chosen ones will enter after their death to enjoy eternal life.⁷¹ This view is also held by Burchard and Laansma.⁷²

However, while such an interpretation is possible, it is not the only compelling way to interpret the *Jos. Asen.* passages. In none of the chapters where κατάπαυσις appears does the author speak about physical death as a prerequisite before entering the

English translation is either mine for short phrases or taken from Burchard, *Joseph and Aseneth*.

⁷⁰ Hofius, *Katapausis*, 30.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 50, 67.

⁷² In a footnote to his translation Burchard notes: “The ‘rest’ (*katapausis*) is not a state of body or mind, but a place in heaven prepared for the saved (15:7; 22:13)”. Burchard, *Joseph and Aseneth*, 213, n. 2; Laansma, *I Will Give You Rest*, 109.

rest. This means that entering this place after death is a pure assumption. At least three reasons may be given for questioning this assumption.

First, the prayer of Joseph on behalf of Aseneth in *Jos. Asen.* 8.9 is a prayer of repentance, not a prayer of acceptance into the heavenly resting place. The term “death” (θάνατος) actually appears but it is a synonym of error and darkness (“Lord God . . . who gave life to all [things] and called [them] from the darkness to the light, and from the error to the truth, and from the death to the life, you Lord bless this virgin, renew her by your spirit, and form her anew by your hidden hand, and make her alive again by your life” [v. 9]). When Joseph prays to God to form her anew, he does not mean that her death is physical death, but death in regard to truth and the life given by God.

The antithesis expressed in this prayer spells out the differences between a Jew and a non-Jew. The contrast is between the existence of a pagan and the existence as a member of God’s elect people: The one is in darkness, the other in light; the one is in error, the other in truth; the one is death, the other life. Chesnutt expresses it well when he says that “the language about eating the bread of life and drinking the cup of blessings is functionally parallel to that about being formed anew, entering God’s rest, and living in eternal life; it expresses the unique blessings of the chosen people of God, by way of contrast to the darkness and death which is the lot of those outside the pale of God’s elect.”⁷³ Entering God’s rest does not presuppose physical death.

Second, the mention of a resting place in heaven in *Jos. Asen.* 15.7 does not use

⁷³ Randall D. Chesnutt, “The Social Setting and Purpose of Joseph and Aseneth,” *JSP* 2 (1988): 24-5.

κατάπαυσις as the noun describing the rest but ἀνάπαυσις. Again, death is not anticipated or required in order to have a resting place prepared in heaven. Repentance is personified in this chapter as a daughter of the most high, who intercedes and prepares “a place of rest in the heavens” (τόπος ἀναπαύσεως ἠτοιμάσεν ἐν τοῖς οὐφανοῖς). And she will renew all who repent, “and wait on them herself for ever (and) ever” (v. 7). In this context the man from heaven who appeared to Aseneth announces to her that her repentance has been noticed and her name is written in the book of the living in heaven (v. 4). Those whose names are written in the book of the living in heaven—and this group now includes Aseneth—participate from now on in immortality and incorruptibility since the man from heaven declares to her: “From today, you will be renewed and formed anew and made alive again, and you will eat blessed bread of life, and drink a blessed cup of immortality, and anoint yourself with blessed ointment of incorruptibility” (v. 5). This verse implies that immortality and incorruptibility and consequently rest are given to Aseneth during her lifetime encounter with the man from heaven, not, as Hofius and others assume, after death.

Third, the incident involving the escort of Joseph and Aseneth, after they visited Jacob in Goshen, by Simeon and Levi talks about a “place of rest in the highest” (ἐώρα τὸν καταπαύσεως αὐτῆς ἐν τοῖς ὑψίστοις) which Levi could see since he possessed the prophetic gift.⁷⁴ Not only does he see the place of rest but the walls around it are “like adamantine eternal walls, and her foundations founded upon a rock of the seventh heaven” (22.13). Again no death is required for Aseneth to enter that place of rest in the

⁷⁴ This is the second and final mention of κατάπαυσις in *Jos. Asen.*

highest. However, a similar phrase is used by Joseph after Aseneth's repentance when he comes to her and blesses her: "because the Lord God founded your walls in the highest, and your walls (are) adamantine walls of life, because the sons of the living God will dwell in your City of Refuge, and the Lord God will reign as king over them for ever and ever" (19.8). If this blessing is spoken even before Joseph marries Aseneth, it is difficult to assume her death in order for her to enter τὸν καταπαύσεως αὐτῆς ἐν τοῖς ὑψίστοις. Even if the uttering of Levi is a prophetic one, it is described in the terminology of what she is going to be while alive and on earth. Thus, seeing the immortality of the soul entering immediately upon death into eternal blessedness is not as easy to sustain if the text is carefully analyzed. However, one has to agree with Hofius that the use of κατάπαυσις in *Jos. Asen.* is no longer connected to either the land of Canaan or the temple in Jerusalem.⁷⁵

To sum up, the uses of κατάπαυσις in *Jos. Asen.* 8.9 and 22.13 are best explained if understood as a state of conversion described in terms of a place compared to a city with indestructible walls and the highest elevation.

Philo of Alexandria

The noun κατάπαυσις does not occur in Philo's writings, but it is nonetheless

⁷⁵ Hofius, *Katapausis*, 50. At the same time one has to question at least quietly whether the κατάπαυσις in *Jos. Asen.* 8.9 has anything to do with the Sabbath, since as expressed earlier the prayer is a prayer of conversion and the text explicitly states that Aseneth is numbered among God's chosen people and to let her enter the rest which has been prepared for the chosen ones. Burchard states that although the Sabbath is not even mentioned it is presupposed in the document. Burchard, *Joseph and Aseneth*, 195, n. 88.

important to consider an idea that some view as parallel to the term.⁷⁶ Philo interprets the Hebrew Scriptures with an ingenious and fanciful application of Greek philosophy. With the passion of faith and the skill of an educator, Philo offers an interpretation of Gen 2:2 that allows God both to rest and to continue acts of creation.⁷⁷ Pursuing his psychological allegories of Scripture, Philo interprets rest within the framework of his Platonic metaphysics, in which “the sensible world, as a place of change and decay is contrasted with the ideal or spiritual world, characterized by the changeless repose of the divine.”⁷⁸

In his work *On the Cherubim* Philo talks about festivals and how only God can truly keep, rejoice, and delight in them. He states:

And therefore Moses often in his laws calls the sabbath, which means ‘rest,’ God’s sabbath (Exod.xx.10, etc.), not man’s, and thus he lays his finger on an essential fact in the nature of things. For in all truth there is but one thing in the universe which rests, that is God. But Moses does not give the name of rest to mere inactivity. The cause of all things is by its nature active; it never ceases to work all that is best and most beautiful. God’s rest is rather a working with absolute ease, without toil and without suffering.⁷⁹

Any positing of rest beyond that rest in the Promised Land is defined by Philo as a

⁷⁶ Philo uses the noun ἀνάπαυσις in connection with Pythagorean number speculations (*Leg.* I.8); ‘rest’ meaning virtuous life (*Leg.* I.77), partial enlightenment (*Congr.* 45), and God’s rest as a working with absolute ease, without toil and without suffering (*Cher.* 87ff.). Also Philo uses the verb ἀναπαύω in reference to Gen 2:2b to mean that God himself did not in fact rest at the end of the six days of creation, but “caused to rest,” i.e., gave rest to others. He himself never stops creating. God’s rest is not mere inactivity (*ibid.*).

⁷⁷ Cf. Robert M. Johnston, “The Eschatological Sabbath in John’s Apocalypse: A Reconsideration,” *AUSS* 25 (1987): 39.

⁷⁸ Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 127.

⁷⁹ *Cher.* 87 ; Philo, *De posteritate Caini* (trans. F. H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker; 10 vols.; LCL; ed. T. E. Page and others; New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1929), 2:61.

rest that belongs to God alone. In the text above he aims to define it as such.⁸⁰

Consistent with Philo's allegorical style, he applies the Pythagorean doctrine of numerological speculation to identify the number seven with rest as he reflects on the story of Samuel and his mother Hannah.⁸¹ Philo states: "But this condition of his implies the Seven, that is a soul which rests in God and toils no more at any mortal task, and has thus left behind the Six, which God has assigned to those who could not win the first place, but must needs limit their claims to the second."⁸² Here in his work, the *Unchangeableness of God*, Philo identifies the number seven with the soul that rests in God and no longer concerns itself with any mortal employment.

In *Allegorical Interpretation* I.14-15 Philo speaks of the power of the number seven which is composed of the number six, and of the unit, as he calls it, which is compared by the Pythagoreans to the virgin Goddess born without a mother. Section 16 turns suddenly to Gen 2:2 based on the word seven. Philo translates Gen 2:2 with his own allegorical and numerical speculation which allows God to continue to create.

"Accordingly, on the seventh day, God caused to rest from all his works which he had

⁸⁰ The English translation of Yonge reads the same text (and part of 90) as follows: "And by 'rest' I do not mean 'inaction' (since that which is by its nature energetic, that which is the cause of all things, can never resist from doing what is most excellent), but I mean an energy completely free from labour, without any feeling of suffering, and with them most perfect ease; . . . rest is the appropriate attribute of God alone." *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged* (trans. C. D. Yonge; New updated ed.; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1993), 89.

⁸¹ So Wray, *Rest as a Theological Metaphor in the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Gospel of Truth*, 17.

⁸² *Quod Deus* 12; Philo, *Quod Deus sit immutabilis* (trans. F. H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker; 10 vols.; LCL, ed. T. E. Page and others; New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1930), 3:17.

made.”⁸³ This is explained by Philo to mean that God ceased to create mortals when he began to create divine creatures akin to the number seven. The number six symbolizes finite perfection, the number seven absolute perfection. The distinction is made between different works of God; from some he rests, from others he never rests, even on the Sabbath.⁸⁴

Here, in *The Special Laws*, Philo associates rest with the Sabbath command of Moses. While humans are to work six days but rest on the seventh, Philo explains the human body consists also of two entities, namely soul and body. While the Sabbath day is the day ordained for the body to relax and renew its strength, God permitted the study of doctrines in accordance with virtues. He appeals to his audience to take advantage of the schools which are wide open every Sabbath day in all the cities to lessons of prudence, temperance, courage, justice, and all other virtues.⁸⁵ Then Philo continues the dichotomy of body and soul. The body has its proper task as well as the soul while God’s earnest desire expressed through Moses was that the two should be waiting to relieve each other. “Thus while the body is working, the soul enjoys a respite, but when the body takes a rest, the soul resumes its work, and thus the best forms of life, the theoretical and

⁸³ *Leg. All.* I.16. The translation of Yonge was preferred because it expresses the transitive meaning of κατέπαυσεν. *The Works of Philo*, 26.

⁸⁴ C.H. Dodd points to the different verbs Philo uses. Once he uses κατέπαυσεν meaning that God caused inferior creative agencies to cease, and a little later he uses παύεται meaning that God himself rests from creating mortal things when he creates divine things. The view that God rested from the work of creation, but not from the moral government of the universe, was later followed by rabbinic ruling. Charles H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: University Press, 1953), 321.

⁸⁵ *Spec. Leg.* 2.60-2.

the practical, take their turn in replacing each other.”⁸⁶ Philo returns again to his number speculation in which he attributes the number six to the practical life allotted for ministering to the body, while the number seven is associated with the theoretical life of knowledge and perfection of mind.

Finally, in *On the Flight and Finding* Philo writes about the difference between self-teaching and being taught by some human agent.⁸⁷ Self-teaching is like a natural talent that somebody possesses, which is by nature rapid and does not need the time required when, compared to being taught by another human agent. In this context Philo interprets Lev 25:11 allegorically and compares the natural talent to the seeds which grow by themselves during the sabbatical year or, more precisely, it is God who produces the growing. The person who is nurtured with these doctrines, as Philo calls them, enjoys endless peace. *On the Flight and Finding* V. 173-4 rest (ἀνάπαυσις) and peace (εἰρήνη) are closely related. Interpreting Lev 25:6 figuratively, Philo defines the “food” belonging to the sabbatical year as rest in God, peace that is unbroken by war, soul-peace with no admixture of discord whatsoever.

In summary, one has to recognize that Philo’s interpretation of rest represents a significant departure from the κατάπαυσις of the LXX previously examined. The shift is not unique to Philo in the first century.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ *Spec. Leg.* 2.64.

⁸⁷ *Fug.* V.169-70.

⁸⁸ Similar shifts in the meaning of ἀνάπαυσις can be seen in references to κατάπαυω/κατάπαυσις. Paul, Matthew, Mark, and the writer of 1 Peter and Revelation use only ἀνάπαυω/ἀνάπαυσις for rest. Only Luke/Acts uses both forms. Luke appears to choose ἀνάπαυσις for the ordinary, physical experience of rest or relaxation and to choose

Rest in Other Early Christian Literature

In addition to the texts considered before we should also look at the *Odes of Solomon*, a first-century document, which makes reference to the rest idea and Origen of Alexandria who uses the noun *κατάπαυσις* to defend his Christian beliefs in his work *Contra Celsum*. The reason why the *Odes of Solomon* are considered is the fact that some scholars see a wide variety of meanings attached to the rest idea in Christian literature of the late first century, C.E.⁸⁹ This survey is done for inclusive purposes.

The date of the *Odes of Solomon* is no longer as puzzling as it was at the beginning of the twentieth century. Most scholars now think they are from the years A.D. 70-125.⁹⁰ The concept of rest has a wide range of meanings in the book. In *Odes Sol.* 16.12-13 the psalmist refers to Gen 2:2.⁹¹ The odist refers to the different creation days by mentioning that God spread out the earth and placed the waters in the sea (v. 10). He is the one who expanded the heaven and set the stars (v. 11), “he set the creation and

κατάπαυσις for a theological reference to God’s place of rest (see Acts 7:49. In Acts 7:49, as well as in Heb 3:11, 18; 4:1, 3, 5, 10, 11, the Coptic New Testament translates *κατάπαυσις* as “place of rest”). Both Acts 7:49 and Heb 3 and 4, however, base references to rest on the Septuagint. For the different meanings or shades of meaning see Wray, *Rest as a Theological Metaphor*, 20-5.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 32.

⁹⁰ James H. Charlesworth, *The Pseudepigrapha and Modern Research with a Supplement* (2 vols., SBLSCS, ed. George W. E. Nickelsburg and Harry M. Orlinsky; Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press for The Society of Biblical Literature, 1981), 189. *Odes of Solomon* is an early Christian hymnbook that survived only in Syriac. The idea of rest is found in it but of course not the term *κατάπαυσις*.

⁹¹ The dependence upon Gen 2:2 is acknowledged by *Critical Reflections on the Odes of Solomon* (JSPSup, no. 22; ed. James H. Charlesworth and Lester L. Grabbe; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 23.

aroused it, then he rested from his work” (v. 12). The psalm maintains the claim that God rested after he finished his work of creation on the seventh day.⁹²

In *Odes Sol.* 25.9-12 the psalmist lists in a hymn of praise the benefits received from God. Among them are the following: to become well after sickness; to become mighty in God’s truth; to become the Lord’s; and to be justified with the implication of God’s everlasting rest. Within the context, this rest is available for the believer.⁹³ Considering the odist’s mood of celebrating God’s rest he contrasts it rhetorically with the lack of silence created by the reciting of the odes. “For his harp is in my hand, and the odes of his rest shall not be silent” (*Odes Sol.* 26.3).

The last two mentions of rest in *Odes of Solomon* deal with the inner peace or tranquility as a result of trusting God and partaking of God’s drink. The odist sometimes juxtaposes a noun with its cognate verb in order to accentuate the source or cause of an action. “I trusted [*haim^eneth*], consequently I was at rest; because trustful [*damhaiman-û*] is he in whom I trusted [*d^ehaim^eheth*]” (*Odes Sol.* 28.3).⁹⁴

Finally, partaking of God’s living water lets the thirsty person rest beside the spring of the Lord (*Odes Sol.* 30.2, 7). In this chapter the salvific connection between ‘water’ and ‘rest’ is explicit while the symbolism with regard to the living water in *Odes*

⁹² Verse 13 speaks about created things which are not able to cease and be idle. Parallels to this concept are abundant: Eccl 16:26-28; 2 Bar 48:9; 1 En 2:1-5:2; cf. Philo, *On the Cherubim*, 87.

⁹³ Wray, *Rest as a Theological Metaphor*, 26.

⁹⁴ Charlesworth, *Odes of Solomon*, 150-1.

of Solomon and the Gospel of John is impressive.⁹⁵ In conclusion, the *Odes of Solomon* speak of a rest that God entered at the end of creation, a rest that is available for the believer as a consequence of being justified by God, trusting in him, and partaking of the living water that comes from the lips of the Lord (*Odes Sol.* 30.5).

Origen, perhaps the most prolific writer in antiquity, was encouraged by Ambrosius to write a reply to the false charges brought by Celsus against the Christians. In the sixth book he desired to answer the accusation which Celsus brought against Christianity not from philosophy, but the ones brought against the simplicity of the language of Scripture, something to be cast into the shade by the splendor of polished discourse.⁹⁶

After Origen deals with Celsus's objection that the distribution of creation over certain days, before days existed, is the most silly thing, because the sun did not yet revolve, he also refutes him with regard to the seventh day.⁹⁷ Origen accuses Celsus of not understanding the difference between God having ceased (*κατέπαυσε*) on the seventh day and the expression he rested (*ἀνεπαύσατο*). Since Celsus equates these two terms and describes God as weary, like a very bad workman, who stands in need of a rest (*ἀνάπαυσιν*) to refresh himself, Origen states: Οὐδὲ γὰρ οἶδε, τίς ἦ, μετά τὴν ὅσον ὁ

⁹⁵ For more details and a list of eleven uses of the symbol of water in the *Odes* and John see *ibid.*, 248. Wray thinks that the invitation to come and drink from the water echoes the words of Rev 22:17 in the context of an early communion liturgy. Wray, *Rest as a Theological Metaphor*, 27.

⁹⁶ Origen, *Contra Celsus* 6.2 (*ANF* 4:573).

⁹⁷ Origen based his argument of things created before days existed on the omnipotence of God as creator, who said and it was done, who commanded and things stood fast. Origen, *Contra Celsus* 6.60 (*ANF* 4:600).

κόσμος συνέστηκεν ἐνεργουμένην κοσμοποιίαν, ἢ τοῦ Σαββάτου καὶ τῆς καταπαύσεως τοῦ Θεοῦ ἡμέτα.⁹⁸ This discussion of Celsus’s understanding of Gen 2:2 retains the *κατάπαυσις* of the LXX text for “the cessation” of God’s works, making a clear distinction between God’s cessation of work, i.e., *κατάπαυσις*, and rest, i.e., *ἀνάπαυσις*.⁹⁹ For Origen, the Christian proclamation of rest, *ἀνάπαυσις*, is clearly distinguished from the doctrine of the Sabbath and of God’s cessation (*κατάπαυσις*) of work on the seventh day.

In the third volume of *Contra Celsus* Origen debates the obviously contradictory claim of Celsus that all humans are sinners and yet not all humans are sinners because he knows somebody without sin. Quoting Jesus’ invitation from Matt 11:28, Origen in this christocentric proclamation of rest (*ἀνάπαυσις*) seems to equate rest, in this context, with relief from the burden of guilt and sin.¹⁰⁰

In summary one can say that when Origen uses *κατάπαυσις* in his writings he refers to the cessation of God on the seventh day of creation, but when he employs *ἀνάπαυσις* he means freedom from guilt and sin. This is evident from all the appearances of *ἀνάπαυσις* in the already-mentioned writings of Origen.

⁹⁸ “He does not even know the meaning of the day after the making of the world which is the object of His activity so long as the world exists, the day of the Sabbath and the cessation of God” (Origen, *Contra Celsus* 6.61).

⁹⁹ Conducting a search through the works of Origen Wray admits: “I could not find any text in which Origen equates the *κατάπαυσις* of God with the *ἀνάπαυσις* preached by Christians or with *ἀνάπαυσις* as ordinary physical REST.” Wray, *Rest as a Theological Metaphor*, 30, n. 64.

¹⁰⁰ Origen refers to Matt 11:28 several times (*Contra Celsum* 2.7; 2.73; 3.63; 6.15) in his work. Wray, *Rest as a Theological Metaphor*, 31.

In conclusion one can say that rest was a versatile metaphor, appearing in various religious settings, adapted to the context in which it was used. When ἀνάπαυσις and κατάπαυσις are used by the same author, κατάπαυσις derives from a LXX text.¹⁰¹ Each writer claims one word or the other; if both are used, they have distinct sources or functions.¹⁰² Based on the survey of rest in Jewish and Christian literature from the

¹⁰¹ Wray correctly observes: “The most consistent use of κατάπαυσις appears in the *Septuagint* and *Septuagint*-related texts: God alone is the subject of REST; all others fall short, even as they are urged to enter in the REST of God. . . . The Epistle to the Hebrews contains the lengthiest discourse on REST to be found in the New Testament. This preliminary survey appears to place the use of REST in Heb within the context of other Septuagint-related texts of the time. Yet, while REST in Hebrews is defined by God’s REST, death does not seem to be required for the faithful to enter into that REST.” Ibid., 33-4.

¹⁰² With regard to the New Testament, Hebrews uses only καταπάυω/κατάπαυσις. Paul and the writers of Matthew, Mark, 1 Peter, and the Revelations use only ἀναπάυω/ἀνάπαυσις for rest (Matt 11:28-29; 12:43; 26:45; Mark 6:31; 14:41; Luke 12:19; 1 Cor 16:18; 2 Cor 7:13; Phlm 7, 20; 1 Pet 4:14; Rev 6:11; 14:13). Only Luke/Acts uses both forms. Luke appears to choose ἀνάπαυσις for ordinary, physical experience of rest or relaxation (11:24; 12:19) and to choose κατάπαυσις for a theological reference to God’s place of rest (see Acts 7:49 a slightly modified quotation of Isa 66:1; Acts 14:18 is the only instance in the New Testament where κατάπαυσις is used with the sense of restraint). Both Acts 7:49 and Heb 3 and 4, however, base references to rest on the Septuagint, a choice Wray equates with “no more than faithfulness to an original text.” Ibid., 24. The Gospel of Matthew offers us the first instance of the metaphor of rest as christological proclamation. Matthew 11:28-30 appears without reference to the LXX or the eschatology. Moving into the second century christocentric references to rest increase but do not displace theocentric presentations of rest usually rendered with κατάπαυσις. This trend appears in the later literature of the Nag Hammadi Codices. With respect to terminology, we need only to observe that the word κατάπαυσις is virtually absent from gnostic literature, ἀνάπαυσις being the common word used in connection with the idea of rest. Cf. Laansma, *I Will Give You Rest*, 145. Helderma analyzes the motif of rest within the heuristic scheme, the gnostic myth of descent and ascent of the soul. He assumes that the primary question to be asked about ἀνάπαυσις is eschatological. Cf. Jan Helderma, *Die Anapausis im Evangelium Veritatis: Eine Vergleichende Untersuchung des Valentinianisch-gnostischen Heilsgutes der Ruhe im Evangelium Vertatis und in anderen Schriften der Nag Hammadi-Bibliothek* (NHS; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1984). Ménard summarizes the gnostic use of rest in four categories: (1) rest as knowledge; (2) rest as

second century, B.C.E., to the third century, C.E., Wray concludes “that the foundation for most Jewish and Christian theologies of rest begins with the creation story in Gen 2:2-3.”¹⁰³ She further asserts that rest continues to be theocentric but views some texts as hinting at the possibilities of rest available to humanity as a present experience or state of being.¹⁰⁴ In a third stage, rest becomes part of the Christology of the church and gains a focus as realized eschatology, an element of the salvation proclaimed and experienced in Christ.¹⁰⁵

After analyzing the rest motif in the LXX and other Jewish and Christian literature it is pertinent to look at the *κατάπαυσις* in closer proximity to Heb 4.

The Immediate Context of Hebrews 4

In the third chapter of Hebrews the author moves to the next stage of the argument. Having shown the superiority of the Son to the angels in terms of status and power, and that the salvation brought by the Son was for the humans, the composition

eschatological; (3) rest as a divine attribute of the Savior; and (4) actual rest. Cf. Jaques-É. Ménard, “Le Repos, Salut du Gnostique,” *RevScRel* 51 (1977): 71-88. Wray, not wanting to force an artificial schema on the rest motif in the Nag Hammadi Texts, adds after analyzing representative samples from the tracts three more categories to Helderman and Ménard: (5) the state of being presently experienced by the faithful, characterized by tranquility and peace; (6) absence of stress and striving, and (7) the cessation of unfruitful work. For more details of the rest motif in the Nag Hammadi Codices see Wray, *Rest as a Theological Metaphor*, 34-46.

¹⁰³ Wray, *Rest as a Theological Metaphor*, 46.

¹⁰⁴ Thus Philo can proclaim that rest belongs in the fullest sense to God and God alone (*Cher.* 90), while at other times in his philosophical speculation he posits that “while the body is laboring the soul may be at rest, and when the body is enjoying relaxation, the soul may be laboring.” *Spec. Leg.* 2.64.

¹⁰⁵ Matt 11:28-29. It has to be noted, however, that in both Philo and Matthew the term for rest used is *ἀνάπαυσις*.

now turns to a lengthy consideration of this “people” for whose sins the “faithful and merciful high priest” Jesus died (2:17-18; 4:15-16). The section 3:1-6 provides a transition to the theme of God’s people by establishing a comparison between Jesus and a figure who might, in terms of Israel’s lore, claim equal or even greater honor. The theme of faithfulness (πιστός) is carried over from 2:17, but it is not the point of contrast between Jesus and Moses, since the latter’s faithfulness is not called into question.¹⁰⁶

In Heb 3:7-19 the author not only follows a line of argument as he writes, but he is searching the Greek Scriptures.¹⁰⁷ Certain Old Testament passages form a sort of literary sub-structure to everything he says in 3:7-4:11, and before advancing to consideration of the context it would be helpful to consider the extent and usage of the OT in this section.¹⁰⁸ The passage begins with a quotation of Ps 95:7-11 [LXX 94:7-11],

¹⁰⁶ Attridge correctly remarks: “The comparison of Moses and Jesus hinged on their both being exemplars of fidelity.” Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 114. The contrast, rather, concerns the relative status and role of the two figures, and is developed through the elaboration of the metaphor of “house/household.” Johnson, *Hebrews*, 105.

¹⁰⁷ G. B. Caird was exceptional in proposing that in Hebrews the writer’s argument is actually arranged in sections around four OT texts, i.e., Ps 110:1-4; Ps 8:4-6; Ps 95:7-11, and Jer 31:31-34. George B. Caird, “Exegetical Method of the Epistle to the Hebrews,” *CJT* 5 (1959): 44-51. Caird’s analysis, however, was unable to account for the manner in which the parenthesis in Heb 10:19-13:21 was integrated into the structure and thematic arrangement of Hebrews. He had tended to focus upon the content of the document rather than its intent. In 1989 J. Walters, in an unpublished paper presented to the annual Christmas Conference of the John Wesley Fellows, proposed that the writer arranged his argument as a series of six scriptural explications, each framed with exhortation. He added to the four OT citations recognized by Caird Hab 2 and Prov 3. For more details see Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, cxiv-v.

¹⁰⁸ For wider treatment of the Old Testament in Hebrews see: Caird, “Exegetical Method of the Epistle to the Hebrews,” 44-51; Simon Kistemaker, *The Psalm Citations in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Amsterdam: Wed. G. van Soest, 1961), 108-16; Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, cxii-cxiv; Friedrich Schröger, *Der Verfasser des Hebräerbriefs als Schriftausleger* (BU, no. 4; ed. Otto Kuss; Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1968), 101-15.

followed by alluding to and quoting Gen 2:2, and having Num 14 as the subtext.

Portions of the Psalm passage are quoted again (Ps 94:7 in Heb 3:15; 4:7; Ps 94:11 in Heb 4:3, 5) or alluded to (Ps 94:8 in Heb 3:16; Ps 94:10 in Heb 3:17; Ps 94:11 in Heb 3:18, 19; 4:1, 3, 6, 10, 11), and outside of these the wording of this psalm is woven into the remainder of the treatment: καρδία (3:12; 4:12); ἡμέρα (3:13; 4:7, 8); σήμερον (3:13; 4:8); σκληρύνω (3:13); ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ (3:17); καταπαύω (4:8); and ἀκούω (4:2). In view of this, the suggestion that 3:7-4:11 is a piece of Alexandrian (Philonic or gnostic) rest speculation only secondarily grounded in the OT is unlikely.¹⁰⁹

In spite of its brevity, Gen 2:2 shares no less than three important words with Ps 94 (95): ἔργα (4:3, 4, 10), ἡμέρα (4:4; cf. 4:7), and κατάπαυσις (4:4, 10; cf. καταπαύω).¹¹⁰ Genesis 2:2 is first alluded to in 4:3 and then quoted in 4:4. From here one notes the use of σαββατισμός in 4:9. The extent to which Ps 95 (LXX 95) and Gen 2 have been brought together by *Auctor* is formally visible in 4:10, which is better described as a compound than a mixture (ὁ γὰρ εἰσελθὼν εἰς τὴν κατάπαυσιν αὐτοῦ καὶ αὐτὸς κατέπαυσεν ἀπὸ τῶν ἔργων αὐτοῦ ὡσπερ ἀπὸ τῶν ιδίων ὁ θεός).¹¹¹

The liturgical use of the *qabbalat Shabbat*, the welcoming of the Sabbath, is a set

¹⁰⁹ Hofius points out against Käsemann that the gnostic literature is at a disadvantage on purely terminological grounds, since κατάπαυσις is hardly used while ἀνάπαυσις is widely used. However, Hofius does not stop with mere word counts, but points out that the intransitive meaning of κατάπαυσις is wholly unique to the LXX. Hofius, *Katapausis*, 39-3. Considering the terminology it seems to indicate that the author is taking his lead from the OT, something which should never have been seriously doubted. Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 37-9.

¹¹⁰ The verbal parallel of rest would not have worked in the MT (tbv vs. hoxwmm).

of psalms that are recited in the synagogue on Friday evening, at the opening of the Sabbath. The *qabbalat Sabbath* has as one element six introductory Psalms (95-99 and 29) each representing a work day.¹¹² No doubt Ps 95 (94) perpetuates earlier practice, in which it was sung as part of the temple service for the Sabbath day and later in the synagogue as the Jews began the Sabbath.¹¹³ The *siddur*, the Jewish prayer book, not the work of one man or one age, has in the meditation before kindling the Sabbath lights not only Ps 95 (94), but also Gen 2:1-3 as a liturgical reading.¹¹⁴ The association and order of the two texts in the Friday evening service of prayer, which in the Diaspora would presumably be conducted in Greek, may have suggested the hermeneutical step taken in Heb 4:4 which leads the author to interpret the personalized expression *κατάπαυσίν μου* in Ps 95:11 from the vantage point of Gen 2:2 which contains the cognate verb *κατέπαυσεν*.¹¹⁵

There is, besides these two Scriptures, another OT passage which figures in 3:7-4:11 although it is nowhere quoted. Psalm 95 (LXX 94) recalls the events recorded in

¹¹¹ Laansma, *I Will Give You Rest*, 261.

¹¹² Carmine Di Sante, *Jewish Prayer: The Origins of the Christian Liturgy* (trans. Matthew J. O'Connell; New York: Paulist Press, 1991), 1756; Lewis N. Dembitz, *Jewish Services in Synagogue and Home* (New York: Arno Press, 1975; reprint, 1898), 188.

¹¹³ Bruce, *Hebrews*, 97-8.

¹¹⁴ Joseph H. Hertz, *The Authorised Daily Prayer Book* (rev. ed.; New York: Bloch Pub. Co., 1948), 347, 81; Elbogen, *Der jüdische Gottesdienst in seiner geschichtlichen Entwicklung*, 110.

¹¹⁵ Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 100. Barnes admits that Ps 95 has been used in the Christian Church from very early times as an introduction to the morning office of praise. "It was once (as it should be) the actual beginning of a service." William Emery Barnes,

Exod 17:1-7 and Num 20:1-13, yet, as Hofius has demonstrated at length, the author has, like some of the rabbis, understood this psalm primarily against the backdrop of Num 14.¹¹⁶ A careful study of the events at Kadesh in LXX Num 14 as well as the remainder of the OT bring to light a number of recurring and prominent features, several of which are plainly present in Heb 3-4:

1. God's command to possess the land was accompanied in that context by the promise that Israel would possess the land (Num 13:2; Deut 1:8, 21).

2. The discouraging report of the spies is said to have "turned aside the heart of the children of Israel" (Num 32:9, καὶ ἀπέστησαν τὴν καρδίαν τῶν υἱῶν Ἰσραηλ).¹¹⁷

3. At Kadesh the people rebelled against God. Convinced that they could not enter the land, the people murmured in their tents and refused to enter the place of promise (Num 14:35).

4. The rebellious response of the people is described in different ways: (a) It is disobedience toward God (Num 14:43, ἀπεστράφητε ἀπειθοῦντες κυρίῳ; cf. Deut 1:26; 9:23); (b) It is the refusal to listen to God or God's voice (Num 14:22, οὐκ εἰσήκουσάν μου τῆς φωνῆς; cf. Deut 9:23); (c) It is unbelief of God or his word (Num 14:11, οὐ πιστεύουσίν μοι; cf. Deut 1:32; Ps 105:25 [106:25]).

5. The unbelief and disobedience of the people of God are called a turning away from God (Num 14:9, ἀπὸ τοῦ κυρίου μὴ ἀποστάται γίνεσθε; cf. Num 14:43; Deut 1:41).

The Psalms (WC; ed. Walter Lock and D. C. Simpson; London: Methuen & Co., 1931), 456.

¹¹⁶ The following points are taken from Hofius, *Katapausis*, 124-7.

¹¹⁷ The italics follow Laansma, who highlights the verbal connections to Heb 3-4.

6. That response is called sin (Num 14:34, λήμψεθε τὰς ἀμαρτίας ὑμῶν; cf. Num 14:40; 32:14; Deut 1:41) and a repeated testing of God (Num 14:22, ἐπείρασάν με τοῦτο δέκατον). The people are called an evil congregation (Num 14:27, τὴν συναγωγὴν τὴν πονηρὰν ταύτην; cf. Num 14:35).

7. Their sin is a particularly weighty one because they had experienced repeatedly the miracles and signs of God's presence with them (cf. Num 14:11, 22; Deut 1:30; Ps 105:21 [106:21]).

8. God's wrath was therefore kindled against the faithless people (Num 14:34, γνώσεσθε τὸν θυμὸν τῆς ὀργῆς μου; cf. Num 14:11, 23, 32:10, 13; Deut 1:34).

9. God takes an oath that they will not enter the land but will die in the desert (cf. Num 14:29, 32; 32:13; Ps 105:26 [106:26]).

10. The generation of sinners must wander in the desert for forty years (cf. Num 14:33; 32:13).

11. Only Caleb, Joshua, and the younger children will enter the land and take possession of it (cf. Num 14:23; 14:30, 38; 32:12; Deut 1:36, 38).

12. The oath of God is irrevocable and the rebels cannot repent so as to change God's mind (cf. Num 14:39; Deut 1:41).

In addition to the specific parallels mentioned by Hofius, Laansma adds that the reference to those ὧν τὰ κῶλα ἔπεσεν ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ in Heb 3:17 is derived from Num 14:32: τὰ κῶλα ὑμῶν πεσεῖται ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ ταύτῃ, which “makes the case very strong that *Auctor* composed this entire passage (Heb 3,7-4,11) with Num 14 open before him.

In short, the Scriptures are the matrix of Heb 3,7-4,11.”¹¹⁸

In Heb 3:12-4:11 the author exegetes a lengthy citation from Ps 94 (LXX). While alluding to the faithfulness exemplified in Jesus, the Son (Heb 3:2), the author also requests similar fidelity from the sons. In the first verse following the citation, the author reveals the import of his discourse by means of the antithetical meaning of the Greek words πιστός (3:2, 5) and ἀπιστία (3:12, 19).¹¹⁹ These two words together with subsidiaries form the underlying concept prevalent in chs. 3 and 4.

In the longer quotation of Pss 95 (LXX 94) the author of Hebrews inserted some changes.¹²⁰ Ἐδοκίμασαν has been changed into a prepositional phrase ἐν δοκιμασίᾳ,¹²¹ τῇ

¹¹⁸ Laansma, *I Will Give You Rest*, 264.

¹¹⁹ The thought of “unbelief,” “unfaithfulness,” is not a lack of faith, a lack of trust, but a refusal to believe, disobedience. R. Bultmann “ἀπιστία,” *TDNT* 6:205. For Michel this sin is not “Weltlust,” “worldliness,” but refusing to obey. Michel, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 189; Käsemann, *Wandering People of God*, 45. “Unbelief” is thus understood in the sense of once having believed in the living God and then having turned away from him. Lenski, *The Interpretation of the Epistle to the Hebrews and of the Epistle of James*, 118. It culminates in sin, the sin of open defiance to God, the sin of tempting God (3:8 and 3:17).

¹²⁰ In recent studies, it has been shown that the author of Hebrews apparently held a very high view of the inspiration of Scripture, Scripture in its Greek as well as Hebrew form. An examination of all the Old Testament citations in Heb 1 and 3-4 has concluded that the author made only two deliberate alterations to his Septuagint text, Ps 44:7-8 cited in Heb 1:8-9 and an addition of δὶό at Heb 3:10 to enable him to divide the citation from Ps 94:7-11 into two parts. Manuscripts uncovered in recent decades, such as Papyrus Bodmer XXIV, 4QDeut^d and 11QPs^a, for example, indicate that the author of Hebrews may well have been citing a genuine textual variant rather than deliberately altering his source where his version differs slightly from the standard Septuagint form. For more details see Docherty, *The Use of the Old Testament in Hebrews*, 121-42.

¹²¹ It has been suggested that this modification of the LXX serves to sharpen the note of accusation (Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 115) or, alternatively, to avoid the idea of human beings testing God. Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 218.

γενεᾷ ἐκείνη was changed into τῇ γενεᾷ ταύτῃ,¹²² and καὶ αὐτοὶ became αὐτοὶ δὲ. The author of Hebrews combines the forty years with the preceding sentence, καὶ εἶδον τὰ ἔργα μου τεσσαράκοντα ἔτη, while the LXX does not do that. This move creates the impression that the ἔργα in Heb 3:9 were not works of anger whereas v. 17 makes it undoubtedly clear that God was angry with that generation for forty years.

Compared to the original text the LXX has just minor changes. Καρδίαις and ἔργα are in the LXX in the plural whereas in the MT they are in the singular; the names of Meribah and Massah are rendered with the common nouns παραπικρασμός and πειρασμός, and ἀεὶ πλανῶνται is not found in the MT.¹²³ In Heb 4:4 the author quotes Gen 2:2 with the short modification of inserting ὁ θεὸς ἐν before τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ ἑβδόμῃ. The LXX is almost unchanged when compared to the MT except that the singular *wtkalm* is modified to the plural ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν ἔργων in the LXX.

The introductory particle διό links the psalm's admonition not to harden the heart with the paraenetic thrust implicit in the conditional clause of Heb 3:6.¹²⁴ The warning is bracketed by two uses of the verb βλέπω, in 3:12 and 3:19. The first is an imperative, in the sense of moral attentiveness (“watch out”), and the second is in the indicative, used in the ordinary visual sense (“we see”).¹²⁵ The warning concerns the danger of ἀπιστία,

¹²² This is made probably to anticipate the contemporization of the Psalm. Laansma, *I Will Give You Rest*, 260, n. 37.

¹²³ Massah is derived from *hsn*, “to test,” and Meribah from *byr*, “to find fault.” Meribah is rendered *λοιδόρησις* at Exod 17:7 and *ἀντιλογία* at Deut 33:8.

¹²⁴ Similar connections are made in 3:10; 6:1; 10:5; 11:12; 12:12, 28; 13:12.

¹²⁵ Johnson, *Hebrews*, 112.

which the author identifies as the reason why the exodus generation failed to enter the promised land (3:19).

A second explicit citation from the psalm (3:15) leads to a series of staccato questions and answers (3:16-18). The theme of faithfulness/unfaithfulness has thus passed from Moses and Jesus to the audience the author of Hebrews targets. As the psalm quotation is introduced, the author attributes the words to the τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον, which indicates that the Spirit is still speaking in the present time of the author and also that the text is not just sacred, but is directly revelatory.¹²⁶

Hebrews quotes just the final portion of Ps 94, a hymn that praises the sovereign power of Yahweh in the first half of this brief psalm and invites the worshiper to adore God and to hear God's voice in the last part of the hymn.¹²⁷ In a word, the first part of the psalm sets up the second part, which summons the people to an obedience not demonstrated by their ancestors (οἱ πατέρες ὑμῶν) in the wilderness. The last part of the

¹²⁶ Ibid., 113.

¹²⁷ Because the second half follows abruptly upon the first without the slightest indication that these two halves belong together, form-critics have argued that Ps 94 (95) is composed of two songs that were sung in the cult. Congregational praise was followed by a prophetic warning in what is called *wechselnde Stimmen*. Hermann Gunkel, *Die Psalmen* (5th ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1968), 419. Form-critical approaches are not unjustified since there are clear differences between these two parts with respect to mood, person, and subject matter. The first half is praise, the second half a warning; in the first half the worshipers are speaking, in the second half God is the speaker; the first half deals with creation while the second half deals with rebellion in the desert. Whether one argues on form-critical grounds for either original unity or disunity, the question still remains why these two parts are together. Positing a particular form does not remove the problem of incongruity. Peter E. Enns goes beyond Marc Girard and Pierre Auffret who have argued that the psalm builds a unity in terms of its structure. Marc Girard, "Analyse structurelle du Psaume 95," *ScEs* 33 (1981): 179-89; Pierre Auffret, "Essai sur la structure littéraire du Psaume 95," *BN*, no. 22 (1983): 47-69. Enns takes it a step further and argues that the unity of the psalm is not only structural but also thematic. "What unites this psalm is what might be called the creation/re-creation theme. Verses 1-5 deal with God's cosmic creation as motivation for worshiping Yahweh. Verses 6-7a follow by speaking of another act of 'creation,' the Exodus, which also

psalm quoted by Hebrews uses the wilderness generation as a foil for those it summons to obedient hearing.¹²⁸ The occurrence of *σήμερον* in 3:7 highlights the contemporary relevance of the text and suggests a sense of continuing and open-ended revelation by God: God speaks “today” (Heb 1:1).¹²⁹

The exhortation to “hear” fits perfectly within the understanding of “faith” and “obedience” which for Hebrews is the basic positive human stance toward God. Hebrews has already stated the need for “hearing more attentively” in 2:1, and will continue this emphasis in 3:15, 16 and 4:2, 7. The point of the citation and the exhortation to hear is the fact that the earlier generation did not “hear faithfully” (3:8-10), and God swore an oath that they should not enter the land (3:11). The rebellion of the people, according to the psalm, revealed certain internal dispositions. First, they had “hardened hearts” (3:8) and, second, they were *ἀεὶ πλανῶνται τῇ καρδίᾳ* (always wandering in the heart; 3:10). Finally, the rebellion of the people shows them not to know God’s ways, even though they had seen his works (3:10; Ps 94:10). God’s response to their rebellion is anger and in that anger he takes an oath.¹³⁰ But the oath referred to in Ps 94 is the one God swears in

inspires the faithful to worship. Verses 7b-11 conclude the psalm by warning the readers against unfaithfulness.” Enns, “Creation and Re-Creation,” 256.

¹²⁸ Johnson, *Hebrews*, 114.

¹²⁹ Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 114.

¹³⁰ The Hebrew formula consists of the protasis of a conditional sentence, *!Waboy>-~ai*, “if they enter,” where the apodosis is suppressed. The LXX translates the Hebrews oath formula *εἰ εἰσελεύσονται*, “if they enter,” with wooden literalness. So *ibid.*, 116. Divine oaths appear several times in Hebrew. This first oath is negative in character: God forbade the wilderness generation to enter the promised land. The negative oath is balanced by the positive oath in 6:13-20, which recalls how God swore that he would bless Abraham and his descendants. While the oath barring Israel from entering the promised land states only the condition and not the consequence, it was

Num 14:21-22, in response to the rebellion of the people:¹³¹ “As I live and as my name lives,” none of that generation would “see the land, which I swore on oath to their fathers.”¹³² The psalmist concludes his recollection of the waywardness of the exodus generation with a reference to God’s determination not to allow any of that generation to enter his rest.¹³³ The author of Hebrews ascribes this loss explicitly to disobedience and

understood that divine agency would put the penalty for violation into effect. Koester, *Hebrews*, 257.

¹³¹ Johnson, *Hebrews*, 116.

¹³² The formulation of v. 11 corresponds to the words in Num 14:30, “You will certainly not enter the land!”

¹³³ It should be noted that καταπάυσις μου in the psalm quotation has been understood by most scholars as the rest in the Land of Canaan. “Mit der καταπάυσις τοῦ Θεοῦ ist im Psalm die Ruhe gemeint, welche Israel nach den Beschwerden der Wüstenwanderung und des Kampfes gegen die ringsum liegenden Völker als Gottes Gabe erhalten sollte.” Schröger, *Der Verfasser des Hebräerbriefs als Schriftausleger*, 104; Kraus, *Psalmen*, 662. Simon Kistemaker remarks: “Although the promise given by God to the Israelites of the desert generation referred to the rest in Canaan (Deut. 12:9f), the psalmist specifies this rest by calling it God’s rest (Ps. 95:11).” Kistemaker, *The Psalm Citations*, 115. Similarly Henry Sturcke: “The rest in Ψ 94 is that of the land of Canaan, a place of rest.” Henry Sturcke, *Encountering the Rest of God: How Jesus Came to Personify the Sabbath* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 2005), 273. Judith Wray comments: “The psalmist has made the leap to equate the land with God’s REST, a leap inconsistent with the text in Numbers, but not inconsistent with other texts in the Hebrew Scriptures” (see Deut 12:9; Josh 21:43-45). Wray, *Rest as a Theological Metaphor*, 67. While Attridge asserts that Hebrews changes the meaning of rest, he acknowledges that its sense accorded in the psalm is “primarily to the resting place of Canaan.” Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 116. Moffatt agrees: “In v. 11 κατάπαυσις is used on Canaan as the promised land of settled peace, as only in Dt 12:9 (οὐ γὰρ ἤκατε . . . εἰς τὴν κληρονομίαν) and 1 K 8:56 (εὐλογητὸς κύριος σήμερον ὃς ἔδωκεν κατάπαυσιν τῷ λαῷ αὐτοῦ). The mystical sense is developed in 4:3.” Moffatt, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 46. Lenski adds: “The rest into which those Israelites were not to enter was certainly that in the land of Canaan.” He further insists that the oath cannot be restricted to just this meaning based on Deut 12:9-11, but equally an exclusion from the rest in the heavenly Canaan. Lenski, *The Interpretation of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 115-6. F. F. Bruce also admits: “Of those who were already full-grown

distrust (3:18-19).

With v. 12 the author moves into the application of the scriptural text to the addressees in order that they do not follow the example of the exodus generation. This mutual exhortation should be a continuous practice of alertness and attentiveness carried out “every day, as long as it is called today” (3:13).¹³⁴ The comment continues to echo the words of the psalm, indicating that this admonition should take place while the σήμερον of Scripture is still a present reality. Such watchfulness has as a goal to eradicate the dispositions that kept the earlier generation from entering the land.

Two of these dispositions are mentioned. The first is the possession of a καρδία πονηρά, which is further modified by the genitive of ἀπιστίας and an infinitive construction ἐν τῷ ἀποστῆναι ἀπὸ θεοῦ ζῶντος. The genitive and the infinitival clause seem to make the same point in clarifying the meaning of the “evil heart.”¹³⁵ By its close connection of ἀπιστία with ἀπειθέω Attridge correctly remarks that faithlessness involves not simply passive disbelief, but active resistance to God’s will.¹³⁶ As the following comment with its paronomasia indicates, faithlessness is tantamount to and results in apostasy (ἐν τῷ ἀποστῆναι; 3:12). The second negative disposition keeping the people

men when they came out of Egypt, none except Caleb and Joshua survived to enter Canaan, the ‘rest’ or home which God had prepared for them.” Bruce, *Hebrews*, 99.

¹³⁴ The community has to do for each other what the author does in the discourse: Heb 10:25; 13:19, 22.

¹³⁵ Johnson, *Hebrews*, 117.

¹³⁶ Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 116.

from the land is the σκληρυθη caused by ἀπάτη τῆς ἀμαρτίας.¹³⁷

The γὰρ in v. 14 provides the basis for the positive exhortation to be carried out among the readers: “we have become μέτοχοι of Christ.”¹³⁸ However reassuring this status, Hebrews immediately reminds readers that it is nevertheless conditional. Thus there is need for constant vigilance. As in 3:6 the εἰναι stresses the seriousness of the condition: “to hold secure the initial reality until the end.”¹³⁹

With the infinitival phrase in v. 15 the sentence comes to a conclusion that began

¹³⁷ In this context ἀμαρτία has a specific connotation. It is the sin of refusing to obey God and to act upon his promise (Num 14:34). Käsemann, *Wandering People of God*, 45.

¹³⁸ The term μέτοχοι was used in Heb 3:1 for “sharers in the heavenly calling.” However, the reality in which Christians partake in Christ is eschatological. In Heb 3:14 the author combines two kinds of eschatologies: one present-vertical and one future-horizontal. The combination occurs in the warning phrase: “We have become partakers of Christ (μέτοχοι γὰρ τοῦ Χριστοῦ γεγόναμεν), if we hold firm to the initial reality (ἀρχὴν τῆς ὑποστάσεως) until the end.” While believers already partake in Christ in the present time, their definitive participation lies in the future and is contingent on their final faithfulness. Enrique Nardoni, “Partakers in Christ (Hebrews 3:14),” *NTS* 37 (1991): 468. The use of the perfect tense in γεγόναμεν indicates that the audience once were not such participants but have entered into it through baptism (μετόχους γεννηθέντας πνεύματος ἁγίου; Heb 6:4). Johnson, *Hebrews*, 118. Hofius overstretched the term μέτοχοι when he claimed that it is an eschatological technical term, designating the companions of the heavenly hosts or of the Lord based on Greek fragments of 1 Enoch 104:6. Hofius, *Katapausis*, 135, 215, n. 820.

¹³⁹ The term ὑπόστασις has been the object of much discussion. The two main streams of interpretations are summarized well by Koester, *Hebrews*, 472-3. The subjective side emerges when ὑπόστασις is linked with “faith,” which pertains to the believing person. The objective side emerges when ὑπόστασις is connected to “things hoped for,” since the object of hope lies outside the believer. Unfortunately, evidence that the word had such a subjective, psychological meaning is extremely slender. It was Melancthon who advised Luther to use the subjective meaning of “sure confidence,” whereas all patristic and medieval exegesis presupposed that ὑπόστασις was to be translated *substantia*. H. Köster, “ὑπόστασις,” *TDNT* 8:585-8. The addressees are told to

in 3:12, but was interrupted by the parenthetical comment of v. 14. The renewed citation in v. 15 echoes the use of “hearing,” “today,” and “hardening.” The prepositional phrase ἐν τῷ παραπικρασμῷ sets up the following set of questions since the focus is on the failure of the desert generation, addressing the nature of the failure and indicating why exhortation is necessary.

The questions (vv. 16-18) pick three aspects of the citation from Ps 94 and each question has basically the same answer, from a different perspective.¹⁴⁰ The first question asks who it was that “heard and rebelled” (ἀκούσαντες παρεπίκραναν; v. 16). The next question being rhetorical provides the answer that it was the whole generation who had gone out from Egypt. The participle ἀκούσαντες adds something to the scriptural citation, Johnson points out, since “it is possible to *hear* and yet not to obey, to *see* and yet not to understand God’s ways.”¹⁴¹ The following question asks to whom God’s wrath was directed (3:17). In contrast to the psalm citation quoted in Heb 3:10, which had associated the forty years with “seeing” and “testing” God (vv. 8-9), that time is now associated with God’s wrath, a feasible reading of the LXX. The answer is another rhetorical

hold firm that heavenly reality in which they participated through Christ. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 119.

¹⁴⁰ Schröger calls this interpretation of Ps 94 a Midrash-Pesher. Schröger, *Der Verfasser des Habräerbriefs als Schriftausleger*, 113. Attridge sees parallels in the questions to those often encountered in Philo (*Spec. leg.* 3.25, 78, 116, 165, 174). Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 120. Moffatt adds that these kinds of questions are a favorite device of the diatribe style. Moffatt, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 48. However, Michel defines them as *catechesis*. Michel, *Hebräer*, 190.

¹⁴¹ Johnson, *Hebrews*, 119.

question, where the bodies that fell in the desert are a clear reference to Num 14:33.¹⁴²

Again the author raises a question with reference to God's "swearing," which was recorded at the end of the psalm citation (v. 11). This question specifies the sin that occasioned that oath as disobedience (ἀπειθήσασιν).¹⁴³

Hebrews draws the conclusion (3:19), which seems inevitable, that that generation was unable to enter the land because of ἀπιστία. The term "unbelief" does not mean doubt, but is akin to the evil that is manifested in the hardening of one's heart (3:15), rebellion (3:16), testing, and sin (3:17).¹⁴⁴ That is the reason why many scholars translate ἀπιστία not as "unbelief," but as "faithlessness."¹⁴⁵

We have seen so far that Heb 3:7-19 is a *midrash* on the second half of Ps 94 and that the author's commentary is to be understood primarily against the background of Num 14.¹⁴⁶ Thus, Scripture is the matrix for Heb 3:7-4:11.

¹⁴² The answer further specifies that it was sinners ἀμαρτήσασιν who caused God's wrath (Num 14:40).

¹⁴³ See Num 14:43, where the Israelites are those who are ἀπειθοῦντες κυρίῳ. Cf. Deut 9:23; 1:26-27.

¹⁴⁴ So Koester, *Hebrews*, 262.

¹⁴⁵ Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 121; Koester, *Hebrews*, 262; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 119; Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 236, just to mention a few.

¹⁴⁶ Smothers gives several reasons why the author's treatment of Ps 94:7-11 is midrashic: (1) he applied the biblical text to his own contemporary situation; (2) he explicated the text to demonstrate its applicability to a new situation; (3) he emphasized key words in the text such as "today," "rest," "harden the heart," and "enter," in order to demonstrate the analogy in the ancient and contemporary situations; (4) he interwove other biblical passages such as Num 13-14 and Gen 2:2 into the fabric of his exposition; and (5) he asked questions and answered them with questions (3:16-18) in a typical

We also noted that in the liturgical welcoming of the Sabbath on Friday night, Jews in the second temple period and later used to recite Ps 94 and Gen 2:1-3, a passage that will surface again in Heb 4:4. It is noteworthy that scholars agree that the κατάπαυσις μου in Ps 94 as well as in this passage means the physical promised land, Canaan. At this moment in the quotation as well as in the interpretation of Ps 94 the rest idea does not yet receive an eschatological coloring,¹⁴⁷ an *überirdische Verwirklichung*,¹⁴⁸ something that is going to be attributed to the rest idea in Heb 4. The warning for the audience of the book of Hebrews in ch. 3 concerns the danger of “faithlessness,” which the author explicitly identifies as the reason why the ancient generation failed to enter the land of promise (3:19). The theme of faithfulness/unfaithfulness has thus passed from Moses, Jesus, and the exodus generation to the audience of Hebrews.

Eschatological and Soteriological Remarks Concerning Hebrews 3 and 4

The opening words of Hebrews give a pronounced eschatological, redemptive-historical orientation to the entire document: God’s former speech to the fathers through the prophets not only contrasts with, but culminates in his final speech in his Son “in these last days” (ἐπ’ ἐσχάτου τῶν ἡμερῶν τούτων ἐλάλησεν ἡμῖν ἐν υἱῷ; 1:2). The eschatological revelation, embodied in the Son, is even more explicit in Heb 9:26 which states that Christ in making a sacrifice for sin “has appeared once for all at the end of the

midrashic fashion. Thomas G. Smothers, “A Superior Model: Hebrews 1:1-4:13,” *RevExp* 82 (1985): 341.

¹⁴⁷ Kistemaker, *The Psalm Citations*, 115.

¹⁴⁸ Schröger, *Der Verfasser des Hebräerbriefts als Schriftausleger*, 106.

ages.”¹⁴⁹ Christ’s death and exaltation inaugurate the coming eschatological age in terms

¹⁴⁹ Platonic philosophical terminology appears in three locations: (1) In 8:5 the earthly tabernacle is said to be “a sketch and shadow of the heavenly one.” (2) Heb 9:23-24 also characterizes the earthly tabernacle as a “sketch” and “copy” of the heavenly tabernacle. (3) In 10:1 the Mosaic law is said to possess “only a shadow of the good things to come and not the true image of these realities.” These and other occurrences have prompted a number of scholars to argue that the author’s primary frame of reference is metaphysical Platonism also conceived along vertical/spatial Platonic ontological lines, with an ideal metaphysical world looming above the earthly shadow-world. Most notable in this regard are: Thompson, *Beginnings of Christian Philosophy*; George W. MacRae, “Heavenly Temple and Eschatology in the Letter to the Hebrews,” *Semeia* 12 (1978): 179-99. Cf. Grässer who states: “Die für den eschatologischen Entwurf der Hb entscheidenden Begriffe sind nicht solche der Zeitlichkeit, sondern solche einer transzendenten Räumlichkeit.” Grässer, *Der Glaube im Hebräerbrief*, 174; Erich Grässer, *Hebr 7,1-10,18* (vol. 17/2; EKK, ed. Norbert Brox and others; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1993), 88, 206-7; Gregory E. Sterling, “Ontology versus Eschatology: Tensions between the Author and Community in Hebrews,” *SPhilo* 13 (2001): 190-211; Wilfried Eisele, *Ein unerschütterliches Reich: Die mittelplatonische Umformung des Parusiegedankens im Hebräerbrief* (vol. 116, BZNW, ed. Michael Wolter; Berlin, New York: W. de Gruyter, 2003). While Thompson, MacRae, and Sterling recognize the presence of traditional Jewish apocalyptic-eschatological materials in Hebrews, their importance is either minimized (Thompson) or relativized (MacRae and Sterling). Thompson, *Beginnings of Christian Philosophy*, 154; MacRae, “Heavenly Temple and Eschatology in the Letter to the Hebrews,” 190; Sterling, “Ontology versus Eschatology,” 204-8. However, the majority of scholars have argued that the traditional Jewish linear/temporal eschatological viewpoint more decisively characterizes the author’s thought-world. Particular mention is merited by two scholars: C. K. Barrett, “The Christology of Hebrews,” in *Who Do You Say That I Am? Essays on Christology* (ed. Mark Allan Powell and David R. Bauer; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999) and Lincoln D. Hurst, “How ‘Platonic’ Are Heb viii.5 and Heb ix.23f.?” *JTS* 34 (1983): 156-68; Lincoln D. Hurst, “Eschatology and ‘Platonism’ in the Epistle to the Hebrews,” *SBLSP* 23 (1984): 41-74. While Barrett prioritizes the role of Jewish eschatology, he acknowledges the presence of Platonic materials; Hurst utterly rejects a Platonic background of thought and aptly demonstrates the fascination and familiarity of the Hebraic mind with the heavenly/vertical dimension, especially in apocalyptic literature. Barrett, “The Eschatology,” 391; Hurst, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 42; Hurst, “Eschatology and ‘Platonism’ in the Epistle to the Hebrews,” 47-8. The two opinions of Barrett and Hurst are certainly mutually coherent. See also George E. Ladd, *The Presence of the Future: The Eschatology of Biblical Realism* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1974), 335-9; George E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1974, reprint, 2002), 618-23.

of the fundamental historical-eschatological distinction between the two ages.¹⁵⁰

Accordingly, the audience of Hebrews through God's word and the Holy Spirit experiences ("tastes") "the powers of the age to come" (6:5). Similarly, the declaration of "salvation" is a present reality resulting from God's eschatological speech "through the Lord" (2:3). Again, believers have already come to "the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem" (12:22) and are present in what is described as the eschatological assembly gathered there (12:22-24). Realized eschatology, then, undoubtedly has an integral place in the message of Hebrews.¹⁵¹

At the same time, eschatological reality is still perceived as future. Christ, having "appeared once for all" (9:26), "will appear a second time" (9:28). For the believers that future, second appearance will be "for salvation" (9:28; 1:14). A "lasting city" is what they are still seeking; it is "the city to come" (13:14). The appearance of Christ the first time, salvation, the heavenly city, all eschatological in character, are both a present and future reality in the view of the writer.

Two comments by Gaffin on this present-future pattern are in order here:

First, the bond between believers and Christ, the high priest in heaven (e.g., 4:14; 6:20; 7:26; 8:1), explains how they presently enjoy eschatological blessings. They are "partakers of Christ," "those who share in (with) Christ" (metochoi tou Christou, 3:14).¹⁵²

¹⁵⁰ Richard B. Gaffin, "A Sabbath Rest Still Awaits the People of God," in *Pressing Toward the Mark: Essays Commemorating Fifty Years of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church* (ed. Charles G. Dennison and Richard C. Gamble; Philadelphia: Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 1986), 34.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid.

Secondly, the still future, unrealized side of the writer's eschatology provides the scope for his considerable parenthesis (exhortation).¹⁵³

Hebrews 4:1-16 is a strong exhortation to deal with the present, unrealized eschatology, something that is very often overlooked when interpreting this passage. That is why so often the rest in Heb 4 is equated with "an eschatological hope to which the believer attains only after this life."¹⁵⁴ Gaffin puts it this way: "Eschatological redemption-rest is not merely an analogue of God's creation-rest; the latter is not simply the model for the former. Rather, the writer knows of only one rest, 'my rest,' entered by God at creation and by believers at the consummation."¹⁵⁵ Jon Laansma states: "*Auctor* is concerned that his holy brothers and sisters remain faithful so that they might obtain the promise, *viz* entrance at Christ's Parousia into God's heavenly resting place."¹⁵⁶ Craig Koester, in his commentary, also argues that to rest in the manner God himself rested after creation (4:10) remains a future reality.¹⁵⁷ The author does not say whether

¹⁵³ Ibid., 35.

¹⁵⁴ Von Rad, "There Remains Still a Rest for the People of God," 99.

¹⁵⁵ Gaffin, "A Sabbath Rest Still Awaits the People of God," 39.

¹⁵⁶ Laansma, *I Will Give You Rest*, 356. For Laansma the thrust of this passage points toward a future corporate realization, but he acknowledges that the question of "when" this exactly takes place is not made very clear. Ibid., 310. For Laansma rest is construed as a locale, as God's own resting place where he celebrates his own Sabbath. Ibid., 334.

¹⁵⁷ Similarly Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 246. Weiss speaks of the Sabbath rest "als eine theologische und eschatologische Größe—alle irdischen Erwartungen und Heilsvorstellungen überschreitet und eben in diesem Sinne das Endziel der Verheißung Gottes für sein Volk darstellt." Weiss, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 269, 81-2. Scholer rejects the already-not yet description of rest proposed by Hofius and Barrett as untenable explanations. He argues that "for the author of Heb., the 'rest' is anticipated as the establishment of a renewed earth." Scholer, *Proleptic Priests*, 203-4.

Christians enter rest immediately upon their own deaths¹⁵⁸ or whether this occurs at Christ's return.¹⁵⁹ These interpretations of rest make it either a post-mortem or a post-*parousian* event.¹⁶⁰

There are other scholars who interpret the rest in Heb 4 as a realized eschatological reality in which the believer enters even now, but consummated at the end of the age. David A. DeSilva, for example, suggests that the verb εἰσερχόμεθα should be taken as a "true present" but highlights its progressive or continuous aspect. Thus, he translates Heb 4:3 "we who believe are entering that rest," that is, we are crossing that threshold into the "better" Promised Land.¹⁶¹ While deSilva defines the time of entering the rest, he also answers the question concerning the nature of the rest that is being entered.

In such a context, "entering the rest" can be no other than entering that divine realm. . . . God's rest is in the realm beyond "this creation," as is the city and homeland for which, according to Hebrews, the patriarchs were seeking even as they dwelt in the midst of Canaan.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁸ Loader, *Sohn und Hoherpriester*, 52.

¹⁵⁹ "Damit ist der Termin des εἰσερχόμεθα genannt: es ist die Endvollendung, das Ende im eschatologisch-apokalyptischen Sinn. Am Tag der Parusie Jesu Christi, den der Hebräerbrief als nahe bevorstehend erwartet (10,20.37), wird der Hoffnung des Glaubens die Erfüllung geschenkt werden." Hofius, *Katapausis*, 57.

¹⁶⁰ So Hans-Friedrich Weiß when he states: "Das durch die biblische Überlieferung vorgegebene Stichwort κατάπαυσις bezeichnet im Hebr vielmehr das Ziel der Verheißung Gottes in einem transzendent-eschatologischen Sinne, genauer: den Zielort der Verheißung Gottes als den Ort des eschatologischen Heils." Weiss, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 268.

¹⁶¹ DeSilva, "Entering God's Rest," 32.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 39.

This present reality is to be grasped by faith or trust, but is not something of present availability except as the addressees continue to move forward in their commitment to Jesus.¹⁶³ This believing “is not merely a wait for a future reality or a fulfillment in participating in God’s rest, rather it is the key to grasp the whole of invisible truth or heavenly reality now and here.”¹⁶⁴ Lincoln adds that “faith makes real in the present that which is future, unseen, or heavenly. This is why those who have believed can be said to enter the rest already.”¹⁶⁵ Barrett expresses his understanding of the rest this way: “The ‘rest’ is and remains a promise, which some of the readers of the Epistle may fail through disobedience to achieve (iv.i) and all are exhorted to strive to enter. The ‘rest’, precisely because it is God’s, is both present and future; men enter it, and must strive to enter it. This is paradoxical, but it is a paradox which Hebrews shares with all primitive Christian eschatology.”¹⁶⁶ Lane confirms the views just expressed by adding:

Consequently, the bold assertion εἰσερχόμεθα γὰρ εἰς κατάπαυσιν, “for we do enter that rest,” implies more than proleptic enjoyment of what God has

¹⁶³ Ibid., 32.

¹⁶⁴ Yeo, “The Meaning and Usage of the Theology of ‘Rest’,” 15.

¹⁶⁵ Lincoln, “Sabbath, Rest, and Eschatology,” 211. He further insists that “the true Sabbath, which has come with Christ, is not a literal, physical rest but is seen as consisting in the salvation that God has provided.” Lincoln, “Sabbath, Rest, and Eschatology,” 215.

¹⁶⁶ Barrett, “The Eschatology,” 372. As far as the time of the rest is concerned, Barrett is quite clear. He is more unclear when he defines the nature of the rest. It is “the complete fulfillment of God’s work in them [believers], and of their work in God. As the next verse (vi.ii), resuming the argument, implies, to enter into God’s ‘rest’ is the opposite of unbelief and disobedience; it means that man shares at length in the perfection of God’s ultimate purpose for mankind.” Barrett, “The Eschatology,” 372. Similar thoughts are expressed by Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 622.

promised. The present tense of the verb is to be regarded as a true present and not simply viewed as future in reference. God's promise is predicated upon reality, and believers are already to enjoy the rest referred to in the quotation of Ps 95:11.¹⁶⁷

Finally, Guthrie thinks the rest motif of Heb 3:7-4:13 “foreshadows the entrance of new covenant believers with Christ, by faith, into the heavenly Holiest Place, experienced now but consummated at the end of age.”¹⁶⁸ These interpretations make the rest motif a present and also a future reality, very often seen in the tension of already and not yet; a realized eschatology which is yet to be consummated.

In the tension between those scholars who advocate a future eschatology and those who argue for realized eschatology with a future consummation, Attridge seems to give the most balanced and exegetically soundest perspective.¹⁶⁹ While acknowledging Hebrews' eschatology he claims that the theme of the section (4:1-9) is enunciated in v. 1. A promise to enter God's rest has been left in force bound on the condition of faithful obedience.

Through a *gezera shawa*, an exegetical argument in which a term in one verse of Scripture is interpreted according to its use in another, the rest of the psalm is connected to the rest of Gen 2:2, the rest into which God himself entered on the first Sabbath.¹⁷⁰

The redefinition of rest by the author of Hebrews disassociates the term from its

¹⁶⁷ Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 99.

¹⁶⁸ George H. Guthrie, “Strive to Enter—What? Hebrews' Appropriation of the ‘Entering Rest’ Motif” (Paper presented at the SBL Annual Meeting; Atlanta, Ga., November 24, 2003), 18, quoted in Scott D. Mackie, *Eschatology and Exhortation in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (WUNT 2; ed. Jörg Frey; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007).

¹⁶⁹ Attridge, “‘Let Us Strive to Enter That Rest’: The Logic of Hebrews 4:1-11.”

political or apocalyptic connotations.¹⁷¹ “To enter God’s ‘rest’” says Attridge “is not to take possession of the land of Israel, nor to enter a concrete eschatological temple. Rather it is to have a share in God’s eternal ‘sabbatical’ repose.”¹⁷² Attridge finds the support for this view in Heb 4:3, καίτοι τῶν ἔργων ἀπὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου γενηθέντων, “even though the works had been completed from the foundation of the world.” The force of this remark is “to emphasize,” argues Attridge, “that the divinely promised ‘rest’ . . . is not primarily a future reality pertaining primarily to human beings, but a feature of God’s own existence which precedes and stands outside of human history.”¹⁷³ The point is well taken that the rest to which the author refers is not a future reality, but a past one, an actuality in which God took repose and *auctor* invites his audience to do the same (4:10).

Furthermore, how could those of the community seem to have fallen short now (4:1) if the rest lies entirely in the future? If the concept of rest as discussed in Heb 4 has an entirely future orientation, all of the members of the community are short of achieving

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 282.

¹⁷¹ Here he combats on the one hand the view of Buchanan who argues for rest as an independent existence of the promised land, a national rest of Israel in sabbatical terms and on the other hand the view of Hofius, who understands the rest as a locale, specifically the heavenly fatherland, the heavenly Jerusalem, and the heavenly temple. Buchanan, *Hebrews*, 64, 71; Hofius, *Katapausis*, 53-4. An extensive critique of Hofius’s view is also given by Laansma, ‘*I Will Give You Rest*,’ 343-6.

¹⁷² Attridge, “‘Let Us Strive to Enter That Rest’: The Logic of Hebrews 4:1-11,” 283. Attridge is not explicit in what exactly this eternal “sabbatical” repose is. Later in his commentary he defines the rest as eternal and a heavenly reality. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 130. At this point I am dealing only with the time frame of entering the rest; I will deal later with the nature of the rest.

¹⁷³ Attridge, “‘Let Us Strive to Enter That Rest’: The Logic of Hebrews 4:1-11,” 282, n. 8. However, it has to be noted that Attridge exaggerates when he places the first Sabbath of primeval history outside of human history and not pertaining to human beings.

it at present.¹⁷⁴

Based on the insight gained so far, one also has to take into consideration the frame of argument in which the author of Hebrews operates. Hebrews 3:14 speaks of the fact that the addressees have become sharers of Christ. This can be taken as realized eschatology. However, Wray draws attention to the fact that an “explicit reference to Christ as the one who gives rest never happens.” Therefore rest is “not defined as an integral result of participation in Christ.”¹⁷⁵ Thus μέτοχοι τοῦ Χριστοῦ is best understood in terms of sharers in the Holy Spirit through baptism (6:4). The perfect tense of γεγόναμεν indicates the addressees once were not such participants but have entered into it through baptism.¹⁷⁶

The time frame of this participation is important. The conditional clause εἰάνπερ¹⁷⁷ . . . μέχρι τέλους βεβαίαν κατάσχωμεν reminds the readers of the time frame, namely “if we hold secure until the end.” The end is not yet specified in Heb 3:14, but in Heb 4:13 the author reminds the reader of the time of accountability. God who sees and judges everything, before whom everything lies naked, is the one to whom an account finally must be rendered.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁴ Although passages in Hebrews point to attainment of God’s promises in the future, the present appropriation of God’s rest must be considered an aspect of our author’s concern. Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 152.

¹⁷⁵ Wray, *Rest as a Theological Metaphor*, 83, 91.

¹⁷⁶ Johnson, *Hebrews*, 118.

¹⁷⁷ An intensive particle for εἴν.

¹⁷⁸ Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 136. I am aware of the ambiguity of the final clause in 4:13, because it is so brief and obscure. Taking ὁ λόγος to mean “account”

If taken seriously, this time frame makes the exclusively future nature of rest, in the sense of a post-parousian event, impossible. The time frame demands a pre-parousian rest, a rest that is being entered before the final eschatological day, before the day of accountability, a true eschatological rest as defined by the author of Hebrews (1:2). ‘If we hold secure until the end’ (3:14), the time in which accountability is required (4:13), is the time frame in which the rest should be entered. Barrett is certainly correct when he states: “The Church lives in the last days, but before the last day.”¹⁷⁹

With regard to the soteriology of Hebrews it is noteworthy to see that salvation in Hebrews is used with the past, present, and future tense. Salvation has already been “founded” or “pioneered” by Jesus (2:10). Through his ongoing work of intercession, Jesus “is able for all time to save those who approach God through him” in the present (7:25). But final salvation must await the return of Christ, who will “appear a second time, not to deal with sin, but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him” (9:28). Thus some scholars argued that soteriology in Hebrews “must be understood as the present possession of a future inheritance.”¹⁸⁰

Most discussions of rest in Heb 4 emphasize the eschatological dimension,

(see Heb 13:17; Josephus, *Ant.* 16.120 and Luke 16:2; 1 Pet 4:5) made to a superior lies implicit in the given context of everything being disclosed and open to God. Weiss, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 289.

¹⁷⁹ Barrett, “The Eschatology,” 391.

¹⁸⁰ Grant R. Osborne, “Soteriology in the Epistle to the Hebrews,” in *Grace Unlimited* (ed. Clark H. Pinnock; Minneapolis, Minn.: Bethany Fellowship, 1975), 155. Also Brenda B. Colijn, “‘Let Us Approach:’ Soteriology in the Epistle to the Hebrews,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 39 (1996): 574-5.

understanding the rest as a soteriological goal.¹⁸¹ The preacher's goal, however, in the context of an awareness of eschatological realities, is to inspire faithfulness in the community "today." Just in case the hearers incorrectly interpret the temporal emphasis the first time (3:7, 15), the present application of the promise in ch. 4 and the continuity of God's word is reiterated by means of multiple temporal designations. In the context of multiple temporal designations Wray argues:

Six times in Heb 4:7 the 'time' factor is reiterated:

πάλιν (again),
ἡμέρας (a day).
Σήμερον (Today),
μετὰ τοσοῦτον χρόνον (so long afterward),
καθὼς προεῖρηται (as was said previously),
Σήμερον (Today).

Assuring the hearers that the promise (and warning) is for today and for them, the preacher repeats Ps 95[94]:7-8 one more time.¹⁸²

Thus, the author himself places the warning into the present time.

Also, the other temporal hints given within the text make the rest a present reality rather than a future soteriological event. In Heb 4:3 the author uses the present tense of

¹⁸¹ So, for example, Osborne when he notes that the concept of Sabbath rest in Jewish exegesis referred to the world to come. This he supported by *Gen. Rab.* 17:12a, a work which dates from 425 C.E. onwards. Osborne, "Soteriology in the Epistle to the Hebrews," 148. Osborne's argument is dependent on Montefiore, 85, while Colijn follows Osborne (Colijn, "Let Us Approach," 578). It is worth noting that in Jewish apocalyptic literature "rest with the fathers" (2 *Bar.* 85:9) has been understood on the figurative level. Sturcke, *Encountering the Rest of God*, 276. However, this does not exclude a literal understanding of the Sabbath day (see 2 *Enoch* 32:2 and 33:1-2 where one can find the chiliastic speculation recorded). For the conception of the Sinaitic laws, and the Sabbath in particular, antedating Sinai as a motif often associated with the apocalyptic strain of Judaism see Robert M. Johnston, "Patriarchs, Rabbis, and Sabbath," *AUSS* 12 (1974): 97-8.

¹⁸² Wray, *Rest as a Theological Metaphor*, 80.

εἰσέρχομαι which some scholars take as a true present¹⁸³ whereas others understand it as a futuristic present.¹⁸⁴ The verb should be taken as the expression of a present fact.¹⁸⁵ The failure of the Exodus generation to enter the promised rest does not abrogate the reality and presence of the rest promised to the contemporaries of the author. The assertion of v. 3a provides the antithesis to v. 2: What was lost to those who refused to believe becomes the possession of the faithful ones.¹⁸⁶ Οἱ πιστεύσαντες of v. 3 are the ones who first believed and now are entering. The aorist participle denotes an action that took place before the action of the main verb.¹⁸⁷

However, it has to be admitted that the present tense can be interpreted both ways. The crux of the matter is that according to how somebody defines the rest he/she will understand the tense to fit the interpretation. That is the reason why it is important to present a clear exegesis of the passage which will insofar as possible eliminate doubts about how the tense of the different verbs is to be interpreted.

Furthermore, the noun σωτήρια occurs only in 1:14; 2:3, 10; 5:9; 6:9; 9:28 and

¹⁸³ Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 126; Barrett, “The Eschatology,” 372; DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude*, 155; Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 99; Lincoln, “Sabbath, Rest, and Eschatology,” 215; Montefiore, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 83; Yeo, “The Meaning and Usage of the Theology of ‘Rest’,” 15.

¹⁸⁴ Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 73, n. 17; Koester, *Hebrews*, 270; Michel, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 194; Scholer, *Proleptic Priests*, 202.

¹⁸⁵ Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 95.

¹⁸⁶ Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 99.

¹⁸⁷ David Alan Black, *It's Still Greek to Me: An Easy-to-Understand Guide to Intermediate Greek* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1998), 124. See also Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 614.

11:7 while the verb σώζειν is found in 5:7 and 7:25.¹⁸⁸ These occurrences make clear that soteriological terminology is not even used within chs. 3 and 4.

Elsewhere in the New Testament some of the primary images for salvation are drawn from the law court (judgment, justification), from the Jewish cult (sacrifice and atonement), from the sphere of relationships (reconciliation), from the slave market (redemption), or from the battlefield (victory over hostile powers). As seen already the forensic language of accountability to divine judgment and of being approved as righteous is not absent from Hebrews (4:12, 13; 6:2; 10:27, 30; 11:4, 7; 12:23). The *Christus Victor* motif, in which Christ conquers the devil, is present in 2:14, 15, and ‘redemption’ terminology occurs in 9:12, 15.

Salvation is viewed also as purification in Hebrews (1:3; 9:22), and in particular it is the human conscience that is purged in order to be able to worship the living God (9:13, 14; 10:2, 22). Salvation by means of Christ’s death is depicted as sanctification, a setting apart from what is unholy (2:11; 9:13; 10:10, 14, 29, 13:12). For Hebrews the exalted Christ makes his once-for-all sacrifice continually effective through his living presence before God (7:25).¹⁸⁹

However, it is striking that the author does not attribute the availability of rest to Jesus’ death and resurrection but to God’s Sabbath observance, which was available from

¹⁸⁸ In the enumeration of σωτήρια/σώζειν occurrences in Hebrews Lincoln misses both a noun and a verb. Lincoln, *Hebrews*, 89.

¹⁸⁹ For these insights I am indebted to Lincoln. *Ibid.*, 90-2.

the beginning of creation.¹⁹⁰ These observations seem to withdraw the soteriological umbrella from Heb 3-4 under which it is usually placed. To give the rest an eschatological (post-parousian)/soteriological meaning results in misreading both the near as well as the extended context of Heb 3 and 4 and gives the rest a meaning from the Amoraic midrashic literature.

Based on what was just stated, the soteriology in Hebrews has a past, present, and future perspective, but within the context of Heb 3-4 the multiple temporal designations seem to indicate that the warning is a present goal rather than an exclusive future soteriological one for the audience of Hebrews.¹⁹¹ Also noting the fact that soteriological

¹⁹⁰ Herold Weiss, “*Sabbatismos* in the Epistle to the Hebrews,” *CBQ* 58 (1996): 683.

¹⁹¹ The fact should not be denied that the exhortation has soteriological implications and consequences (4:1, 11). While arguing strongly against a soteriological rest which denies the reference to a literal Sabbath observance, it is absurd to assume that the literal Sabbath observance can be separated from the Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:28). Thus the underlying subtext is soteriological (3:14). The soteriological implications are supported by the fact that the believer enters by a faith response (4:3). The exegete has to be careful in resisting the temptation not to make the subtext the main text and thus interpret the solitary rest as an experience of salvation in the present to be followed by the consummation of the divine purpose at the end of time. Cf. Lincoln, *Hebrews*, 94. Others state it very bluntly: “Rest is salvation.” Edgar McKnight and Christopher Church, *Hebrews-James* (Macon, Ga.: Smyth & Helwys Publ., 2004), 110. Yet others interpret the rest in Heb 4:9 as follows: “It is a figurative expression for entry into God’s rest, itself a metaphor of salvation.” Henry Strucke, *Encountering the Rest of God* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 2005), 274. Hebrews 4:10 states that “for the one who entered God’s rest he himself also rested from his works, as God did from his.” This implies that after diligently laboring one rests from his works as God did after his labor during the creation week. Every Sabbath is a rest of grace, a rest of spiritual as well as corporal renewal, a rest from toiling, trials and tribulations of the present age. In this sense “this blissful rest in unbroken fellowship with God is the goal to which His people are urged to press forward.” Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 79. By understanding that Heb 4 does not talk primarily about rest as salvation or a rest connected to Christ but to God because the audience is in danger of neglecting the gatherings (10:25), yet the rest having salvific consequences, the apparent disjunction between the interpretation of Heb

language is not even mentioned in these chapters makes the Amoraic midrashic interpretation rather speculative.

Concluding, I can say that rest in the context is the eternal sabbatical repose, because its predecessor was the Sabbath rest God entered after he finished his works of creation at the end of the first week, not a future rest in the heavenly temple or a metaphysical reality. The time frame mentioned in Heb 3 and 4 seems to place the rest before the parousia rather than afterwards.

The future soteriological interpretation of the rest appears to contradict the multiple temporal designations of Heb 4:7, which make the rest a present existence. Furthermore, rest is never attributed to Jesus' death or resurrection but to God's Sabbath observance. At the same time the soteriological terminology is obviously lacking within the context, something that should at least caution the interpreter.

The Meaning of Rest in Hebrews 4

After setting the time frame for the rest it is imperative to define what the author meant by *κατάπαυσις* and *σαββατισμὸς*. Once the 'when' the believers enter the rest is elucidated, the nature of the rest has to be defined.

Thus Stedman, who regards the rest as a present state enjoyed by believers, identifies it as the rest of "justification and salvation," the rest which ceases to gain

4 as not being soteriological in focus and Heb 10 as speaking of salvation as well as perdition ameliorates the obvious disjunction between the exegetical results of the two chapters.

salvation by works and accepts it as God's gracious gift.¹⁹²

Although Lincoln does not think this is the meaning of the rest in Hebrews, he does draw a similar practical application of Heb 4:1-11: "In fact the Sabbath keeping now demanded is the cessation from reliance on one's own works (Heb 4:9, 10)."¹⁹³ This is a blatant introjection of the old "faith" versus "works" dichotomy into Hebrews.¹⁹⁴

Toussaint insightfully shows the problem with this line of interpretation: "There the writer says that the readers are to cease from works as God did. The clear implication of the faith-rest view is that God's works were bad!"¹⁹⁵ In other words, if the parallel is carried out in 4:10, then God's works, the object of comparison, were also carnal and fleshly strivings.¹⁹⁶

Another prominent interpretation is that the rest is the millennial kingdom. Walter Kaiser championed this view. Beginning with an interpretation of the enthronement psalms (Ps 95 included) as announcements of the eschatological reign of God on this earth, he argues that the author "has no more intention of severing the physical and spiritual aspects of this rest than he has of isolating the promise of the geographical land

¹⁹² He argues: "In verse 10, we learn at last the nature of that rest. It means to cease from one's own work, and so, by implication, to trust in the working of God instead." Ray C. Stedman, *Hebrews* (The IVP New Testament Commentary Series, ed. Grant R. Osborne; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 52, 8-9.

¹⁹³ Lincoln, "Sabbath, Rest, and Eschatology," 215.

¹⁹⁴ DeSilva, "Entering God's Rest," 33, n. 24.

¹⁹⁵ Toussaint, "The Eschatology of the Warning Passages in the Book of Hebrews," 72.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

of Canaan from the spiritual and material aspect of the kingdom of God.”¹⁹⁷

He goes on to link Heb 9:15 and 11:9 (based on the appearance of the word “inheritance” in both) in an attempt to prove that the “promise of an eternal inheritance” to Abraham is the same as “the firm possession of the land” promised not only to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but to all who have received the promise with him.¹⁹⁸

Because of this focus on the geographical land and the possession of the land of Canaan, Kaiser considers the final realization of the rest to be “that millennial reign of the world’s new sabbath.”¹⁹⁹ Stanley Toussaint follows the work of Kaiser, promoting the same reading of rest as the millennium.²⁰⁰

DeSilva counters this view by highlighting the fact that the author of Hebrews does not insist on a millennial kingdom of Christ centered in Jerusalem, but rather calls attention consistently away from any such geographical and nationalistic conception of the believers’ destiny.²⁰¹ “He does not show interest in any inheritance in the material world.”²⁰² Abraham is said to have dwelt in Canaan, the promised land, as a sojourner

¹⁹⁷ Kaiser, “Theology of Rest,” 146.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 149.

²⁰⁰ Toussaint, “The Eschatology of the Warning Passages in the Book of Hebrews,” 74.

²⁰¹ “Certain doctrinal systems (notably dispensationanism) insist upon a renewed rest in Canaan/Palestine and even a millennial kingdom of Christ centered in Jerusalem, but this is not a concept invoked by the author of Hebrews, who, rather, calls attention consistently away from any such geographic and nationalistic conception of the believers’ destiny.” DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude*, 159.

²⁰² DeSilva, “Entering God’s Rest,” 34.

precisely because he knew he was looking not for any earthly region as his abiding dwelling place, but rather for the heavenly homeland (11:13-16).

DeSilva himself defines “entering the rest” as nothing other than entering that divine realm. The divine realm is further defined as: “God’s rest is in the realm beyond ‘this creation,’ as is the city and homeland for which, according to Hebrews, the patriarchs were seeking even as they dwelt in the midst of Canaan.”²⁰³

If the rest is beyond this creation, one has to ask the question: How can it be beyond the realm of this creation when Heb 4:10 states that “the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his work as God did from His”? The rest of the audience is to be analogous (ὡσπερ) with God’s rest.²⁰⁴ The audience is given the chance of participation in the realm of rest. This tension is downplayed by employing “paradoxical” statements.²⁰⁵

Moreover DeSilva emphasizes the fact that the author of Hebrews is concerned throughout the sermon about the “unshakable kingdom,” the “abiding” and “coming city” which exists beyond any earthly locale.²⁰⁶ While this is true and to a certain degree—even the rest as a divine rest offered to the audience that they may participate in it, since it is God’s it is divine because God rested on the first Sabbath of creation—the question still

²⁰³ Ibid., 39.

²⁰⁴ Barrett, “The Eschatology,” 371.

²⁰⁵ DeSilva follows Barrett’s lead when he states: “This is paradoxical, but it is a paradox which Hebrews shares with all primitive Christian eschatology.” Ibid., 372, and DeSilva, “Entering God’s Rest,” 31, n. 19.

²⁰⁶ DeSilva, “Entering God’s Rest,” 39.

remains: How does DeSilva connect Heb 4 with Heb 12, the rest with the unshakable kingdom or the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem? This is something that is not documented in the text. There is no connection between rest and the heavenly city. Wray supports this by claiming: “Whether or not the author of Heb made the connection between REST and a spiritual land, the ‘heavenly city,’ that equation cannot be documented in the text.”²⁰⁷ Furthermore she admits: “Yet no texts in Heb suggest that the author made a connection between REST or even Gods’ REST and the heavenly city.”²⁰⁸ Because the rest is enjoyed by the audience of Hebrews already and the connections between Heb 4 and 12 are baseless, rest cannot be the divine realm beyond this creation.

One of the most significant works on the subject is by O. Hofius, who, based on his study of Jewish apocalyptic, argues that rest must be understood as oriented to the end of the Christian’s journey—the entrance into the heavenly Most Holy Place at the end of the age.²⁰⁹ As noted already, the time frame of Heb 4 eliminates this option of rest being an eternal praise around the throne. Also “we find nothing in Heb to verify any expectation of this author that the end-time activity of the people of God will be eternal praise around the throne,” notes Wray.²¹⁰

Laansma criticizes Hofius for interpreting the rest in terms of apocalyptic

²⁰⁷ Wray, *Rest as a Theological Metaphor*, 91.

²⁰⁸ However, she speaks of a shift from the temporal focus of “today” to a special focus; she speaks of a metamorphosis in the author’s true concern. Yet she admits that this metamorphosis employed by many Hebrews scholars is unwarranted. *Ibid.*, 93.

²⁰⁹ Hofius, *Katapausis*, 53-4. This interpretation of the rest has also been adopted by Hughes, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*.

²¹⁰ Wray, *Rest as a Theological Metaphor*, 82.

parallels while distinguishing himself sharply from Gnosticism and from Philo, but “compares it most closely with 4 Ezra, though the latter neither identifies the resting place with the heavenly temple nor connects it to the creation account.”²¹¹

Attridge blames Hofius for relying too heavily on the reconstruction of an “apocalyptic” understanding of the symbol on 4 *Ezra* 8.52, without paying enough attention to 4 *Ezra* 7.75, 91, 95, all of which portray rest as a status of mortality.²¹² Just as the Gnostic and Philonic parallels should never have been taken as a license to align Heb 3 and 4 with those usages of the motif more than the language allows, so the same is true of apocalyptic parallels, says Laansma.²¹³

Gerd Theissen has responded to Hofius by pointing out the association of rest with God’s rest on the seventh day.²¹⁴ For him as well as for Käsemann, entering into the rest has been seen more in metaphysical terms, as entry into the Gnostic Pleroma.²¹⁵ In

²¹¹ Laansma, ‘*I Will Give You Rest*,’ 343.

²¹² Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 128, n. 71.

²¹³ Laansma, ‘*I Will Give You Rest*,’ 343. For an evaluation by Laansma of Hofius’s position see pp. 343-6.

²¹⁴ Gerd Theissen, *Untersuchungen zum Hebräerbrief* (SNT, no. 2; Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1969), 128.

²¹⁵ Käsemann, *Wandering People of God*, 75. Theissen states: “Als Ergebnis läßt sich festhalten, daß die κατάπαυσις-Speculation des Hb von Traditionen abhängig ist, die gnostischen Character haben. Auf jeden Fall steht der Hb der Philo erscheinenden Interpretation der Ruhe viel näher als der apokalyptischen Interpretation in Barn 15.” Theissen, *Untersuchungen zum Hebräerbrief*, 128. At this point it is noteworthy to mention that there is no need for separation of a gnostic and Philonic understanding of rest as it pertains to the discussion of Heb 3-4. Käsemann had already linked the two, and his heirs (Theissen, Gräßer, and Braun) have continued in this tradition. This is true even of James W. Thompson. Thompson is primarily concerned to draw parallels with Philo,

the evaluation of Theißen’s understanding of the rest idea, Laansma argues that the distinctive features of gnostic dualistic rest speculation are simply not present in or behind Heb 3-4. What is distinctive for Philo’s and Gnosticism’s thought is its essential debt to Pythagorean number speculation and its mythology of the cosmic journey of the soul out of the material realm into the heavenly realm. “None of *this* sort of dualism is present in connection with the *κατάπαυσις*-idea in Heb 3-4.”²¹⁶ Thus, both Laansma and Attridge are viewing an aligned *κατάπαυσις*-idea with Philonic and Gnostic rest-speculation with its underlying cosmological and metaphysical dualism as forced and artificial.²¹⁷ As demonstrated earlier a Jewish tradition of the Hellenistic period is clear for the derivation of the rest idea.

Another rather unique view regarding the rest is that of George Guthrie. He connects the term *κατάπαυσις* with *σαββατισμός* and joins the concept of rest to the concept of Sabbath based on the author’s exegesis of the Old Testament. Then he finds the clue to what the author had in mind with regard to the specific Sabbath in the Pentateuch where the concept of rest is also joined with the Sabbath in Lev 16:29-31 and 23:27, 32.

This shall be a statute to you forever: In the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall deny yourselves, and shall do no work, neither the citizen nor the alien who resides among you. For on this day atonement shall be made for you, to cleanse you from all your sins you shall be clean before the LORD. It is a Sabbath of complete rest to you, and you shall deny yourselves; it is a statute forever.

but his discussion belongs to the interpretive tradition associated with the scholars just mentioned. See Thompson, *Beginnings of Christian Philosophy*, 100-1.

²¹⁶ Laansma, *I Will Give You Rest*, 340.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 341; Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 128.

Now, the tenth day of this seventh month is the day of atonement; it shall be a holy convocation for you: you shall deny yourselves and present the LORD's offering by fire. . . . It shall be to you a Sabbath of complete rest, and you shall deny yourselves; on the ninth day of the month at evening, from evening to evening you shall keep your Sabbath.

In these texts the Sabbath ordinance is associated with the high-priestly offering on the Day of Atonement, an offering vital to the author's discussion in the following chapters (Heb 8:3-10:18). In this interpretation, so Guthrie, "the Sabbath that remains for God's people is a new covenant Day of Atonement Sabbath, in which they are cleansed from their sins."²¹⁸

The definition of rest in Guthrie's understanding is novel but lacks support. First, the word for rest in the LXX of Lev 16:31 is not *κατάπαυσις* but *ἀνάπαυσις*. The Hebrew just reads: !AтB'v; тB;v;. Second, the book of Hebrews speaks about a new covenant (e.g., 8:13) but nowhere does the author speak of a new covenant Day of Atonement. Hebrews merely alludes to the Day of Atonement (5:1; 7:27 et al.), and does not even mention it as such, let alone make a reference to it in Heb 3-4.²¹⁹ This is something Guthrie admits: "It must be admitted, of course, that the author does not make an overt reference to these texts in Leviticus."²²⁰ Thus, such a view is innovative but

²¹⁸ Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 154-5.

²¹⁹ Lane, however, asserts that whenever the designation "high priest" occurs in Hebrews, the Day of Atonement stands in the background. Jewish sources indicate that the high priest was regarded as the fully accredited representative of God before the people on that solemn day (*b.Qidd.* 23b; *Ned.* 35b; *Yoma* 19a-b). Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 75.

²²⁰ Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 154.

lacks the necessary support from the text.²²¹

Similarly John Phillips speaks creatively of the rest the author of Hebrews has in mind as “Calvary rest.”²²² He traces the following line of argument. When Christ died on the cross of Calvary, he cried, “It is finished!” (John 19:30). Jesus had finished the work God gave him to do. Today, God rests in Christ’s finished work and so does the believer. “That is one reason why Christian believers do not keep the Old Testament Sabbath, for our rest is not in a day but in a Person.”²²³

While this line of argument sounds good, it does not take the context of Hebrews into consideration, but rather reads preconceived ideas into it by mentioning Christ’s cry at Calvary. Hebrews 4:10 alludes unmistakably to Gen 2:2. In the present verse, ἀπὸ τῶν ἔργων αὐτοῦ is taken from Gen 2:2 with the omission of πάντων.²²⁴ Pfitzner puts it well when he says “that God’s own resting from the work of creation is an archetype for the final rest promised to Christians.”²²⁵ Attridge supports the idea of the individual entering the rest by imitating God’s rest from his works on the first Sabbath. “A sabbath celebration remains for the people of God, not because the earthly land of Canaan remains to be entered, but because the individual who enters rest does as God did on the

²²¹ This is probably the reason why it has not found followers among Hebrews scholars.

²²² John Phillips, *Exploring Hebrews* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1977), 77. Besides “Calvary rest” Phillips mentions also “creation rest” and the “Canaan rest.”

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 257.

²²⁵ Pfitzner, *Hebrews*, 80.

first Sabbath and rests from works.”²²⁶ It is essential to the thought of Hebrews that God did rest from his works on the first Sabbath (Gen 2:2), and that the rest of the believer is to be analogous with his (ὡσπερ).²²⁷ While John Phillips’s interpretation seems to fit his presuppositions it is ingenious but artificial, lacking textual support.²²⁸

Finally, I will allow Attridge to expose his understanding of the rest. For him, God’s promised rest is not the earthly Canaan but a heavenly reality, which God entered upon the completion of creation (Heb 4:3b-5).²²⁹ To understand the “entry into rest” more precisely, he thinks that a better understanding of soteriological motifs in Hebrews, such as inheritance of promise, glorification, and perfection, is necessary. The Christians’ entry into rest parallels Christ’s entry into the divine presence.²³⁰ Thus for Attridge, “the

²²⁶ Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 131.

²²⁷ Barrett, “The Eschatology,” 371.

²²⁸ To mention just another one of those innovative interpretations of the rest, Kistemaker, after correctly viewing the intended rest of the people of God as a Sabbath rest in direct reference to the creation account of God’s rest on the seventh day, speaks of the Sabbath rest not as merely a day of rest in the sense that it is a cessation of work, but rather a spiritual rest—“a cessation of sinning.” Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 112. While the text mentions ‘believe’ and ‘disobedience’ (4:3, 11) implying cessation of sin, this, however, is not the nature of the rest developed by the author of Hebrews as Kistemaker asserts. Ray Stedman claims that the nature of rest is to trust in the working of God rather than one’s own works. For him truly keeping the Sabbath “is not observing a special day (that is but a shadow of the real sabbath), but sabbath-keeping is achieved when the heart rests on the great promise of God to be working through a believer in the normal affairs of living.” Stedman, *Hebrews*, 58. There are endless possibilities to interpret the rest in Heb 4 if one does not do a thorough exegesis.

²²⁹ Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 123.

²³⁰ DeSilva, following Attridge’s approach in combating Oberholtzer’s identification of rest with the millennial kingdom, employs the “entering” passages to come to the conclusion that “entering the rest” can be nothing else but entering the divine

imagery of rest is best understood as a complex symbol for the whole soteriological process that Hebrews never fully articulates.”²³¹

Furthermore, he insists that in the process of entering the heavenly homeland (11:16), the unshakeable kingdom (12:28), and soteriological imagery of Hebrews, there is a tension between personal and corporate, between realized and future eschatology.²³²

We see that rest cannot be equated with the heavenly homeland or the unshakeable kingdom because the equation remains undocumented within the text. The lack of any explicit reference to Christ as the one who gives rest, but instead retaining the theocentric availability of rest, and the absence of soteriological motifs in Heb 3-4 make the suggestion of Attridge rather unlikely.

Since rest is not defined as justification and salvation, millennial kingdom, divine realm, entering the Most Holy Place, the cosmic pleroma, the new Day of Atonement, or the Calvary rest, nor does the symbolic soteriological process seem to be satisfactory, I

realm. DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude*, 162-3. As already mentioned, if all the entering passages are taken into account it becomes clear that “entering” in Hebrews does not have heaven or the divine realm as its object every time. In Heb 3 the author speaks clearly about “entering” the land of Canaan when he states: “So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief” (3:19; the same object is used in vv. 11 and 18). The author also states that “the high priest enters the Holy Place year after year” (9:25) and Christ himself entered “into the world” (10:5). This shows that the entering passages do not always have heaven or the divine realm as their object but the earthly realm as well. It is noteworthy to observe that at no time in the later chapters of Hebrews is the sanctuary, into which Jesus and the faithful enter, associated with rest.

²³¹ Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 128. Judith Wray calls it an undeveloped theological metaphor: “I conclude that REST remains an undeveloped and unsustainable theological metaphor in the Epistle to the Hebrews because ENTERING INTO THE REST has not become a part of the Christology of the writer of Hebrews.” Wray, *Rest as a Theological Metaphor*, 91.

²³² Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 128.

will propose a different meaning, one that has been often and prematurely dismissed.²³³

The meaning which will be proposed in what follows is rest as a real seventh-day Sabbath observance with the hypothesis in mind that the audience is in danger of abandoning this Sabbath observance. The alternative reading offered here is consistent with the textual evidence and has the advantage of offering an alternative that is cohesive within the epistle itself.

The Seventh-Day Sabbath in Hebrews 4

Hebrews 4 seems to mark a watershed between two phases in the exposition of the quotation from Ps 95. In the first phase (3:12-19) the quotation was viewed in the light of Num 14; attention was concentrated on the past historical situation; and the

²³³ Laansma for example asserts: “Yet if one is going to read between the lines about the assumed practices of Jewish Christians, then one might as well read there the idea that the weekly Sabbath has come to fulfillment in Christ’s salvation and is of no binding significance for the Christian—along with temple worship generally it is obsolete and fading.” Further he contrasts Heb 3-4 to *Barn* 15 and draws the following conclusion: “The passage does not begin with the Sabbath, as one would expect if this was the primary concern, and after referring to Gen 2 the passage closes with a reference back to Ψ 94 [95].” Laansma, *I Will Give You Rest*, 316-7. Lincoln thinks that rest is entered by believing, therefore “the New Covenant people of God discharge their duty of Sabbath observance, according to this writer, by exercising faith.” Lincoln, “Sabbath, Rest, and Eschatology,” 213. Wray believes: “The one reference with the obscure Σαββατισμός in Heb 4:9, ‘a [sabbath rest] remains for the people of God,’ denies any identification with the practice of seventh-day observance.” Wray, *Rest as a Theological Metaphor*, 91. Strucke interprets the Sabbath in Heb 4 in light of Second Temple Judaism as a metaphor for salvation and thinks that this “link may have been present in the minds of the addressees, but no reference to the weekly Sabbath is made.” Strucke, *Encountering the Rest of God*, 281. Girdwood and Verkruyse argue: “Some groups today want to observe a seventh day of rest as a ‘Sabbat.’ The Sabbath was part of the old covenant. It is not in the new covenant.” Girdwood and Verkruyse, *Hebrews*, 138. Karrer doubts that the author of Hebrews knew about the Sabbath in the life of the congregation. “Wir wissen daher nicht, ob er Sabbate im Leben der Gemeinde kennt, sehen aber um so klarer, wie intensive er vom irdischen Leben zum Leben in der größeren, qualitativ schlechterdings überlegenen Ruhe Gottes hin lenkt.” Karrer, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 218.

predominant note was one of warning. In the second phase (4:1-11), the psalm is related to Gen 2:2; attention is concentrated on the application of Scripture to the readers' situation; and the note of promise, present from v. 1, comes to predominate over the warning.²³⁴ The train of thought in this whole midrash on Ps 95 does not progress in a simple linear fashion, but circular, as the author explores the implications of the psalmist's warning and applies that warning in a new way to his own congregation.²³⁵

The emphatic position of φοβηθῶμεν²³⁶ at the beginning of the paragraph (4:1) implies that the attitude toward the word of God in Scripture within the community has not been acceptable.²³⁷ The solemn warning "let us begin to fear" is against "being found" to have come up short,²³⁸ parallel to the final admonition (v. 11) not to "fall,"

²³⁴ Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 237. Cf. Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 97.

²³⁵ Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 124.

²³⁶ The aorist subjunctive can express the coming about of conduct which contrasts with prior conduct; in this case it is ingressive. Cf. Blass and Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament*, 137. Thus one should translate: "Let us begin to fear . . ." (Heb 4:1).

²³⁷ Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 97.

²³⁸ The perfect tense of ὑστερηκέναι "marks not only a present (Rom. iii.23 ὑστεροῦνται) or past defeat (2 Cor. xii. 11 ὑστέρησα) but an abiding failure." Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 93. "Metaphorically speaking," Buchanan adds, "falling behind in religious matters means not being able to fulfill all of the demands or commandments, being negligent, failing to qualify or measure up." Buchanan, *Hebrews*, 68-9. Grässer confirms the thought by saying: „Die als zurückgeblieben Befundenen sind die, die *weggespült* werden (2,1), die die Ausgangslage nicht bis ins Ziel durchhalten (3,14), die mutlos ihr Vertrauen wegwerfen (10, 35) und damit das heil endgültig versäumen.“ Grässer, *Hebr 1-6*, 202.

after the example of the disobedient Israel of old.²³⁹ The aorist infinitive εἰσελθεῖν is epexegetical, or explanatory, of the ἐπαγγελία.²⁴⁰ Εἰσελθεῖν εἰς τὴν κατάπαυσιν αὐτοῦ identifies the content of the promise which “has been left,” hence remains in force.²⁴¹

Impetuous exegetes seem to interpret τὴν κατάπαυσιν αὐτοῦ as eschatological salvation,²⁴² although entering the rest for the exodus generation never meant eschatological salvation nor does the context hint to such an interpretation.²⁴³ The context speaks of a present entering (4:3), a past experience (4:10), and a future effort on the part of the audience to enter (4:11), but not of eschatological salvation. Otherwise how could the community seem to have fallen short now (4:1) if the rest is an eschatological salvation. If the concept is an eschatological salvation, all of the members are short of achieving it at present.²⁴⁴ Also, if Ellingworth is right in assuming that the emphatic position of φοβηθῶμεν implies a struggle with the word of God on the part of the

²³⁹ Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 72. Attridge sees both hortatory subjunctives φοβηθῶμεν οὖν (4:1) and σπουδάσωμεν οὖν (4:11) with a note or warning. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 123, n. 16.

²⁴⁰ Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 93, n. a.

²⁴¹ The distinction between καταλείπω here and ἀπολείπω in vv. 6 and 9 is slight. Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 239, contra Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 92-3.

²⁴² Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 124, n. 20.

²⁴³ However, over the course of time in Second Temple Judaism a distinctly eschatological concept of rest developed. The debate revolved around the question of whether the oath of God, which excluded the desert fathers from entrance into his rest, implied their exclusion from participation in the age to come at the consummation of redemption (*t. Sanh.* 13:10; *b. Sanh.* 110b; *y. Sanh.* 10:29c; *Abot R. Nat.* 36; cf. Hofius, *Katapausis*, 44-7, 52).

²⁴⁴ Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 152.

community, the neglect of Sabbath observance seems to be close at hand (cf. 10:25).

In Heb 4:2 the circular train of thought becomes evident when the author is concerned with both his audience and the wilderness generation. The contrast is made between the two generations.²⁴⁵ The desert generation did not trust the unproved word they heard and were consequently disqualified from entering the Land of Canaan.²⁴⁶ That is why the author uses the rather strange profane expression οὐκ ὠφέλησεν.²⁴⁷ The reason why the spoken word²⁴⁸ did not benefit the exodus generation was because they were not united in faith with those who listened.²⁴⁹ Those whose faith was united with the spoken

²⁴⁵ Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 240.

²⁴⁶ The point the author wants to make is the unity between hearing the word and believing/obeying it, a connection known in primitive Christianity (Gal 3:2, 5; 1 Thess 2:13; Rom 10:14). Weiss, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 278.

²⁴⁷ So Michel, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 193. He ponders about this strange secular expression by saying: “Man würde eigentlich ein Retten (σώζειν) erwarten.” The reason why the author does not use σώζειν either in the case of the exodus generation or in the case of his audience is the fact that he does not deal with eschatological salvation in any of the situations. It seems strange to see the author using such a secular term when one has already decided *a priori* that the rest is an eschatological “*Endvollendung*.” Michel, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 193, 5.

²⁴⁸ In the phrase ὁ λόγος τῆς ἀκοῆς the genitive should be taken as descriptive a genitive as is the case often in Hebrews (cf. 1:3; 3:12; 4:16). Thus, the phrase renders “the word heard.” Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 125.

²⁴⁹ The MSS preserve a bewildering variety of readings. The accusative plural form of συγκεκερασμένους enjoys early and diverse support from both Alexandrian and Western types of text (p¹³ p⁴⁶ A B C D* Ψ 69 81 88 1739 2127 vg^w sy^h bo sa^{3mss} Chr Theodore of Mopsuestia Aug). Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 595. They did not unite in faith (τῇ πίστει) with those who heard the word (ἀκούσασιν). Here we find a reference to Joshua and Caleb. Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 93. It would be possible to construe acceptably the less well attested nominative participle (συγκεκερασμένοι), but it is unnecessary since the best attestation makes good sense. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 125.

word obviously benefited.²⁵⁰

The assertion of the author towards his audience is καὶ γάρ ἐσμεν εὐηγγελισμένοι καθάπερ κάκεῖνοι (vs. 2a) a phrase that reflects the formulation of 2:3-4.²⁵¹ There the writer associates himself with his hearers as those who had come to faith through the preaching of witnesses who had heard the Lord. The correspondence between the exodus generation and the audience of Hebrews is that both were evangelized.²⁵² The difference is that some were not united in faith with the ones who heard, but there were at least two who did this.²⁵³ The evangelizing of the audience also implies τὸ λαβεῖν τὴν ἐπίγνωσιν τῆς ἀληθείας (10:26). The purpose of receiving the knowledge of truth is to sin no longer. The author is concerned with a state of open rebellion against the word of God among his audience similar to that of the exodus generation.²⁵⁴

²⁵⁰ The implied idea is that the benefit they had was the entry into the rest. This is an important thought later in the argument.

²⁵¹ The perfect tense of the participle εὐηγγελισμένοι emphasizes the completeness of the act of preaching, and thus leaves no room for any excuse to the effect that the proclamation had been inadequate or deficient. Fritz Rienecker, *A Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament* (trans. Cleon L. Rogers; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1980), 2:329.

²⁵² The correspondence is expressed by καὶ . . . καθάπερ. Hebrews engages here in subtle paronomasia, paraphrasing ἐπαγγελίας (v. 1) with εὐηγγελισμένοι (v. 2).

²⁵³ The συγκεκρασμένους can be compared with the words of Rabbi Nathan: “He who studies the Torah in his youth—the words of the Torah are absorbed in his blood and come out of his mouth fully spelled out.” *Abot de Rabbi Nathan* 24:5. See also Hermann Leberecht Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch: Die Briefe des Neuen Testaments und die Offenbarung Johannis* (vol. 3; Munich: Beck, 1926), 687.

²⁵⁴ Μὴ συγκεκρασμένους τῇ πίστει (vs. 2) is broadly synonymous with ἀποστῆναι ἀπὸ θεοῦ ζῶντος (3:12). So Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 244. The willful sinning after receiving the knowledge of truth in 10:26a is closely connected with

The failure of the Exodus generation to enter the promised rest does not abrogate the reality and presence of the rest for the audience of the epistle. The presence of this reality is emphasized by placing the present tense verb εἰσερχόμεθα first in the structure of the sentence (4:3).²⁵⁵ The description of the community as οἱ πιστεύσαντες reflects what was already said in vv. 1-2.²⁵⁶ There are those who have united their faith with the word heard and are taking the warning φοβηθῶμεν seriously. These are those who are entering the rest at the present although the exodus generation was prohibited by God's own oath.²⁵⁷

The redefinition of rest takes the form of a *gezera shawa*, an exegetical argument in which a term in one verse of Scripture is interpreted according to its use in another.²⁵⁸

The author prepares for the argument by a surprising comment on Ps 95:11 that the reference to rest occurs “although²⁵⁹ the works were accomplished since the creation of

the warning not to neglect the gatherings in 10:25 because there remains no sacrifice for rebellious sinning (10:26b).

²⁵⁵ Taking the verb as a real present rather than a futuristic present has already been discussed above.

²⁵⁶ The aorist participle of πιστεύσαντες is taken to point back at the moment of open profession on the side of the believers. Hughes, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 158.

²⁵⁷ The construction εἰ with the future indicative (εἰ εἰσελεύσονται) has the force of an emphatic negative assertion here and in v. 5, where the statement is repeated. Blass and Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament*, 237.

²⁵⁸ Under the chapter “Hermeneutics of the Talmud and Midrashim” see the exposition on *Gezerah Shawah* in Hermann Leberecht Strack, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1945), 94. Also Schröger, *Der Verfasser des Hebräerbriefts als Schriftausleger*, 114.

²⁵⁹ The introductory particle καίτοι, which is common in classical and later literary Greek, is used to clarify or strengthen the concessive idea in the participle. Blass

the world” (4:3b).²⁶⁰ The remarks attribute to rest a primordial status. The point is that the rest was the sequel to completed “works.” This is the most natural understanding taking into account the quotation which follows.²⁶¹ After telling his audience that the faithful ones are presently entering the rest, God’s promise (v. 1), and that this promise has become a reality, the author will then answer the next question: What is God’s rest?

The author explains the word rest in his own inimitable way by quoting an expression from Gen 2:2, which he cites in Heb 4:4. The appeal to the rest of the τῆς ἐβδόμης (day) follows naturally from the reference to the completion of God’s works in v. 3.²⁶² In terms of historical-critical exegesis the idea of rest in Ps 95 has nothing in common with this idea of the Sabbath rest in Gen 2:2.²⁶³ However, when the LXX text is compared directly with the argument of Hebrews, a different perspective emerges.

and Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament*, 219. The particle is found in the New Testament only once more in Acts 14:17, again showing contrast.

²⁶⁰ In arguing against an eschatological resting place as a work that God prepared “from the foundation of the world,” Koester claims: “In Hebrews, however, rest is not included among God’s works, but follows upon the completion of Gods’ works.” Koester, *Hebrews*, 271, contra Weiss, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 269. If the rest is an eschatological place or event or a soteriological process with a final consummation, one has to ask himself why the author argues that the works were finished from the foundation of the world pointing back to creation. It would be more natural to argue that the works will be finished with a view into the future to the new creation.

²⁶¹ Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 129. As noted above Ps 95 was connected to Gen 2:2 in a liturgical setting. However, here their relationship is exegetical. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 129, n. 83.

²⁶² The text as quoted agrees substantially with the LXX. It is true that the Hebrew underlying καταπαύω here (τῆς ἐβδόμης) is unrelated to that underlying κατάπαυσις in Ps 95:11 (ἡσυχία), but since the author of Hebrews worked on the basis of the LXX, this consideration is not directly relevant to the understanding of the epistle. Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 248.

Ellingworth aptly notes:

Already within the OT, the psalm itself loosens God's condemnation of the wilderness generation from its original historical setting, and interprets it afresh as a permanent warning. This opens the way for further development in the epistle of the theme of God's rest, first backwards to creation with the help of Gn. 2:2, then forwards to the author's own σήμερον (vv. 6f.).²⁶⁴

Hebrews' use of Gen 2:2 is remarkable for what it does not contain. In contrast to Philo (*Post. Caini* 64; *Leg. All.* 1.6.16),²⁶⁵ there is no speculation on the nature of the κατάπαυσις; it is soberly described in v. 10 in contrast with "works."²⁶⁶ Nor is there any suggestion of the late Jewish and early Christian expectation of a thousand years of rest

²⁶³ Schröger, *Der Verfasser des Hebräerbriefts als Schriftausleger*, 109.

²⁶⁴ Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 248.

²⁶⁵ Williamson analyzes the use of Gen 2:2 within Philo and concludes: "Gen 2:2 is interpreted by Philo to mean that God did not and does not rest. The Writer of Hebrews uses Gen 2.2 with precisely the opposite thought in mind." Williamson, *Philo and Hebrews*, 542. For him the picture of rest described in Hebrews has far more in common with the Old Testament than with Philo. He goes so far as to agree with Barrett's incontrovertible statement on the topic of rest: "Between Philo and Hebrews there is no resemblance at all." Barrett, "The Eschatology," 371, quoted in Williamson, *Philo and Hebrews*, 557. Because rest in Hebrews is understood by many scholars through Philo's interpretation of Gen 2:2, the seventh-day Sabbath escapes their view. Luke T. Johnson, for example, does not make a difference between God's work in the desert, which was seen by the Israelites during the forty years (3:9-10) and God's work of creation. That is the reason why he asks how can God speak of "my rest" when he is still at work in the world. The juxtaposition of authoritative texts, such as Psalms and Genesis, make him conclude that creation is an ongoing activity of the living God revealed in his saving acts otherwise "God is otiose, not truly a living God who continues to 'speak' and 'act,' but a passive retiree." Johnson, *Hebrews*, 128. Hebrews makes a clear distinction between God's work of creation (1:10; 4:3, 4, 10), God's works during the exodus (3:9), the dead works of human beings (6:1; 9:14), and the good works done by the audience and to be continuously done (6:10; 10:24). Kistmaker, however, differentiates between God's continuous working (John 5:17) and his cessation from the works of creation (Kistmaker, *Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 108).

²⁶⁶ Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 249, contra Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 129.

before the end.²⁶⁷ Nor does this passage contain any trace of allegory, even of the restrained type found in 2 Pet 3:8.²⁶⁸

If that is correct we have to interpret the rest from the context of Genesis applied to the present audience of Hebrews. Guthrie correctly remarks that the author wants to emphasize two things by this association of texts: “The ‘rest’ of God is not something of the past (4:6-9), and by its nature it involves the cessation of work (4:10).”²⁶⁹ That makes a Sabbath observance very likely for the audience.²⁷⁰ This is supported by the intricate chiasmic structure (4:3c-4) between the two citations of Ps 95:11/Gen 2:2 and places the key idea of God’s creation rest at the very center:

A κατάπαυσίν μου (3b)

B τῶν ἔργων (3c)

C τῆς ἐβδόμης (4a)

D κατέπαυσεν ὁ θεὸς (4b)

C’ τῇ ἐβδόμῃ (4b)

B’ τῶν ἔργων (4b)

²⁶⁷ Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 74, n. 20. While Bruce defends the identification of the rest of God in Hebrews with a coming millennium he admits that “it involves the importation into the epistle of a concept which in fact is alien to it.” Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 75.

²⁶⁸ So Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 249.

²⁶⁹ Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 152-3.

²⁷⁰ Michel calls the rest of God “ein zeichenhaftes Nichthandeln Gottes.” Michel, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 194. That is what Heb 4:10 explicitly states.

Α' κατάπαυσίν μου (5)²⁷¹

Montefiore believes that “if God rested on the seventh day from all his works, the phrase ‘my rest’ must signify the ‘rest’ which God enjoyed after creating the universe. He offered to share his ‘rest’ with mankind. And therefore the promise of entering the ‘rest’ is still open.”²⁷² The point the author wants to make is that the exodus generation was prohibited from entering the place of rest, the land, because of disobedience and unbelief (3:18, 19). The author’s audience has also the promise to enter (4:1), they have been evangelized like the exodus generation (4:2), and the ones who believe enter the rest (4:3), which for the author’s audience is the rest, the Sabbath rest God entered after the creation week (4:4).²⁷³ This idea is taken up again in 4:6a and 4:9-11.²⁷⁴

In Heb 4:5 the author returns back to Ps 95:11 by pointing to the place of the

²⁷¹ Laansma, *I Will Give You Rest,* 289.

²⁷² Montefiore, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 84. While Montefiore is correct in what he just said he interprets the rest of Ps 95 and Heb 4:9 as heaven, an image of the world to come. *Ibid.*, 85.

²⁷³ The association of κατάπαυσις with σαββατισμός (v. 9) as a Sabbath celebration has had for the listener of Hebrews a huge degree of plausibility. This is confirmed by Hegermann: “Daß Gott dem Menschen an seiner Ruhe Anteil geben will, ist hier durch deren Verbindung mit dem ‚siebenten Tag‘ klar dokumentiert, der ja im nächsten Satz des Genesistextes für die Sabbathruhe des Menschen ‚geheiligt‘ wird. Schon in der Einleitung des Genesistextes ist das Motiv des siebenten Tages akzentuiert; es wird anschließend unterstrichen, indem die dem Menschen zugesagte Ruhe (κατάπαυσις) Gottes als Sabbatfeier (σαββατισμός) bezeichnet wird (9). *Zweifellos hat diese Art Auslegung des Gottesruhertextes in Ps. 95, 11 von Gen. 2, 2b her für den damaligen Hörer einen hohe Grad von Plausibilität*” (emphasis supplied). Hegermann, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 101-2.

²⁷⁴ See Koester, *Hebrews*, 276.

Psalm quotation.²⁷⁵ As already noted, the author does not create a linear argument but he oscillates/alternates in his argument between the exodus generation and his own audience. He reiterates the oath of God about the exodus generation that they would not enter into his rest. Weiss correctly remarks that by the connections between Ps 95:11 and Gen 2:2 the disobedience of the exodus generation is even more amplified and the warning to the addressees given urgency to take advantage of the new chance, of today.²⁷⁶ The recurring warning, “They shall never enter my rest,” ought not to be taken lightly by the reader.

With this warning the reader is introduced to the following résumé. The exegetical inference is drawn. The hypotactic conjunction, ἐπει, introduces the idea of result.²⁷⁷ “Since therefore it remains for some to enter it” (v. 6a),²⁷⁸ the author indicates

²⁷⁵ ἐν τούτῳ, the neuter is referring to the text from the Psalm that he proceeds to cite.

²⁷⁶ “... und anhand der Verbindung von Ps 95,11 mit Gen 2,2 als Gottes eigene Ruhe gekennzeichnet wird, gewinnt der Ungehorsam der Wüstengeneration Israels damals verschärftes Gewicht – damit aber auch die Mahnung an die gegenwärtigen Adressaten des Wortes Gottes, nun endlich das ‘Heute’ des Wortes Gottes und damit die ‚heute‘ noch gewährte Chance des Heils wahrzunehmen.” Weiss, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 280.

²⁷⁷ Black, *It's Still Greek to Me*, 132.

²⁷⁸ A careful reading of the first part of 4:6 shows that the thought expressed is somewhat incomplete. The introductory clause, “since therefore it remains for some to enter it,” needs a concluding remark, perhaps in the form of an exhortation. This exhortation is given in 4:11. “Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest.” John Brown labels Heb 4:6b-10 parenthetical and maintains that the writer chooses this structure “to establish the principle on which this exhortation proceeds.” Brown, *Hebrews*, 207.

that God provided rest not only for himself but also for his people.²⁷⁹ The verb ἀπολείπεται²⁸⁰ means “remains in existence,”²⁸¹ “left behind,”²⁸² “a certainty left,”²⁸³ or “*es bleibt dabei*.”²⁸⁴ Once again the author uses a present tense not a future tense, which makes it clear that he did not have a future eschatological rest in mind. While the rest remains in existence the author applies the warning to be obedient against the background of disobedient Israel (δι’ ἀπειθειαν).²⁸⁵ They were evangelized like the author’s audience (4:2) but failed (6b).²⁸⁶ The rest remains in existence for τῷ λαῷ τοῦ θεοῦ (4:9). However, v. 6 indicates that τινὰς are entering it, implying that disobedience can be a potential threat even today (σήμερον), in the days of Hebrews, and the attainment by the

²⁷⁹ Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 100.

²⁸⁰ Cf. καταλειπομένης in 4:1.

²⁸¹ Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 250.

²⁸² Bauer, *A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 115; Liddell, Scott, and Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 206.

²⁸³ Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 96. Similarly, Hofius translates the verb as “es steht mit Sicherheit zu erwarten.” This rendering is justified by the understanding Hofius gives to the rest namely an eschatological event. Hofius, *Katapausis*, 55.

²⁸⁴ Grässer, *Hebr 1-6*, 212.

²⁸⁵ Cf. ἀπειθήσασιν in 3:18.

²⁸⁶ Unbelief is manifested in disobedience. So Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 97. However, the context indicates that while unbelief leads to disobedience, the end result is a hardened heart (4:7). Continuing rebellion makes the listener dull. There is no suggestion that all in the past failed to live by faith in God’s promises (see ch. 11) but the targeted audience is described in 3:16-19. Matthew J. Marohl correctly remarks that in the context of Heb 3-4 “rest is described as the forthcoming result of continued faithfulness.” Matthew J. Marohl, *Faithfulness and the Purpose of Hebrews: A Social Identity Approach* (Princeton Theological Monograph Series, ed. K. C. Hanson and Charles M. Collier; Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2008), 179.

individual is not assured.²⁸⁷ This fact points to the urgency of the situation. The audience should not follow Israel's example of disobedience (4:11).²⁸⁸

God has given the listener of the sermon another opportunity. However, attention is momentarily drawn in v. 7 to the time at which Ps 95 was written. This is assumed by the author of Hebrews to be the time of David.²⁸⁹ Under these conditions, God designates another day, the "today" (σήμερον) of the psalm, which has already appeared in the first portion of the exposition (3:13) as an appeal to the author's contemporaries.²⁹⁰

By using the indefinite adjective *τινὰ* the author rhetorically prepares the reader for the emphatic *σήμερον*. It is important to notice that the author stresses "the temporal

²⁸⁷ James Thompson, *The Letter to the Hebrews* (The Living Word Commentary, ed. Everett Ferguson; Austin, Tex.: R. B. Sweet, 1971), 65. See also Delitzsch, *Hebrews*, 195.

²⁸⁸ Salevao thinks that the author denounced Judaism, portraying the Jewish cult in a very hostile and negative manner by underlining the rebellious, unbelieving, and disobedient nature of contemporary non-Christian Jews. Salevao, *Legitimation in the Letter to the Hebrews*, 218.

²⁸⁹ ἐν Δαυιδ can mean "in the Psalter" (so Delitzsch, *Hebrews*, 196; Moffatt, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 52) or "through David" (Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 130; Grässer, *Hebr 1-6*, 214) or "in the person of David" (Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 97; Schröger, *Der Verfasser des Hebräerbriefts als Schriftausleger*, 101). In the LXX the psalm bears David's name but not the MT.

²⁹⁰ The present tense of ὀρίζεται is best understood as a historical present since it describes a past event as though it were actually taking place. Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 526; Black, *It's Still Greek to Me*, 107. However, this σήμερον is not just a past day in the exhortation of the psalmist but the author applied it already to his own times (3:13). Grässer remarks: "Über Mose und David reicht somit das Heute des Verheißungsangebotes bis in die neutestamentliche Zeit." Grässer, *Hebr 1-6*, 213. The implied subject of ὀρίζεται is probably God.

rather than the spatial aspect of God’s rest, as sabbath rather than the resting-place.”²⁹¹

This is very important to note since most scholarly discussion focuses on a place rather than on time, something that distracts from the intent of the author.²⁹²

In the immediate context *μετὰ τοσοῦτον χρόνον* implies “after such a long time” from the composition of David.²⁹³ The composition of David was the one *προείρηται*, previously mentioned and quoted in ch. 3. Here in v. 7 the author reiterates the warning of Ps 95, “Today if you hear his voice do not harden your heart.” Again it is important to notice that this is a warning for the today of the author’s contemporaries and not a today of entrance into the rest.²⁹⁴ The author deals with unbelief and disobedience, not with realized eschatology as often assumed.²⁹⁵ The today of Ps 95 was a warning to the generation of David and the today of Hebrews is a warning to his generation.²⁹⁶ Neither

²⁹¹ Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 251.

²⁹² It cannot be denied that the *κατάπαυσις* in Ps 95 is understood as a local as well as in Judaism (*MidrPss* 95). However, with the introduction of Gen 2:2 the author of Hebrews shifts the emphasis in Heb 4 from a locale, the promised land, to a time, the seventh day of creation, the *σαββατισμὸς*.

²⁹³ Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 130, contra Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 252. *Μετά* plus accusative is temporal in Hebrews (cf. 7:28; 8:10; 9:27; 10:15, 16, 26) except 9:3.

²⁹⁴ Contra Johnson, *Hebrews*, 128; Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 110; Girdwood and Verkruyse, *Hebrews*, 137; Delitzsch, *Hebrews*, 196; Riggenbach, 106. Koester understands the “today” as “a time for repentance, faith, and perseverance in the hope of future rest.” Koester, *Hebrews*, 271.

²⁹⁵ See Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 100-1. Montefiore says even that the “rest” of Psalm xcv is to be identified with heaven, and not with entry into the promised land; this time an *a posteriori* argument.” Montefiore, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 84-5.

²⁹⁶ F. F. Bruce calls it an “urgent appeal.” Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 76. The translation of Ps 94:8-11 LXX reads as follows: “Today if you will hear his voice, do

in the psalm nor here do we find a reference that the listeners are invited to enter the rest that very day. On that “today” the people are invited and exhorted not to harden their hearts, not to rebel, not to distrust or disobey God.²⁹⁷ Taking the “today” as the day of entrance into God’s rest is the mistake that is made in Heb 4 too often, and because of it the interpretations are diverse and sometimes often confusing.

With v. 8 the author draws a negative conclusion: “For if Joshua had given them rest, He would not have spoken of another day after these (things).” The use of a second-class conditional clause, also called the contrary-to-the fact condition, the author expresses an unfulfilled condition.²⁹⁸ That means Joshua²⁹⁹ did not give them rest.³⁰⁰ This

not harden your hearts, as in the provocation, according to the day of irritation in the wilderness where your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works. Forty years was I grieved with this generation and said: They always err in their heart and they have not known my ways. So I swore in my wrath: They shall not enter into my rest.” There is nowhere any clue that David promised them another rest. The psalm is an invitation to worship in the first part and a warning of not hardening the heart as the exodus generation did in the later part. A misreading of the psalm as promising another rest leads to misreading Heb 4 as well.

²⁹⁷ DeSilva correctly points out: “This new ‘Today’ and every ‘today’ (‘as long as it is called ‘Today,’ 3:13) is the day for responding to God’s promise, to God’s voice, with trust and obedience. It is the ‘day’ for not hardening one’s heart or allowing distrust to turn one’s heart away from the prize.” DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude*, 154. However correct DeSilva is in this regard, he also falls prey to the general mistake made by almost all commentators in 4:7 when he claims that “David speaks about the possibility of entering the rest after ‘so much time.’” DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude*, 166.

²⁹⁸ Blass and Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament*, 182; Black, *It's Still Greek to Me*, 145.

²⁹⁹ The reference to Joshua, whose name in Greek Ἰησοῦς is the same as that of Jesus (cf. Acts 7:45), has led some scholars to interpret this verse Christologically. Anthony Tyrrell Hanson, *Jesus Christ in the Old Testament* (London: SPCK, 1965), 61. Most modern commentators interpret the verse as a straightforward reference to the historical Joshua. Riggenbach rejects any other interpretation as “*törichte Verwechslung*.” Riggenbach, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 107. Some scholars have inferred a typology

announcement implies for most commentators that until the time of the psalmist no one had entered God's rest.³⁰¹ In other words, the rest to which the psalm referred cannot have been the rest that Joshua provided in the promised land.³⁰² This conclusion further implies that the author of Hebrews contradicts such explicit texts as Josh 1:13; 21:44; 22:4, which mention that God provided them with rest, the land of Canaan on every side just as he had sworn and promised to their ancestors.³⁰³ The logic then of v. 8 is that "another day was later appointed, therefore Joshua did not give them rest. This looks like a *non sequitur*."³⁰⁴

With this reinterpretation the definition of rest in Ps 95 is extended from the land of Canaan to the unshakable kingdom, the divine realm, where even now festal liturgies

between one ἀρχηγός of the old covenant and that of the new. Such a typology was explicitly developed in later Christian literature (*Barn.* 12.8; *Justin Dial.* 24.2; 72.1-2), but such a typology is not exploited here. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 130. The Peshita defines the ambiguous name as: "as the son of Nun."

³⁰⁰ This verse and v. 10 are the crux for a consistent, exegetical, context-related interpretation of the section.

³⁰¹ So Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 101.

³⁰² Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 130; Weiss, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 281; Sturcke, *Encountering the Rest of God*, 274. A further implication is "that the rest that Joshua gave to the people was only penultimate (4:8), foreshadowing ultimate rest." Koester, *Hebrews*, 278. Similarly Delitzsch, *Hebrews*, 196-7. Rest is not something "was geschichtlich erreicht worden ist; sie ist vielmehr Zeichen der Endvollendung." Michel, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 195. It is assumed that if Joshua did not provide an entrance into the rest of God, neither did later leaders up to the time of Christ. So Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 98. For F. F. Bruce it is plain that the rest of v. 8 spoken by Ps 95 is not the earthly Canaan since the land was occupied by the Israelites of the second generation, who entered under the command of Joshua. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 76. Cf. also Johnson, *Hebrews*, 128.

³⁰³ Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 254.

³⁰⁴ Laansma, *'I Will Give You Rest,'* 292.

are performed by angels (12:22-24), a rest that remains for the audience of Hebrews a “future” experience, but for God and the inhabitants of the divine realm it is a present reality.³⁰⁵ Grässer noted the Old Testament instances in which “rest” is associated with the promised land and admitted that these instances prompted the notion that Hebrews accepted them but their “Transponierung zu einer himmlisch-jenseitigen Ruhe stellt ihn doch mehr in den Zusammenhang religiös-philosophischer Speculationen von unzweifelhaft apokalyptisch-gnostischer und alexandrinischer Provenienz.”³⁰⁶

After exposing the logic that leads to this interpretation, it is appropriate to challenge it and expose its shortcomings. The failure implicates at least three areas. The first is that of misreading the Old Testament statements. The second area is a misinterpretation of the context of Heb 3-4, and the third is consequently to distort Heb 4:8.

Starting with the Old Testament the writer clearly appeals to biblical history. God promised rest to the wandering Israelites when Moses declared, “When you cross the Jordan and live in the land which the Lord your God is giving you to inherit, and He gives you rest from all your enemies around you so that you live in security . . .” (Deut 12:10). Kistemaker adds: “This promise was fulfilled literally when Joshua addressed the

³⁰⁵ DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude*, 167. The author “simply assumes (a) that God’s promise of *κατάπαυσις* is spiritual; it was not fulfilled, it was never meant to be fulfilled, in the peaceful settlement of the Hebrews clans in Canaan; (b) as a corollary of this, he assumes that it is eschatological.” Moffatt, *A Critical and Exegetical Epistle to the Hebrews*, 53. For a spiritual understanding of rest see also Kent, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 111, and Hughes, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 160.

³⁰⁶ Grässer, *Der Glaube im Hebräerbrief*, 106. For further discussions of other scholars who also do not understand the rest in terms of Joshua’s conquest, in Ps 95 and

people of the tribes of Reuben and Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh,” quoting Josh 22:4: “And now that the Lord your God has given rest to your brothers, as He spoke to them; therefore turn now and go to your tents, to the land of your possession, which Moses the servant of the Lord gave you beyond the Jordan” (see also Josh 1:13, 15; 21:44; 23:1).³⁰⁷ This shows that the Old Testament is quite clear on the fact that the Israelites entered the rest while entering the Promised Land. Since the statements are so unambiguous Ellingworth states that “the author must have been aware of frequent statements in the OT that God did give his people rest in the time of Joshua, . . . κατέπαυσεν must imply ‘gave them true rest.’”³⁰⁸

Although many scholars are aware of the fact that the OT testifies to the rest of the people of Israel in Canaan, many reject these references and claim that they were “*ohne Belang*” for the author of Hebrews.³⁰⁹ It is exegetically not solid to argue this way if there is no clear evidence within the text for such a postulate. Furthermore, to claim that these promises were literally fulfilled yet did not incorporate this fulfillment into the interpretation of the text makes hardly any sense.³¹⁰

The second area of misinterpretation regards the immediate context of Heb 3. If Heb 4:8 states that Joshua did not give the Israelites rest, the question has to be asked,

Heb 4:8, and consequently spiritualizing the rest as something non-political, non-material, see Buchanan, *Hebrews*, 72-4.

³⁰⁷ Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 111.

³⁰⁸ Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 253.

³⁰⁹ Weiss, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 281.

³¹⁰ See Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 111.

Whom does the author mean? Who were the people who did not receive rest? This question is answered by the author himself. Surprisingly, hardly anybody in interpreting Heb 4:8 refers to Heb 3:17, 18, “And with whom was He angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned *whose bodies fell in the wilderness* [emphasis mine]? And to whom did He swear that they should not enter his rest, but to those who were disobedient?” The author answers the question without any doubt. The ones to whom Joshua did not give the rest were the ones whose bodies fell in the desert.³¹¹ It was the first generation that left Egypt with Moses; because of their disbelief and disobedience when the twelve spies returned, they were not willing to go into Canaan, to enter the rest. God at that time already promised them that their bodies should fall in this wilderness (Num 14:29).³¹² This makes it clear that God kept his promises. First, he brought Israel into the land of rest, but not the first generation (the people over twenty years of age) and, second, he kept his promise that the disobedient generation should die in the wilderness. With this clear explanation by the author himself, the mystery of who was not brought by Joshua into the rest, the Promised Land, is solved and is much more consistent with the OT statements and the context of Heb 3 rather than to retreat to a heavenly-otherworldly rest place in relationship to religious-philosophical speculations of clear apocalyptic-

³¹¹ Buchanan, however, acknowledges that “Joshua had not ‘given them [i.e., the first generation] rest.’” Buchanan, *Hebrews*, 72.

³¹² Cf. τὰ κῶλα ἔπεσεν ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ (Heb 3:17) and ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ ταύτῃ πεσεῖται τὰ κῶλα ὑμῶν (Num 14:29). As noted earlier the author interprets Ps 95 against the background of Num 14. If that is the case, here we have another proof.

gnostic and Alexandrian provenance.³¹³

The third area concerns a false translation of Heb 4:8 given by DeSilva: “If Joshua had given them rest, he [God ‘speaking through David’] would not have spoken concerning another [rest] after these days.”³¹⁴ This translation/interpretation contains several mistakes:

1. Psalm 95:11 does not speak concerning another rest, but about the rest the Exodus generation did not enter. There is no evidence whatsoever about another rest which David promises.³¹⁵

2. ἡμέρας is singular not plural as DeSilva translates it.

3. ἄλλης has its antecedent in ἡμέρας (since the adjective and noun agree in case, number, and gender) not in κατάπαυσις. If ἡμέρας stands in apposition to σήμερον in Heb 4:7³¹⁶ then ἡμέρας in 4:8 should be understood as the “today” of warning, which calls the audience to not harden their heart when they hear the voice of God.

With these corrections in interpreting Heb 4:8 there is no need to resort to all kinds of speculative options in defining rest. Two definitions are given so far for rest, one is rest as the land of Canaan, while the other one is the rest defined as the seventh day of

³¹³ Ellingworth admits that Buchanan’s argument has validity, namely that the contrast between earth and heaven has little place in Heb 3:7-4:13. The contrast is one of generations; in substance, it is between listening, believing, and obeying. Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 254.

³¹⁴ DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude*, 159.

³¹⁵ This, however, is very often assumed.

³¹⁶ Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 251, contra Riggensbach, 106, n. 79.

creation. There is no need to see “three ‘rests’ in [t]his passage.”³¹⁷

Continuing with the exposition of Heb 4, in order to find out the meaning of rest v. 9 draws a bold conclusion: “Therefore there remains a sabbath observance for the people of God.”³¹⁸ The statement is structurally parallel in form to v. 6a:

v. 6a ἀπολείπεται τινὰς εἰσελθεῖν εἰς αὐτήν

v. 9 ἀπολείπεται σαββατισμὸς τῷ λαῷ τοῦ θεοῦ.³¹⁹

The formal parallelism suggests that the substitution of σαββατισμὸς for κατάπαυσις is meant to define more precisely the character of the rest promised to the people of God.³²⁰ If the author simply wished to say that a rest remains for the people of God he could have used κατάπαυσις. From the context, rest could have meant also the promised land.³²¹ The deliberate choice of σαββατισμὸς makes it clear that he intended to

³¹⁷ So DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude*, 159.

³¹⁸ The particle ἄρα is placed at the beginning of the sentence, as in Heb 12:8. In the synoptics it introduces a statement (Matt 7:20) or a question (Matt 19:25, 27). In Paul ἄρα introduces conclusions based either on Scripture (Rom 5:18; 9:16, 18; 10:17; 14:12) or on theological argument (Rom 7:3, 21, 25; 8:1, 12).

³¹⁹ The author identifies his Christian readers as τῷ λαῷ τοῦ θεοῦ or his “house” (3:6).

³²⁰ The τῷ λαῷ τοῦ θεοῦ are the readers of Hebrews. Johnson, *Hebrews*, 129. Grässer identifies the people of God with the μέτοχοι τοῦ Χριστοῦ of 3:14 or the πιστεύσαντες of 4:3. Grässer, *Hebr 1-6*, 216. As observed before, the argument is circular and the author turns from the exodus generation of v. 8 to his contemporary audience. The full term τῷ λαῷ τοῦ θεοῦ appears just once more in 11:25 and there it refers to Moses’ contemporary. For the author of Hebrews there is just one λαὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ. Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 255.

³²¹ Grässer notes: “Die inhaltliche Paralleltät von V 9 zu V 6 läßt keinen Zweifel, daß nicht ein zweites Heilsziel neben der κατάπαυσις benannt, sondern diese präzisiert werden soll.” Grässer, *Hebr 1-6*, 217.

designate more comprehensively Sabbath observance.³²²

Etymologically σαββατισμός derives from the cognate verb σαββατίζειν meaning keeping the Sabbath (Exod 16:30; Lev 23:32; 26:35; 2 Chr 36:21; 2 Macc 6:6).³²³ The usual form σαββατισμός is related to σαββατίζειν in much the same way that βαπτισμός is related to βαπτίζειν or ἑορτασμός to ἑορτάζειν and points to the essential element of the Sabbath, namely its being dedicated to rest.³²⁴ Johnson notes: “The choice of the noun here seems deliberately to evoke the ‘seventh day’ on which God rested (Gen 2:2), as the next verse makes explicit.”³²⁵

The term σαββατισμός also occurs in non-Christian literature in Plutarch, *Superst.* 2 (166), and signifies Sabbath observance.³²⁶ The term appears in a list of superstitious practices: “. . . καταβορβορώσεις σαββατισμούς, ρίψεις ἐπὶ πρόσωπον, αἰσχροὺς προκαθήσεις, ἀλλοκότους προσκυνήσεις” (smearing with mud, wallowing in filth, Sabbath observances, casting oneself down with the face to the ground, disgraceful besieging of the gods, and uncouth prostrations).³²⁷ Plutarch’s essay on superstition is an attempt to

³²² So Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 13, contra Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 101. See also Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 909.

³²³ Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 101; Blass and Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament*, 58-9.

³²⁴ Johnson, *Hebrews*, 129; Delitzsch, *Hebrews*, 197.

³²⁵ Johnson, *Hebrews*, 129.

³²⁶ Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 101.

³²⁷ Bentley’s emendation (Loeb 2.460) of σαββατισμούς to βαπτισμούς, though widely accepted, is unnecessary, since Plutarch knows of and castigates the superstitious Jewish observance of the Sabbath (cf. *Superst.* 8 [196C]). Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 131, n. 3.

prove that superstition is worse than atheism. In this context he condemns the fear of superstitions and enumerates some, somewhat pejoratively, among which is Sabbath observance. The meaning of Sabbath observance, however, is not figurative.

In other documents from the patristic period that are independent of Heb 4:9, the term is also used. In *Dial.* 23.3 Justin the Martyr argues with Trypho against Jewish customs replaced by Christianity: “εἰ γὰρ πρὸ τοῦ Ἀβραὰμ οὐκ ἦν χρεία περιτομῆς οὐδὲ πρὸ Μωυσέως σαββατισμοῦ καὶ ἑορτῶν καὶ προσφορῶν, οὐδὲ νῦν, μετὰ τὸν . . .” (For if there was no need of circumcision before Abraham, or of the observance of a Sabbath, of feasts and sacrifices, before Moses; no more need is there of them now, after that . . .).³²⁸ Justin argues that God justified Abraham while uncircumcised and he received circumcision as a sign, not for righteousness. Again, while the language is not figurative, the tone might be somewhat pejorative, but this is completely normal given the heat of the argument.

The term is also used in Epiphanius, *Pan.* 30.2.2, where Epiphanius argues against Ebion and the Ebionites: “ἐν τῷ νόμῳ τοῦ Ἰουδαϊσμοῦ προσανέχειν κατὰ σαββατισμὸν καὶ κατὰ τὴν περιτομὴν καὶ κατὰ τὰ ἄλλα πάντα ὅσα περ παρά Ἰουδαίοις καὶ Σαμαρείτους ἐπιτελεῖται” (his attachment to Judaism’s Law of the Sabbath, circumcision, and all other Jewish and Samaritan observances). Epiphanius (ca. 315-403) blames the Ebionites for going further than the Jews in their rituals. For example, he added rules in touching a Gentile and that a man must immerse himself in water every

³²⁸ Hofius makes an artificial separation when he claims that Justin means only the observance, the celebration of the Sabbath (“ . . . die Begehung, die Feier des Sabbats . . .”), but not the Sabbath day itself. Hofius, *Katapausis*, 104.

day he has been with a woman. This occurrence shows that σαββατισμὸν means Sabbath observance since the term is used in association with circumcision, touching of Gentiles, and the washing after contact with a woman, rituals performed by Jews and Samaritans.³²⁹

σαββατισμὸν is also found in *Martyrium Petri et Pauli* 1. In this apocryphal document, dating towards the end of the third century C.E., Peter is accused by the Jews of Rome of abrogating Sabbath observance, new moons, and the holidays appointed by the law: “ἀπέκλεισε τὸν σαββατισμὸν καὶ νεομηνίας καὶ τὰς νομίμους ἀργίας” (he has prevented Sabbath observance and new moons, and the holidays appointed by the law). Since the request of the Jews is made to Paul in order to correct Peter, Paul assures the Jews that he is a true Jew, that they have kept the Sabbath, and that God rested on the seventh day.³³⁰

Yet another occurrence is found in *Ap. Const.* 2.36.2. The Apostolic Constitution is a late fourth-century collection of treatises on early Christian discipline, worship, and doctrine, intended to serve as a guide for clergy as well as for laity. In the second book, ch. 36, the author encourages his readers to have the fear of God always before their eyes and to remember the ten commandments of God: “γίνωσκε δημιουργίαν Θεοῦ διάφορον, ἀρχὴν λαβοῦσαν διὰ Χριστοῦ καὶ σαββατιεῖς διὰ τὸν παυσάμενον μὲν τοῦ ποιεῖν, οὐ

³²⁹ Hofius again claims “Sabbatfeier” because of the verb ἐπιτελεῖν (to complete, accomplish, bring about; Heb 9:6 performing rituals or duties).

³³⁰ Καὶ γὰρ ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ σαββάτου κατέπαυσεν ὁ Θεὸς ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν ἔργων αὐτοῦ. *Martyrium Petri et Pauli* 2. For the seventh day the term σαββάτου is used, which seems to indicate that the author differentiated between the Sabbath day and

παυσάμενον δὲ τοῦ προνοεῖν, σαββατισμὸν μελέτης νόμων, οὐ χειρῶν ἀργίαν” (Consider the manifold workmanship of God, which received its beginning through Christ; you shall observe the Sabbath, on account of him who ceased from his work of creation, but ceased not from his work of providence; it is a Sabbath observance for meditation of the law, not for idleness of the hands). The Christians are encouraged to observe the Sabbath not just by resting their hands from labor, but by meditating, thinking about the law (word) of God. Here again the term σαββατισμὸν is used to describe observance of the Sabbath, whereas the term σάββατον is used to define the Sabbath day.³³¹

Origen, who as a Christian theologian and apologist argues against Celsus, a second-century Greek philosopher and opponent of Christianity, employs the term. Celsus accuses the Christians of having the same God and believing the same creation story as the Jews. However, the mistake Celsus makes is that he attributes to God a ἀναπαυσάμενος rest after creating the world. Origen accuses him of using a term that the creation account does not use.³³² Then he states (*Cels.* 5.59): “Περὶ δὲ τῆς κοσμοποιίας καὶ τοῦ μετ’ αὐτὴν ἀπολειπομένου σαββατισμοῦ τῷ λαῷ τοῦ θεοῦ πολλὸς ἂν εἶη καὶ μυστικὸς καὶ βαθὺς καὶ δυσερμήνευτος λόγος” (About the creation of the world and the

Sabbath observance. Thus, Hofius correctly talks about a “Sabbatfeier.” Hofius, *Katapausis*, 105.

³³¹ Cf. *ibid.*

³³² There seems to have been a clear distinction between ἀναπαύω and καταπάύω for the rest God took in the creation account. When the creation account is rehearsed the verb that goes with it to describe the rest God took after he finished the work is καταπάύω. This seems the reason why Hebrews uses καταπάύω and κατάπαυσις, but never ἀναπαύω or ἀναπαυσις. Origen clearly remarks that in Celsus’s elaboration he confuses ἀναπαύω with καταπάύω. That is why he blames him for not obeying (τηρήσας) the Scripture and not understanding (συνιείς) its meaning (Origen, *Cels.* 5.59).

Sabbath observance that remains for the people of God after it, we could say much which is mysterious, profound, and hard to explain). Origen associates first of all the creation week with a Sabbath observance that remains for God's people in defending Christianity against Celsus and, secondly, he makes a clear distinction between the ἀναπαύω versus the καταπαύω rest. This fact concurs well with what we find in the book of Hebrews.

Origen also uses σαββατισμου in *Comm. Jo.* 2.27. Here he discusses the significance of the names of John the Baptist and his parents Zacharias and Elisabeth. Zacharias means “memory” and Elizabeth “oath of God” or a “seventh (ἑβδομον) of God.” Then Origen says: “ἀπὸ Θεοῦ δὲ χάρις ἐκ τῆς περὶ Θεοῦ μνήμης κατὰ τὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ ἡμῶν ὄρκον τὸν περὶ τοὺς πατέρας ἐγεννήθη ὁ Ἰωάννης, ἐτοιμάζων κυρίῳ λαὸν κατεσκευασμένον ἐπὶ τέλει τῆς παλαιᾶς γενομένης διαθήκης, ἣ ἔστι σαββατισμοῦ κορωνίς” (Thus John was born as a gift from God, from the memory of God according to the oath of our God concerning the fathers, to prepare a people being prepared to the Lord at the end of the covenant grown old, which is the bent/end of Sabbath observance).³³³ One has to admit that the meaning of Origen's words is not perfectly clear. What is clear, however, is the fact that he mentions a Sabbath observance connected to the old covenant and furthermore he mentions the Sabbath (σάββατον) of God's rest. He obviously knew of a Sabbath observance and a Sabbath rest.

³³³ The translation offered here differs from the translation given in Origen, *Commentary on the Gospel According to John: Books 1-10* (trans. Ronald E. Heine; FC; ed. Thomas P. Halton; Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1989), 148. Heine translates: “to bring to completion of the old covenant which is the end of the Sabbath observance.” The term κορωνίς means “anything curved” or “bent.” Liddell, Scott, and Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 983. The old covenant to which the relative pronoun ἣ refers is curved or bent.

Continuing with Origen let us look at *Or.* 27.16. In his *Treatise on Prayer*, Origen acknowledges the arrival of the end of ages with Jesus. He then compares the end of ages with the months that complete a year. The end of the present age is followed by the ages to come, in which God will show his riches and bring sinners into order. A human being in his prayer for daily bread is encouraged: “ἵνα σαββατισμὸν τίνᾳ ἁγίου θεωρήσῃ . . .” (in order that he will consider a Sabbath observance). The meaning of Sabbath observance is not very easy to detect.³³⁴ Given the context in which he contrasts the end of ages and the coming ages, it seems that Origen wishes his readers to understand that after this present age, which draws to a close, waits the coming age. Being aware of that, one should think of the end of the week, the end of a month, the end of the years in terms of ages after which will follow the coming age. As with each year the Israelite male (Deut 16:16) had to present himself before God, so the praying Christian should make use of every hour to receive the “daily bread.”³³⁵ The Sabbath observance here seems to detect a time period in the scheme of this age which is preparatory for the age to come.

The next occurrence in Origen comes from *Sel. Exod.* 12.289.7 in which Origen quotes Exod 16:23. He talks about the establishment of a day of Sabbath (σαββάτου) for the just in which the works of the world should be stopped and God be glorified. Then he focuses on the burden of sin that weighs heavy, quoting Ps 38:5 (LXX 37:5), and immediately he adds the next quotation from Heb 4:9: “ἀπολείπεται σαββατισμὸς τῷ λαῷ τοῦ θεοῦ, ἀνάπαυσις ἱερὰ καὶ ἁγία” (there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God,

³³⁴ Jay states that the whole passage is difficult. Origen, *Origen's Treatise on Prayer* (ed. Eric George Jay; London: S.P.C.K., 1954), 182.

³³⁵ For Origen it is the “living bread,” obeying the Lord as teacher (*Or.* 27.6).

a rest sacred and holy). It is not completely clear what Origen meant by this “rest” but from the context it seems that besides a literal Sabbath (σαββάτου) he associates the σαββατισμὸς with a Sabbath observance from one’s works that was set aside, a holy and sacred rest (ἀνάπαυσις).

The last Origen occurrence comes from *Exc. Ps.* 17.144.31. In the context of *Excerpta in Psalmos*, Origen speaks about obtaining righteousness through the law but promptly quotes Gal. 5:4, “You who want to be justified by the law have fallen away from grace.” Then the text reads: Πλὴν ἀφιγμένοι διὰ τῆς πίστεως εἰς τὸν ἐν Χριστῷ νοούμενον σαββατισμὸν, τουτ’ ἐστὶν εἰς ἀργίαν καὶ κατάληξιν τὴν ἐξ ἁμαρτίας, οὐχ ὡς ἀχρηστον παραιτούμεθα τὴν προσωρευθεῖαν τοῦ νόμου ταίδευσιν, χειραγωγούσαν ἡμᾶς εἰς Χριστὸν (On the other hand reaching righteousness through faith in Christ into understanding the Sabbath observance, that is in rest and cessation from sin, we are not considering as useless the precepts of the law as a system of education which are leading us by the hand to Christ). It seems that Origen understands σαββατισμὸν in this context as a rest, a cessation from sin.

In conclusion one can say that σαββατισμὸς is always used literally, although sometimes pejoratively, with the exception of Origen, who uses the term twice figuratively as a time period in the scheme of ages and as a cessation from sin.³³⁶ This

³³⁶ The literal understanding of σαββατισμὸς destroys the artificial construct of Weiss who claims that the term reflects an immovable reality, a ὑπόστασις, a reality which is not immediately apparent, a divine entity, existing since creation, which humans share only by faith and hope (11:1), “but will not enter as long as they remain in the realm of what is shakable.” Weiss, “*Sabbatismos* in the Epistle to the Hebrews,” 686. Hebrews nowhere asserts that the entering into the rest happens in the order of the *hypostatic*. When God had completed his work of creation, he entered into that rest

concurr well with what has been said already, namely that in a second and third stage of using σαββατισμός the term is freed from its theocentricity especially in Origen's allegorical interpretation of Scripture.³³⁷ The meaning of σαββατισμός in its literal use in non-Christian literature, even in later times, is Sabbath observance. Etymologically this conclusion concurs well with what I concluded from the use of the cognate verb σαββατίζειν in the LXX. A figurative/spiritualized definition of σαββατισμός is thus not warranted.

Returning to Heb 4, v. 10 serves to show how this σαββατισμός will be possible. The statement: αὐτὸς κατέπαυσεν ἀπὸ τῶν ἔργων αὐτοῦ ὡς περ ἀπὸ τῶν ἰδίων ὁ θεός “models the rest after the Sabbath of Gen 2:2; it is a ‘rest from works.’”³³⁸ Attridge notes that there is an element of ambiguity about the nature of the works and the one who enters the rest.³³⁹ Considering the fact that the prepositional phrase ἀπὸ τῶν ἔργων αὐτοῦ is a direct quote of Gen 2:2 with the omission of πάντων, it seems not so difficult to understand the analogy of God's works and the believer's works.³⁴⁰ Grässer comments with regard to the works: “Der Mensch ruht von seinen Werken so, wie Gott nach dem Sechstageswerk am siebenten Tage, dem von ihm gesegneten und geheiligten, ruhte (tbv,

blessed and sanctified, not a *hypostatic* reality, but one that was literally penetrated by humans throughout salvation history.

³³⁷ Wray, *Rest as a Theological Metaphor*, 47.

³³⁸ Laansma, *I Will Give You Rest*, 296.

³³⁹ Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 131.

³⁴⁰ The soteriological application of a rest after the toils of this life (so *ibid.*) is creatively artificial. The correspondence between God and human beings is exemplified in the resting from one's works.

Gen 2,2f; Ex 20,8-11).”³⁴¹ This is the reason why Grässer does not see any ambiguity about the nature of the works. Such an analogy appears to be self-explanatory provided that σαββατισμός is not transposed into the metaphysical realm.

Barrett, in comparing the author of Hebrews to Philo and Barnabas, notes that “our rest is to be analogous with his,” something that is grammatically expressed in the comparative conjunction ὡσπερ.³⁴² The comparative conjunction ὡσπερ is used in the book two more times and offers a comparison to Christ, the High Priest who entered the heavenly realm without daily offerings for himself (7:27) nor offered himself often like the earthly high priest (9:25). The comparison is between the exalted Christ and the human high priest. Similarly in 4:10 the comparison is between God and human beings.³⁴³ Johnson remarks: “The ‘sabbath rest’ is therefore to live as God lives.”³⁴⁴ Believers will enjoy a Sabbath rest not by means of sharing in God’s nature, but by themselves (emphatic αὐτοῖς) resting from their works, just as God rested from his works.”³⁴⁵ Zimmermann aptly remarks: “Die Ruhe des Menschen entspricht der Ruhe

³⁴¹ Grässer, *Hebr 1-6*, 220-1. Grässer equates the eschatological Sabbath with the weekly Sabbath.

³⁴² Barrett, “The Eschatology,” 371. Philo said that when God rested he contemplated what he had made. Similarly, the Sabbath rest gives people opportunity for contemplation (*Decalogue*, 97-98).

³⁴³ Hasel states that physical Sabbath-keeping epitomizes cessation from works in commemoration of God’s rest at creation. Gerhard F. Hasel, “Sabbath,” *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 5:856.

³⁴⁴ Johnson, *Hebrews*, 130.

³⁴⁵ Laansma, *I Will Give You Rest*, 296.

Gottes, wie die Werke des Menschen den Werken Gottes entsprechen.”³⁴⁶

The participle εἰσελθῶν is probably best understood of antecedent action since the aorist participle denotes action that takes place before the action of the main verb.³⁴⁷ If the main verb is also aorist, this participle may indicate contemporaneous time.³⁴⁸ The main verb being κατέπαυσεν is in the indicative mood. This aorist verb should be understood as ingressive aorist, emphasizing the beginning of the action rather than a gnomic aorist.³⁴⁹ Accordingly, the verse should read: “For the one who had entered into his rest, he also began to rest from his works.” In other words, once the audience entered the Sabbath rest, the sacred palace of time, they would become imitators of what God did on the first Sabbath of creation.³⁵⁰ By following the intended analogy, a defining of τῶν ἔργων αὐτοῦ seems unnecessary.

With regard to the one who enters the rest, some scholars have implied Jesus to be

³⁴⁶ Zimmermann, *Das Bekenntnis der Hoffnung*, 141.

³⁴⁷ Black, *It's Still Greek to Me*, 124. Contra Ellingworth who understands it as a coincident action. Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 256. Generally speaking, the present participle denotes action taking place at the same time as the action of the main verb (contemporaneous action), not the aorist participle.

³⁴⁸ Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 614.

³⁴⁹ So Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 256. Wallace classifies it among the proleptic futuristic aorists. Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 564. DeSilva realizes the exegetical problem with the aorist verb κατέπαυσεν. He states: “Since the hearers are being urged in the reader’s next breath to ‘strive zealously to enter that rest’ and not fall short of it like the Exodus generation, it would appear strange to use an aorist rather than a present or future tense.” For him the exegetical problem is solved by taking the aorist in a gnomic, general maxim-like sense. DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude*, 167.

³⁵⁰ Cf. Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001), 21.

the subject of εἰσελθῶν and κατέπαυσεν.³⁵¹ The main argument for that is the three other places of Hebrews where the author uses the aorist indicative ‘entered’ concerning Christ’s entry into heaven (6:20; 9:12, 24). However, right within the immediate context the author uses εἰσῆλθον (4:6b) and ἠδυνήθησαν εἰσελθεῖν (3:19) for the wilderness generation. The whole argument is designed to encourage the readers to take their own place in God’s κατὰπαυσις; nowhere else is there a clear reference to Christ’s resting-place.³⁵² If v. 10 is understood christologically, the appeal to the readers in v. 11 is somewhat abrupt.

The pericope began with a hortatory subjunctive (φοβηθῶμεν οὖν; 4:1) and ends with a hortatory subjunctive (Σπουδάσωμεν οὖν; 4:11), and with a note of warning. Σπουδάξω, an intransitive verb, is a characteristic term of Christian paraenesis, associated with holding fast to the tradition, whether doctrinal (2 Tim 2:15; 2 Pet 1:15), ethical (2 Pet 3:14), or both (Eph 4:3; 2 Pet 1:10).³⁵³ The hortatory subjunctive σπουδάσωμεν is followed by a complementary infinitive εἰσελθεῖν (4:11).³⁵⁴ The audience is exhorted to diligently enter that (ἐκείνην) rest, the antecedent being mentioned in v. 10, the rest God

³⁵¹ Cf. Schierse, *Verheissung und Heilsvollendung*, 134-6. For a discussion of arguments in favor of Christ being the implied subject and the counterarguments, see Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 253-5.

³⁵² Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 257. Wray adds: “Even though various descriptions of the Christ and of the ministry/function of the Christ permeate Heb, no explicit identification of the Christ with REST ever appears.” Wray, *Rest as a Theological Metaphor*, 83.

³⁵³ G. Harder, “σπουδάξω κτλ,” *TDNT* 7:565-7; Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 258.

³⁵⁴ Blass and Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament*, 199.

entered after he finished his own works right after the creation week, a rest imitated by the community as well.³⁵⁵ The exhortation to make every effort to enter God’s rest presupposes what was said in v. 3, that God’s rest is entered by the believer at the present time.³⁵⁶ Since the rest, as we have seen above, cannot be a post-eschaton, soteriological, metaphysical celebration in the heavenly sanctuary, the author encourages his audience to enter the Sabbath observance of which God himself is the perfect example and that at the present age.³⁵⁷

Koester aptly remarks that “Hebrews insists that striving characterizes the present (4:11)”³⁵⁸ while Wray states: “The implication, however, is that the REST is presently available and not just reserved as eschatological reward.”³⁵⁹ A similar appeal is given in Heb 10:25, “not forsaking our own gatherings,” but in different words. DeSilva correctly remarks when he asks what such striving looks like in real life: “It involves continuing to

³⁵⁵ The demonstrative pronoun ἐκεῖνην in this context shows backwards reference (4:2; cf. 8:7) suggesting “the rest already mentioned.” Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 258; Blass and Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament*, 151.

³⁵⁶ Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 102.

³⁵⁷ Contra Lane and others who are making the rest a future consummation-rest. Ibid. Cf. Laansma, ‘*I Will Give You Rest*,’ 297, 310. Grässer insightfully notes that “in einem weltläufig werdenden Christentum hat angemahnter Glaubenseifer seinen Platz und viele Möglichkeiten, sich zu bewähren: in der Glaubenslehre (5,11-6,1) und Nächstenliebe (6,10), im Leiden (10,32-34; 12,4f; 13,3), Gottesdienstbesuch (10,5), in Ausdauer (10,36; 12,1.12), Friedfertigkeit (12,14), Bruderliebe und Gastfreundschaft (13,1).” Grässer, *Hebr 1-6*, 222. All of these ministries are to be exercised in the present age; none of them in the age to come. Therefore one can conclude that entering God’s rest, his Sabbath rest is not a post-eschaton event, but a Sabbath rest in the present age.

³⁵⁸ Koester, *Hebrews*, 280.

³⁵⁹ Wray, *Rest as a Theological Metaphor*, 86. She elaborates that the details are unspoken, but the author encourages the people to a faithful living in the present.

identify with the ‘people of God’ through worship (10:25) and acts of love and service.”³⁶⁰ The stern warning in v. 11b recapitulates what was said about the generation of those who died in the desert as the consequence of their disobedience (3:17-18; 4:6).³⁶¹ By such striving the addressees will avoid falling into the same pattern (ὑποδείγματι) as the disobedient Israelites.³⁶² The threat posed in v. 11 is parallel to v. 1 and is motivated by the earnest concern of the author not to imitate the disobedient Israelites but God in entering his rest.

Summarizing vv. 1-11 one can see an alternating reasoning in which the author oscillates between the exodus generation and his own contemporaries. While the rest for the exodus generation was the land of Canaan, the rest for his audience was the Sabbath observance the readers/listeners are in danger of neglecting. This becomes clear when one looks at the progression of the argument. The κατάπαυσις is redefined through a *gezera shawa* connection to the creation week and ultimately to the seventh-day Sabbath. The progression increases in volume by the change of κατάπαυσις to σαββατισμός (v. 9). The preliminary climax is reached in v. 10 when the description of the rest in which the audience entered is portrayed in the exact terms of God’s first Sabbath observance at the end of the creation week on that first Sabbath in primordial history. The *imitatio Dei* is not to be confused with any other rest but God’s. These are the reasons why in v. 11 the

³⁶⁰ DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude*, 168-9.

³⁶¹ The verb πέση alludes to those whose carcasses dropped in the desert (Heb 3:17; Num 14:29, ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ ταύτη πεσεῖται τὰ κώλα).

³⁶² In Hellenistic Greek the ὑπόδειγμα came to have the sense of παράδειγμα. Moffatt, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 54; Montefiore, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 87.

audience is warned of the disobedience of the exodus generation. They missed the promised land because of disobedience, whereas the author's audience is in danger of giving up the Sabbath observance by the same disobedience, expressed in the hardening of hearts towards God's voice.

The following two verses (12-13) bring to a climax the theme of God's speech, which has been a major motif in the opening chapters. Like God, the word of God is alive (ζῶν).³⁶³ The vital power of the word consists in its ability to penetrate the innermost depths of the human being.³⁶⁴

While the reference to ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ, a genitive subjective, is often excerpted to serve as a doctrine of Scripture, in its present context it constitutes a final and climactic warning, providing the ultimate rationale for accepting the author's proposal that "striving to enter God's rest" should occupy the first place in the hearers' mind and lives.³⁶⁵ DeSilva continues to elaborate that the image is crafted to arouse the emotion of fear by creating an impression of imminent harm to befall those unprepared to give an acceptable account.³⁶⁶ The image created by these verses is that of a defendant being

³⁶³ ζῶν is emphatic by position, recalling ἀπὸ θεοῦ ζῶντος (Heb 3:12).

³⁶⁴ Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 134. There are verbal links with Philo, who can, for example, speak of the *Logos* as the "cutter" (*Cherubim* 28 and 31). However, Moffatt says that "our author is using Philonic language rather than Philonic ideas." Moffatt, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 55.

³⁶⁵ Some have taken "the word" to be a metaphor for the Son of God, thus forming an inclusion with Heb 1:1-2, where God spoke through a Son. James Swetman, "Jesus as *λογος* in Hebrews 4:12-13," *Bib* 62 (1981): 214-24. Most find this unlikely since Hebrews does not develop a *logos* Christology like that in John 1:1-18. So Koester, *Hebrews*, 273; Wray, *Rest as a Theological Metaphor*, 88.

³⁶⁶ DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude*, 170.

hauled before a judge, in this case before God's all-piercing scrutiny.³⁶⁷

An impression of total exposure and utter defenselessness in the presence of God is sharpened in v. 13. That nothing in creation is hidden from God's sight was a Jewish commonplace (*Tg. Neof.* Gen 3:9). The utter visibility of all creation to the Creator is emphasized by the choice of words that explicate "made visible." The state of being naked (γυμνός) is, in the biblical tradition, an expression of vulnerability to the other (Gen 2:25; 3:7, 10, 11; 1 Sam 19:24; Job 1:21; Hos 2:3; Ezek 16:7, 22; 23:29). Bruce notes, "It is not surprising, accordingly, that a judicial function is here attributed to the word of God."³⁶⁸ Through the subtle play on words, the author suggests that God's word (*logos*) demands a human account (*logos*).³⁶⁹ The listeners are familiar with the idea of future judgment (9:27; 10:25-27), but the author reminds the audience even in the present age that they are subject to the scrutiny of God. Judgment is another link to ch. 10, which connects ch. 4 to ch. 10 not only semantically or syntactically but also thematically.

The following pericope (14-16) will provide even more links to ch. 10:19 ff., the

³⁶⁷ Hebrews resonates with both Jewish and Greco-Roman cultural knowledge about the exposure of human beings to God's insight (Ps 139:1-4, 11-16, 23-24; *1 Enoch* 9:5; Seneca *Ep.* 83.1-2; Epictetus *Diatr.* 2.14.11, etc.).

³⁶⁸ Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 82.

³⁶⁹ Koester, *Hebrews*, 275. The final clause πρὸς ὃν ἡμῖν ὁ λόγος is ambiguous. It can mean (1) "about whom we speak," or (2) "to whom we must give account." Meaning (2) fits better in a passage concerned with God's judgment. So Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 265. That λόγος here could mean "account" can be seen from the use of it in the parable of the unjust steward, where the man is told ἀπόδος τὸν λόγον τῆς οἰκονομίας σου (Luke 16:2). However, the problem with this translation is that Hebrews actually uses that idiom in 13:17 similarly to Luke 16:2. That is the reason why Johnson objects to the author's subtle manipulation of language by saying: "If the author wanted the present phrase to mean simply 'render an account,' he could have said it more plainly." Johnson, *Hebrews*, 137.

functionally similar pericope to 4:11-16. The paraenetic material begins with: Ἔχοντες οὖν identical to 10:19 Ἔχοντες οὖν.

The participle ἔχοντες can be taken as a causal participle, “since we have.”³⁷⁰

What Christians have is a ἀρχιερέα μέγαν or ἱερέα μέγαν (10:21) who passed through the heavens and is identified as Jesus the Son of God. This is a festive reference to Christ’s exaltation.³⁷¹ With Christ as high priest, compared to those high priests taken from among humans, the audience is exhorted κρατῶμεν τῆς ὁμολογίας. The plea κρατῶμεν τῆς ὁμολογίας (4:14) echoes 10:23 κατέχωμεν τὴν ὁμολογίαν.³⁷²

The ὁμολογία is a distinctly Christian confession in Hebrews and probably “a firmly outlined, liturgically set tradition by which the community must abide.”³⁷³ By referring to the “confession,” using the definite article, and urging listeners to hold fast to

³⁷⁰ Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 266.

³⁷¹ Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 139.

³⁷² Kosmala as well as Westcott differentiate between κρατέω and κατέχω. The first seems to mark the act of grasping and taking possession of that which we attach ourselves, implying an exhortation for the audience (for Kosmala they are Essenes) to take up the Christian confession. The second term seems to describe the holding on to what is already possessed. Kosmala, ed., *Hebräer, Essener, Christen*, 7, 39 n. 5; Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 106. Attridge shows that κρατέω with the genitive can mean “to be in possession of, hold, or maintain” (Cf. Polybius *Hist.* 18.11.8. Josephus *Ant.* 6.6.3 § 116). Even passages like Sir 4:13 and 25:11, mentioned by Kosmala, refer to both “to lay hold of,” but also “holding on” to the wisdom of the Lord. Thus Attridge concludes that κρατῶμεν τῆς ὁμολογίας (4:14) is synonymous with κατέχωμεν τὴν ὁμολογίαν (10:23). Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 139, n. 35. Also Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 267. Grässer confirms it by saying that Hebrews “will konservieren nicht missionieren!” Grässer, *Der Glaube im Hebräerbrief*, 32.

³⁷³ O. Michel, “ὁμολογέω, ὁμολογία, κτλ,” *TDNT* 5:215-16. See also Käsemann, *Wandering People of God*, 173.

it, Hebrews indicates that the confession had content that could be identified.³⁷⁴ What exactly the confession included is open to the speculation of the exegete, but the fact is that the listeners were familiar with a substantial set of teachings (cf. 6:1-2).³⁷⁵ Neufeld assumes that in Hebrews it is not the acknowledgment of the ὁμολογία that is important, “but rather the adherence to the *homologia* already known or expressed.”³⁷⁶ The verbs which accompany the ὁμολογία in this context indicate that the *homologia* has the function of promoting or preserving faithfulness in a time of difficulty and persecution. Christian readers are called upon to cling to their faith as expressed in the ὁμολογία which they once accepted and have openly declared. On the other hand, the apostate is the one who crucifies afresh the Son of God (6:6; cf. 10:29) rather than holding fast to the Christian confession.³⁷⁷

³⁷⁴ Koester, *Hebrews*, 126.

³⁷⁵ Dunn argues that confessions in the early church were brief, simple assertions or slogans (Jesus is the Christ, Jesus is the Son of God, Jesus is Lord). James D. G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament: An Inquiry into the Character of Earliest Christianity* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977), 59. Laub admits that during the time of Hebrews the term ὁμολογία with a definite article and in conjunction with the already mentioned verbs “lassen an eine mehr oder weniger feste Größe denken.” Franz Laub, *Bekennntnis und Auslegung: Die parännetische Funktion der Christologie im Hebräerbrief* (BU, no. 15; ed. Jost Eckert and Josef Hainz; Regensburg: F. Pustet, 1980), 11.

³⁷⁶ Neufeld, *The Earliest Christian Confessions*, 136. What exactly the *Sitz im Leben* of the ὁμολογία in Hebrews was is unknown, but several factors did provoke a confession. Occasions like baptism called for something like a creed. The catechetical instruction preceding baptism was also a moment sympathetic to the shaping of creedal summaries. Preaching, whether against heretics within or pagan foes without, provided another situation propitious to the production of formal confessions. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 13-4.

³⁷⁷ Neufeld, *The Earliest Christian Confessions*, 136.

If what I have concluded before is correct, then the audience of Hebrews seems to be in danger of giving up Sabbath observance. Under such circumstances the hortatory subjunctives σπουδάσωμεν (11), κρατῶμεν (14), and προσερχώμεθα (16) make perfect sense. To be eager to enter that rest, to hold on to the confession, and to approach the throne of God are essentials for not abandoning Sabbath observance. The holding on to the confession in the present age is yet another strong reason why the rest cannot be a post-eschatological rest because at that point in time the holding fast to the confession is obsolete since the faithful ones will be in the kingdom.³⁷⁸

In this pericope the addressees are urged both to hold on (v. 14) and to draw near to God (v. 16). This second action is also prominent in Heb 10:22 as a suitable foil for “shrinking back” or “turning away” (10:38-39).³⁷⁹ The encouragement offered in v. 15 is complemented by an exhortation. The force of the present tense of προσερχώμεθα is “let us again and again draw near to the throne of grace.”³⁸⁰ Scholars agree that the source of the terminology is cultic, since προσέρχομαι in Hebrews is used always in a cultic sense.³⁸¹ Attridge opposes those who deny any interest in the Christian cult by affirming that our author is interested that his addressees maintain their participation in their communal assembly (10:25), but for him a sacramental issue does not seem to be at the

³⁷⁸ Contra Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 103.

³⁷⁹ DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude*, 185.

³⁸⁰ Wolfgang Schenk, "Hebräerbrief 4,14-16: Textlinguistik als Kommentierungsprinzip," *NTS* 26 (1980): 252.

³⁸¹ Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 115; Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 141; Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 269. See the reference of approaching God,

center of concern.³⁸² The call to the addressees to approach τῷ θρόνῳ τῆς χάριτος evokes the Old Testament image of the ark of the covenant in the inner sanctuary where God was to be found (Exod 25:22; Isa 6:1).³⁸³ Hebrews locates the throne of God in heaven (8:1; cf. Isa 66:1). Where then is this approach realized? Grässer answers: “im Gottesdienst der Gemeinde.”³⁸⁴ Furthermore he states: “In der Parallelparänese 10,22-25 heißt es ausdrücklich: Laßt uns hinzutreten, am Bekenntnis festhalten, *indem* wir unsere Versammlung nicht verlassen (10,25). Hier, nicht im privaten Bettkämmerlein, hat das προσέρχασθαι seinen legitimen Ort.”³⁸⁵

The metaphor of approaching the throne of God, a circumlocution for God himself, implies “einen konkreten und realen Vorgang, der sich im Gottesdienst ereignet.”³⁸⁶ If that is the case, then a Sabbath gathering seems to be the most appropriate occasion for the cultic setting. Since the audience is in danger of imitating the exodus generation the author has to urge them to be eager to enter God’s rest. Also because they are in danger of abandoning their former confession, the author has to exhort them to hold on fast to that confession. Ultimately he invites them to approach God in the cultic setting of the Sabbath worship to receive grace and mercy in time of need. This seems to

either generally (11:6), in the OT ritual (10:1; 12:18), or through Christ (7:25; 10:22; 12:22).

³⁸² Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 141.

³⁸³ The genitive noun in the construction τῷ θρόνῳ τῆς χάριτος should be understood as a descriptive genitive, meaning the throne characterized by grace.

³⁸⁴ Grässer, *Der Glaube im Hebräerbrief*, 109.

³⁸⁵ Grässer, *Hebr 1-6*, 259.

³⁸⁶ Michel, *Hebräer*, 209.

be the most natural reading of Heb 3:7-14:16. To understand the σαββατισμός in Heb 4 as a seventh-day Sabbath observance is a very strong possibility. If the book of Hebrews would end with this chapter, this interpretation would just be a possibility. However, the acute problem in ch. 10 makes the issue even more concrete and changes the perception of a possibility to one of probability.

Summary and Conclusion

In this chapter I have analyzed the eleven occurrences of κατάπαυσις in the Septuagint and found out that the term refers to (1) the Promised Land (Deut 12:9), which was not just the resting place for the people of God after their pilgrimage through the desert but as seen from Deut 12:11 also the place chosen by God himself, (2) the temple, the sanctuary, the habitation desired by God (Ps 132:14 [131:14]), and finally (3) the Sabbath rest (Exod 35:2; 2 Macc 15:1).

Further I looked into the use of κατάπαυσις in other Jewish and Christian literature. Barnabas and Athenagoras quoted Isa 66:1, Josephus used the term as a cessation of King Herod's kingship, whereas the use in *Jos. Asen.* is best explained if seen as a state of conversion described in terms of a place compared to a city with indestructible walls and the highest elevation. Philo's interpretation of rest represents a significant departure from the uses of κατάπαυσις in the LXX. Looking further into early Christian literature we could follow the transition from the foundation for most Jewish and Christian theologies of rest beginning with the creation story (Gen 2:2), moving on to a rest available to humanity as a present experience, and lastly rest becoming a part of the Christology of the church in the form of realized eschatology (Matt 11:28-30).

In dealing with Heb 3, the immediate context of our main passage, we have seen

that Heb 3:7-19 is a midrash on Ps 94 (LXX) and that the author's comments are to be understood from the background of Num 14. This leads to the inevitable conclusion that the Scriptures, and not Philo, the Nag Hamadi Documents, or Jewish apocalypticism, are the matrix for Heb 3:7-4:16. We also noticed that in the liturgical welcoming of the Sabbath on Friday night, Jews in the Second Temple period and later used to recite Ps 94 and Gen 2:1-3. Noteworthy also is the fact that the phrase *κατάπαυσις μου* in Ps 94 and in Heb 3 relates to the physical promised land, Canaan. The warning in Heb 3 concerns the danger of "faithlessness," which the author explicitly identifies as the reason why the ancient generation failed to enter the land of promise. The theme of faithfulness/unfaithfulness has thus passed from Moses, Jesus, and the exodus generation to the audience of Hebrews.

As far as the post-parousian eschatology of Heb 3-4 is concerned, we discovered that the time frame places the nature of rest before the parousia. The time frame is bracketed by Heb 3:14 "if we hold secure until the end" and Heb 4:13 "the one to whom we must render an account." The audience of Hebrews lives in the last days, but before the last day. Another view, the exclusive soteriological perspective on Heb 4, has also been rejected because of the multiple temporal designations which exhort the audience to a present goal. Also the soteriological language is absent from Heb 3-4. Finally, rest is never connected to Jesus' death or resurrection but to God's rest after creation. Therefore rest in the context is the sabbatical repose based on the Sabbath rest God entered after finishing his work.

By analyzing different suggestions proposed I concluded that neither rest defined as justification and salvation, millennial kingdom, divine realm, entering the Most High

Place, the cosmic pleroma, the new Day of Atonement, the Calvary rest nor the symbolic soteriological process seem to be satisfactory. Thus the proposed meaning for rest would be a seventh-day Sabbath observance obviously neglected by the audience.

Supporting this view are the following exegetical conclusions that I reached: The emphatic ingressive aorist subjunctive “let us begin to fear” (4:1) implies a struggle with the word of God on the side of the community, something I have identified and will further support in the next chapter as a neglect of Sabbath observance (cf. 10:25). The exhortation to fear “that none of you seem to have fallen short to reach it” supports the view that this rest is not a post-eschaton salvation because otherwise all the members are short of achieving it in the present age. Both the exodus generation and the audience of Hebrews have been evangelized according to v. 2, but it did not benefit (οὐκ ὠφέλησεν) them because they did not unite in faith with those who heard the word. The exchange of the secular term ‘benefit’ rather than ‘saving’ indicates that the author did not deal primarily with salvation in any of the cases. The failure of the Exodus generation to enter the promised rest does not abrogate the present reality of the audience emphasized by placing the present tense verb εἰσερχόμεθα first in the structure of the sentence (4:3). The redefinition of rest through a *gezera shawa* attributes to rest primordial status, the point being that the rest was subsequent to completed “works” after the first creation week on the seventh day. This is expressed by the quotation of Gen 2:2 in Heb 4:4. That means rest involves cessation of work (cf. 4:10). That makes a Sabbath observance necessary for the audience. This is also supported by the chiasmic structure (4:3c-4) which places God’s creation rest at the very center.

In v. 6 the author draws an exegetical inference by stating that it (the rest) remains

in existence for some to enter. The descriptive or iterative present verb ἀπολείπεται makes it clear that the author does not think of the future as a post-eschaton event, otherwise he would have used a future tense, since both of his *Vorlagen* used a future tense. When he quotes Ps 95:11 in v. 5 he uses the future tense for God's oath decreed to the exodus generation (εἰ εἰσελεύσονται). The same future tense is used in Num 14:30 (LXX) εἰ ὑμεῖς εἰσελεύσεσθε εἰς τὴν γῆν which indicates the consistency in Numbers, Psalms, and the quotation in Hebrews and how careful and intentional the author deals with his words when he applies them to his audience. The emphatic σήμερον stresses the temporal rather than the spatial aspect of the rest that the audience is exhorted to enter. However, it does not mean that they are entering in today, as it did not mean for David's contemporary that he was promising them another rest. The new 'today' is the day for responding to God's promise with trust and obedience rather than hardening the hearts.

The next critical issue deals with the view of v. 8 which claims that since Joshua did not give rest to the exodus generation therefore the rest has to be interpreted as something otherworldly of apocalyptic-gnostic and Alexandrian provenance. However, we saw that the Old Testament testifies to the fact that Israel entered the rest. Hebrews 3:17-18 witnesses to the fact that the first generation that left Egypt was not allowed to enter the rest of the promised land. With that in mind the interpretation of rest in terms of an otherworldly concept is obsolete. The rest to which Joshua did not bring the first generation of the exodus Israelites was the promised land. The formal parallelism between v. 6 and v. 9 suggests that σαββατισμός is meant to define more precisely the character of the rest.

Etymologically σαββατισμός derives from σαββατίζειν in much the same way that

βαπτισμός derives from βαπτίζειν. We could hardly claim that we would not know what βαπτισμός means by having a full understanding of what βαπτίζειν means. The analysis of σαββατισμός in non-Christian as well as in Christian literature revealed that it is always used literally, although sometimes pejoratively, with the exception of Origen, who uses the term twice figuratively. This is understandable once Origen's allegorical interpretation of Scripture is taken into consideration.

In v. 10 the author describes how the σαββατισμός will be possible. The one entering it rested (past tense) from his works just as God did rest from his on that first Sabbath in the primeval history of this world. The comparative conjunction does not allow much room for negotiation of who should be imitated.

With v. 11 we reached the three-fold hortatory subjunctives which connect ch. 4 to ch. 10. By such striving the addressees will avoid falling into the same pattern as the Israelites or letting go of their initial confession. The articulate noun 'confession' indicates that there was content attached to it. Holding on to the confession just makes sense if the addressees are in danger of abandoning it. The clear connection to ch. 10:25 shows what the addressees are about to give up. Holding on to the confession also makes sense only in the present time, not after the parousia. The approaching of God's throne is a cultic act and the author is interested in the participation of communal assemblies (10:25). This happens in the worship time on the Sabbath day. These arguments support the conclusion that the danger of giving up or neglecting Sabbath observance is in view in Heb 4, a conclusion that will find additional support in the following chapter.

CHAPTER V

HEBREWS 10:19-31

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate the immediate context of Heb 10:25 in vv. 19-31. Such terms as ἡ ἐπισυναγωγή should be defined, phrases like ἔκουσίως γὰρ ἁμαρτανόντων ἡμῶν need to be explained, and the background for such statements needs to be identified. Finally we have to see how Heb 10:19-26 and 4:11-16 correlate not just on the level of linguistics, syntax, and genre but possibly also at the level of content. In the previous chapters I showed that Heb 4: 11-16 and Heb 10:19-25 are the most striking use of *inclusio* in Hebrews. The two units share structural features, lexical and semantic cohesion, formal constituents, syntactical elements, and the same genre. In the previous chapter, I argued that Heb 4 is not only linguistically tied to Heb 10 but also conceptually, and proposed the thesis that the audience of Hebrews is in danger of abandoning the Sabbath observance. Whether or not this claim of abandonment is true will be the focus of the exegesis in this chapter.

The Context of Hebrews 10:19-25

In Heb 10:19-31 the exhortation falls into two distinct phases, the first fundamentally positive (10:19-25), the second taking the form of a warning (10:26-31).

The positive exhortation (Heb 10:19-25) is closely parallel, as already seen, in its internal structure and phraseology to 4:11-16, a pericope that marked the transition from

the paraenetic exposition of Ps 95 to the renewed development of the theme of the high priest.¹ Here, however, the transition moves in the opposite direction, from the exposition of chs. 7-10 to the paraenesis that dominates the final third of the book.² This transitional section (vv. 19-25) consists of a single complex period that moves from an affirmation of the indicative, the access to God provided by Christ's sacrifice (vv. 19-21), to a series of exhortations (vv. 22-25).³ The first two exhortations, to advance (v. 22) and to hold fast to the confession (v. 23), recall earlier paraenetic material. The final exhortation, to love and to express mutual concern (vv. 24-25), introduces new elements.

The negative warning (10:26-31) uses another "lesser to the greater" argument (vv. 28-29), in which the author declares that the punishment of death decreed by the Torah for those who reject it is less severe than the punishment awaiting those who spurn the Son of God and insult the spirit of grace. The living God is the source of all blessing, but the living God never ceases being fearsome.⁴

As in other paraenetic passages, our author addresses the recipients of his

¹ Nauck, "Zum Aufbau des Hebräerbriefes," 203. DeSilva calls the parallels "an unmistakable echo" of the exhortation in ch. 4. DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude*, 333. For more points of contact between Heb 10:19-31 and other parts of the Epistle see Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 515-6.

² Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 283.

³ A period or a single complex sentence (cf. 19-25) exhibits symmetry of thought. Thus at the beginning of 10:19-25 the author urges the listeners to draw near to God, and at the end he warns that the Day of God is drawing near to them. For more details on *periodos* see Koester, *Hebrews*, 93.

⁴ Johnson, *Hebrews*, 255.

message as ἀδελφοί “brothers and sisters” (v. 19).⁵ In v. 19 (“Ἐχοντες οὖν, ἀδελφοί, παρρησίαν εἰς τὴν εἴσοδον τῶν ἁγίων ἐν τῷ αἵματι Ἰησοῦ, Now because we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus) the focus shifts from the cultic argument the writer has been developing to the response of faith it demands.

The participial phrase ἔχοντες οὖν indicates that the writer is building on what has preceded.⁶ That becomes evident by the use of the inferential conjunction οὖν.⁷ The adverbial participle ἔχοντες has a causal force (“since/because we have . . .”)⁸ and has two complementary objects: παρρησία in v. 19 for access to the heavenly sanctuary and ἱερέα μέγαν in v. 21 in charge of God’s household.⁹

The παρρησία implies a certainty created by Christ’s definitive sacrifice.¹⁰

Objectively, παρρησία is the authorization to enter God’s presence—a contrast to the old

⁵ Although ἀδελφοί is used sparingly in Hebrews, it functions both as a discourse marker, calling attention to a major turn in the argument, and as an appeal to the distinctive solidarity of Christians, within which the warning of vv. 26ff. will be set. Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 517.

⁶ Heb 10:19 employs an inclusive first-person plural “we.” By it the author associates himself with the audience. Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 396.

⁷ See also Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, 282.

⁸ Blass and Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament*, 215-6.

⁹ This is mirrored in 4:14 Ἐχοντες οὖν ἀρχιερέα μέγαν.

¹⁰ In the discussion of the objective vs. the subjective benefits of the confidence/boldness the author of Hebrews mentions, Michel correctly remarks: “das objektive Element schließt das subjektive in sich, nicht aber das subjektive das objektive.” Michel, *Hebräer*, 344.

order, which allowed only the high priest to enter the inner chamber once a year (9:6-7).¹¹ In 3:6 this quality was associated with the hearers' belonging to God's house, and in 4:16 with their approach to the throne of grace. Here boldness enables them to enter the divine presence.¹²

The term εἴσοδος can be used for any sort of opening, as to a temple.¹³ It also can be the act of entering (1 Thess 1:9; Acts 13:24) or a means of access (2 Pet 1:11), but the connection with “way” in Heb 10:20 suggests taking it in the latter sense. Lane states: “It is possible to approach God in worship at the present time because the heavenly high priest has secured εἰς τὴν εἴσοδον τῶν ἁγίων, “free access to the heavenly sanctuary.”¹⁴ What authorizes the Christian to approach God is expressed in the prepositional phrase with the instrumental dative ἐν τῷ αἵματι Ἰησοῦ. Forgiveness produced by the shedding

¹¹ The Christian becomes a “boundary-crosser” like the priests who were boundary-crossers when they entered into the realm of the holy. See Richard D. Nelson, *Raising up a Faithful Priest: Community and Priesthood in Biblical Theology* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993), 83, 144.

¹² Attridge remarks that the word παρρησία in an ancient Jewish context relates especially to approaching God in prayer (cf. Philo *Rer. div. her.* 5, 21; 1 John 3:21; Eph 3:12). In Hebrews it will also have that sense, but will appear in a context of public demonstration of Christian commitment (4:16; 10:19). Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 111-2. These remarks seem to place the exhortation period in the context of a worshiping community, something that will be of use as I progress to establish the context of Heb 10:25.

¹³ See Euripides, *Ion* 104.

¹⁴ Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, 283. For Lane τὰ ἅγια designates the true sanctuary in heaven where Christ appears in the presence of God on behalf of his people (8:1-2; 9:11-12, 24). Dahl understands τὰ ἅγια as the place to approach God, the heavenly sanctuary. Dahl, “A New and Living Way,” 402. DeSilva comprehends τὰ ἅγια as a metonym for God's presence. The author seems to refer to the content or occupant by means of the container or dwelling. DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude*, 336, n. 3.

of that blood is the basis for the Christians' confidence and empowerment for entrance.¹⁵

The blessing of free access to the presence of God, the εἴσοδον to which the relative pronoun ἣν refers back, is further defined by the expression ὁδὸν πρόσφατον καὶ ζῶσαν (v. 20). The way is defined as “new,” a term having both temporal and qualitative nuance.¹⁶ Temporally, the community possesses a way that had not been available previously, a way which he inaugurated through his sacrifice.¹⁷ Qualitatively, it is new because it is life-giving.¹⁸ The paradox arises by the fact that the way of life arises out of Christ's death, a paradox typical of Christian thinking.¹⁹ The inauguration of this new and living way implies a benefit for the audience, something expressed in ἡμῖν, a dative of advantage.²⁰

¹⁵ Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 285.

¹⁶ Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, 283.

¹⁷ The same way that the old covenant had been inaugurated by the blood of animals, so Christ inaugurated the new way. The same verb ἐγκαταλείπω is used of the Sinai covenant (9:18). Thus ἐγκαταλείπω is a cultic term. Montefiore, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 172.

¹⁸ Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 519.

¹⁹ So Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 285.

²⁰ ἐγκαταλείπω means to pave a way that was not accessible until now, a way first opened and inaugurated. The way to God which Jesus trod first and inaugurated is also the way Christians find access to God. The term occurs again in the context of the covenant inauguration which is set in place by death (Heb 9:18). That is the reason why the author of Hebrews mentions that even the first covenant at Sinai was not inaugurated without blood (Exod 24:6-8). See J. Behm, “ἐγκαταλείπω,” *TDNT* 3:455-6. The “new and living way” of approaching God contrasts the description of the old covenant, “obsolete and growing old” (Heb 8:13). As the inauguration of the first covenant was ratified through a covenant sacrifice that cleansed the people through the sprinkling of the blood (Heb 9:15-23), similarly the “new and living way” includes the purification of the believers through the blood of Jesus. But the death of Jesus accomplished what the

The next phrase διὰ τοῦ καταπετάσματος parallels the reference to the sanctuary in the previous verse and continues the cultic imagery.²¹ Some have considered the phrase τοῦτ' ἔστιν τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ as a secondary/later gloss.²² However, there is no reason to do so.²³ The question to be answered is: Do the words τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ refer to τοῦ καταπετάσματος or to ὁδὸν? Linguistically τοῦ καταπετάσματος is closer to τῆς σαρκὸς than to ὁδὸν. It is normal for τοῦτ' ἔστιν to link two items having the same case.²⁴ Word order and the use of the parallel genitive case indicate that “flesh” corresponds to “curtain.” That fits the appositional use of “that is” in 2:14; 7:5; 9:11; 13:15. If the antecedent would be ὁδὸν one should expect to read τὴν σαρκὰ αὐτοῦ.²⁵ The preposition διὰ governs both “curtain” and “flesh.” Some take διὰ in a consistently local sense, so

sacrifices for the first covenant could not do: “access into the presence of God.” Cortez does not see in the “new and living way” an identification of the heavenly sanctuary but asserts that the inauguration of the new covenant implies the inauguration of the heavenly sanctuary. Cf. Felix Cortez, “The Anchor of the Soul That Enters within the Veil”: The Ascension of the ‘Son’ in the Letter to the Hebrews” (Ph.D. diss., Andrews University Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, 2008), 423-4.

²¹ Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 285.

²² Buchanan, *Hebrews*, 168; Hans-Martin Schenke, "Erwägungen Zum Rätsel des Hebräerbriefes," in *Neues Testament und Christliche Existenz: Festschrift für Herbert Braun zum 70. Geburtstag am 4. Mai 1973* (ed. Hans Dieter Betz and Luise Schottroff; Tübingen: Mohr, 1973), 426-7.

²³ Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 519.

²⁴ Joachim Jeremias, “Hebräer 10:20: τοῦτ' ἔστιν τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ,” *ZNW* 62 (1971): 131. For discussion on the syntax, see Norman H. Young, “τοῦτ' ἔστιν τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ (Heb 10:20): Apposition, Dependent or Explicative?” *NTS* 20 (1973): 100-4.

²⁵ Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 519.

that Christ passed through his flesh to enter heaven.²⁶ Alternatively, *διὰ* can function both locally and instrumentally.²⁷ On the level of Levitical practice, the priest passes “through” the curtain, but on the level of Christ’s work, Jesus secured access to God’s presence “by means of” his flesh.²⁸ The parallel between “the blood of Jesus” (v. 19) and “his flesh” (v. 20) suggests that both should be taken instrumentally. This basically means that Christ entered that realm and made it possible for others to do so, not by a heavenly journey through a supernatural veil, but by means of his obedient bodily response to God’s will.²⁹ Thus Jesus procured access to the presence of God by the means of his sacrificed body.

With v. 21 the author introduces the second complementary object that the participle *ἔχοντες* furnishes, namely a *ἱερέα μέγαν*. This short verse is largely a condensation of 4:14-16 (cf. 3:6):

²⁶ Braun, *Hebräer*, 307-8. As far as the image of the veil is concerned, it is clearly local: the high priest passes through the veil.

²⁷ Weiss, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 525. Ellingworth thinks that a second *διὰ* should be understood before *τῆς σαρκός*. He finds support for this addition of a second *διὰ* in manuscript D. Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 520. Note also the use of prepositions in two senses in the same context: 1:7; 5:1; 9:11-12.

²⁸ Koester, *Hebrews*, 443. For more details on the meaning and the background of the “veil” in Heb 10:20 as well as in Heb 6:19-20 see Otfried Hofius, *Der Vorhang vor dem Thron Gottes: Eine exegetisch-religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zu Hebräer 6, 19 f. und 10, 19 f.* (WUNT, no. 14; Tübingen: Mohr, 1972); Roy E. Gane, “Re-opening Katapetasma (“Veil”) in Hebrews 6:19,” *AUSS* 38 (2000): 5-8; Norman H. Young, “Where Jesus Has Gone as a Forerunner on Our Behalf’ (Hebrews 6:20),” *AUSS* 39 (2001): 165-73; Richard M. Davidson, “Christ’s Entry ‘Within the Veil’ in Hebrews 6:19-20: The Old Testament Background,” *AUSS* 39 (2001): 175-90.

²⁹ Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 287.

Heb 4:14	Heb 10:19-21	Heb 3:6
ἔχοντες οὖν	ἔχοντες οὖν	
ἀρχιερέα μέγαν	ιερέα μέγαν	
	ἐπὶ τὸν οἶκον τοῦ θεοῦ	ἐπὶ τὸν οἶκον αὐτοῦ

The expression ἱερέα μέγαν is simply an alternative designation for the high priest ὁ ἱερεὺς ὁ μέγας of Lev 21:10 and Num 35:25, 28 in the LXX.³⁰ As the parallels show, the house of God is not a physical building, but the congregation, the church, the audience: “Christ was faithful over God’s house as a son, and we are his house” (3:6). The ecclesiological significance has been established in ch. 3, but it will be reinforced by the following exhortations.³¹

“Let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water” (v. 22). The triple exhortation (“let us approach,” “let us hold fast,” and “let us consider”) that starts with v. 22 is familiar from the metaphorically applied cultic language in ch. 4. The call to approach (προσερχώμεθα) is directed to the way opened in vv. 19-20 and that access to God made available in Christ (4:16).³² As in the earlier case the verb is derived

³⁰ Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, 285. Contra Ringgenbach who sees a distinction of meaning between ἱερέα μέγαν and ἀρχιερέα μέγαν. The first designation Ringgenbach understands as an allusion to the “Priesterkönig” according to the order of Melchizedek. Ringgenbach, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 316.

³¹ Thus, an interpretation of the image of the “house” simply in terms of a heavenly temple is inadequate as proposed by Delitzsch, *Hebrews*, 174.

³² The exhortation to approach the throne of God is made possible by what the high priest himself accomplished. This is aptly expressed by the phrase “Primat des Indikativs vor dem Imperativ” in Erich Grässer, *Hebr 10,19-13,25, An die Hebräer*

from the cultic sphere but is used in a faith context to refer to the Christian's appropriation of God in a worshipping community (v. 25).³³

The addressees are summoned to come with a true heart (μετὰ ἀληθινῆς καρδίας) suggesting sincerity and loyalty (cf. Isa 38:3; *T. Dan.* 5:3). The semantic opposition to the expression mentioned is found in 3:12 καρδία πονηρὰ ἀπιστίας.³⁴ Further, the approach of the community of believers is characterized by a full assurance of faith (ἐν πληροφορίᾳ πίστεως), which helps define how the heart is to be sincere.

The solid basis for the hortatory subjunctive προσερχώμεθα is an existing relationship with God, which is made explicit by the introduction of the two complementary participial clauses in the perfect tense. The perfect participles (ῥεραντισμένοι . . . καὶ λελουσμένοι) refer to actions which are accomplished and to their lasting effects.³⁵

(EKK, vol. 17; ed. Norbert Brox and others; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1997), 3:21.

³³ The author has taken the cultic term προσέρχεσθαι, which describes the priest as he approached the altar (LXX Lev 9:7; 21:17; 22:3; Num 18:3) and the Israelites/Christian church as they approach God (LXX Exod 16:9; Lev 9:5; Jer 7:16; Sir 1:28; 1 Pet 2:4; Heb 7:25; 10:1) and extended it to a "gottesdienstlichen Hinwendung zum Thron der Gnade." Ibid. For more details on the use of the cultic term προσέρχεσθαι and how Thüssing finds specific referents such as prayer, faith, worship, suffering and the eucharist for these exhortations in vv. 22-25 see Wilhelm Thüssing, "Laßt uns hinzutreten (Hebr 10:22): Zur Frage nach dem Sinn der Kulttheologie im Hebräerbrief," *BZ* (1965): 5-17.

³⁴ Grässer thinks that the author is not describing two moral qualifications but two basic ways of the human existence "gott-los oder gott-zugehörig zu sein." Grässer, *Hebr 10,19-13,25*, 21.

³⁵ Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 523. The imagery of the sprinkled heart and the washed body is an allusion to the consecration of Aaron and his sons to priestly service. When they were installed in their office, they were sprinkled with blood

The first participle (ῥεραντισμένοι) continues the cultic language reminiscent of both the priestly purifications of the old covenant (Exod 29:4; Lev 8:12, 30; 16:4) and the sprinkling associated with the red heifer's ashes (9:13). However, in this context our author seems to be more concerned with the general metaphor of interior purification than with pressing the cultic imagery.³⁶ That the "sprinkling" is a metaphorical one is clear from the object, "hearts," and from the reference to what is cleansed, a "bad conscience," something that could not be cleansed by the old sacrifices (10:2).

In spite of its metaphorical use the "sprinkling" and the "washing" point "almost certainly to Christian baptism, which replaces all previous cleansing rites."³⁷ The strongest evidence for a reference to baptism is the connection between washing here and the confession in v. 23.³⁸ Ephesians 5:26 relates "washing with water" with "the word."³⁹ The washing of the body with water and the purging of the heart are complementary

and their bodies were washed with water (Exod 29:4, 21; Lev 8:6, 30; cf. *Jub.* 21:16; *T. Levi* 9:11; *m. Yoma* 3:3). Both participles have baptism in view, so Dahl, "A New and Living Way," 407.

³⁶ So Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 288.

³⁷ So Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, 287. In the LXX "pure water" is an expression for the water used in ritual purification (Num 5:17; Ezek 36:25), but already in Heb 9:13-14 the writer contrasted the cleansing that affects only the body with the decisive purgation that reaches to the conscience and makes possible the service of God. Philo argues that bodily washing is useless without a clean soul. Philo, *Cher.* 28. Leithart claims that the phrase in Heb 10:22 "our bodies washed with pure water" refers to baptism, and therefore implies in context that baptism initiates one into the Christian priesthood. Peter J. Leithart, "Womb of the World: Baptism and the Priesthood of the New Covenant in Hebrews 10.19-22," *JSNT* 78 (2000): 64.

³⁸ So Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 524.

³⁹ The verb λούω occurs not only in Heb 10:22 in the New Testament (also John 13:10; Acts 9:37; 16:33; 2 Pet 2:22), but the noun λουτρόν appears twice in connection with baptism (Eph 5:26; Titus 3:5).

aspects of Christian conversion.⁴⁰ Michel argues in favor of Christian baptism as follows: “Die Taufe reinigt nicht nur äußerlich, sondern auch innerlich, übertrifft also die verschiedenen Waschungen des Alten Bundes, die nur der σάρξ gelten (9:10).”⁴¹ The Christological soteriological effects of the new covenant include also the forgiveness of sins (10:18).⁴² In such a context the washing of the body with clean water seems to point beyond cultic ceremonial washings performed by the priest before entering the sanctuary.

The next exhortation (v. 23) summons the hearers to “hold fast” (κατέχωμεν) to what they possess.⁴³ The object of the exhortation is the ὁμολογίαν characterized by faith.⁴⁴ The genitive case of τῆς ἐλπίδος is understood by Attridge as a descriptive genitive, therefore the insurgence ‘characterized’ thus we translate as a “confession characterized by hope.”⁴⁵ The descriptive genitive makes more sense than a genitive objective since hope is not the only content of the confession. The content of the confession is Christological (3:1; 4:14) and soteriological (10:23), which gives the

⁴⁰ Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, 211-14.

⁴¹ Michel, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 347. Others who see a reference to baptism in this verse are Moffatt, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 144-5; Lenski, *The Interpretation of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 351; Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 289; Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 250-1; Veronica Koperski, "Hebrews 10:16-25," *Int* 56 (2002): 203; Dahl, “A New and Living Way,” 406-7.

⁴² Therefore comments like “Commentators have been too quick to find in ‘having our bodies washed’ a reference to Christian baptism” (Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 344) are quite unfounded.

⁴³ Cf. 3:6, 14 for κατέχειν and 4:14 for the synonymous term κρατεῖν.

⁴⁴ So Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 289.

confession a hopeful outlook.⁴⁶

By referring to τὴν ὁμολογίαν using the definitive article, and urging listeners to hold fast to it, Hebrews indicates that the confession had content that could be identified and grasped.⁴⁷ The confession might not have included all the teachings known to the listeners (cf. 6:1-2), but followed τὸ λαβεῖν τὴν ἐπίγνωσιν τῆς ἀληθείας (v. 26). Michel thinks that Hebrews means with the ὁμολογία “die in der Gemeinde gültige, geformte Bekenntnisaussage, vielleicht eine katechetische Tradition, in der die Gemeinde ihren Glaubensbesitz zusammenfaßt.”⁴⁸ In the present verse, where the writer is recapitulating rather than developing fresh teaching, there is a likely reference to a summary of Christian faith in the process of becoming a fixed formula.⁴⁹ Confessions briefly stated core beliefs.⁵⁰ Central to the confession was that Jesus is the Son of God.⁵¹

What exactly the *Sitz im Leben* is of the ὁμολογία in Heb 10:23 is unknown, but several factors did provoke a confession. Occasions like baptism called for something

⁴⁵ Contra Michel, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 347, and Grässer, *Hebr 10,19-13,25*, 25 who take the Genitive as a Genitive objective.

⁴⁶ Braun, *Hebräer*, 78.

⁴⁷ Lane argues that the confession in this passage is not a technical term for an objective, traditional confession of faith, as it clearly is in 4:14, but refers more generally to the profession of a definite, distinct belief. Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, 126. Weiss sees the community's confession reinforced by the secondary insertion of ἡμῶν (a² lat sy^P). Weiss, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 530.

⁴⁸ Michel, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 347.

⁴⁹ Laub, *Bekenntnis und Auslegung*, 10-3.

⁵⁰ Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament*, 59.

⁵¹ Koester, *Hebrews*, 126.

like a creed.⁵² The catechetical instruction preceding baptism was also a moment sympathetic to the shaping of creedal summaries. So was the preaching against heretics which provided another situation propitious to the production of formal confessions.⁵³

Within the context of Heb 10:19-31 we see the apostate who crucifies the Son of God (v. 29; cf. 6:6) rather than holding fast to the Christian confession, therefore the uses of the hortatory subjunctive κατέχωμεν τὴν ὁμολογίαν τῆς ἐλπίδος (v. 23). The call to maintain this hopeful confession “unwavering” (ἀκλινη) parallels earlier exhortations to hold certain things “secure.”⁵⁴ Since the noun τὴν ὁμολογίαν is articular and the adjective ἀκλινη is anarthrous and in the Accusative case, the adverbial sense of the adjective is preferable.⁵⁵ Thus the translation: “Let us hold fast the confession characterized by hope without wavering.”

The strongest incentive for fidelity is in the faithfulness of God who does what he

⁵² If v. 22 is an allusion to baptism, as argued, the confession is perfectly in place.

⁵³ Neufeld, *The Earliest Christian Confessions*, 13-4.

⁵⁴ Cf. the synonym βέβαιος 3:14 and 6:19. The adjective is a hapax in the New Testament, but occurs in *4 Macc.* 6.7 and 17.3. In the vocabulary of Philo, ἀκλινη signifies the unchangeable nature of God (*Alleg. Interp.* 2, 83), the immutability of individual human beings like Abraham and Moses (*Abraham*, 170), and the pursuit of truth and philosophy (*Unchangeable*, 22). For more details see Williamson, *Philo and Hebrews*, 31-6.

⁵⁵ So Koester, *Hebrews*, 445; Ceslas Spicq, *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament* (trans. and edited by James D. Ernest; 3 vols.; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994), 1:59. Contra Attridge and Grässer who both take the adjective to describe the confession not the confessor. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 289; Grässer, *Hebr 10, 19-13, 25*, 25. The reasons for taking the adjective adverbially are grammatical and contextual. The following clause defines God as faithful, contrasting him with the audience who is in danger of wavering with regard to the confession. Furthermore the audience is neglecting the gatherings (v. 25), which makes the exhortation all the more forceful “to hold fast the confession of hope without wavering” (v. 23).

has promised. The formulation πιστὸς γὰρ ὁ ἐπαγγειλάμενος is confessional in character.⁵⁶ In v. 23 God and the confessors are juxtaposed. God is portrayed πιστὸς while the factor of uncertainty lies exclusively with the community, in their tendency to waver in their commitment to the gospel (vv. 25, 35-36, 39).

Holding on to the confession is not a matter of grim determination, but of active and mutual commitment and upbuilding.⁵⁷ Grässer sums it up well when he states: “Jede Bekenntnistreue hat den Prüfstein ihrer Echtheit in der Ethik.”⁵⁸ That is the reason why the author utters the final exhortation of the series (v. 24), which is unparalleled in earlier transitional sections, although the call to “consider” has been heard before (Heb 3:1). The common translation of v. 24, “And let us consider how to stimulate/provoke one another to . . .” (NRS, NAS), is to a certain degree a compromise.

The verb κατανοέω has the ordinary sense of “notice,” “observe carefully,” “consider.”⁵⁹ Here, however, the sense is closer to “pay attention to one another,” “put your minds to one another,”⁶⁰ or “laßt uns das Augenmerk richten auf”⁶¹ similar to 3:1. In Heb 3:1 the object was Jesus; here in 10:24 the object is the community.

⁵⁶ Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, 289.

⁵⁷ Johnson, *Hebrews*, 259.

⁵⁸ Grässer, *Hebr 10,19-13,25*, 26. Ellingworth sees in this third exhortation a change in the author’s focus from a vertical to a horizontal dimension of Christian living. Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 526.

⁵⁹ Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 522.

⁶⁰ Johnson, *Hebrews*, 259.

⁶¹ Grässer, *Hebr 10,19-13,25*, 27.

The noun *παροξυσμός* is often used in the LXX (Deut 29:27; Jer 39:37) in a negative way as “irritation,” “indignation” or “exasperation” and the verb can have that meaning too (1 Cor 13:5; Acts 17:16; cf. the noun Acts 15:39).⁶² In secular Greek it can have the sense of “stimulating” or “urging” someone (Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* 6.2.5) or even the positive sense of stimulating someone to good deeds (*Memorabilia* 3.3.13; Josephus, *Ant.* 16.125). Thus, a more literal translation would be: “And let us pay attention to one another in stimulating us to love and good works.”

The phrase “love and good works” appears here for the first time in the composition and is not just simply an emotion, but a tangible expression of caring love as in Heb 6:10.⁶³ The objects of this stimulation, “love and good works,” may be considered as something of a hendiadys; love is not a vague principle, but is shown by the doing of good deeds.⁶⁴ Regardless of how important the care of the individual, religious needs are, it is imperative for the audience to care for the advancement of the fellow Christian. “Gottesdienst ohne Nächstenliebe wäre Heuchelei.”⁶⁵ This is the appeal to a *vita Christiana*. This is “a pastoral epistle to a community whose faith is in danger.”⁶⁶

How to stimulate one another to love and good deeds is described in the

⁶² It is no doubt that for this reason p^{46} reads ἐκ παροξυσμοῦ “away from anger.” F. W. Beare, “The Text of the Epistle to the Hebrews in p^{46} ,” *JBL* 63 (1944): 384.

⁶³ The “good works” can be contrasted to the “dead works” in 6:1; 9:14.

⁶⁴ Johnson, *Hebrews*, 259-60.

⁶⁵ Grässer, *Hebr 10,19-13,25*, 27.

⁶⁶ So Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 526.

participial clauses of v. 25.⁶⁷ The two participial clauses in v. 25 μή ἐγκαταλείποντες τὴν ἐπισυναγωγὴν ἑαυτῶν and ἀλλὰ παρακαλοῦντες supplement the hortatory subjunctive καὶ κατανοῶμεν of v. 24.⁶⁸ While the two participles of v. 22 (ῥεραντισμένοι and λελουσμένοι) supplement the first hortatory subjunctive προσερχώμεθα and are complementary, their counterparts in v. 25 are antithetical. Such an alternation between the negative warning and the positive exhortation has characterized the passage we looked at earlier.⁶⁹

The warning not to forsake (ἐγκαταλείποντες) connotes not just simply neglect, but wrongful abandonment (see the use of the verb in Matt 27:46; 2 Tim 4:10, 16; 2 Cor 4:9; Heb 13:5).⁷⁰ The LXX also portrays this verb by conveying the idea of wrongfully abandoning God and his ways. In 1 Macc 1 the author describes how Antiochus Epiphanes conquered Jerusalem on his way back from Egypt. After a while the king sent his chief tribute collector to Jerusalem, but by deceit he slew the inhabitants of the city so that they abandoned (ἐγκατέλιπον) it (v. 38). As a consequence the sanctuary became

⁶⁷ “One of the most important ways to stir up one another to love” claims Culpepper “is by faithful attendance at worship.” R. Alan Culpepper, “A Superior Faith: Hebrews 10:19-12:2,” *RevExp* 82 (1985): 377.

⁶⁸ Although the participles probably function as adverbial participles with an imperative force. Note the negation μή before ἐγκαταλείποντες. It seems to forbid a habitual action even though a durative force is not required by the use of present participles, but it fits the context. This is supported by the fact that the author describes the neglect of the gatherings as a ἔθος. Wallace translates v. 25a “not [habitually] forsaking our assembly, as is the habit of some.” Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 522.

⁶⁹ In Heb 4:1 (“let us fear”) and 4:11 (“let us therefore be diligent”).

⁷⁰ Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 290. See also Josephus, *Life* 205 (“not to abandon them to the ruin”), Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* 8.8.4 (Rheomithres violated his oath to the king and abandoned his family as hostages in Egypt), and Plato, *Symposium* 179A.

desolate, the feast became a morning, and the Sabbaths a reproach (v.39). Because of the king's pressure to abandon their way of worshiping God, some of the Jews sacrificed to idols and profaned the Sabbath. This enforcement on the Jews was done with the purpose of forgetting the law and ordinances of God (vv. 42-49). Because the verb ἐγκαταλείπω is so strongly associated with a wrongful abandonment, the author of Hebrews warns the audience not to give up their assemblies.⁷¹ The abandonment of their assemblies “expresses infidelity and apostasy.”⁷² This understanding of wrongful abandonment of their gatherings makes it clear that the assemblies were not gatherings for meals or simply social gatherings.

The parenthetical remark that such an abandonment is a custom (ἔθος) of some in the community “is a strong indication of the concrete problem that Hebrews as a whole is designed to address.”⁷³ Some (τισίιν)⁷⁴ of the members of the community have fallen prey

⁷¹ The object of this abandonment, the ἐπισυναγωγή, will be treated separately.

⁷² So Johnson, *Hebrews*, 261. Lane thinks that this kind of behavior “was a prelude to apostasy on the part of those who were separating themselves from the assembly.” Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, 290. Furthermore Williamson asserts: “The ‘neglect’ of the ‘great salvation’ (2.3), like the neglect of meeting together (10.25), which he writes about in his ‘word of exhortation’, is that degree of neglect which can only be construed as apostasy, or as something so very near to it as to be in imminent danger of merging into it. That, for the Writer, is the unforgivable sin, the only one.” Williamson, *Philo and Hebrews*, 261. Thompson writes: “The possibility of apostasy has led the author already to call for this mutual exhortation [ἀλλὰ παρακαλοῦντες].” Thompson, *Beginnings of Christian Philosophy*, 34.

⁷³ Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 290. Johnson goes so far as to suggest that this verse (v. 25) is one of the keys to a possible reconstruction of the rhetorical situation faced by the author. “A sense of discouragement and lack of hope has a concrete expression in a distancing of the self from the community, resulting in a still more perilous condition for the remaining members.” Johnson, *Hebrews*, 261. The *habitus* may explain the regularity of such a behavior.

to this negative habit.⁷⁵ Some have considered that the cost of holding onto God's promises is greater than those promises are worth.⁷⁶ Listeners were to exhort (παρακαλοῦντες) each other (3:13; 10:25) just as the author exhorted them (13:19, 22). The exhortation helps to combat spiritual lassitude in some of the readers (5:11; 6:12). In a positive sense exhortation means encouraging people to persevere, and in a negative sense the exhortation warns about the consequences of disobedience, especially given the coming "day" of judgment.⁷⁷

The urgency is highlighted by the eschatological notice. The ἡμέρα connotes

⁷⁴ The Dative case with the copula, which is omitted, is a common idiom for "have": "as some have a custom," i.e., as some are doing. "This is more than just carelessness; it is the beginning of apostasy." Lenski, *The Interpretation of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 354.

⁷⁵ However, the reasons for the neglect not specifically addressed by the author have remained the speculation of the exegetes. For a list of those reasons (competitive congregations; relapsing into the Synagogue; cancelation of the Eucharist; etc.) see Grässer, *Hebr 10,19-13,25*, 30. Harnack comments: "At first and indeed always there were naturally some people who imagined that one could secure the holy contents and blessings of Christianity as one did those of Isis or the Magna Mater, and then withdraw. Or, in cases where people were not so shortsighted, levity, laziness, or weariness were often enough to detach a person from the society. A vainglorious sense of superiority and of being able to dispense with the spiritual aid of the society was also the means of inducing many to withdraw from fellowship and from the common worship. Many, too, were actuated by fear of the authorities; they shunned attendance at public worship, to avoid being recognized as Christians." Adolf von Harnack, *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries* (trans. J. Moffatt; 2 vols., 2d enl. and rev. ed.; London: Williams and Norgate, 1908), 1:343-4.

⁷⁶ DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude*, 342. The duty of attendance at public worship, regardless of whether it was the Sabbath day or annual feast, was emphasized by Philo, *De Migr. Abr.* 91-92.

⁷⁷ Koester, *Hebrews*, 446.

divine presence and judgments.⁷⁸ Among early Christians it was called “the day” (1 Thess 5:4; 1 Cor 3:13), the day of God (2 Pet 3:12; Rev 16:14), the day of the Lord (1 Cor 1:8; 5:5; 2 Cor 1:14; 1 Thess 5:2; 2 Thess 2:2; 2 Pet 3:10), the day of judgment (2 Pet 2:9; 1 John 4:17; Jude 6), and the day of wrath (Rom 2:5). Like other eschatological realities, it was felt to be fast approaching (ἐγγίζουσαν).

Summarizing the findings of vv. 19-25 we can see that the positive exhortation seems to take place in a worship setting. This is important since we postulated an abandonment of Sabbath observance. The believers have an open entrance by the blood of Jesus to the sanctuary, which he as their high priest just inaugurated since it is still called new. The audience is encouraged to approach God, to hold on to the confession, and to pay attention to each other with how to stimulate love and good deeds. The approaching happens with a clean heart, obviously a reference to baptism, the holding on to the confession is supposed to happen without wavering, and the attention that one should pay to the other should not materialize in abandoning the gathering, but in love and good deeds since the day of judgment is soon to draw near. The holding on to the confession does not make much sense if there is not a tendency on the side of the audience to give it up, to neglect it, to abandon it. Therefore the congregation is in need of encouraging each other not to neglect the gathering since they once confessed

⁷⁸ Davidson asserts that τὴν ἡμέραν is a reference to the Day of Atonement and sees it confirmed by the following vv. 26-31 and the usages of the term “the day” (*yoma*) for Day of Atonement in the Mishna. Davidson, “Christ's Entry ‘Within the Veil’ in Hebrews 6:19-20,” 188. Gleason believes that the “drawing near of the day” alludes to the coming Roman invasion of Palestine that would soon bring an end to the Temple sacrifices and the destruction of Jerusalem. Randall C. Gleason, “The Eschatology of the Warning in Hebrews 10:26-31,” *TynBul* 53 (2002): 99, 120.

unwavering loyalty.

Note on the Meaning of ἐπισυναγωγή (10:25)

The object of this wrongful abandonment is “the assembly” (τὴν ἐπισυναγωγὴν), a term that can refer to the act of assembly or the corporate body so formed.⁷⁹ This is a very rare word in secular Greek. On a stele from the island Syme off the Carian coast, in a resolution honoring a worthy citizen, the following inscription is found: τὰς δὲ ἐπισυναγωγὰς τοῦ διαφόρου γινομένηας πολυχρονίου (“but the collecting of the disputed charges took a long time”).⁸⁰ The only occurrence of the noun in the LXX is in 2 Macc 2:7, which speaks of the gathering together of the Diaspora people (ἐπισυναγωγὴν τοῦ λαοῦ). In the New Testament the only other occurrence is found in 2 Thess 2:1, where the noun is used to describe the assembling or gathering together to meet the Lord at his parousia. This is supported by the fact that ἐπισυναγωγή and παρουσία are in close proximity and close relationship since the two nouns share the same article (Ἐρωτῶμεν δὲ ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί, ὑπὲρ τῆς παρουσίας τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ ἡμῶν ἐπισυναγωγῆς ἐπ’ αὐτόν; “But we request you, brothers, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering with Him”). It is obvious that this is not a normal gathering but of being united with the κυρίως.

⁷⁹ Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 290.

⁸⁰ Quoted in Wolfgang Schrage, “ἐπισυναγωγή,” *TDNT* 7 (1971): 841. The translation is mine. The writing is considered to be not later than 100 B.C., so that the inscription is probably older than the second Book of Maccabees. Adolf Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East: The New Testament Illustrated by Recently Discovered Texts of the Graeco-Roman World* (trans. Lionel R. M. Strachan; new and completely rev. with

The meaning of ἐπισυναγωγή in Heb 10:25 is different from that of the profane Greek, the LXX or even 2 Thess 2:1. Thus, the context of Hebrews has to define the meaning. Schrage thinks that it “is most natural to think of the congregation gathered for worship. Ἐγκαταλείπω ‘to leave in the lurch’ is in agreement with this, as is the singular ἐπισυναγωγή.”⁸¹ This is based on the meaning of ἐγκαταλείπω which, as will be argued later, denotes a morally wrongful abandonment. At the same time the cultic character of ἐπισυναγωγή cannot be denied. Schrage argues that the noun has indeed a cultic character.⁸² It is likely, according to Attridge, that the author has particularly in mind the assembly of his addressees as a worshiping community.⁸³

In the patristic literature the meaning which dominates is that of assembling or gathering of Christian congregations.⁸⁴ Eusebius describes the favor the church enjoyed by all the governors and procurators before the persecution of his time. In this context he speaks of the multitudes of the “gatherings” (τὰς μυριάδους ἐκείνας ἐπισυναγωγὰς) in every city, and the glorious concourses in the houses of prayer. The gatherings in Eusebius are associated with the “concourses in the houses of prayer” (ἐν τοῖς

eighty-five illustrations from the latest German ed.; London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1927), 103.

⁸¹ Schrage, “ἐπισυναγωγή,” *TDNT* 7:842.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 843.

⁸³ Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 290. Also Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 382. Witherington thinks that from the etymology of the term the author might refer to a local meeting—a meeting “at” a certain place, in view of the prefix ἐπί. Ben Witherington, *Letters and Homilies for Jewish Christians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on Hebrews, James and Jude* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2007), 288.

⁸⁴ Lampe, ed., *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, 536.

προσευκτηρίοις συνδρομάς) thus, Christian worship gatherings.⁸⁵

The historic occasion of Heb 10:25 is obscure. It has been suggested that Christians were attending Jewish synagogues.⁸⁶ Others have proposed a partaking in the mystery cults.⁸⁷ Yet others think that the background might be a “typische Erscheinung einer Christlichkeit, die ihre erste Begeisterung verloren hat.”⁸⁸

With regard to the time of the gathering Spicq comments that in Heb 10:25 ἐπισυναγωγή “is a religious term, designating not a ‘grouping together’ or a society of any sort, but a meeting for worship, at more or less regular intervals.”⁸⁹ The intervals suggested range from daily gatherings, based on the parallel passage in 3:13,⁹⁰ to weekly gatherings on the first day,⁹¹ and Sabbath gatherings.⁹²

⁸⁵ Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 8.1.5.

⁸⁶ Manson, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 69.

⁸⁷ Moffatt, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 148.

⁸⁸ Dibelius, “Der Himmlische Kultus nach dem Hebräerbrief,” 161. Thomas Aquinas gave three general reasons for the forsaking of the gatherings: First, by apostatizing from the faith on account of persecution. Second, by evil prelates who leave the sheep in danger, and third, by pride. Aquinas, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 214. For further suggestions see Hughes, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 417-8.

⁸⁹ C. Spicq, “ἐπισυναγωγή,” *TLNT* 2:64.

⁹⁰ Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, 290.

⁹¹ Hughes, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 418. Cf. Acts 20:7; 1 Cor 16:2.

⁹² Gabriella Gelardini, “Hebrews, an Ancient Synagogue Homily for *Tisha Be-Av*: Its Function, Its Basis, Its Theological Interpretation,” in *Hebrews: Contemporary Methods, New Insights* (ed. Gabriella Gelardini; BIS, no. 75; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 116.

The first suggestion made by Lane of the daily gatherings has some problems because he seems to overlook that Heb 3:13 does not speak of daily gatherings but of a present encouragement, which echoes the words of Ps 94, indicating that this exhortation should take place each day, that is, while the “today” (σήμερον) of the Scripture is spoken.⁹³ That means that as long as there still is a today—a chance of listening to the word of God as a present reality—there still is a chance for obeying. The stress lies on the present opportunity that is available rather than a daily communal setting for mutual encouragement. Ellingworth in understanding σήμερον points to Heb 4:7 and states “that it is a period, not literally a particular day.”⁹⁴

Furthermore, if one takes into consideration that the audience of Hebrews faces such challenging problems as “drifting away” (2:1) from the teaching they received, “having an evil, unbelieving heart,” “apostatizing from the living God” (3:12), warned “not to fall through such disobedience” (4:11), become “dull of hearing” (5:11), “you have come to need milk not solid food” (5:12), regressing to the “basic teachings” (6:1), having become “sluggish” (6:12), “forsaking the gathering” (10:25), “sinning willfully” (10:26), “trampling under foot the Son of God, regarding as unclean the blood of the covenant, and insulting the Spirit of grace” (10:29), “throwing away the confidence” (10:35), “being entangled by sin” (12:1), “greedy for money” (13:5), and “disobedient to their teachers” (13:17), an exhortation “not to neglect the gatherings” is very appropriate.

⁹³ Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 117.

⁹⁴ Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 224.

Considering all of these problems which the author addresses in his sermon, the picture such a congregation presents does not look very promising in terms of zealously meeting every day. In other words, it is very improbable that a congregation practicing such lax Christianity meets daily for mutual encouragement.

The second proposal brought forth by Hughes that the gathering is a weekly gathering on the first day of the week, based on Acts 20:7 and 1 Cor 16:2, rehearses the commonly misplaced idea that the early church in the first century begins the practice of singling out the first day of the week as their worshiping time, a *primus inter pares*, the so-called day of the Lord.⁹⁵ This kind of reasoning does not pertain to the topic of our discussion, and the exegetical justification seems artificial.

A consideration of the whole narrative in Acts 20 provides no support for the view that Paul held the meeting specifically because it was the first day of the week but because Paul's visit fell on this day. He had been at Troas for seven days. Now he was about to depart, and it was most logical that he would hold a final farewell meeting. Luke's remark that this occurred on the first day of the week, rather than being a notice of specific Sunday keeping, is quite in harmony with the whole series of chronological notes with which he fills his narrative of this voyage (see chs. 20:3, 6, 7, 15, 26; 21:1, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 15). Therefore the simplest way to view this passage would seem to be that the meeting was held, not because it was Sunday, but because Paul was ready to depart

⁹⁵ Max M. B. Turner, "The Sabbath, Sunday, and the Law in Luke/Acts," in *From Sabbath to Lord's Day: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Investigation* (ed. D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1982), 137; and D. R. De Lacey, "The Sabbath/Sunday Question and the Law in the Pauline Corpus," in *From Sabbath to Lord's Day: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Investigation* (ed. D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1982), 185.

(20:7). That Luke includes an account of the meeting and his note that it was “the first day of the week” is merely a part of his continuing chronological record of Paul’s journey.

Concerning the collection of 1 Cor 16:2, Paul was promoting a special project on behalf of needy believers in Jerusalem (cf. 2 Cor 8; 9). The exhortation in 1 Cor 16:2 indicates that they were to do so regularly every first day of the week. The prepositional phrase *παρ’ ἑαυτῶ* means literally “by himself,” equivalent to “at home.”⁹⁶ When this verse is examined in connection with the apostle’s project for the poor believers in Jerusalem, it seems to be an exhortation to systematic planning on the part of the Corinthian church members. There is nothing in the verse that suggests that there is any sacredness attached to the first day of the week.

The third proposal recommended by Gelardini is the result of her dissertation “‘Verhärtet eure Herzen nicht:’ Der Hebräer, eine Synagogenhomilie zu Tisha be-Aw” (Diss. Theol., University of Basel, 2004). She has summarized her findings in an article, which will be used in what follows.⁹⁷ For her, the *Sitz im Leben* of an ancient synagogue homily is the Sabbath gathering (cf. Luke 4:16; Acts 13:14, 42, 44; 17:2; 18:4; Josephus, *C. Ap.* 2.175; Philo, *Somn.* 2. 127; *t. Sukkah* 4:6). The function of the homily is the teaching of the sacred texts from the *sidrah* and the *haptarah*. The basis for the synagogue homily was the Palestinian triennial cycle. With regard to the form-critical aspect of the homily there were two types of homilies: the *petichta* and the *yelammedenu*.

⁹⁶ Cf. Leon Morris, *I Corinthians* (TNTC 7; Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1958; repr., Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1993), 233.

⁹⁷ Gelardini, “Hebrews, an Ancient Synagogue Homily for *Tisha Be-Av*,” 107-24.

The less frequent type, the *yelammedenu*, was a more spontaneous homily. The more frequent type, the *petichta*, usually required a careful literary composition. For the *sidrah* the author of Hebrews used Exod 31:18-32:35 and for the *haphtarah* he used Jer 31:31-34. Based on the internal evidence of Hebrews, Gelardini assumes that the *Sitz im Leben* for Hebrews is the Sabbath gathering.⁹⁸ One good reason that stands out in her article is the fact that Hebrews' formal self-definition is a word of exhortation, as τοῦ λόγου τῆς παρακλήσεως (Heb 13:22). The only other use of λόγος παρακλήσεως in the New Testament is to be found in Acts 13:15 and refers explicitly to a synagogue homily on the Sabbath day.

While I agree that the gathering referred to in Heb 10:25 reflects a regular Sabbath gathering, the strict assumption that this was a synagogue gathering is problematic for the following reasons. First of all, the term ἐπισυναγωγή not συναγωγή is used, second, the implied listeners are also addressed as ἐκκλησία in Heb 2:12 and 12:23, and third, the audience of Hebrews is not exclusively Jewish Christians, but also Gentile Christians as I have argued in chapter 2 of this dissertation.⁹⁹ The duty of corporate worship is attached to the Sabbath command also by Pseudo-Philo, *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum* 11:8 (“Take care to sanctify the sabbath day. Work for six days, but the

⁹⁸ Ibid., 115.

⁹⁹ Our author probably may have used ἐπισυναγωγή in 10:25 simply to avoid the Judaic-sounding term συναγωγή, which is applied only once to a Christian assembly in the New Testament, and that is in Jas 2:2. Delitzsch, *Hebrews*, 182. However, in this context ἐπισυναγωγή is “scarcely to be differentiated from συναγωγή.” Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 382. Koester thinks that calling a Christian gathering an ἐπισυναγωγή may reflect the church's continuity with Israel's heritage. Koester, *Hebrews*, 446.

seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord. You shall not do any work on it, you and all your help, except to praise the LORD in the assembly of the elders and to glorify the Mighty One in the council of the older men. For in six days the Lord made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all things that are in them and all the world and uninhabitable wilderness and all things that labor and all the order of heaven. And God rested on the seventh day. Therefore, God sanctified the seventh day because he rested on it”) a work approximately contemporaneous with Hebrews.¹⁰⁰

Considering the immediate context of Heb 10:25 there are several reasons why the ἐπισυναγωγή is a Sabbath gathering. The verb ἐγκαταλείπω as mentioned already denotes more than just a simple neglect but implies a morally wrongful abandonment (cf. 2 Tim 4:10, 16). That means this gathering could not have been a social gathering, but something much more serious. In v. 23 the author exhorts the audience to hold fast to the confession. Obviously, a wrongful abandonment of the gathering is worth the exhortation to cling to what they once confessed. In addition, the addressees, as we saw, had problems with the basic doctrines of Christian faith (cf. 6:1, “leaving behind the basic teaching about Christ, and not laying again the foundation: repentance from dead works and faith toward God”). Thus, they were in danger of giving up the most basic teachings they once embraced and defended in spite of outside atrocities (cf. 10:32-35). This is probably also the reason why the author dealt with the issue of Sabbath observance in Heb 4:9. If the audience is in danger of apostatizing (3:12; cf. 6:6) it is logical to assume that they are apostatizing from something, namely, giving up the Sabbath ordained by

¹⁰⁰ Thanks is due to my chair Dr. Robert M. Johnston who drew my attention to this reference. Cf. also Philo, *De Migr. Abr.* 91-92.

God himself, not just omitting some social human meetings.¹⁰¹

Next, the adverb ἐκουσίως with its emphatic place at the beginning of the sentence in v. 26 further suggests that this is a Sabbath neglect. Why? Since the definition of the willful sin (Num 15:30-36) is illustrated with the intentional Sabbath neglect, it seems to indicate that the morally wrongful abandonment of the gathering is a Sabbath day worshiping neglect. Furthermore, such willful sin occurs after “receiving the knowledge of the truth” (τὸ λαβεῖν τὴν ἐπίγνωσιν τῆς ἀληθείας), terminology that closely resembles a fixed expression used in the pastoral epistles for conversion (1 Tim 2:4; 4:3; 2 Tim 2:25; 3:7).¹⁰² That means the addressees had once been acquainted with the Sabbath but now after the receiving of the knowledge of truth they are giving it up, willfully, high-handedly. Conversion language is also used in 10:32 (“after being enlightened”) and 6:4 (“once being enlightened”). Moreover, the author tells his audience that such a willful persistence in sin after receiving the knowledge of truth cannot be forgiven because there remains no longer a sacrifice for sin.

The verb ἀπολείπω occurs three times in the Epistle. The first time the author tells

¹⁰¹ Grässer believes that gathering had the function of *stabilitas fidei*. On the other hand, forsaking them is a clear indication that the audience throws away their confidence (10:35). Even worse they are intentionally sinning “das als solches irreparable ist (10, 26 ff.; 6, 4 ff.)” Grässer, *Der Glaube im Hebräerbrief*, 41.

¹⁰² Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 292. The phrase (“after receiving the knowledge of truth”) thus describes a dynamic assimilation of the truth of the gospel. Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, 292. The compound ἐπίγνωσις, Bultmann comments, “has become almost a technical term for the decisive knowledge of God which is implied in conversion to the Christian faith.” R. Bultmann, “γινώσκω,” *TDNT* 1:707. Grammatically a preposition and the arthrous infinitive, μετὰ τὸ λαβεῖν, define antecedent time to the main verb. That means that the willful persistence in sin took place after they converted to the Christian faith. Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 595.

the audience that there remains (ἀπολείπω) a rest to be entered (4:6), then he tells them that a σαββατισμός remains (ἀπολείπω) for the people of God (4:9), and the third time he tells them that if they wrongfully neglect the Sabbath gathering and persist in this sin intentionally there remains (ἀπολείπω) no sacrifice for this sin (10:26).

Why does the author not use the verb μένω (to remain)? He uses it several times throughout the Epistle (7:3, 24; 10:34; 13:1, 14). Even in a cultic context of Christ who “remains [μένω] a priest forever” (7:3; cf. 7:24), the author uses the verb μένω rather than ἀπολείπω, although one would expect to see in a cultic setting of sin offerings (10:26) the verb μένω. Could it be that by using ἀπολείπω in 10:26 the author intentionally connects back to Heb 4:6, 9, indicating that what remains for the people of God is the Sabbath observance, but if willfully neglected no offering remains for such a sin?

Finally, the rest of the passage in Heb 10:26-32 uses an *a fortiori* argument to describe the situation of the audience in Hebrews in terms of the person who picked up the sticks on the Sabbath (Num 15:30-36).¹⁰³ Thus, the conclusion seems to be reasonable that the ἐπισυναγωγή is the neglect of their Sabbath gathering.

Note on the Meaning of ἑκουσίως γὰρ ἀμαρτανόντων ἡμῶν¹⁰⁴
(Heb 10:26)

The connection of the subunit in 10:26-31 with 10:19-25 is a semantic connection

¹⁰³ Heb 10:26-31 will be dealt with separately.

¹⁰⁴ The participle ἀμαρτανόντων stands not only in a Genitive absolute construction, but it is best understood as a conditional participial implying the conditional conjunction “if.” Ibid., 633.

of antonymy.¹⁰⁵ The willful sin referred to in 10:26 is the direct opposite of the behavior encouraged in vv. 24 and 25. What exactly is the sin against which the author warns? Ellingworth answers: “The immediate context suggests that it involves separation from the Christian community (v. 24), thus offending against Christ as Son of God (→ 6:6), against his sacrifice, and against the Holy Spirit (v. 29).”¹⁰⁶ Oberholtzer responds: “Contextually it seems to refer to ‘holding fast the confession’ and ‘not forsaking the assembling’ (10:23, 25).”¹⁰⁷ This unit is joined to the preceding unit (vv. 19-25) with γὰρ indicating supportive material and an enhancement of reason.¹⁰⁸

The language of v. 26 derives from the Pentateuchal distinction between willful or high-handed and inadvertent sins that was widely recognized in post-biblical Judaism (cf. Heb 9:7).¹⁰⁹ While Heb 10:26 uses the adverb ἐκουσίως Num 15:30 uses ἐν χειρὶ

¹⁰⁵ Westfall, *A Discourse Analysis of the Letter to the Hebrews*, 244.

¹⁰⁶ Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 530. See also DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude*, 344.

¹⁰⁷ Thomas Kem Oberholtzer, “The Danger of Willful Sin in Hebrews 10:26-39,” *BSac* 145 (1988): 413. The tone and intensity of the vv. 26-31 would not be understandable if the author did not refer back to μὴ ἐγκαταλείποντες τὴν ἐπισυναγωγὴν ἑαυτῶν (v. 25), but instead rather to just a harmless separation, says Riggensbach, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 324.

¹⁰⁸ Westfall, *A Discourse Analysis of the Letter to the Hebrews*, 244. It has to be noted that P⁴⁶ and some Vulgate MSS lack the γὰρ but it is conformed by a, A, D, E, I, K, L, P, Ψ, which give it a strong support. Lane calls it an explanatory γὰρ which sustains an intimate relationship to the preceding admonition in v. 25. Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, 290. The γὰρ indicates that the same readers are in view as in 10:19-25—the New Covenant people. Oberholtzer, “Willful Sin,” 412.

¹⁰⁹ Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 292. It is specified repeatedly in the Levitical statutes that provision for atonement is restricted to those who sin ἀκουσίως “unintentionally” (Lev 4:1-2, 13, 22, 27, 5:14-15). The deliberate ἐκουσίως sin places the offender beyond forgiveness (Heb 10:26).

ὑπερηφανίας (with a hand of arrogance) as a literal translation of $hm' a r'' dy'' \text{âB} . .$ Is the meaning the same? From the context of Num 15:22-29 one can see that the counterpart to ἐν χειρὶ ὑπερηφανίας is the adverb/adjective/verb ἀκουσίως/ἀκούσιος/ἀκουσιάζομαι (involuntarily/involuntary/to sin inadvertently; Num 15:24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29) the positive of ἐκουσίως. This difference is made not only by post-biblical Judaism but also by Hellenistic authors.¹¹⁰ ἐκουσίως then is the counterpart to ἀκουσίως and has essentially the same meaning as ἐν χειρὶ ὑπερηφανίας. To better understand the willful sin let us turn our attention to Num 15:30-36 from where the author of Hebrews draws his understanding.¹¹¹

Numbers 15:30-31 describes high-handed transgression. The Hebrew phrase $hm' a r'' dy'' \text{âB} . .$ is a picture metaphor whose original setting is seen in the statues of ancient Near Eastern deities who were sculpted with an uplifted or outstretched right hand, bearing a spear, war ax, or lightning bolt.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ See 2 Macc 14:3; *Jub.* 22:14; 30:10; 33:13, 17; 41:25; *T. Jud.* 19:3-4; *T. Zeb.* 1:5; Josephus, *Ant.* III 231-2; Philo, *Opif.* 128; *Post.* 10; *Deus* 128; *Fug.* 86; *Mos.* 1, 273; Philo expects that on the Day of Atonement the sinner will ask God for the remission of both voluntary and involuntary sins. *Spec.* 2, 196; *Post.* 48. See also Michel, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 350, n. 1.

¹¹¹ The most common OT use of ἐκουσίως and cognates is in connection with freewill offerings not required by the Law (Lev 7:16; 23:38; Num 15:3). It also refers more generally to willing obedience to the Law (1 Macc 2:42), spontaneous praise (Pss 54:6[LXX 53:8]; 119[LXX 118]:108), voluntary labor (Exod 36:2), and voluntary suffering (4 Macc 5:23). The ἐκουσίως sin in Num 15:30 translates the Hebrew idiom $hm' a r'' dy'' \text{âB} . .$ literally to ἐν χειρὶ ὑπερηφανίας “with a hand of arrogance.” In other words ἐκουσίως expresses the same thought as ἐν χειρὶ ὑπερηφανίας although the word ἐκουσίως is not used in Num 15:30.

¹¹² Milgrom, “Numbers,” 125.

This idiom describes in a positive way the mighty acts of deliverance by the God of Israel performed on behalf of his people (Exod 14:8; Deut 4:34; 5:15; 26:8). However, this literary image is also used in a negative way to describe a person acting in deliberate presumption, pride, revolt, and disdain. Moreover, the phrase is modified in Num 15:30 with the words “that one is blaspheming the Lord.”¹¹³ High-handed transgressions are best interpreted as intentional or premeditated sin.¹¹⁴ Unlike the unintentional sins, for which there are provisions of sacrifices (Num 15:22-29), for one who sets his hand defiantly to despise the word of God and to blaspheme there is no forgiveness, but such a person must be “cut off” (כרת) from the people.¹¹⁵ The thrust of the entire passage reaches its climax in the broader context of Israel’s rebellion in rejecting the Promised Land and hence rejecting God. The nation’s defiance was an example of a sin of “high-hand” in that they symbolically raised their fist in defiance of God at Kadesh and the

¹¹³ Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., compares the high-handed sin of Num 15 with the NT expression of the offense of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (Heb 10:26-39). Walter C. Kaiser, *Toward Rediscovering the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1987), 132.

¹¹⁴ Dozeman, *The Book of Numbers*, 127.

¹¹⁵ The nature of *karet* is always a crime committed against God but not against man. The *karet* cases of the Old Testament are being subsumed by Milgrom into five categories: sacred time, sacred substance, purification rituals, illicit worship, and illicit sex. Milgrom, *Numbers*, 125. Concerning the depth of resolution toward sin expressed by such a person, Ashley notes: “This kind of rebellion therefore differs from the intentional sin described in Lev. 5:20-26 (Eng. 6:1-7) for which a reparation offering may be made, ‘when the offender feels guilty’ (5:23, 26). The sinner with a high hand feels no guilt; therefore the offense is not expiable.” Timothy R. Ashley, *The Book of Numbers* (ed. R. K. Harrison; NICOT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1993), 288.

debacle of Hormah (Num 14:45).¹¹⁶

The passage concludes with an exemplary adjudication of the case law delineated in vv. 30-31, which relates to a deliberate violation of the Sabbath statutes. The story describes the case of a person collecting sticks on the Sabbath who is taken into custody and brought to Moses for judgment.¹¹⁷ The infraction is without precedent, requiring special revelation for a resolution. The answer came from the Lord: “The man shall be put to death” (v. 35), and the sentence was carried out by the people, outside the camp. The story illustrates that the penalty for breaking the Sabbath was death (Exod 31:15; 35:2) as in the case of the willful blasphemer (Lev 24:10-16).

This story of the man who picks up the sticks on Sabbath exemplified what the author of Numbers described as the high-handed sin. In Hebrews 10:25 one encounters the forsaking of the gatherings, which we have best defined as Sabbath gatherings. As the sequel indicates, our author connects the forsaking of the gathering with a willful sinning, which is defined and then illustrated in Num 15 as the premeditated sin of desecrating the Sabbath day. This leads to the conclusion that the high-handed sin the author of Hebrews refers to but does not explicitly mention is the intentional, wrongful abandonment of the Sabbath gathering. The present tense of the participle (ἀμαρτανόωντων) suggests that the sin is not a single act but a continuing habit of forsaking the gatherings, as also the noun ἔθος (v. 25) suggests.

¹¹⁶ The bad report of the land by the leaders of Israel (who die instantly; Num 14:36) and the murmuring of the people (who are condemned to die in the wilderness) are instances of premeditated transgression. So Dozeman, *The Book of Numbers*, 128.

¹¹⁷ The incident obviously took place the first Sabbath after the fiasco of the reconnaissance mission (Num 13-14) according to Milgrom, “Numbers,” 126.

The Context of Hebrews 10:26-31

The second section of the exhortation, Heb 10:26-31, develops the allusion to divine judgment implicit in the reference to the “day” (v. 25) and repeats the dire warning that had preceded the central exposition section (6:4-8).¹¹⁸ Since I have already dealt with the “willful sinning” and the phrase “after receiving the knowledge of truth,” just a few more remarks will be made with regard to v. 26. The effects of the willful sin are not developed until v. 29.¹¹⁹ Based on the *a fortiori* argument the effects are described with three parallel participial phrases: trampling the Son of God, dishonoring the blood of the new covenant, and insulting the spirit of grace.¹²⁰ Whoever continues willfully to sin after having received the knowledge of truth relapses back into the stage prior to acquiring the knowledge, and Weiss says: “für den bleibt nunmehr konsequenterweise auch nichts

¹¹⁸ The reiteration of the pattern of apostasy and its irreversible consequences demonstrate that 6:4-8 and 10:26-31 are complementary declarations. The process consists of four stages: (1) the experience of Christian life (6:4-5; 10:26 “after we received the knowledge of truth”), (2) the fact of apostasy (6:6; 10:26 “if we deliberately persist in sin”), (3) the recognition that renewal is impossible (6:4, 6; 10:26 “there remains no longer a sacrifice for sins”), and (4) the imposition of the course sanctions of the covenant (6:8; 10:27 “only an inevitable terrifying expectation of judgment and of raging fire ready to consume God’s adversaries”). Pierre Proulx and Luis Alonso Schökel, “Heb 6, 4-6: eis metanoian anastaurontas,” *Bib* 56 (1975): 204-5. For a summary of the interpretation of these passages see Grässer, *Der Glaube im Hebräerbrief*, 192-98.

¹¹⁹ So Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, 292.

¹²⁰ Trampling is a strong metaphor of showing utter contempt (Mic 7:10; Isa 26:6), not unlike the ritual of placing an enemy’s neck under a conqueror’s foot. The word κοινὸς (“common”) refers to making profane something that is holy or sacred—an act of degradation. Ἐνυβρίζω is a verbal form of hubris and refers to an arrogant and outrageous act. Witherington, *Letters and Homilies for Jewish Christians*, 288, n. 576-8. This language, which makes the sins in question seem as horrific as one can imagine,

mehr ‘übrig’ von jenem ‘Sündenopfer’, das der Hohenpriester Christus ein für allemal dargebracht hat.”¹²¹ This was also true for the deliberate sinner under the old covenant, whose iniquity rested, without any sacrificial offering and expiation, upon his own head (Num 15:31). This is even more obviously true of the apostate under the new covenant.

The believer who sins intentionally can await only “a certain fearful expectation of judgment” (v. 27), which has just one outcome, namely the “fiery zeal” (πυρὸς ζήλος). The theme of fear is prominent in Hebrews. Moses’ parents did not fear the edict of the King of Egypt and hid Moses for three months (11:23). Moses himself did not fear the king when he left Egypt (v. 27). However, when he encountered the presence of God at Sinai the sight was so fearful that he not only feared but also trembled (12:21 οὐτω φοβερὸν ἦν τὸ φανταζόμενον, Μωϋσῆς εἶπεν· ἔκφοβός εἰμι καὶ ἔντρομος). Fear is also used by the author of Hebrews as a kind of motivator (4:1, “let us fear, while the promise remains of entering His rest”). The fear of death is a slave master who holds his subjects captive until they are freed by Christ (2:15). Finally, fear and God’s judgment are contrasted (10:27). The expectation of humans who sin intentionally is a fearful prospect of judgment (ἐκδοχὴ κρίσεως), while God’s provision is a zealous fire (πυρὸς ζήλος).¹²²

involves the rhetorical technique called *deinosis*, which “adds force to facts which are disgraceful, cruel, or odious” (Quintilian, *Inst.* 6.2.24)—in this case to ward off apostasy.

¹²¹ Weiss, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 539. Because of the fact that for such a person there remains no more sacrifice for sin, Michel draws the conclusion: “Hebr hat als erster erkannt, daß es einen Weg zurück in einen vorchristlichen Stand nicht gibt.” Michel, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 351.

¹²² Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 329. The phrase ἐκδοχὴ κρίσεως καὶ πυρὸς ζήλος is separated by a καὶ, which some exegetes understand as an exegetical καὶ. Blass and Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament*, 228; Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 535. Based on the Hebrew phrase hanq va from Zeph 1:18,

The imagery of a “zealous fire about to devour God’s opponents” is a natural metaphor frequent in the OT and in apocalyptic writings.¹²³ It recalls the experience of the followers of Korah who were consumed by fire because they had shown contempt for God (Num 16:35). Such people are called by the author of Hebrews opponents (ὕπειναντίος). In our context the opponents are those who sin willfully, for whom there is no sacrifice available, but the term is also used to refer to opponents in battle (Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* 1.6.38; Thucydides, *Peloponnesian War* 2.2.2).¹²⁴ The consequence of persistent apostasy is terrifying, irrevocable judgment.¹²⁵

Verse 28 expresses the lesser form of the *a fortiori* argument to be completed in v. 29.¹²⁶ The goal of the *a minori ad maius* argument is “die behauptete Unvergebbarkeit der Freiwilligkeitssünde argumentativ zu bekräftigen.”¹²⁷ Our author refers to the case of someone who ἀθετήσας τις νόμον Μωϋσέως. The weight of the verb ἀθετέω must be taken seriously.

In profane Greek the verb means “to regard as naught,” “to declare invalid,” “to

Delitzsch suggests to translate πυρὸς ζῆλος not as fiery zeal but as jealousy of fire. Delitzsch, *Hebrews*, 186.

¹²³ Zeph 1:18; Isa 26:11, and *4 Esra* 13:10; *Pss. Sol.* 15:4; *Jub.* 9:15; 36:10; *Sib. Or.* 3:53.

¹²⁴ The opponent in Hebrews is not the Gentile but the apostate. Michel, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 352.

¹²⁵ Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, 293.

¹²⁶ This kind of argument was used already in 2:2-3. There the writer used a rhetorical question to drive home his point that if disregard for the Mosaic Law was appropriately punished, neglect of salvation announced in the gospel must inevitably be catastrophic. For an *a fortiori* argument on blasphemy see Philo, *Fug.* 84.

¹²⁷ Grässer, *Hebr 10,19-13,25*, 41.

set aside,” e.g., an agreement between cities.¹²⁸ In the LXX it has the meaning of abrogating the sacrifices of God (1 Sam 2:12), rebelling against God (Isa 1:2), or a human ruler (1 Kgs 12:19).¹²⁹ The verb in connection with its object the νόμον is very rare in the LXX, but appears in Isa 24:16 and Ezek 22:26. The reference in Ezekiel concerns the Priests who nullify the law of God (οἱ ἱερεῖς αὐτῆς ἠθέτησαν νόμον μου) and by doing so, they not only make no distinction between clean and unclean but disregarded the Sabbath (ἀπὸ τῶν σαββάτων μου παρεκάλυπτον τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτῶν). Hebrews uses the noun form ἀθέτησις twice, once with respect to the “nullification” of the former commandment of selecting priests (Heb 7:18 ἀθέτησις . . . προαγούσης ἐντολῆς), and once with respect to the “nullification” of sin by Christ’s sacrifice (9:26). Considering the weight of both the verb and the noun, Johnson is right when he claims that our author is not speaking in Heb 10:28 of “‘unintentional sins,’ but precisely of the sort of apostasy that is the equivalent of ‘sinning deliberately’ (10:26).”¹³⁰ That means our author still has in mind the wrongful abandonment of the gatherings, which cause the willful sinning, exemplified in the person who picked up the sticks on Sabbath, for whom no sacrifice was available. He is the one who nullifies the law of Moses (v. 28).

The conclusion that v. 28 is connected to the forsaking of the gathering is further

¹²⁸ Christian Maurer, “ἀθετέω,” *TDNT* 8:158.

¹²⁹ Maurer calls that a “willful repudiation of an institution.” *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ Johnson, *Hebrews*, 263. Ellingworth also claims that: “Here the object is an institution, the Law of Moses, but willful disobedience is implied (cf. ἐκουσίως, v. 26).” However, Attridge wrongfully claims that the author by using the verb ἀθετέω did not have the infringement of a specific commandment in mind. Attridge, *The Epistle to the*

supported by the indefinite pronoun τις. “Τις may nevertheless be an oblique reference to the τινές of v. 25.”¹³¹ Assuming this line of reasoning, the expression νόμον Μωϋσέως in this specific context alludes to the Sabbath observance which that person in the wilderness obviously disregarded intentionally.¹³² For such a sin the penalty in the Torah is clear and severe (Exod 31:14, 15; 35:2).¹³³ The law breaker is to be punished without pity (χωρίς οίκτιρμῶν).¹³⁴ A feeling of sympathy would be a natural reaction toward such a victim, but the author forbids it and the Old Testament regulations involved the whole community in the infliction of punishment (Deut 17:7; cf. Acts 7:58). The LXX expresses the idea of merciless killing with the phrase “thy eye shall not spare him” (Deut 19:31 οὐ φείσεται ὁ ὀφθαλμός σου ἐπ’ αὐτῷ). However, the Pentateuchal stipulation made sure that the judicial fact had to be established on the testimonies of at least two or three witnesses. The delinquent person was brought before Moses, Aaron, and the whole συναγωγὴν υἱῶν Ἰσραηλ by the witnesses who found him picking up the wood on Sabbath and after the sentence was stated the community conducted the execution.

Hebrews, 294. If proper consideration is given to the context Attridge’s claim cannot be supported.

¹³¹ Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 536.

¹³² Although the term νόμος in Hebrews refers to the Torah-Law as a whole (cf. 7:5, 16, 19, 28; 8:4; 9:19, 22; :10:1, 8). Grässer, *Hebr 10,19-13,25*, 42.

¹³³ Contra Attridge who neglects the context of Heb 10:25-31 and claims that the paradigm cases of abrogating the law of Moses would be blasphemy or idolatry. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 294. His conclusion is based on Deut 17:1-7 where the issue discussed is worshiping idols and the judicial punishment is confirmed by the testimony of two or three witnesses. A similar situation is portrayed in Lev 24:14-16 but the issue in this case is blasphemy.

¹³⁴ D* adds καὶ δακρύων.

The *a fortiori* inference takes the form of a rhetorical question (v. 29). The impact of the rhetorical question is achieved not only by the *a fortiori* argument, but also by the switch from the inclusive “we” (vv. 26-27) to the direct address in v. 29: “for if *we* willfully persist in sin . . . How much severer punishment do *you* suppose will he deserve?”¹³⁵ The case of the apostate is described with three participial phrases.¹³⁶ The phrases cannot refer to three different groups of people, since they are linked by the same definite article ὁ.¹³⁷ Taken cumulatively, the three participial clauses in v. 29 define the effects of a willful persistence in sin (v. 26) through vivid metaphors. Grässer notes: “Die Dreizahl ist kein Zufall, sondern geprägter Stil. Sie läßt den Abfall als abgeschlossen, vollständig, endgültig erscheinen.”¹³⁸ The first participial clause ὁ τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ καταπατήσας describes in vivid metaphorical language the apostate’s utter contempt of the Son of God.¹³⁹

¹³⁵ The shift from the first-person plural to the second-person plural has been observed among others by Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, 293. With regard to the interrogative adjective πόσῳ (how much) it should be understood as a dative of measure. C. F. D. Moule, *An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek* (2nd ed.; Cambridge: University Press, 1959; reprint, 1994), 44.

¹³⁶ The offence is described under three distinct aspects, as an act (καταπατήσας), as an opinion (ἡγησάμενος), and as a personal assault (ἐνυβρίσας). Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 330.

¹³⁷ Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 538.

¹³⁸ Grässer, *Hebr 10,19-13,25*, 45.

¹³⁹ Lane thinks that the designation Son of God for Jesus is almost certainly a reference to the formal confession of faith which the community had openly acknowledged. Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, 294.

The verb καταπατέω is used elsewhere in the New Testament to describe the literal trampling of the tasteless salt, the trampling of pearls cast before the swine, the trampling of seed that fell on the road, and the trampling of people who gathered to hear Jesus (Matt 5:13; 7:6; Luke 8:5; 12:1). The verb is used in the LXX in a metaphorical sense: Pss 56(55):2, 3; 57(56):4; Mal 4:3 (LXX 3:21); Dan 8:10; Zech 12:3. Homer uses it for scorning oaths that had been taken (*Il.* 4.157), and Plato uses the verb for the scorning of laws (*Laws* 714A). When the Son of God is trampled underfoot “so bedeutet das der Sache nach nichts anderes als das ἀνασταυροῦν καὶ παραδειγματίζειν in 6,6.”¹⁴⁰ God promised to put all things under Christ’s feet (Heb 1:13, quoted from Ps 110:1), but Christ’s adversaries seek to put Christ under their feet in a show of contempt.¹⁴¹

The second participial clause expresses apostasy through cultic, not ethical language by τὸ αἷμα τῆς διαθήκης κοινὸν ἡγησάμενος. The apostate considers the blood of the covenant, which does not refer to the Sinai covenant (Exod 24:8), but to the blood of Jesus by which the new covenant was established (9:20), as profane (κοινὸν).¹⁴² The person does not recognize its sacral quality, referred to by the following prepositional phrase which is best understood as instrumental, ἐν ᾧ ἡγιάσθη. The passive form of the verb ἀγιάζω stands in stark contrast to the adjective κοινὸν and implies a *passivum*

¹⁴⁰ Grässer, *Hebr 10,19-13,25*, 45.

¹⁴¹ Koester, *Hebrews*, 453.

¹⁴² The phrase “blood of the covenant” although similar to the eucharistic blessing is in this context not sacramentally focused. It is not the eucharist that stands behind the sprinkling ritual of Exod 24:3-8 or Heb 9:19-21, but baptism (9:13; 10:22), as the aorist ἡγιάσθη confirms. “In der Taufe und nicht im Abendmahl vermittelt das Stiftungsblut

divinum.¹⁴³ That means that God has once sanctified the apostate through the blood of Jesus, which he now considers as profane.

Finally, the third participle phrase τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς χάριτος ἐνυβρίσας describes the apostate as the one who insulted the spirit of grace. The verb ἐνυβρίζω is a New Testament *hapax legomenon*, but like the more common form ὑβρίζω (Matt 22:6; Luke 18:32; Acts 14:5; 1 Thess 2:2) it implies insulting arrogance, often accompanied by violence. In an honor-shame culture it means to reduce the honor that is due to somebody, by insulting him/her.¹⁴⁴ The verb ἐνυβρίζω is used in this sense in Polybius, *Histories* 10.26.3, and Sophocles, *Philoctetes* 342. The phrase “spirit of grace” draws together for the first time two terms, each of which points to the presence and power of God among humans. The πνεῦμα is the source of the many gifts distributed to the believers (2:4) and the πνεῦμα speaks through Scripture (3:7; 9:8:10:15). Grace is what the believer can find in times of need at the throne characterized by grace (4:16). Summarizing v. 29 with the words of Johnson, we could say: “In brief, the apostate insults everything that has come from God, and therefore also insults God.”¹⁴⁵

Such arrogance demands a dreadful and certain penalty, delivered by God

‘den Zugang zur Gemeinde 10, 19; 12, 22.24, von der hier der Abfall droht’.” Grässer, *Hebr 10,19-13,25*, 46.

¹⁴³ Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 541.

¹⁴⁴ Dunham writes of this threefold rejection by the believer: “Is the sin of a blood-bought believer less insulting or outrageous to God than the grossest unbeliever? It is not. It is far more serious. A child insulting his father is more wounding than a neighbor child insulting the same man.” Duane A. Dunham, “An Exegetical Examination of the Warnings in the Epistle to the Hebrews” (Th.D. diss., Grace Theological Seminary, July 1974), 210.

¹⁴⁵ Johnson, *Hebrews*, 265.

himself, who is the insulted one. To support the initial statement of willfully persisting in sin (v. 26), the author cites an authoritative text by introducing it with the clause “because we know the one saying” (v. 30).¹⁴⁶ The biblical citations come from the Song of Moses (Deut 32:35-36), and its two parts are separated by the phrase καὶ πάλιν, used to lump texts together in the catena of chs. 1 and 2.¹⁴⁷ The first citation ἐμοὶ ἐκδίκησις, ἐγὼ ἀνταποδώσω differs from the MT (~Leêviw> `~q'n" yliû; “vengeance is mine and recompense”) and the LXX (ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ἐκδικήσεως ἀνταποδώσω; “in the day of vengeance I shall recompense”). However, the version in Hebrews agrees with Rom 12:19 ἐμοὶ ἐκδίκησις, ἐγὼ ἀνταποδώσω¹⁴⁸ and the Targums (mylvya anaw atwn[rwp ymdq]).¹⁴⁹ The term ἐκδίκησις means to exact vengeance for a wrong and is associated with God’s actions (Exod 7:4; 12:12; Num 31:3; 33:4; Judg 11:36; 2 Sam 4:8; Pss 18[17]:47; 94[93]:1; Luke 18:7-8). The second term means simply to “pay back.” It is

¹⁴⁶ Grässer, *Hebr 10,19-13,25*, 48. The community not only knows what is said, but also who said it. This knowing seems to indicate that it is based on a prior experience with God. In Heb 6:4-5 the author makes it clear that the audience has been enlightened, tasted the heavenly gift, became partakers of the Holy Spirit, tasted the word of God, and the power of the coming age, thus experiencing the one who is speaking. Christians not only have the knowledge of God, they know God’s character and an essential attribute of this God is a negative attitude toward sin. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 295.

¹⁴⁷ The passage in Deut 32:35-36 was often used in the New Testament to illustrate the theme of Jewish rejection (Rom 10:19; 15:10). In the original Song of Moses these verses are part of God’s promise to vindicate his people by exacting judgment on their enemies. As usual in Hebrews, the original context does not determine the application of the text, since it now serves as a warning for the apostates in the new covenant.

¹⁴⁸ Some MSS add λέγει κύριος.

used in the LXX for God’s “paying back” evildoers with punishment (Lev 18:25; Deut 32:41, 43; Judg 1:7; Ps 31[30]:23[24]).¹⁵⁰

The second citation κρινεῖ κύριος τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ agrees with Deut 32:36 and with Ps 135[134]:14. In both Old Testament passages the statement about God’s judgment is followed by an affirmation that comfort will come to his servants. While the first citation in v. 30 declares that God is a just judge, the second tells against whom the judgment will be executed. The potential apostate is warned that leaving the assemblies does not mean that he has nothing to do with God anymore, whose day of judgment and reward draws near. The author of Hebrews assumes this final judgment in other parts of the sermon as well (4:12; 9:27; 10:27; 12:23; 13:4). This concept of God judging the sins of his own people is common in the Old Testament (Exod 34:7; Num 14:18; Ps 99:8).

The final sentence in the summary of the admonition is very simple: φοβερὸν τὸ ἐμπεσεῖν εἰς χεῖρας θεοῦ ζῶντος (v. 31).¹⁵¹ Φοβερός forms an *inclusio* with v. 27. Two instances in Scripture and the Apocrypha declare how much better it is to fall into the “hands of the Lord” than into the “hands of a man” (2 Sam 24:14; 1 Chr 21:13; Sir 2:18). In such passages, “falling into God’s hand” is a reassurance. However, this is not the case in Hebrews. Rather, falling into God’s hands is a fearful judgment announced already in

¹⁴⁹ *Tg. Onq.* but also *Tg. Pal.* Witherington doubts the author’s reliance on the Aramaic targums since the author does not reflect knowledge of Aramaic. Witherington, *Letters and Homilies for Jewish Christians*, 289, n. 582.

¹⁵⁰ In secular literature the term means paying back a loan; see Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 9.2.3.

¹⁵¹ By placing φοβερὸν first in the sentence the author adds emphasis to it. The articulate infinitive, τὸ ἐμπεσεῖν, makes it a substantival infinitive. Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 235.

v. 27.

The judgment will be fearsome, because it will be carried out by the “living God.” This phrase appears in 3:12 when the exodus generation turns away from the living God. In 9:14 Christ’s sacrifice turns the audience to worship the living God. In 12:22 the hearers are reminded that they are not approaching Mount Sinai, but the city of the living God. Among these passages, the statement in 10:31 reminds the hearers what the final consequence of willfully turning against God will do to a person. The apostate is warned that leaving the gathering does not mean getting out from being under hostility and danger, but “it means exposing oneself to the greatest danger and loss.”¹⁵² Ellingworth states: “The present passage suggests, without explicitly stating, that God’s judgment, especially on apostates, is more terrible than death.”¹⁵³

In summary, I can say that vv. 28-31 are best understood and interpreted from the background of Num 15 which is exemplified with the person who high-handedly rebels against God and his statutes, rather than inserting the issue of idolatry which is foreign to the context of Heb 10:19-25.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude*, 355.

¹⁵³ Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 543.

¹⁵⁴ This conclusion begs the question with regard to the role of the law in the book of Hebrews. Since this should not be understood as the introduction to a new dissertation topic, a few succinct but clear remarks are due. At the same time this issue could well be understood as a topic for further studies. Hebrews refers to the “law” (νόμος 7:5, 12, 16, 19, 28; 8:4; 9:19, 22; 10:1, 8, 28, etc.) and the “first” or Mosaic “covenant” (διαθήκη 8:7, 9, 13; 9:1, 15, 18, 20, etc.) with little difference in meaning. Hebrews’ scholars interpret the difference between the law in Paul and Hebrews with Paul emphasizing the ethical aspect of the law, whereas Hebrews emphasizes the ritual portion of the law. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 204; Leonhard Goppelt, *Theology of the New Testament* (ed. Jürgen Roloff; trans. John E. Alsup; 2 vols.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1981), 2:256; Hans von Campenhausen, *The Formation of the Christian Bible* (trans. J. A. Baker; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), 68. Koester is correct in assessing that such a

“distinction is not helpful.” Koester, *Hebrews*, 114. Hebrews refers not only to tithing (7:5), priests (7:28), sacrifices (8:4; 10:8), food, drink, and ablutions (9:10), but to the entire Sinaitic code (9:19), which included ethical commands that asked for punishment if broken (10:28). Furthermore, the law’s provisions for priesthood cannot be neatly separated from ethical matters because priests offered sacrifices for sins (5:3), which included the transgressions of the so-called ethical commandments. Neither Paul nor the author of Hebrews fully explains why God gave an ineffective law in the first place. However, laws pertaining to priesthood and sacrifices have been terminated, but Hebrews understands that God remains opposed to lawlessness (1:9; 10:17) and will write his laws upon the human heart (8:10; 10:16). The author of Hebrews understands the Christian conduct congruent with the law, because the law is written in their heart (10:16); he urges listeners to remain faithful in marriage (13:4), and to avoid covetousness (13:5). Hübner sees the laws written on the heart of the believers not identical with the cultic law of the old covenant. The extent to which they might overlap in terms of content with the moral commandments of the Mosaic law is not pondered in Hebrews (Hans Hübner, “νόμος,” *EDNT* 2:477). Räisänen asserts that the author of Hebrews mounts a direct attack on the cultic law. In other words the cultic side of the law is criticized in Hebrews. Heikki Räisänen, *Paul and the Law* (WUNT 29; ed. Martin Hengel and Otfried Hofius; Tübingen: Mohr, 1983), 209. It is difficult to agree with Thielman, who claims that the entire law is obsolete. Frank Thielman, *The Law and the New Testament: The Question of Continuity* (New York: Crossroad Pub., 1999), 131. Unfortunately, Weiss disregards those few instances in Hebrews where the law is not portrayed as a shadow. Such occurrences, he claims, should not distort or correct the unanimous picture Hebrews portrays about the law and its function as “shadow.” Weiss, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 406. It is important to note that the author does not say that the law is the shadow but the law has a shadow (σκιάν γὰρ ἔχων ὁ νόμος), a point overlooked by most commentators. The implication is that it is not the law itself, but only the part of the law which formed the sacrificial system that contains an element of provisionality. Nevertheless, there were some elements of the law which were certainly not merely provisional, claims Bayes. “The believing life in Christ is not, however, divorced from the requirements of God’s written law in the Decalogue.” Jonathan F. Bayes, *The Weakness of the Law: God’s Law and the Christian in New Testament Perspective* (Carlisle, Calif.: Paternoster Press, 2000), 186, 206. Thomas Schreiner understands the law/covenant in Hebrews as a prelude to the salvation to come. For him resting on the Sabbath anticipates the eschatological Sabbath rest of Heb 4:3-11, something I have argued against all along. T. R. Schreiner, “Law,” *DLNT* 647. Grässer in his discourse on the covenant in Hebrews sees continuity and discontinuity. The continuity consists in the fact that the speaking God of the old covenant is the same as the one of the new. On the other hand the discontinuity resides in the speaking of the Son in the new covenant, which gives birth to a reality non-existent in the old covenant, namely eschatological forgiving of sin. Erich Grässer, *Der Alte Bund im Neuen: Exegetische Studien zur Israelsfrage im Neuen Testament* (WUNT 35; ed. Martin Hengel and Otfried Hofius; Tübingen: Mohr, 1985), 114. For more details see also W. Gutbrod, “νόμος,” *TDNT* 4:1078-80; Ben Witherington III, “The Influence of Galatians on Hebrews,” *NTS* 37 (1991): 147.

Summary and Conclusion

The positive exhortation in Heb 10:19-25 is closely parallel in its structure and phraseology to Heb 4:11-16. The transitional section in vv. 19-25 consists of a single period that moves from an affirmation of the indicative, which is the access to God provided by Christ's sacrifice to a series of exhortations. Having the confidence created by Christ's sacrifice, to enter the presence of God, the believer becomes a boundary-crosser like the priest who had access to the very presence of God. In worship this access is open for the believer, authorized by the instrument of Christ's blood. The blessing of free access is new in terms of time as well as quality. Temporally it is new because it was not available before. Qualitatively it is new because of its life-giving effects. Christ made this possible by passing through the temple veil by means of his obedient bodily response.

With v. 21 the author furnishes the second complementary object of the participle "having," namely the high priest over the house of God, which is the church (3:6). The call to approach God is directed to the new way opened in Christ. The verb to approach is used to refer to the Christian's appropriation in a worshipping community (v. 25). There the worshiper comes with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, washed clean with water and the heart sprinkled clean from an evil conscious. This washing and the holding fast to the confession are strong evidences of baptism. Occasions like baptism, or catechetical instructions, or preaching against heretics were favorable moments for formal confessions. The author exhorts the audience to hold fast to the confession for God is faithful even then when human beings are wavering. However, holding fast to the confession is also a matter of mutual commitment in a community. That is the reason

why the author encourages the believers to pay attention to each other in stimulating them to love and good deeds. How to stimulate somebody to love and good deeds is described by the author as a warning not to forsake the gathering. We have seen that the verb “to forsake” has morally negative connotations to it with fatal results. Therefore I concluded that the gathering must be more than just a social gathering. Some of the members are obviously in the habit of neglecting them, although the author exhorts his audience to encourage one another all the more as they see the day approaching.

With regard to ἐπισυναγωγή, we found out that the term has to be defined from the context of Hebrews since the mention of it in profane Greek, in 2 Macc 2:7, and 2 Thess 2:1 could not help us advance in its understanding. Because the verb ἐγκαταλείπω describes a wrongful abandonment, and also because the context exhibits a worship setting, and because Eusebius describes with this noun the concourses in the houses of prayer, I concluded that ἐπισυναγωγή is understood best as a Christian worshipping gathering. This is supported by the predominance of scholarly opinion.

The question asked next was: When did this gathering take place? We saw that the suggestion of daily gatherings and Sunday gatherings (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor 16:2) is very unlikely. The suggestion made that this refers to Sabbath gatherings is based on the following evidence:

1. The audience is encouraged to exhort one another (v. 25). The purpose of the book (13:22) is a “word of exhortation.” This phrase appears only once more in the New Testament, namely in Acts 13:15 where Paul was asked to give a “word of exhortation” on a Sabbath to the Jews and God-fearing proselytes in Antioch of Pisidia.

2. In Hebrews 10:23 the author exhorts his addressees to hold on to the

confession. Hebrews 6:1-2 portrays the audience as in danger of abandoning the most basic teachings. That is probably the reason why they need the encouragement to hold fast to their confession without wavering.

3. The willful sin is defined in Num 15:30-36 and exemplified by the person who willfully, wrongfully neglected the Sabbath observance.

4. The high-handed sin happened after the addressees received the knowledge of truth, which means after they became acquainted with Sabbath observance.

5. The verb ἀπολείπω is used to describe the non-availability of a sacrifice (v. 26) connecting back to Heb 4:6, 9 where the rest/Sabbath observance is stated as being left for the people of God.

6. The rest of the warning passage, vv. 26-31, is dealt with the background in mind of the person who willfully desecrated the Sabbath (no sacrifice available; two or three witnesses; nullifying the Law of Moses; and death without compassion). These are the reasons why a Sabbath gathering seems to be the most viable option for the noun ἐπισυναγωγή. Having Num 15 in the background gives the text of Hebrews a very coherent flow without having to force the text to say what it does not say.

Hebrews 10:26 ends with the statement that for the apostate who high-handedly sins against God after his conversion, there remains no sacrifice to atone his sins. Instead he will encounter a fearful prospect of judgment that will consume the opponent of God. The *a fortiori* argument cements the statement that for such sins there are no sacrifices. They are irreversible. The nullification of the Law of Moses is described in Ezek 22:26 with the consequences of disregarding the Sabbath day. The indefinite pronoun τις (v. 28) in the phrase “anyone nullifying the Law of Moses” refers back to the τινές of v. 25,

to “some” who have the habit of neglecting the gathering. The culprit is punished without mercy, as exemplified in the stoning of the person who willfully sinned.

The effects of this kind of sin are portrayed by vivid metaphorical language: trampling the Son of God, profaning the blood of the covenant, and insulting the spirit of grace. If the person who willfully sinned in the desert by disregarding the Sabbath received a merciless punishment, how much worse will the punishment be of that person who abandons the gathering, sins willfully, and nullifies the Law of Moses? He/she basically insults everything that comes from God, and therefore he also insults God. Such arrogance can be punished only by God himself. To fall into the hands of God in the condition of willful sin is a fearful thing because one attribute of God’s character is a negative attitude toward sin and those who willfully embrace it.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

I started out this research by pointing out that the enthusiasm for the subject has not resulted in a general consensus regarding the meaning of “rest” in the book of Hebrews. This study does not claim to be the all-convincing break-through to the much desired consensus. However, I have inquired into some very difficult passages in the book of Hebrews (Heb 4:1-11 and 10:19-31). Throughout this journey it has become obvious that Heb 4 and Heb 10 are connected together. That has led me to ask the question: What does the author mean by Sabbath rest in Heb 4:9? Suggesting that the rest in Heb 4:9 and the gathering in Heb 10:25 are a literal Sabbath observance gives a coherent solution from within the book of Hebrews itself to the earnest exhortation addressed to the author’s audience not to be disobedient like the exodus generation.

With the introduction into the topic in the first chapter I moved on to the second one. The issue dealt with in that chapter was the audience of the book of Hebrews. As the textual evidence indicates, the Epistle to the Hebrews has been addressed to a community of Christians who obviously underwent at least a three-phase development. The first phase is characterized by the proclamation of the Lord’s message. This proclamation was accompanied by both signs and miracles and the distribution of the Holy Spirit. By the confession of their faith the community received its group identity and distinguished itself from the outside world. In the second phase, the audience encountered conflicts

with those outside the community and solidarity among those inside. These phenomena helped reaffirm the group's distinctive identity, while promoting support for one another. The third phase portrays the community with signs of malaise. The culmination of these tendencies could be apostasy, according to the author. Therefore the sermon encourages perseverance rather than shrinking back.

In pursuing the profile of the audience, it seems that a shift in approaching Hebrews has taken place away from a Jewish readership to a Gentile one, and back to a mixed audience.

In favor of a Jewish Christian readership are the facts that the author moves easily through the Old Testament Scripture and employs rabbinic methods of interpretation, both of which presuppose that the audience must have been familiar with Judaism to a certain degree.

In favor of a Gentile Christian readership speak phrases such as "repentance from dead works," "faith toward God," and "enlightenment," which were ways of expressing conversion from paganism to Christianity. Also the basic teachings mentioned in Heb 6:1-2 are seen by proponents of this view as topics used by Jews in their proselytizing mission to Gentiles. The acquaintance with the LXX and rabbinic methods of interpreting Scripture were due to the socializing process into the sect, according to scholars who prefer this view.

The best reasons seem to support a mixed ethnic background. This is the view adopted in this work. The author calls the ancestors "fathers" rather than "our fathers." The epistle never mentions Jews or Christians, the Temple, or circumcision, never makes negative references to Jews or Gentiles, and refrains from divisive references to Jews or

Gentiles. The group to which the audience is supposed to belong is the “people of God.” If credibility is given to R. Brown then all types of Christianity were a mixture of Jewish Christians and their Gentile converts.

The Essene hypothesis has been dismissed mostly because certain Qumran specifics are missing in Hebrews such as the dualism between Christ and Belial, the contrast between the sons of light and the sons of darkness, the opposition between flesh and spirit, and the corruption of the Jerusalem priesthood contrasted with the inadequacy of the levitical priesthood in Hebrews.

Regarding the situation of the addressees, many scholars have engaged into the relapse theory because of socio-political reasons, the delay of the *parousia*, or a heightened consciousness of sin. Others advocate danger from heretical teachings, spiritual lethargy, or a combination of external pressure and waning commitment. That the relapse theory has little support in the text itself is evident from the introduction of Christ as the “first-born” (1:6) a messianic term without justifying its use or talking about Christ’s messiahship. If the audience would be in danger or relapsing into Judaism they would neglect their Lord, but Heb 2:3 warns not of neglecting the Lord, but the salvation declared through the Lord. The issue in Heb 3-4 is the antithesis of unfaithfulness and obedience, not joining another community. Therefore the audience does not seem to relapse into Judaism but what seems to happen is a waning commitment to the community’s confessed faith (4:14; 10:23). Thus, I concluded that the audience is of a mixed ethnic background deprived of the promised rewards and the audience encountered a waning commitment to the faith they once confessed.

In the third chapter I explored the structural relationship between Heb 4 and 10.

The history of investigation of the structure of Hebrews has been divided into four divisions: Early attempts, Medieval and Reformation periods, eighteenth and nineteenth century, and the twentieth century. Earliest commentators did not use formal divisions but simply included an overview of the author's argument in their commentaries.

From the fifth century on into the Medieval and Reformation time, the superiority of the Christ-theme gained popularity. A bipartite scheme with the focus on Christ's superiority and joining the leaders preceded the tripartite scheme introduced by Heinrich Bullinger, with parts one and three admonishing the audience not to reject Christ and the middle section characterized by Christ as the true priest. Following Bullinger, Niels Hemmingsen introduced the rhetorical approach.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the bipartite division of Hebrews by Bengel was different from earlier attempts. It drew attention to the fact that Hebrews has doctrinal but also practical passages. The later ones are introduced with "therefore." Based on exegesis Bengel detected three major key words in Hebrews (faithful, merciful, and high priest) around which the author would build his arguments. He also found out that Pss 2, 8, and 110 form the point of departure for the author on several occasions. Heinrich F. von Soden presented a thematic arrangement but according to the rhetoric of classical Greek.

The twentieth century put its focus more on linguistics, paying attention to formal features, to links and transitions signaled by the text. The three streams of discussion that brought fresh insights to the debate were: (1) "Genre Differentiation" as carried out by F. Büchsel and Rafael Gyllenberg, (2) the "Literary Analysis" of Leon Vaganay, Albert Vanhoye, and others, and (3) the "tripartite scheme" advanced by Wolfgang Nauck.

Building on the work of L. Dussaut and L. L. Neeley, discourse analysis has been continued most recently with the work of C. L. Westfall.

After laying out the history of investigating the structure of Hebrews, I turned our attention to the evaluation of the different approaches. The agnostic approach accurately describes the discourse as circular and repetitive, but fails to discern an organizational structure of the author, though ancient literature used conventions for arranging the material.

Theme or content analysis has the advantage of recognizing that the author of Hebrews revolves around recognizable themes. The downside is that it fails to account for the repetitive nature of the discourse and assumes the homily to be a dogmatic apologetic treatise that targets Jews, who are about to revert back into Judaism.

Rhetorical analysis has unified scholars of Hebrews in at least one area, namely the oral nature of the discourse so that the sermonic nature of Hebrews is widely accepted. The homily cannot, however, be forced into the mold of a classical speech although it has several features described in the Greek handbooks of rhetoric.

In favor of literary analysis is the fact that it identifies literary devices that were used in the ancient world. The danger of this analysis is a potential one, namely that form divorced from content can lead to a distortion of the initial intention of the author.

The strength of discourse analysis consists in the attempt to analyze the text as a coherent material. Also to be mentioned are the markers which indicate interrelationship between the discourse units. But since this approach does not yield a fool-proof result, one has to be aware of its weaknesses also; especially the fact that it treats the text as a visual phenomena rather than an oral presentation. Furthermore, the approach tends to be

subjective since every discourse analyst defines the functions of particles slightly different from his colleagues.

Regarding the cohesion between Heb 4 and 10 we have seen that 4:11-16 and 10:19-25 exhibit the most striking use of *inclusio* in Hebrews. Lexical and semantic cohesion ties the two units even more together and connects them also to Heb 3:1, 6. Semantic threads in a discourse are woven with the same or related lexical items, indicating a relationship between those units. The two units function as overlapping constituents, meaning that they have a bidirectional function. In other words these units are furnishing the conclusion of the previous section but also an introduction to the following section. Besides formal and semantic cohesion these two units also provide syntactical cohesion. Both furnish three hortatory subjunctives in close proximity, and in Heb 4:11-16 we find three times the inferential conjunction οὖν, a marker of prominence, connected to the hortatory subjunctives. The same marker of prominence is also found in the Heb 10:19-25 unit. Finally, both units share the same genre. The two units share structural features, lexical and semantic cohesion, formal constituents, syntactical elements, and the same genre. This means that the units exhibit cohesion of form and function, but also a continuity of topic and content. This cohesion was proven to show continuity in topic and content. The exhortation of a Sabbath observance in Heb 4 has been shown to be complementary to the neglecting of the gathering in Heb 10. Since structurally these two units are related, the proposed thesis that they are also topically related has been valuable. Only by recognizing the structure does continuity in content become evident and explanatory since the theme of “rest” as such does not appear again in the composition.

In the fourth chapter I analyzed the eleven occurrences of *κατάπαυσις* in the Septuagint and found out that the term refers to (1) the Promised Land (Deut 12:9); (2) the temple as the habitation desired by God (Ps 132:14 [131:14]); and finally (3) the Sabbath rest (Exod 35:2; 2 Macc 15:1).

Further I looked into the use of *κατάπαυσις* in other Jewish and Christian literature. Barnabas and Athenagoras used the term in a quotation of Isa 66:1. Josephus used the term for the cessation of King Herod's kingship, while *Jos. Asen.* is best explained as a state of conversion described in terms of a place. Philo's interpretation of *ἀνάπαυσις* represents a significant departure from the *κατάπαυσις* of the LXX. Looking further into early Christian literature we could see the transition from most Jewish and Christian theologies of rest beginning with the creation story (Gen 2:2), moving on to a rest available to humanity as a present experience, and lastly rest becoming a part of the Christology of the church in the form of realized eschatology (Matt 11:28-30).

In dealing with Heb 3, a midrash on Ps 94 (LXX), the author deals with the exodus generation and their failure from the background of Num 14. This led me to conclude that the Old Testament Scripture, not Philo, the Nag Hamadi Documents, or Jewish apocalypticism, is the matrix for Heb 3:7-4:16. Noteworthy is also the fact that the *κατάπαυσις μου* in Ps 94 and in Heb 3 relates to the physical promised land, Canaan. Faithlessness was the reason for their failure. The theme of faithfulness/faithlessness in Heb 3 has thus passed from Moses, Jesus, and the exodus generation to the audience of Hebrews.

As far as placing the rest in Heb 4 as a post-parousian eschatological rest I noted that the time frame bracketed by Heb 3:14 "if we hold fast until the end" and Heb 4:13

“the one to whom we must render an account” places the rest before the parousia rather than after. The audience in Hebrews lives in the last days, but before the last day.

Also soteriological language is absent from Heb 3-4, which reinforces the view that the rest is a sabbatical repose based on the seventh-day Sabbath rest God entered after finishing his work. Supporting this view are the following exegetical conclusions I reached: The emphatic ingressive aorist subjunctive “let us begin to fear” (4:1) implies a struggle with the word of God on the side of the community, something I have identified as a neglect of Sabbath observance (cf. 10:25). The exhortation to fear “that none of you seem to have fallen short to reach it” supports the view that his rest is not a post-eschaton salvation because otherwise all the members are short of achieving it at the present age. Both the exodus generation and the audience of Hebrews have been evangelized according to v. 2, but this did not benefit (οὐκ ὠφέλησεν) them because they did not unite in faith with those who heard the word. The exchange of the secular term ‘benefit’ rather than ‘saving’ indicates that the author did not deal primarily with salvation in any of the cases. The failure of the Exodus generation to enter the promised rest does not abrogate the present reality of the audience emphasized by placing the present tense verb εἰσερχόμεθα first in the structure of the sentence (4:3). The redefinition of rest through a *gezera shawa* attributes to rest primordial status. The point is that the rest was sequel to completed “works” after the first creation week on the seventh day. This is expressed by the quotation of Gen 2:2 in Heb 4:4. That means rest involves cessation of work (cf. 4:10). That makes a Sabbath observance necessary for the audience. This is also supported by the chiasmic structure (4:3c-4) which places God’s creation rest at the very center.

Furthermore, a future soteriological interpretation of the rest is not supported within the context of Heb 4 because rest is never attributed to Jesus' death or his resurrection but to God's own Sabbath rest. This is in my estimation the strongest reason why the rest of Heb 4 should not be reduced to a salvation/spiritual experience. However, Heb 4 does not unfold in the absence of soteriological implications. Interpreting the rest as Sabbath observance does have soteriological implications for the audience of Hebrews.

In Heb 4:6 the author draws an exegetical inference by stating that it (the rest) remains in existence for some to enter. The descriptive or iterative present verb ἀπολείπεται makes it clear that the author does not think of the future as a post-eschaton event, otherwise he would have used a future tense, since both of his *Vorlagen* used a future tense. When he quotes Ps 95:11 in v. 5 he uses the future tense for God's oath decreed to the exodus generation (εἰ εἰσελεύσονται). The same future tense is used in Num 14:30 (LXX) εἰ ὑμεῖς εἰσελεύσεσθε εἰς τὴν γῆν which indicates the consistency in Numbers, Psalms, and the quotation in Hebrews and how careful and intentional the author deals with his words when he applies them to his audience.

The emphatic σήμερον in Heb 4 stresses the temporal rather than the spatial aspect of the rest that the audience are exhorted to enter. However, it does not mean that they are entering in today, as it did not mean for David's contemporary that he was promising them another rest. The new 'today' is the day for responding to God's promise with trust and obedience rather than hardening the hearts.

The next critical issue deals with v. 8 which claims that Joshua did not give rest to the exodus generation, therefore the rest has to be interpreted as something otherworldly of apocalyptic-gnostic and Alexandrian provenance. However, we saw that the Old

Testament testifies to the fact that Israel entered the rest. Hebrews 3:17-18 witnesses to the fact that the first generation that left Egypt was not allowed to enter the rest of the promised land. With that in mind the interpretation of rest in terms of an otherworldly concept becomes less probable. The rest to which Joshua did not bring the first generation of the exodus Israelites was the promised land.

The formal parallelism between v. 6 and v. 9 suggests that σαββατισμός is meant to define more precisely the character of the rest. Etymologically σαββατισμός derives from σαββατίζειν in much the same way that βαπτισμός derives from βαπτίζειν. I could hardly claim that I would not know what βαπτισμός means by having a full understanding of what βαπτίζειν means. The analysis of σαββατισμός, meaning Sabbath observance in non-Christian as well as in Christian literature, revealed that it is always used literally, although sometimes pejoratively, with the exception of Origen who uses the term twice figuratively. This is understandable taking Origen's allegorical interpretation of Scripture into consideration.

Hebrews 4:10 describes how the σαββατισμός will be possible. The one entering it rested (past tense) from his works just as God did rest from his on that first Sabbath in the primeval history of this world. The comparative conjunction does not allow much room for negotiation of whom should be imitated. With v. 11 we reached the three-fold hortatory subjunctives which connect ch. 4 to ch. 10. By such striving the addressees will avoid falling into the same pattern as the Israelites or let go of their initial confession. The articular noun 'confession' indicates that there was content attached to it. Holding on to the confession just makes sense if the addressees are in danger of abandoning it. The clear connection to ch. 10:25 shows what the addressees are about to give up. The

reasons presented above are part of the rationale of why I think Heb 4 deals in a parallel way with the promised land for the Israelites as well as with the danger of giving up, neglecting the seventh-day Sabbath in the case of the audience of Hebrews.

In the last chapter we looked at Heb 10:19-31. Having the confidence created by Christ's sacrifice to enter the presence of God, the believer becomes a boundary-crosser like the priest who had access to the very presence of God. The verb "to approach" (v. 22) is used to refer to the Christian's appropriation in a worshipping community (v. 25). There the worshiper comes with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, washed clean with water, and the heart sprinkled clean from an evil conscience. This washing and the holding fast to the confession are strong evidences of baptism. Holding fast to the confession is also a matter of mutual commitment in a community. That is the reason why the author encourages the believers to pay attention to each other in stimulating them to love and good deeds.

How to stimulate somebody to love and good deeds is described by the author as a warning not to forsake the gathering. We have seen that the verb "forsake" has morally negative connotations to it with fatal results. Therefore, I concluded that the gathering must be more than just a social gathering. Some of the members are obviously in the habit of neglecting them, although the author exhorts his audience to encourage one another all the more as they see the day approaching.

When did the gathering take place? The suggestion made that this refers to a Sabbath gathering is based on several reasons:

1. The audience is encouraged to exhort one another (v. 25). The purpose of the book (13:22) is a "word of exhortation." This phrase appears only once more in the New

Testament, namely in Acts 13:15 where Paul was asked to give a “word of exhortation” on a Sabbath to the Jews and God-fearing proselytes in Antioch of Pisidia.

2. In Heb 10:23 the author exhorts his addressees to hold on to the confession. Hebrews 6:1-2 portrays the audience in danger of abandoning the most basic teaching. That is probably the reason why they need the encouragement to hold fast to their confession without wavering.

3. The willful sin is defined in Num 15:30-36 and exemplified by the person who willfully, wrongfully neglected the Sabbath observance.

4. The willful sin occurred after the addressees received the knowledge of truth, a phrase which is used in the pastoral epistles for the conversion process. Thus, it seems the addressees had once been acquainted with the Christian teachings including the Sabbath observance, but now after receiving the knowledge of truth they are giving it up, willfully, high-handedly.

5. The verb ἀπολείπω used to describe the non-availability of a sacrifice (v. 26) connects back to Heb 4:6, 9 where the rest/Sabbath observance is stated as being left for the people of God.

6. The rest of the warning passage, vv. 26-31, is treated with the background in mind of the person who willfully desecrated the Sabbath (no sacrifice available; two or three witnesses; nullifying the Law of Moses; and death without compassion). These are the reasons why a Sabbath gathering seems to be the most viable option for the noun ἐπισυναγωγή. Having Num 15 in the background gives the text of Hebrews a very coherent flow without having to force the text to say what it does not say.

Hebrews 10:26 ends with the statement that for the apostate who high-handedly

sins against God after his conversion, there remains no sacrifice to atone his sins. The effects of this kind of sin are portrayed by vivid metaphorical language: trampling the Son of God, profaning the blood of the covenant, and insulting the spirit of grace. If the man who willfully sinned in the desert by disregarding the Sabbath received a merciless punishment, how much worse will the punishment be of that person who abandons the gathering and sins willfully? Only God can punish such arrogance. That is why the author concludes: “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Heb 10:31). One attribute of God’s character is a negative attitude toward sin and those who willfully embrace sin. Such statements are rather awkward in today’s ecclesiastical jargon, but yet the author of Hebrews does not hesitate to address his audience in a frank manner while at the same time trying to exhort them.

Finally I can summarize that the audience of Hebrews does not relapse back into Judaism, but faces a waning commitment to the community’s confessed faith. Since Heb 4:11-16 and Heb 10:19-25 share similar vocabulary, syntax, and genre it is safe to assume that they share also a similar theme. The *Sabbatismos* remains for the people of God and an invitation is extended to rest the way God rested from all his works after the six-day creation on the seventh-day Sabbath. In Heb 10 the acute problem seems to be the intentional neglect of the church gathering that, as we have seen, is very likely Sabbath gatherings. Such a continuing, willful, intentional neglect does equate to trampling under foot the Son of God. This is the reason why the author strikes such a serious tone in his elaboration on this matter.

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